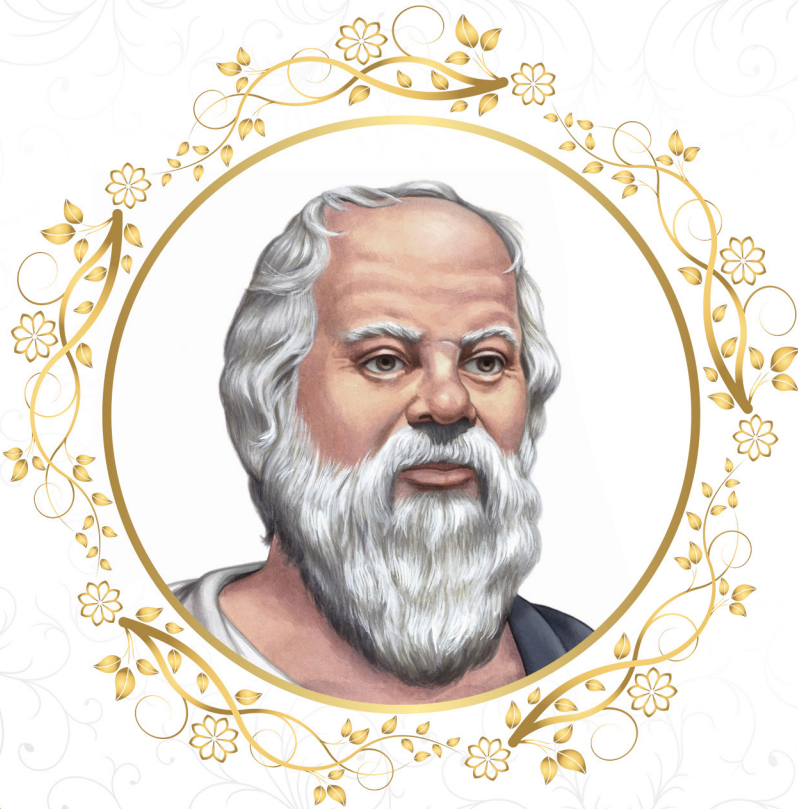# Introduction to Western Philosophy

COURSE CODE: B21PH01DC

BACHELOR OF ARTS
PHILOSOPHY
WITH SPECIALISATION IN
SREENARAYANAGURU STUDIES

Self Learning Material

വിദ്യകൊണ്ട് സ്വതന്ത്രരാവുക

SREENARAYANAGURU
OPEN UNIVERSITY

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

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

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

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.

Introduction to Western Philosophy
Course Code: B21PH01DC
Semester - I

Bachelor of Arts
Philosophy with Specialisation in Sreenarayanaguru Studies
Self Learning Material

B21PH01DC
Introduction to
Western Philosophy

SREENARAYANAGURU
OPEN UNIVERSITY

DOCUMENTATION

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 centres 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 endeavours.

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. We are extremely delighted to present this programme to the learners as it stays connected with the teaching of the Sreenarayanaguru. It is a matter of pride as well as satisfaction for this being the maiden attempt to offer a programme in the domain of Sreenarayanaguru's philosophy. The UG programme in Philosophy has derived its framework from the contemporary methodologies in teaching. Topical discussions have been integrated in to the historical progression of the philosophical concepts and practices. Care has been taken to ensure continuity of discussion on Guru's teachings within the basic structure of philosophy as a discipline of knowledge. 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   01.03.2023

Contents

1

BLOCK

Ancient Greek
Philosophy

Origin and Development of Greek Philosophy

Learning Outcomes

The unit will enable the learner to:

- get an overall idea about the origin and development of Greek philosophy

- get familiar with various aspects of human-social life such as God, religion, myths and beliefs in the philosophical inquiry and pursuit

- get an overall survey of the phases of Greek philosophy

- become acquainted with the significance of the history of philosophy

Prerequisites

At what point in human history did philosophy originate? What is the history of philosophy and philosophical enquiry? The historical origin of philosophy can be traced back to human wonder about oneself and the cosmos and the human wonder can be necessarily traced back to the first human being. It means that the history of philosophy is the history of human species. Was the ancient Greek philosophy similar to that of the enlightenment philosophy which dominated from 17th to 18th centuries in Europe? No. Because, philosophy (thought) is the product of time and history, despite the fact that it transcends time and history and makes an eternal impact. Why are the ancient and the enlightenment philosophies not similar? Because each historical point triggers unique philosophical thinking depending upon the larger inquiries into society, culture, myth, religion, God, science, economy, politics, law and other social institutions. The central debate in each philosophy will differ according to these many inherent aspects of human-social life. If the relation between enlightenment philosophy and God/religion/supernatural power is that of confrontation, the relation between ancient

Greek philosophy and God/religion/supernatural power is that of intertwinement. Ancient Greek is considered as the first era which witnessed the systematic philosophical enquiry into the nature of knowledge and reality, into thinking process, essence and existence of human beings and the world, into characteristics of social-political organisations and consequences, as we know from the history of philosophy. This unit sheds light into the origin and development of Greek philosophy.

Key Concepts

Greek philosophy, History of philosophy, Theological and Mythological origins of Greek philosophy, Naturalist philosophy.

Discussion

We do wonder at cosmos. Wonder is an emotion which leads human beings to try to understand our world. As we know, it is an emotion which activated the greatest achievements in science, art and religion, in everything related to human-social life. There could have been no scientific investigation of rainbows without wondering at it. Wonder is a wellspring from which all human endeavors begin, be it religious beliefs, scientific inquiries or artistic expressions. And, it is this wondering nature of human beings makes him/her different from animals seeking safety, satiation and sex. Humans wonder, think, reflect and seek comprehension.

> "Wonder is the feeling of a philosopher, and philosophy begins in wonder"
> - Plato

The word philosophy is derived from the Greek philo (love) and sophia (wisdom) and is literally defined as "the love of wisdom". Philosophy, in that sense, is the search for a comprehensive view of nature, and an attempt at universal explanation of things and the world.

Now, what is the relation between wonder and knowledge? Do we wonder just at the 'beyond' of our knowledge? Is the wonder happening just at the 'beyond' of our knowledge? No. The ordinary reality as a dynamic process and day to day events raise wonder in us.

The philosophical wonder discussed here does not necessarily mean a state of being startled by something strange, sudden or unusual. Rather, the usual, ordinary and the everyday thing/reality begets the philosophical wonder.

So, what is the relation between wisdom and knowledge? Is wisdom merely the 'source' of knowledge? No. It is its source as much as its goal. Most of the time, knowledge is limited to what is known or intellectually grasped by someone. It is a limited business. Wisdom, on the other hand, has a wider horizon. It looks beyond

the boundary of knowledge. A knowing person would say: "I know what I know." And, that person is stuck with what he/she knows. But, a wise man would say: "I know that I do not know." And, that person is more concerned with what he/she does not know, at the ignorance of myriad things. In that sense, wisdom is the knowledge of your ignorance. The great philosopher Socrates thus said: "I know that I know nothing."

1.1.1 Is Philosophy Different from Science?

There have been very different views of the nature of philosophy in history. One can say, philosophy emerged in various fashions in various historical points. The word 'philosophy' meant different things to different people in different ages. For example, in its origin and development, the ancient Greek philosophy had a close relation to the sciences. Philosophy was even called the *mother of all sciences*. In modern times, philosophy and sciences have completely different domains.The former is understood by most of the people as a realm dealing with dry, abstract ideas and concepts while the latter is understood as a realm dealing with day to day physical and empirical reality.

Many disciplines which are independent sciences today were part of philosophy in ancient and medieval times. Then, how do we differentiate between philosophy and sciences in general? It can be done like this. A discipline remains philosophical and becomes part of philosophy as long as its concepts are not clarified and its methods are controversial and debatable. But, there is a paradox. If we take such an approach to differentiate philosophy from science, we will have to agree with the fact that there are no scientific concepts which are explained, clarified and settled

once and for all, nor are there scientific methods which are totally uncontroversial. This indicates the flipping aspects of philosophy and science.

The above point tells us that there is always a philosophical element left in every science and that every scientific endeavour is triggered by the philosophical quest of human beings. But, when many problems were stated with clarity, concepts were standardised without objection and, consensus arose with regard to the methodology of solution, then we witnessed science branching out independently in different ways with a focused concentration on their subject-matter. Thus, we could say that philosophy gave birth to new disciplines, took care of their up-bringing and let them live on their own after their maturity. In this sense, philosophy played the role of a womb or midwife (the woman who takes care of the mother and newborn at birth).

1.1.2 The Primal Question about the Primal Stuff

Thales of the 6th century B.C. is considered the "Father of the Western Philosophy." Thales put forth the primary philosophical question: what is the basic stuff of the universe? Or, what is that thing out of which all things are made and to which all things return? To put it in an Aristotelian sense, what is the First Cause of the Existence? This does not mean that the ancient Greeks were naive to answer this question. Nor were they indifferent to such a question. Rather, the ancient Greeks believed that their pantheon of Gods created the world and the human beings. Thus, such a question was neither appreciated nor encouraged.

Every philosophical question or scientific investigation into the universe

in history has this destiny of facing confrontations from the existing dominant beliefs. Because, philosophical questions are begotten by wonder about the universe and quest for more knowledge and are seeking more clarity about the reality. The intellectual/philosophical questions, in this sense, always shook the foundations of the existing beliefs of any historical point.

However, Thales being clever, did not deny the existence of Gods. Rather, he suggested that the First Cause of the existence was water. This, of course, was a question about the first cause of the existence including deities/Gods. Thales founded the Milesian School which is considered as the first philosophical school in the west. His followers, Anaximander and Anaximenes, furthered and continued Thales' philosophical inquiries and thoughts, however, rejecting his suggestion of water as the first cause and put forth their own positions. These three philosophers initiated the ancient Greek philosophy which then was enriched by other Pre-Socratic philosophers. Thales, Anaximander and Anaximenes are the famous philosophers of the Ionian school.

It need not be said that human beings' philosophical enquiry began long before Thales asked his questions. It started when the first person wondered why things happened as they did. However, the development of Greek philosophy throughout the ancient world established Greece as the birthplace of philosophy.

As we know from the history of philosophy, after Thales, the questions relating to the originating substance of the universe and investigations of the cosmos dominated the philosophical realm. Thales is known, therefore, as the founder of the school of natural philosophy. The phrase 'natural philosophy' or 'philosophy of nature' needs to be underlined and understood in juxtaposition with what we call today 'natural science.' As we indicated above, philosophy in ancient Greece significantly dealt with the questions of 'natural science' than with what we call today 'metaphysics.' And, today we understand 'natural science' with its numerous branches – begotten by philosophy – as independent and separated from the realm of philosophy.

Two points need to be stressed with regard to Thales' primary philosophical question: one, the philosophical enquiry in ancient Greek was triggered by wonder and investigation into the universe and its underlying stuff; two, the subject matter of the question had direct connection with the Gods, religious and mythical beliefs existing at that time. These two points make clear the point with which we started this unit; the inherent relation between philosophy and science and philosophy and religion/theology in the ancient Greek.

The intertwined relation between philosophy and science, and, philosophy and religion/theology in the ancient times

Betrand Russel's following statement in *A History of Western Philosophy* gives us a sum total of the Greek civilization. Russel says: "what they (Greek) achieved in art and literature is familiar to everybody, but what they did in the purely intellectual realm is even more exceptional. They invented mathematics and science and philosophy; they first wrote history as opposed to mere annals; they speculated freely about the nature of the world and the ends of life, without being bound in

the fetters of any inherited orthodoxy." But, was philosophy completely out of the clutches of inherited orthodoxy, myths and beliefs?

1.1.3 Religious and Mythological Origins of Greek Philosophy

It will be very unscholarly for a learner to study Greek philosophy in separation from Greek society, culture, religion, myths, politics and economics. Especially because there is not a mere relation between Greek philosophy and popular Greek mythology. Rather, there are religious/ mythological origins of Greek philosophy. In one sense, Greek philosophy originated when few ancient people thought beyond the mythological stage of human history. For example, Thales's importance lies in his raising the philosophical question of the original stuff and declaring it to be water without referring to any mythology or mythical beings**.**

There was a deep relation between philosophy and theology. Many Pre-Socratic philosophers were religious leaders as much as scientists. This is very much clear in the case of medieval philosophers – Western or Islamic. The relationship between ancient philosophy and religion/theology is clear in Aristotle. For him, 'theology' was a branch of philosophy with respected place and significance. The Christian and Muslim Aristotelians made additions and revisions drawing from the teachings of their respective sacred books and paved ways for various schools of new-Aristotelianism

It will not be even wrong to say that Greek philosophy was begotten by Greek mythology as much as that the specific branches of science such as physics, biology and astronomy were begotten by

the philosophy. One could say that Greek philosophy emerged when mythological beginnings were developed as complex and comprehensive intellectual systems. The mythology, religion, philosophy or science of the Greek, all constituted and shaped one another– either by engagement or confrontation. Thus, they cannot be separately understood. This point is true of many of the aspects of human history. We cannot understand a society at a point in history independent of its relation to religion, science and philosophy and vice versa.

As there was no organised and structured form of religion in the ancient Greek, most often religion and theology were expressed in art, poetry and philosophy. The fusion of poetry and religion of the Olympian Gods in Homeric poems is one among the many examples of the intertwined aspects of Greek culture. The religious spirit of the ancient Greek has been expressed and elaborated as much in its philosophy as in the utterance of cult or myth.

The concept of Zeus, the supreme among the Gods, presents well to us the interpenetration of philosophic and religious ideas in the Greek. The legendary Greek poet Homer's conception of the Gods as subject to fate and subsequently, Hesiod's speculation about the Gods in more philosophical fashion in poems, all tell us the interpenetration of philosophic, mythological and supernatural ideas in the Greek.

It is this intertwinement of religion and philosophy that is handed down to the philosophic monotheism of Plato and Aristotle. It can be clearly seen in Platos' theory of ideas/forms and Aristoles' theory of prime mover or unmoved mover. According to Plato theories are unchangeble entities despite time and space and accoring to Aristotle, there

is prime mover of all the motion in the universe. In sum, the fusion of myth, religion, art, poetry and philosophy was an inherent aspect of Greek culture.

1.1.4 A Survey of Greek Philosophy

The ancient Greek philosophy, for some scholars, can be loosely viewed as four phases based on the central concern or debate in each phase. The first phase is the period of naturalist philosophy. The fundamental problem in this period is that of the external nature in the Milesian school. In fact, this was a combination of two other problems.

> The fundamental philosophical problem in the ancient Greek period was external nature

One is the problem of substance: what is the basic stuff or substance from which the natural objects originate? What is the underlying substance of the universe? The substance put forth as basic by various Milesian philosophers is a concrete substance like water and air. And, second is the problem of change: what is the nature of the process by which the basic substance changes into things? The coming unit will discuss the problem of substance and change, which is also called the problem of one and the many in detail.

While these two questions are interdependent and almost indistingu-ishable in the earliest nature -philosophies of the Miliesian School of which Thales, Anaximander and Anaximenes are chief exponents, the problem of change emerged in a radical form and got the central place in Heraclitus and in the Eleatic school, of which Parmenides is the chief exponent.

Two points about the philosophical inquiry into change need to be said; one, the question at hand is not about how the change takes place, but if there is any change at all. The question is whether the change is permanent or a mere sensory appearance. Most of the Greek philosophers had upheld hylozoism. Hylozoism (derived from Greek *hyle* meaning 'matter' and *zoe* meaning 'life') is the view that nature/reality is alive and the original substance carries within itself the cause of motion and change. In simple terms, it views all matter as alive, either in itself or by participation/engagement in the operation of a world soul.

The pre-Sophistic naturalist period extends from about 585 to the middle of the fifth century B.C. Frank Thilly's exposition of the philosophy of this period is more telling: "The earliest Greek philosophy is naturalistic: its attention is directed to nature; it is mostly hylozoistic: it conceives nature as animated or alive; it is ontological: it inquires into the essence of things; it is mainly monistic: it seeks to explain its phenomena by means of a single principle; it is dogmatic: it naively presupposes the competence of the human mind to solve the world-problem."

The second phase of the development is the period of the Sophists and Socrates. This phase which belongs to the fifth century B.C witnessed a shift from natural and cosmological speculations about the origination of the external world toward the problems of human beings-to human knowledge and conduct. The focal point of philosophical inquiry here is not the external nature, rather the internal self – to know thyself. The philosophy's call for examining the problem of human beings consists of various aspects of human-social life; a thorough examination of the

problems of thinking (logic), knowledge (epistemology), social conduct (ethics), state (politics), etc.

If Thales' Miletus is the home of the first Greek enlightenment, the Athens of Sophists and Socrates is the home of this New Greek enlightenment giving birth to the great schools of philosophy. The Socratic period from 430 to 320 B.C. specifically is the period of philosophical reconstruction.

The third phase is the systematic period of Plato and Aristotle built upon the philosophical foundations of their master Socrates. The philosophy of this period can be genuinely characterised as both 'critical' and 'systematic' (system building) this period was concerned with constructing rational theories of epistemology, logic, ethics and politics with a careful and detailed examination of the dynamics and with an intention of building comprehensive systems about them. Frank Thilly characterises the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle as 'critical': "it investigates the principles of knowledge; as rationalistic: it accepts the competence of reason in the search after truth; as humanistic: it studies man; as spiritualistic or idealistic: it makes mind an important if not the chief factor in the explanation of reality. It is dualistic in that it also recognizes matter as a factor in reality, though secondary to mind."

The fourth phase, which extended from 320 B.C to 529 A.D, spread mainly in Athens, Alexandria and Rome is the ethico-religious period. The questions mostly examined and debated during this time are ethical and theological.

Let us conclude by focusing on two words which are the crux of this unit, history and philosophy. This unit talked about the history of ancient Greek philosophy. But, why do we study the history of philosophy? Does it have any scope and relevance? Anthony Kenny starts his book *A New History of Western Philosophy* by stating the two reasons why we study the history of philosophy. The reasons are 'philosophical' and 'historical.' He says, "we may study the great dead philosophers in order to seek illumination upon themes of present-day philosophical inquiry. Or, we may wish to understand the people and societies of the past, and read their philosophy to grasp the conceptual climate in which they thought and acted. We may read the philosophers of other ages to help to resolve philosophical problems of abiding concern, or to enter more fully into the intellectual world of a bygone era."

Recap

♦ Philosophy begins in wonder at the day-to-day reality

♦ "Wonder is the feeling of a philosopher, and philosophy begins in wonder"

♦ Greek philosophy is naturalist philosophy

♦ Cosmological investigation begot philosophy

♦ "I know that I do not know" is what we call wisdom

♦ Philosophy as the mother of all sciences

♦ Philosophy played the role of midwifery

♦ Convergence of philosophical and mythological ideas in the Greek

♦ Interpenetration of philosophic, mythological, religious and supernatural ideas in the Greek

♦ Greek philosophical ideas explained in poems

♦ Fundamental difference between philosophy and science in modern times

♦ "What is the primal stuff of the universe" is the primal question of philosophy

Objective Questions

1. Which emotion of human beings triggers philosophical enquiry?

2. Which emotion activated the greatest achievements in science, art and religion?

3. Was Greek philosophy and science purely detached?

4. Was Greek philosophy and theology/religion purely detached?

5. Why do we call Plato and Aristotle's philosophy 'critical'?

6. Why do we call Plato and Aristotle's philosophy 'dualistic'?

7. What is humanistic philosophy?

8. Who is the father of the Greek enlightenment?

9. Which is the home of the New Greek enlightenment?

Answers

1. Wonder.

2. Wonder.

3. No.

4. No.

5. Because it investigates the principles of knowledge.

6. Because it recognizes both the mind and matter as factors in reality.

7. Philosophy centered on human being.

8. Thales.

9. Athens.

Assignments

1. 'Philosophy begins in Wonder' Discuss with reference to the origin of philosophy in Greek.

2. What were the major concerns of Greek philosophy? Explain.

3. What is the relation of philosophy and science in Greek thought?

Suggested Readings

1. Kenny, Anthony. (2012). *A New History of Western Philosophy*, Vol: 1. *Ancient Philosophy,* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

2. Russell, Bertrand. (2016). *History of Western Philosophy*, Routledge Classics.

3. Salkever, Stephen. (2009). *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Greek Political Thought*. In *Series: Cambridge Companions to the Ancient World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

4. Sedley, David. (2003). *The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Philosophy*. In *Series: Cambridge Companion to Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

5. Cottingham, G. John. (Ed.) (2021). *Western Philosophy: An Anthology* (Blackwell Philosophy Anthologies), New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell.

6. Stace, W.T (1960). *A Critical History of Greek Philosophy,* London: Macmillan Company Ltd.

2

UNIT

Problem of the One and the Many

Learning Outcomes

The unit will enable the learner to:

♦ know the philosophical approach of the ancient Greek

♦ get exposed to some major philosophers of the Greek and their different philosophical explanations of the universe

♦ identify some of the significant philosophical puzzles in the Greek; the original stuff of the universe and permanence vis-à-vis change of the reality

♦ develop an understanding of ancient Greek philosophical thoughts

Prerequisites

The universe in which we live consists of space and time, all living beings and non-living things and all the matter and energy. The universe includes each and everyone. It includes earth, sun, moon and the planets. The universe is full of physical (natural) and biological phenomena. It is here the confusion rises. Where do we start our speculation about the universe from? Can we start it from a single thing which is unifying the whole universe? A God, or material, or an idea? The ancient Greek philosophical speculation started when the Greeks tried to explain the origin of the universe beyond a God. They were not satisfied with a purely theological explanation of the world. This natural phenomena like earth quakes and lightning occur by actions of gods. Rather, they started to explain the universe from within the things in the universe. The Greek philosophy emerged out of the naturalistic explanations of the world, without reference to the super-natural powers, but, necessarily in engagement with the mythological and super natural powers. One could say that the first Greek philosophy emerged out of the cosmological doctrines.

Key Concepts

Original stuff of the universe, Ancient Greek, Cosmological Doctrines, Change, Permanence

Discussion

In the first unit, we started discussion about the foundational questions of ancient Greek philosophy. We said that their first philosophical inquiry was also their first scientific inquiry about the universe. To put it more intriguingly, the origin and development of the ancient Greek philosophy was a scientific inquiry about the origin, nature and development of the physical world. One could say that the ancient Greek replaced the myths of anthropomorphic Gods and heroes with more general, rational inquiry in approach to the origin and nature of the universe.

They raised questions such as: why is there something rather than nothing? Is there any underlying stuff of the universe at all? If there is, is it matter or idea? Is it one or many? This question can be rephrased like this: would observation of the world of natural phenomena lead us to a problem of a single, finite object, material or idea? Or, would it land us in a quagmire of an infinite phenomena, things, their characteristics and changes? Is there one thing which unifies everything else? Or, are there fundamentally many things?

The ancient philosophical puzzle of one and the many still has its repercussions down the centuries in philosophy, western or Indian, spreading out into various isms. In the western tradition, monism is the theory or doctrine which upholds that only one Supreme Being exists and that rejects any duality between matter and mind, or God and the world. Indian philosophy has fundamentally two vibrant Vedantic traditions in this regard, Advaita and Dvaita. Advaita Vedanta literally means 'non-dualism' or 'non-secondness' and identifies the individual self (Atman) with the ground of reality (Brahman). Dvaita Vedanta upholds that Brahman/God and the individual soul (jīvātman) are distinct and exist as independent realities. While Advaita is about the rejection of the duality of the universe, Dvaita affirms the same.

Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Pythagoras, and Heraclitus are ancient Greek philosophers who belonged to the Ionian school established at Miletus and they are called the Milesian/Ionian thinkers while Parmenides is the founder of the Eleatic school at the city of Elea. As mentioned in the first chapter, the philosophical approach and inquiry of the ancient Greek was cosmological or physical. Ancient Greek philosophy primarily concerned itself with the physical world and in that sense, it put forth the 'scientific truth' of that time.

Two points have to be critically reflected here: one, if philosophy is understood today as a dry realm of abstract theories without having any relation to daily life, in the ancient time, it was understood as a realm of inquiry into the physical world in which we live. Two, the philosophical theories and findings originated from mythology, religion, divine-conceptions, rituals and beliefs of the ancient Greek

were regarded as the 'scientific truth' of that time. Modern science will not accept almost any of the theory, knowledge or truth of that time. This forces us to put each scientific-objective knowledge or theory in the context of history and understand it.

1.2.1 Major Ancient Greek Philosophers

1.2.1.1 Thales

Thales, born about 624 B.C. is known as the official founder of Greek philosophy. Thales showed rigorous interest in investigating various areas of knowledge including philosophy, science, history, mathematics, geography, engineering, and politics. However, much of his involvement was in the problems of astronomy and he provided naturalist/scientific explanations of cosmological events without any reference to supernatural entities.

Thales deserves the credit for adopting or developing a new method and style of discussion in ancient Greek. He encouraged people to question, debate, explain, justify and criticise with regards to understanding the universe disregarding the mythological beliefs. Thales and his disciple Anaximander, and Anaximenes, the disciple of Anaximander became three Milesians who developed the critical method.

> Philosophical questions disregarding and challenging the mythological beliefs

Thales put forth some bold hypotheses of his time and helped freeing natural phenomena from Godly interventions and interpretations. He developed a scientific method and was known as the 'initiator of philosophy' or the father of the first western enlightenment. The Greek colony- Miletus- which was situated then in Asia Minor is now in Modern Turkey.

Aristotle makes some clear references and wordings regarding Thales. It confirms that Aristotle had access to the works of Thales or other works which had cited Thales. We have much of the philosophy of Thales from Aristotle.

Thales affirmed water as the 'originating principle' or the single material substance. He tried to explain that all things in the universe could come into existence from water and go back to the originating material, the water. The water is the single controlling element of nature and thus the explanation of the universe must be one in number. The problem of the one and the many- one of the most significant metaphysical problems- rose from Thales.

He upheld this view depending upon a foundational hypothesis that water had the potential to take various shapes and forms of solidity, liquidity and vapour and that the universe is made up of the things in those forms. The water evaporates in the heat of the sun which is transmutation of the water into the fire. The water comes down as the rain which is the transfiguration of the same into the earth. This made him believe that water is the most lively thing in the universe. To put it more simply, water is the primary stuff out of which various things of the universe are made, the chemical, physiological, meteorological, geological and botanical. In another sense, he believed that water had the potential to nourish and generate the whole cosmos.

Aristotle reports Thales's declaration that primary stuff of the universe is water:

"Thales says that it (the nature of things) is water." Aristotle also says, "Thales's supposition may have arisen from observation… that the nurture of all creatures is moist, and that warmth itself is generated from moisture and lives by it; and that from which all things come to be is their first principle."

> Different philosophical views about the primal stuff of the universe

Thales not only held the view that everything originated from the water, but also that the earth rested and floated on water. Aristotle's reference to Thales's view about the resting of earth on water is written in the former's cosmological treatise titled *De Caelo* (translated as *On the Heavens*). According to Aetius, the philosopher of the first or second century AD, Thales had upheld that 'even the very fire of the sun and the stars, and indeed the cosmos itself is nourished by evaporation of the waters.'

A number of anecdotes are connected to and reported with regard to Thales' investigations of the cosmos. Story goes like this. Thales's view that earth was floating on the water comes from his observations of arrival and departure of ships with much heavier cargoes at the busy port of Miletus. From his empirical observations, Thales may have attributed a common quality of 'floatiness' to ships and the earth. Such an observation becomes plausible as it is reported that there were many floating islands composed of lighter stones at that time which Thales could have visited. By assuming the earth as a modification and by-product of the water, Thales then must have understood it as a lighter substance especially given the existence of Islands with the capacity to float.

1.2.1.2 Anaximander

Anaximander, the second philosopher of the Milesian school, is said to have lived between 611-547 B.C. He also held that all things originate from a single primordial substance but he differed from his teacher's water-theory. According to Anaximander, primordial stuff of the universe cannot be water or any other known thing. It can only be an indeterminate and indestructible thing. Russel states in *A History of Western Philosophy*: "it is infinite, eternal and ageless, and 'it encompasses all the worlds'--for he thought our world only one of many."

Anaximander was full of scientific curiosity and had reasoned justification and argument in order to prove that the primal substance could not be water. His argument that primal stuff is an indeterminate thing is based on his idea of justice/balance, both cosmic and human, which was one of the most profound of Greek beliefs.

The concept of justice is that any being/thing should not overstep the externally fixed bounds. It also includes that even the gods are subject to justice just as much as human beings are. Russell explains Anaximander's rejection of watery-principle as the primal stuff and affirmation of an indeterminate thing as the same. He says, "there should be a certain proportion of fire, of earth, and of water in the world, but each element (conceived as a god) is perpetually attempting to enlarge its empire. But there is a kind of necessity or natural law which perpetually redresses the balance; where there has been fire, for example, there are ashes, which are earth."

If there is a determinate/known thing as primal stuff, it would dominate

and conquer others. According to Aristotle, Anaximander's point is that all the determinate/known things are in opposition to one another. Air is cold, the water is moist and the fire is hot. Thus, if any one of the determinate/known things were primal and infinite substance, it would dominate and conquer others and consequently the rest of the elements would have ceased to exist by now. Thus, it is necessary that primal substances be neutral in the cosmic conflict.

Anaximander made speculations on the origin of living creatures along with cosmological speculations. Frank Thilly says that most of his speculations had a modern flavour. He believed and propagated that earth, as the centre of the system, is shaped like a cylinder, which is supported by nothing but held in equilibrium by other bodies. And, he is believed to have made the first map of the earth.

He believed that the world was not created as in Jewish or Christian or Islamic theology, but was evolved. And, evolution happened not only in the material world but also that of the animal kingdom. The living creatures, according to him, arose from the moist element as it was evaporated by the sun. He believed that human beings descended from fishes.

1.2.1.3 Anaximenes

Anaximenes is the last of the Milesian triad. He is believed to have lived before 494 B.C. He comes back again to Thales's mode of thinking about the universe. According to him, the primordial stuff of the universe is air, vapour or mist. "Just as our soul, being air, holds us together, so do breath and air encompass the whole world." Russell explains his air-principle of the universe as "the soul is air; fire is rarefied air; when condensed, air becomes first water, then, if further condensed, earth, and finally stone."

1.2.1.4 Pythagoras

Pythagoras comes in the next stage in ancient Greek philosophy when philosophy moved into Southern Italy. It is said that he is a disciple of Anaximander. As reported, he was born in the island of Samos between 580 and 570 B.C. and migrated to the Greek Colonies in southern Italy.

Pythagoras made important contributions to Mathematics. The demonstrative deductive argument, which played a significant role in logic later on, is said to have begun with him. The influence of mathematics and logic on philosophy partially owes to him and has been profound after him. While he concentrated on cosmology, anthropology and ethics, Aristotle in his *Metaphysics* tells us that Pythagoreans were devoted to mathematics.

Pythagoras advanced on his predecessors and shifted the debate on primal stuff from material element to mathematical number. He looked at the world and the things through numbers. All things are numbers and numbers are the fundamental principle of the universe. To put it in a different sense, all things are countable and thus the universe can be expressed and explained numerically. The world, before anything, is a relation of intelligible proportions or numbers.

Number as the fundamental principle of the universe

The philosopher Philolaus expresses the Pythagorean philosophy in the following words, "Everything that is known has a number; without this, nothing could be thought or known…Never does falsehood approach the number, because the number's nature is hostile to falsehood, while truth is proper and natural to the species of number. Love, friendship, justice, virtue, health, etc., are pictured on numbers."

Pythagoras extended the number-thesis even to the space/body. That means, he regarded the number spatially. One is the point; two is the line; three is the surface and four is the solid. To say that primal stuff of the universe is number or that all things are numbers would mean to him that all bodies are points/units in space, which then form a number, when taken as a whole. In this sense, he propagated that all material bodies must be seen and considered as numbers.

However, there is a twist in Pythagoras. We may believe that, as a philosopher who provided philosophy with numerical/ mathematical form, Pythagoras must be a man imbibed with rationality and scientific enquiry. That is what at least the contemporary analytic philosophy which has the mathematical and logical background tempts us to believe. However that is not the case. We have already stated how the ancient philosophy had a religious and mythological origins, how the religion and theology were expressed in art, poetry and philosophy and, thus, how everything

had an amalgamated existence. In this line, there were many miraculous features in Pythagoras' persona. It is in this way, Pythagoras becomes one of the most interesting and puzzling men in the history of philosophers.

He was a mystic, founder of a religion, wonder-worker and a semi-divine person as much as a mathematician and philosopher ("among rational beings one is god, another one man, and the third like Pythagoras"). There are enough sources which say that one of the main tenets of the religion he established was the belief in transmigration and reincarnation of the soul. He should be understood in terms of these contrary traditions ascribed to him.

1.2.2 Problem of Permanence and Change

1.2.2.1 Parmenides

Parmenides is believed to have lived between late 6th and mid-5th century B.C. and is known as the founder of the 'Eleatic School' of thought. Zeno of Elea, Melissus of Samos, and Xenophanes of Colophon are some of its major thinkers.

Parmenidean metaphysics/philosophy is basically a response to the previous metaphysics/philosophy that is founded on the notion that some original material turns into all other things. For his daring philosophical journey into the very nature of existence, Parmenides is considered the founder of ontology or metaphysics.

> Permanence is real and change is illusion

Parmenides' main teaching is that reality is 'permanence' and 'change' is an illusion. In a different term, 'what is' cannot be in motion or change and it cannot lack uniformity. The concept of

'being' upheld by Parmenides comes in opposition to the concept of 'becoming.' In whatever little sense, reality is a unified and unchanging singular entity.

Parmenides differs from earlier pre-

Socratic philosophers who identified the ultimate principle of the world with concrete elements ('water' for Thales, 'air' for Anaximenes, 'number' in Pythagoras). He comprehended and considered both existential and logical characteristics of things and, based on that, presented a metaphysical doctrine.

To put it simply, Parmenides built his philosophy relying on both the principle of self-identity (that each thing is logically identical with itself) and the principle of self-substance (that each thing exists by itself as an immutable, immobile and eternal being). While the ontological and logical characteristics of the primal substance of the universe are presupposed and implied in the philosophy of earlier thinkers, Parmenides conceptualised and articulated them explicitly as the first principle of philosophy.

Parmenides, in sum, sought for the permanent substratum amid changing phenomena. Russel says in *A History of Western Philosophy* that "Philosophers, accordingly, have sought, with great persistence, for something not subject to the empire of Time. This search begins with Parmenides…. Heraclitus maintained that everything changes; Parmenides retorted that nothing changes." He sums up Parmenides' argument like this: "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."

1.2.2.2 Heraclitus

Heraclitus is the last and the most famous of the series of early Ionian philosophers. Heraclitus is best known for his fundamental doctrines that things are constantly in change (universal flux) and that opposites coincide and match (unity of opposites). Primarily, Heraclitus' theory of universal flux is a response to and criticism of the Ionian philosophers who were his predecessors such as Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes who believed and propagated that some original material exists from which everything comes and that turns into all other things. Secondly, Heraclitus' theory needs to be understood as a philosophical counter to his contemporary Parmenides and his theory of permanence of reality and things.

Heraclitus symbolically uses fire to establish his point of constantly changing nature of reality. The fire is constantly changing through flames and so is every other stuff in the universe. One thing/stuff is transformed into another in a cycle of changes. What is constant is the overall process of change itself, not any stuff.

> Change is real and permanence is illusion

From the records of his engagements, it can be assumed that Heraclitus lived through the 6th and 5th centuries BCE, as a contemporary of Parmenides. However, we do not have any confirmation if Heraclitus wrote after Parmenides or before. That everything is in a state of flux is the most famous of the philosophical doctrines of Heraclitus. In *Theaetetus*, Plato describes this as the most emphasised principle by his disciples. Some of the famous dictums which are attributed to him are, "You cannot step twice into the same river; for fresh waters are ever flowing in upon you" and "the sun is new every day".

Recap

♦ The ancient Greek philosophical enquiry was about the unifying/underlying thing of the universe

♦ Thales is known as the 'initiator of philosophy' or 'the father of the first western enlightenment'

♦ Thales upheld that water is the original stuff of the universe

♦ Anaximander upheld that primal stuff was an indeterminate thing

♦ For Anaximander, the primal substance should be neutral in the cosmic conflict

♦ Anaximander's ideas of balance and justice were applied both into human and cosmological realms

♦ Air was the fundamental stuff, according to Anaximenes

♦ Pythagoras propagated the number as the primary stuff of the universe

♦ Parmenidean metaphysics is a response to the previous metaphysics/philosophy founded on the notion that some original material turns into all other things

♦ For Heraclitus, the inherent nature of the things and the universe is change

Objective Questions

1. What is the philosophical message from the ancient Greek?

2. What is the meaning of dictum "you cannot step twice into the same river; for fresh waters are ever flowing in upon you"?

3. "All material bodies must be seen and considered as numbers." Who put forth this theory?

4. What are the two principles put forth by Pythagoras?

5. What is the meaning of the extension of number theory into space?

6. What was the Parmenidean inquiry into?

7. What was the debate between Parmenides and Heraclitus basically on?

8. Do ancient Greek philosophical doctrines about the universe have mythological origins and elements in them?

Answers

1. Philosophical enquiry is primarily cosmological

2. There is nothing permanent and everything is in change

3. Pythagoras

4. Principle of self-identity (that each thing is logically identical with itself) and the principle of self-substance (that each thing exists by itself as an immutable, immobile and eternal being).

5. One is the point; two is the line; three is the surface and four is the solid. Thus, all bodies are points/units in space, which then form a number, when taken as a whole

6. Permanent substratum amid changing phenomena

7. If reality is permanent and change is an illusion and vice versa

8. Yes

Assignments

1. Why Thales is known as the 'initiator of philosophy' or 'the father of the first western enlightenment'? Explain.

2. 'Number is the fundamental principle of the universe'. Explain with reference to Pythagorean philosophy.

3. Make a short note on the problem of permanence and change in the philosophies of Parmenides and Heraclitus

Suggested Readings

1. Kenny, Anthony, (2012), *A New History of Western Philosophy*, *Vol: 1. Ancient Philosophy,* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

2. Copleston, Frederick, (1993), *A History of Philosophy, Vol: 1. Greece and Rom: From the Pre-Socratics to Plotinus*, United States: Double Day.

3. Russell, Bertrand, (2016), *History of Western Philosophy*, United States: Simon & Schuster.

4. Sedley, David, (2003), *The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Philosophy*. In *Series: Cambridge Companions to Philosophy,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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

UNIT

3

Qualitative and Quantitative Thinkers

Learning Outcomes

The unit will enable the learner to:

♦ get introduced to the significance of Ancient Greek philosophy

♦ be informed of quantitative and qualitative thinkers such as Empedocles, Anaxagoras, Leucippus and Democritus

♦ get exposed to the point on which qualitative and quantitative thinkers differ

♦ be aware of the idea of elements of ultimate reality

♦ be familiarised with the cosmological origin put forward by quantitative and qualitative thinkers

Prerequisites

The ancient Greek philosophical tradition witnesses a shift from mythology to rationality. At first, natural phenomena were worshipped as God. Later there evolved a curiosity to learn the truth behind natural phenomena, and this enquiry was rational in character. They emphasised the significance of rational and scientific explanations of cosmology.

How to make a rational confrontation to the problem of change was one of the major issues most of the thinkers of that time dealt with. All quantitative and qualitative thinkers agree that absolute change is impossible. In their view, the change occurs relatively. But they had different opinions about the kinds of elements that make up reality. According to qualitative thinkers, the fundamental elements differ qualitatively and yet those are the same in terms of number. The basic components, according to quantitative thinkers, differ in quantity but are the same in terms of quality.

Key Concepts

Elements of ultimate reality, Atoms, Absolute change, Relative change, Nous

Discussion

Ancient nature - philosophers held that nothing could arise or vanish. They believed neither in total creation nor in utter annihilation. Eleatic thinkers added that if nothing can appear or vanish, and nothing can convert into anything else, then the quality also cannot change. They held the view that reality is constant, timeless, and unchangeable. Change is a mere false impression produced by the senses. We frequently come across things that are subject to change and static. Then the question is, "How is it possible for things to exist and yet to change?". It became a necessity to figure out the conflict between change and permanence. Permanence and change in the world need to be harmonised in some way. The followers of Parmenides and Heraclitus made such a reconciliation.

For Eleatics, the notion of absolute change is absurd. Hence, we can use a relative notion when referring to a thing's origin, growth, and decay. There are eternal, unchangeable, and original particles of reality. Such eternal entities are incapable of evolving into anything else. According to the Eleatic school, these everlasting and permanent particles continue to exist as they are. These particles come together to form bodies. The origin of things results from the fusion of these eternal components, whereas decay results from their separation. In this process, the fundamental components of reality remain uncreated, undestroyed and unaltered. The only thing that is subjected to change is how they relate to one another. Although the elements cannot alter absolutely, they can change relatively. The change is due to the alteration of the mutual relationship of elements.

Qualitative thinkers also attempted to solve the mystery of change. Empedocles, Anaxagoras, and the Atomists provided a general answer to the problem highlighted by Heraclitus and Parmenides. They claim that absolute change is impossible while accepting the possibility of relative change. The only thing that separates them is how they answered the subsequent inquiries. Firstly, what kinds of components make up the reality of the world? Secondly, what causes the blending and division of these particles?

Anaxagoras and Empedocles both thought that the elements had distinct qualities. Atomists, however, contend that there is no quality in the elements. Earth, air, fire, and water are some of the four qualitative elements mentioned by Empedocles. He continues by saying that love and hate are the two legendary beings responsible for the union and division of these elements. According to Anaxagoras, there is an infinite number of such elements, and the motion is initiated by a mind outside the elements. Leucippus and Democritus, who believed in the quantitative atom, claim that motion is very much inherent to the elements themselves.

1.3.1 Qualitative Thinkers

1.3.1.1 Empedocles

Empedocles was born in Agrigentum. He was a philosopher, poet, physician, and orator. In later life, he became a priest and prophet. His famous work is *On Nature and Purifications*. Empedocles seeks to reconcile the divergent viewpoints of his forebears in his philosophy. According to Thales, the universe is primarily made up of water. Heraclitus asserted that fire is the primordial substance, but Anaximenes and Anaximander identified it with air and boundless matter respectively. According to Empedocles, the earth, water, air, and fire are the four basic building blocks from which the world is created. These four elements are equally composed and cannot be changed into one another. These four essential elements are subdivided into 'particles' or 'elements.'

According to Heraclitus, everything is in perpetual flux. But, for Parmenides, the reality is one and eternal. Empedocles maintained that the underlying reality is not one but four, and they do not remain constant. Through mingling and intermixing, these elements of water, earth, air and fire create the world of becoming. Empedocles argued that the world is made up of four eternal material elements. He believes that the world has undergone mingling and separation rather than origin and destruction. The four elements, which are underived, unchangeable, and indestructible are the foundations or the root of all things. When these four elements combine, objects or things are created, which are destroyed by the dissolution of these elements.

According to Empedocles, the world is governed by the two opposing principles of love and hatred, which are similar to the forces of attraction and repulsion. Empedocles' idea of love and hatred is comparable to Anaximenes' theory of condensation and rarefaction. He attempted to find a middle ground between Anaximenes and the all-change theory of Heraclitus here. According to Empedocles, all-natural states result from the mixing and intermixing of the four essential elements.

Firstly, the four fundamental elements are completely mixed up together and form a spherical order. The world process is circular, with periodic cycles in the cosmos. The dominating principle in the elementary stage is love. Here, only the love reigns, and there is absolute tranquillity. Hatred is completely excluded from here. Then it surrounds the sphere and later enters the sphere. When hatred enters, the process of separation and disunification of elements begins. When the separation of elements is finished, all the elements gather together. However, love again continues its function to mingle and unite with diverse elements. This phenomenon persists until all of the elementary particles are combined, just as they were at the beginning. It is then up to hatred to begin its work. Therefore, the process goes on without the initial starting or end.

1.3.1.2 Anaxagoras

Anaxagoras was born at Clazomenae, in Asia Minor. He spent early years of his life in Ionia before relocating to Athens. He was the first to introduce philosophy to the Athenians and to provide a scientific explanation for the eclipse. He became well-known for his materialistic ideas, especially for his assertion that the heavenly objects were burning pieces of rock and were spinning in the ether around the planet. This resulted in an impiety charge like atheism being levelled against him, and he was condemned to death

by the Athenian court. He left Athens and spent his remaining years in exile to avoid the penalty. He was famous for being an astronomer, mathematician, and philosopher. His important book is *On Nature*.

Like Empedocles, Anaxagoras also tried to explain the phenomena of change. He adopted the philosophy of Parmenides that being is eternal. For Anaxagoras, changing one quality into another is impossible because 'nothing comes into being or passes away'. He accepted the relative change and went along with the Eleatic notion that absolute change is impossible. Things come into existence due to the joining and disjoining of elements. As distinct from Empedocles, Anaxagoras believed in the reality of an infinite number of elements. In his view, the world is composed of distinct kinds of things with different qualities, however, we can only know very few among them. Anaxagoras rejected Empedocles' belief in four types of elements, such as earth, water, fire and air. Anaxagoras considered that such entities are not elements but a mixture of other substances.

According to Anaxagoras, there are infinite elements with specific properties. These elements are minute indivisible particles that remain unaffected by any change. They possess all forms of colours and tastes, as well as particles of flesh, hair, blood, bone, silver, gold, and so on. The quality and the quantity of the elements remain the same. It is impossible to add or take away anything from it.

In Anaxagoras' view, every object contains a portion of everything that exists. Hence, each object contains parts of heterogeneous elements in it. The character of an object depends on the dominance of specific homogeneous parts contained in it. If there is a limited kind of element like Empedocles holds, then how can we observe an infinite number of things with infinite qualities?

The body is composed of skin, blood, flesh, and other materials that vary in their degree of brightness and darkness, warmth and cold, hardness and softness, etc. It is nourished by food, containing elements that compose the human body. Food draws its ingredients from the earth, water, air and the sun. For Anaxagoras, in reality, the simple elements of Empedocles are the most complex things. They are stores of incredibly minute particles of matter of various types. It must contain all substances to be found in the organic body.

For qualitative thinkers, elements differ in quality and not in quantity

For Anaxagoras, there exist infinitely small particles of matter in a blended mass. Philosophers call these small particles as seeds or germs. At first, these germs cannot be separated from one another. The combination of endlessly little germs is what created the original mass. The world as we know it now is the product of the blending and separation of the particles that make up this mass. These scattered seeds extracted from the chaos are integrated into a cosmos or global order by some mechanical means or motion and by change of place. As the seeds are devoid of life, how is the movement possible? What prompted them to move? The rotation of the celestial bodies that we can see, according to Anaxagoras, provides a clue to the solution.

A rapid force is created in the mass that separates the germs and it continues until the mixture is completely disintegrated. This process of separation led to the formation of the heavenly bodies, which are solid masses thrown from the earth by the force of rotation and it causes the formation of different bodies on the earth. Then the heat of the sun dried up the wet earth and the organic bodies emerged from the seeds that were deposited in the earth's slime by the falling rain. To explain the motion of these organic bodies, Anaxagoras gave souls to them. To explain the initial motion, he postulated the existence of an intelligent principle, a mind or nous, or a world-ordering spirit. It is an active being and source of all kinds of movement and life.

The mind is completely made up of simple and homogeneous substances that have influence over matter and are not blended with other elements or seeds. Nous is the source of all movement and life in the universe. It possesses complete knowledge of the past, present, and future and rules over everything alive. Nous is the teleological or purposive principle. Regarding the nature of nous, there is a difference of opinion over whether it is a pure spirit, a limited form of matter, or something in between. In some occasions, he expressed nous as a kind of matter and gave chances to describe his position as vague dualism. However, as he introduced the concept of the mind as an explanatory principle in his philosophy, he is considered one of the pioneers of philosophical idealism.

1.3.2 Quantitative Thinkers.

1.3.2.1 Leucippus & Democritus

Leucippus was widely regarded as the true founder of the atomic system. He is from Miletus and a disciple of Zeno at Elea. He founded a school at Abdera, which was popularised by his disciple Democritus. In the writings of Leucippus, we can find the fundamentals of the atomist philosophy. Empedocles's materialistic and mechanical philosophical teaching was developed by Leucippus into atomism. But it is Democritus who later developed the theory and popularised it. Democritus lived as the contemporary of Empedocles and Anaxagoras. He was born at Abdera. He travelled widely, especially in Babylonia, seeking knowledge and wisdom. Democritus was a highly regarded mathematician who wrote numerous writings on physics, philosophy, ethics, and history.

Leucippus and Democritus united with their forebears in accepting the original and unchanging elements of reality. Absolute change is inconceivable to them. They conceive reality as being unalterable, eternal, and unbreakable. Despite this, they admit the fact that things are in constant motion and thus change is happening in the world. According to atomists, motion and change are impossible without an empty space or vacuum. Therefore, atomists acknowledge the existence of empty space.

Although this empty space does not have a physical existence, it does have a reality of its own. Even though it does not possess a physical form, empty space is real. The atoms and the vacuum in which they travel are the sole realities for atomists. Everything is either plenum or vacuum, and both are equally real. In contrast to what the Eleatics hold, atomists say, the reality is multiplicity, an unlimited number of creatures that are isolated from one another by empty space.

For Atomists, everything is composed of atoms. These are endless number

of indivisible units. Atoms are simple, invisible, indivisible spatial entities that vary in weight, size, form, and amount. Atomists rejected the qualitative properties of atoms. They are imperceptible since they are too small for the senses to detect. Atoms are the fundamental components of matter and motion is very much inherent in it. Democritus developed the theory of atomism to explain metaphysics, ethics, and epistemology. He tried to prove the possibility of scientific knowledge, which the sophists rejected. He made an effort to explain scientific knowledge with the help of materialism.

Everything in the world is made of atoms, which are the fundamental units of reality. When atoms are combined with space, the creation of bodies occurs. The union of atoms results in the creation, and the separation results in destruction. Atoms possess an inherent motion in them and it is causeless. The union and the separation of atoms are possible with this inherent motion. There is an inexorable mechanical law to govern the motion.

> For quantitative thinkers, elements differ in quantity and not in quality

The universe is composed of infinite atoms of various forms, sizes, and motions. The atoms collide with one another in all directions, creating a vortex. The vortex motion gathers atoms of similar shape and size. This produces composite entities like fire, air, earth, and water. Later, this action continues and creates numerous universes. For Atomists, life emerged from the moist earth. The heat of living bodies is accounted for by fiery atoms that are spread throughout the entire living creature and are especially numerous in the human soul.

According to atomists, the soul is just a collection of atoms. It is made up of the tiniest, most rounded, and nimblest atoms, which have the essence of fire. Although these fiery atoms are present in all living things, including plants, animals, and other creatures, they are most abundant in humans. A soul atom exists between the two atoms and that initiates body movement. According to Democritus, certain organs of the body contain specific mental processes. Thought is initiated by the brain, anger is initiated by the heart, and desire is initiated by the liver. At the time of death, the atoms of the soul are dispersed, and the soul streams out when the body is broken.

For Democritus, the true end of existence is happiness, which is the inner condition of satisfaction or pleasure. The real source of happiness is the gentle motion of the fiery atoms. Only the right insight of fiery atoms secures tranquillity and protects the soul from emotional disturbance, and yields mastery over emotions through knowledge. He teaches the knowledge about the inner soul's stability and serenity. According to him, God exists and is made up of atoms. Like men, the God is mortal but longer-lived. God possesses higher-order reason and is more powerful than men.

Democritus asserts that there is a clear separation between perception and thought. They differ only in quantity, not in quality. According to Democritus, perception informs us about the realm of change. Sensual perception only provides temporary, fleeting, and relative knowledge. In contrast, the knowledge of being is procured only through thought.

Thought-generated information is universal and objectively valid. With this claim of priority of thought over senses, Democritus rejected the possibility of scientific knowledge.

The main difference between Empedocles and atomists is that, for Empedocles, there are four distinct sorts of elements. In contrast, Atomists maintained that there was just one type of element, that is the atom. Every atom is made up of the same kind of substance. They are qualitatively equivalent but differ in quantity.

The main differences between Anaxagoras and the atomists are: (1) According to Anaxagoras, there were an endless number of elements, each of which differs qualitatively, while Democritus believed in an infinite number of atoms, that differ only in quantity. (2) The elements of Anaxagoras can be split up into smaller and smaller units, while the atoms of Democritus were very simple and it was not possible to split further. (3) Anaxagoras made no mention of empty space and believed that reality is qualitative everywhere. But Democritus believed in the existence of space as it is empty space necessity for atomic motion. (4) According to Anaxagoras, the mind or nous was an active agent that initiated motion and it was a principle that existed apart from the moving elements. Democritus, on the other hand, asserted that motion was an inherent quality of atoms. (5) For Anaxagoras, the world system was the outcome of an intentional mind i.e., the mind was something purposeful or teleological. On the other hand, Democritus' atoms were subjected to mechanical law.

Recap

♦ Only relative change is possible

♦ Qualitative thinkers hold the difference in quality

♦ For Empedocles, there are four types of elements - earth, water, fire and air

♦ For Empedocles, two legendary principles help for union and disunion of elements- love and hatred

♦ Anaxagoras believed in the infinite number of elements, and all quality is contained in one, but dominates one quality in one object

♦ For Anaxagoras, the motion is initiated by the mind outside the element

♦ Quantitative thinkers hold the difference in quantity

♦ For Leucippus and Democritus, atoms are the ultimate elements of reality

Objective Questions

1. Is absolute change accepted by qualitative thinkers?

2. Where do qualitative and quantitative thinkers diverge?

3. What is the basis on which qualitative thinkers differentiate elements?

4. For Empedocles, which are the elements of reality?

5. According to Empedocles, which are the two mythical laws that support the union and disunion of the elements?

6. For Anaxagoras, what initiates the motion?

7. What is the basis on which quantitative thinkers differentiate elements?

8. Who were the major proponents of atomist philosophy?

9. What is the ultimate reality according to the atomists?

Answers

1. No, they believe in relative change

2. On the kind of component and the causes of blending and division

3. Elements differ in quality

4. Earth, water, fire and air

5. Love and hatred

6. Mind or nous

7. Quantity

8. Leucippus and Democritus

9. Atoms

Assignments

1. There is a change away from mythology to rationality that can be observed in the ancient Greek tradition. Discuss

2. What is the ground on which qualitative and quantitative thinkers differ?

3. Make a short note on the atomist philosophy of Democritus

4. Explain the cosmological origin of the universe, according to Empedocles

5. Discuss the qualitative philosophy given by Anaxagoras

Suggested Readings

1. Thilly, Frank. (1982) *A History of Philosophy*. Allahabad: Indian Universities Press.

2. Russell, Bertrand. (1945) *The History of Western Philosophy*. New York: American Book Stratford Press.

3. Kenny, Anthony. (1998) *An Illustrated Brief History of Western Philosophy*. New York: Oxford University Press.

4. Masih, Y. (1994) *A Critical History of Western Philosophy* (Greek, Medieval and Modern) Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited.

5. Guthrie, W. K. C. *A History of Greek Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Vols: 3 (1969), 4 (1975) and 5 (1978).

Sophists and Socrates

UNIT 4

Learning Outcomes

The unit will enable the learner to:

♦ have a general awareness of relativistic attitudes in sophists

♦ get exposed to the ideas of significant sophists such as Protagoras and Gorgias

♦ familiarise with the Socratic Method

♦ be revealed to the ethical teachings of Socrates

Prerequisites

We make many assertions in our life; sometimes, they may have objective authorization or may be grounded on subjective assumptions that may or may not have an objective warranty. The assertions that have objective validity are grounded on certain objective truths. On the other hand, subjective assertions are opinions of the subject that may change from person to person.

When you evaluate these two assertions, both objective and subjective, what do you consider most appropriate? If you hold on to the former, you are with the ideas and ideals of Socrates, who firmly believed that there are universal and necessary truths behind the changing opinions. If you hold on to the latter, you are with the ideas of sophists who hold that one opinion is good as another or that the opinion varies from one individual to another individual.

Key Concepts

Relativist, *Eikos*, Dialectic, Sceptical, Conversational

Discussion

1.4.1 Sophists

In the history of philosophy, we see sophists as teachers who emerged in the history of thought to protest against the contradictory conclusions made by their predecessors. They found that in Greek, no two philosophers agreed in their answers to the questions concerning reality. The Greek thinkers considered water, air, fire, number, etc., as the universe's first principles. The sophists critically viewed these philosophical fluctuations and concluded that the limitation of the human faculty of thought was the primary reason for these contradictory conclusions.

When we take the sophist philosophy as a whole, freedom and individualism remain as the characteristic marks of their thought. During this period, the individual began to keep a safe distance from authority and gave more importance to the betterment of their individual lives. However, the zeal for investigation was intense among them and extended to all sorts of problems, including political, epistemological, metaphysical, moral, religious, economic, scientific etc.

> Freedom and individualism are the main characteristic marks of sophist philosophy

The word 'sophist' refers to wise men, and in the development of history, it is used as a general term to refer to scholars who were philosophers, teachers and orators. Later with the influence of Plato, the word became narrower in meaning and scope. He reduced the sophistry to relativism and rhetoric. Scholars of recent times viewed Plato's position critically and pointed out that sophists covered ethics, political theory, literature, mathematics, oratory, mnemonics, law and astronomy as their subject matters of thought. Some of the sophists even dealt with epistemological, metaphysical and anthropological issues in their thought.

Even though they have contributed much, the appreciation they gained was comparatively less in the history of thought. The significant reason for narrowing the sophist thought in the history of philosophy is the lack of proper evidence. Sophist philosophy lacks supporting references to substantiate their philosophy. Much of what we consider sophist philosophy is derived from the works of Plato, who critically viewed most of the teachings of sophists. In his view, sophists replaced appearance with reality and persuasion for truth. He underrated the knowledge that they had on the subjects they taught. However, when we consider these criticisms, we must not give them an eyewitness value since there is a gap between the period of both Plato and sophists in the history of thought. Along with that, we must also consider the new scholarly approaches by the thinkers like

George Grote, who recognised the value of Sophist philosophy.

Like other schools of Greek tradition, Sophists did not constitute a school to represent their thought. However, they had something in common with their teaching that focused more on practical ends. As everyone points out, philosophy was not their major stream of inquiry, but they taught the methods of argument and correct use of words. Through their teachings, they aimed to gain greater precision in the meaning of words than their conventional meaning. Their lectures also aimed at teaching their students the art of speaking in a democratic state and court of law when they have to make a necessary defence to protect their rights.

Sophists availed these services to their students to meet the demands of Athens's social and political situation at that time. During this period, democracy gained popularity in Athens and Sicily. As a result, a situation emerged that gave new powers to strong speakers in law courts and assemblies. Every individual felt a need to study rhetoric, oratory, grammar and dialectics to fit them to meet the demands of that time. Sophists were the masters of these subjects and began to teach these subjects in the cities by accepting a certain amount of remuneration for their duty. They also gave more attention and systematic treatment to political and ethical matters, which resulted in Greece's cultural and intellectual revolution in the fifth century B.C.

The most common argument that Sophists taught their students was *'eikos'*, which refers to the reasonable expectation or probability of something. It was widely used in deliberative speeches and forensics. They use this type of argument to make reasonable predictions when the eyewitness or direct testimony lack or the gained evidence does not give enough support to assert the truth. Plato wrongly conceptualised this view and treated the probability method as a value offered by sophists in place of truth.

We can find many sophists in the history of thought, but some are important because of their significant contributions and the multiple references in the writings of other thinkers in the later period. Among the sophists, Protagoras was a successful teacher, and Gorgias was a great orator. Another sophist was Prodicus, who specialised in the definitions of words. Some other sophists had a wide range of interests; for instance, Hippias was good at science and well known for his work in astronomy. Apart from these thinkers, we also have evidence of the teachings of Alcidamas, Events, Antiphon, Lycophron, Critias, Thrasymachus and Euthydemus. Among these thinkers, Protagoras and Gorgias appear and reappear in the history of thought because of their significance. So let us have a brief account of them in the following discussions.

Protagoras was one of the self-proclaimed and most successful sophists who celebrated the profession that he carried out. Through his teaching, he attempted to impart to the student the virtue of making an appropriate judgement which he considered as an important quality that every individual must possess to lead a better public life at that time.

Apart from this, like other sophists, he also had an interest in the use of language, especially in oratory. He focused on the proper use of words and even used to correct poets who contradicted themselves in their verses by using inappropriate words. He was also good at presenting opposed speech- the art of giving an argument on both sides of an issue. He firmly believed that practising the same will make indi-

viduals strong public speakers who can form good arguments supporting what they believe is true.

In the history of philosophy, Protagoras is best known for his famous statement, "man is the measure of all things". Here he prioritised the individual and pointed out that the same thing could be good for one individual and bad for the other, or on some occasions, conflicting views may be equally valuable, depending on the circumstances. Plato used these statements to interpret Protagoras as a relativist who emphasised individual perception and judgement.

Plato interpreted the above-stated sentence in the following way: my judgments are true for me, and yours are true for you. In the initial stage, it was applied only to perception, but later, he extended it to another level to justify all the opinions made by the individual. In Plato's view, with this statement, Protagoras asserted the truth of all opinions made by the individual. That is, no opinions are ever false, and it is valid for the person whose opinion it is. So there is no scope for receiving knowledge the other has because everyone would have such knowledge from their private sources.

Relativism, broadly defined, is any view that allows apparently conflicting judgments to be equal in some respect for the people who believe them - equally arbitrary, equally reasonable, equally useful, or equally true. Extreme relativism is any view that denies the possibility of absolute truth by insisting that nothing could be true without relativistic qualification.

We are also aware of some of his notions related to belief and God's existence. Concerning the former, Protagoras did not prioritise any belief over the other. He gave equal importance to all beliefs and considered everything equally valid. It is also notable that he did not make any critical comment concerning the existence of God. He stated that he is not in a position to know whether God exists or does not exist. In his opinion, many things prevent humans from knowing God. One of the main reasons is the shortness of human life. Since human life is too short, we could not get any chance to experience any events that God might have directly intervened in human life.

Another important figure among sophists is Gorgias, with whom we have more pieces of evidence than Protagoras. It includes two complete speeches, a significant part of the other, and two different summaries of a major

philosophical text. Nevertheless, it is considered a small part of the work he might have done in his entire life.

Like other sophist thinkers, Gorgias emphasised the appropriate use of language and the formation of valid arguments. In his method of argumentation, he did not select just the correct argument but instead formulated a group of arguments to cover up all the possibilities to establish his position. Among the sophists, he was a well-appreciated speaker and famous for his good use of language. Concerning the use of language, Gorgias added more metaphors and compound expressions as ornaments of his language to create heart-touching feelings and emotional movement in the audience. He taught how to use rhythm, balance and internal rhyme to elevate the meaning of language to another realm to make the passage memorable and ever remembered.

Concerning the question of knowledge and reality, Gorgias went beyond the realm of relativity to an absolute negation of both. In his work *On Nature or the Nonexistent*, he set a negativist philosophy which is generally stated in the following statements: 1) that there is nothing; 2) even if there is something we cannot know it; 3) even if it exists and known then it cannot be communicated or made evident to others because things are different from words and no one has the same thing in mind as another.

It is generally conceived as Gorgias' scepticism, but in its proper sense, he made a negative affirmation that the sceptics do not appreciate. A true sceptic doubts everything and does not hold on to any beliefs, even the negative ones. So we cannot equalise this position with sceptics. We cannot also conceive Gorgias' approach as relativism since his claims are global and negative.

However, the critics view this approach as barren, which does not produce anything positive or bring surety regarding anything. In a true sense, Protagoras did not propose any theory to explain the meaning of being, knowledge, morality etc. He focused completely on influencing human affairs through the effective use of words.

1.4.2 Socrates

Socrates is the greatest philosopher and magnificent figure in the history of western thought. In history, we have no account of any of his writings, but he is still considered as a genuine thinker who gained an eternal space in the hearts of men with his ideas and ideals. His life was filled with great events such as war, trials and punishments to prove his intellectual and moral power. The scholars consider him as a wise man with extraordinary self-control, courage, noble and capable of enduring suffering for the sake of the good.

1.4.2.1 Life and Philosophy of Socrates

The scholars mainly use three different accounts to engage with the philosophical thoughts of Socrates. They are Xenophon's work on Socrates, Plato's dialogues and various statements by Aristotle. Xenophon gave a sympathetic and highly mundane account of Socrates. He was a military man with no philosophical bag around. Bertrand Russell's comment on Xenophon's account of Socrates is famous. He states that "a stupid man's report of what a clever man says is never accurate... I would rather be reported by my bitterest enemy among philosophers than by a friend innocent of philosophy".

A second major source of Socrates' philosophy is found in Plato, who is his disciple. However, it is not easy to differentiate between the real philosophy of Socrates and the philosophy that Plato established by using Socrates as a spokesperson. The interpreters of both Socrates and Plato even take different positions regarding the same. We have no sufficient independent evidence with which we can distinguish between the real Socrates and Plato's idealised version.

Another account that offers evidence for formulating Socratic philosophy is found in Aristotle. Aristotle depicts the picture of Socrates as a man who is not interested in creating transcendental and metaphysical theories like Plato. He pointed out that Plato, except in the early Socratic works, used Socrates' mouth to establish his doctrines.

Socrates- the man of uniqueness with his character and philosophy was born

in Athens. His birth year is calculated generally based on the death year given by Plato. According to Plato, Socrates was seventy years old when he died in 399 B.C. Based on this account, we can say that he might have been born around 470 B.C. We do not have evident information with regard to his education, but he appeared in the history of thought as a man of wisdom.

Socratic intelligence was revealed in his conversion with all sorts of men and women in the streets or the marketplace. These engagements with people were filled with diverse topics such as poetry, religion, love, friendship, politics, trade, science etc. He was well versed in all these topics, and nothing was foreign to him. Socrates also had a good argumentative ability to bring clarity to different subjects, especially matters related to morality. He was very keen and quick to discover fallacies in arguments and was skilful enough to get into the steering position to lead the conversation to meet the required ends.

These efficiencies make Socrates more, in a sense, a pragmatic thinker who gave first and foremost importance to morality. The moral conviction that he had was the basis for all his decisions. He did what he thought was right without having been influenced by any external forces and showed a fearless attitude towards all matters in life. His sacrifice of life in respect for the authority of the state that condemned him to death on false charges resulted from the same fearless attitude.

Socrates placed the misconception of the meaning of truth as one of the major reasons for the fallacies that existed in the political and moral realm. With an optimistic faith in human reason, he began to confront these issues raised majorly by Sophists. According to Socrates, if we follow Sophists, we have to trust every opinion that enters our minds, which may be self-contradictory or utterly false. We may also have to take into account all the arbitrary assertions made by prejudices and presuppositions from which we cannot arrive at genuine knowledge.

Socrates critically engaged the Sophist's approach to knowledge that lacks a strong foundation. Sophists pointed out that men differ from one another, and each one has their opinions regarding the notion of truth; since it differs from person to person, there is no possibility of attaining universal truth. Socrates viewed this as a dangerous mistake committed by sophists.

Socrates admits that since all individuals are unique, there can be different opinions; however, that must not be the final end. He considers it as our duty to dig beneath to reach a fundamental agreement or some common ground on which all opinions can stand. The method he proposed in philosophy aimed at such universal definitions by which the clashes of opinions are cleared.

1.4.2.2 Socratic Method

One of the famous quotes we usually attribute to Socrates in relation to the act of philosophising is that "I cannot teach anybody anything; I can only make them think". With his dialectical or conversational method, Socrates wanted to provoke us to think in the right way to reach the truth. He had no specific place to employ the method. He randomly engaged with all sorts of individuals in the marketplace or any other public places and got into conversation with them on matters of everyday affairs.

"I cannot teach anybody anything; I can only make them think"

Socrates proceeds this conversation with an actual or professed ignorance concerning a generally accepted subject by the community and tries to provoke other people with illustrations taken from everyday life. For instance, Socrates might profess his ignorance of what love is and ask other people to enlighten him with their views. He leads the conversation in a particular direction that creates a situation to ask the question of what love is. When he gets a description or definition of love from anybody in the group, Socrates would express his great satisfaction for their attempt and may point out one or two issues in what they said. He may continue the discussion with further questions that aggravate the inquisitiveness of other discussants. It takes the conversation to the next level, where the discussant comes up with other definitions or descriptions. The process continues in this manner with or without final success.

The peculiarity of this dialectic process is that sometimes it proceeds from less adequate definitions to more adequate ones, and at other times, it may lead to no definite result. With this method Socrates helped others to have certain conclusions on matters necessary for leading a good life.

We can find certain characteristic features of this method: it is sceptical, conversational, conceptual or definitional, empirical or deductive and inductive. It is sceptical because the method begins with the real or professed ignorance of Socrates. It is also named as Socratic irony since he is pretending to be ignorant. However, we must not forget that Socrates used the sceptical approach to bring clarity and preciseness to a concept. It is different from the philosophy advocated by sceptics who considered doubt as an end in itself.

The Socratic method is conversational because Socrates employed dialogue to discover the truth. The aim of employing the dialogical method was to find the truth from the diverse opinions of the people. He tried to unfold the truth by discussion or questions and answers. In order to explain this conversational method, Socrates used the Greek word 'maieutikos' (means midwifery) in one of Plato's dialogues and found an analogy between both. That is, he compared the dialectical process with the work done by a midwife in delivering a baby and called it as an art of intellectual midwifery. So this method is also named as midwifery or maieutic method.

The Socratic method is conceptual and definitional in the sense that, he applied this method to derive exact definitions of the concept that came under discussion. It has an empirical or inductive characteristic since Socrates uses common experiences and general usages to test the definitions derived in the conversational method. Socrates uses the inductive process to arrive at clear and distinct definitions. In order to attain this end, he uses different examples and forms a provisional definition which is altered in further discussions until it reaches the finest form. This method is also deductive because Socrates sometimes examines the derived statements by going back to the basic definitions that are assumed to be correct.

1.4.2.3 Socratic Ethics

When we come to the discussion of the philosophy of Socrates, the first and foremost point we must keep in mind is that Socrates was not a system builder. When he engaged with philosophy, the prime motive was to raise the love of truth and virtue in men. In order to attain this target, he did not offer any theory; rather practised a method in his life and even taught others to follow the same. This approach

challenged sophistry that negated the possibility of attaining universal knowledge and a strong foundation for morality.

> The prime motive of Socrates' philosophy was to raise the love of truth and virtue in men

Socrates related virtue with happiness and found a necessary relation between both. According to him, no one can be happy unless they are virtuous. Along with that, Socrates also considers knowledge as the highest good in his philosophy. The right knowledge is essential for the right action. One who does not know what virtue is cannot act as virtuous, that is, the knowledge about courage and justice makes a man courageous and righteous. He conceives knowledge as the necessary and sufficient condition for virtue; that is, knowledge makes virtue possible.

We must also note that Socrates did not differentiate between knowledge and virtue. His trust in knowledge and rational thinking is solid in the sense that he found solutions to major human problems from it. According to him, knowledge and virtue are one or knowledge is virtue, that is the wise men who know what truth is will order life in accordance with it. In other words, one who does evil does it out of ignorance, or no one knowingly chooses evil.

However, the ordinary life experience contradicts the assertions stated above. For instance, let us take our life experience of doing something wrong deliberately when we know what the right is. We usually consider men wrong only when they do the wrong action with knowledge; otherwise, we do not hold them morally responsible. These facts compel us to heed the Aristotelian criticism of Socratic ethics. In Aristotle's opinion, Socrates forgot to consider the irrational part of the soul. He did not give sufficient attention to men's moral weakness while developing his moral principles.

In response to this criticism, we can place the pragmatic character that Socrates attributed to his knowledge. He clearly stated that one who knows what is really good cannot but choose it. Knowledge, for him, is not just a tool to build theories. It has a practical purpose, and he considers it as a matter not only of the intellect but also of the will.

Recap

♦ Freedom and individualism are the main focus of attention in the Sophists' philosophy

♦ Plato reduced the sophistry to relativism and rhetoric

♦ eikos- the reasonable expectation or probability of something

♦ Major sophists were Protagoras, Gorgias, Prodicus, Hippias, Alcidamas, Events, Antiphon, Lycophron, Critias, Thrasymachus and Euthydemus

♦ Opposed speech- the art of giving an argument on both sides of an issue

♦ "Man is the measure of all things"

♦ Gorgias Scepticism

♦ Socrates was a pragmatic thinker

♦ "I cannot teach anybody anything; I can only make them think"

♦ Sceptical, conversational, conceptual or definitional, empirical or deductive and inductive

♦ The prime motive of Socrates was to raise the love of truth and virtue in men

♦ The right knowledge is essential for the right action

♦ Knowledge and virtue are one

Objective Questions

1. What was the major criticism raised by sophists against Greek thinkers?

2. What was the primary focus of attention in sophists' thought?

3. What does the word 'sophist' mean?

4. What was the most common argument that sophists taught to their students?

5. Who proposed the famous statement "man is the measure of all things"?

6. Why is the Socratic method considered sceptic?

7. Why is the Socratic method considered as conversational?

8. What is the Greek word Socrates used to refer to his method?

9. What is the necessary and sufficient condition for virtue in Socrates?

Answers

1. No two philosophers agreed in their answers to the questions concerning reality

2. Freedom and individualism

3. Wise men

4. 'eikos', which refer to the reasonable expectation or probability of something

5. Protagoras

6. It begins with the real or professed ignorance

7. Because of the importance of dialogue

8. Maieutikos

9. Knowledge

Assignments

1. Comment on 'Man is the measure of all things'.

2. What was the main intention of Socratic Philosophy? Explain

3. Explain the characteristics of Socratic Method.

4. Comment on Socratic assertion 'knowledge is virtue'

Suggested Readings

1. Copleston, Frederick. (1962). *A History of Philosophy Volume 1 Greece and Rome.* New York: Image books.

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

3. Guthrie, W K C (1971). *The Sophists.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

4. Guthrie, W K C (1971). *Socrates.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

2
BLOCK

Greek Philosophy-
Plato and Aristotle

UNIT 1

Plato

Learning Outcomes

By the completion of the unit, the learner will:

- ♦ be familiarised with metaphysical teachings of Plato's philosophy

- ♦ be introduced to the Plato's idea

- ♦ get exposed to the general characteristics of ideas

- ♦ acquire a brief account of the two-world theory

Prerequisites

The ancient Greek tradition, primarily from Thales, attempts to establish a unique way of thinking. The new manner of thinking gave way to the beginning of the western intellectual tradition. This tradition tried to see the world with a scientific outlook. Here, logic or rational thought was given the upper hand. Plato, being one of the finest thinkers of the ancient tradition, followed the same path by giving primacy to reason. He described the impermanence of the physical universe much like Sankara in the Indian philosophical tradition.

Plato's philosophical conversations discussed subjects such as metaphysics, politics, ethics, psychology and epistemology. Being a dualist, he saw the world as existing independently of us. Later philosophers, notably feminist thinkers, questioned Plato's dualistic position and his belief in the superiority of reason over emotions.

Key Concepts

Metaphysics, Idea, Two-World Theory, Soul, God, Allegory of the Cave

Discussion

Plato is the world's first great systematic philosopher of western tradition. He was born in Athens in an aristocratic family. His original name was Aristocles, and he later received the name, Plato. He makes an effort to organise all significant areas of human thought into one coherent whole. He is the disciple of Socrates and the teacher of Aristotle. He founded a school in Athens called 'Academy', where various topics were discussed. This institution served as a model for the formation of subsequent universities in western society.

> Important works of Plato: *Apology, Crito, Euthydemus, Meno, Parmenides, Phaedo, Symposium, The Republic*

Platos' 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 one 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 own assumptions and basic concepts. Plato was influenced by Heraclitus, Parmenides, Pythagoras and Socrates. He died at the age of eighty.

2.1.1 Plato's Metaphysics

According to Plato, true knowledge is always constant and abiding; therefore, he does not guarantee sense perception as a means to attain true knowledge. The knowledge that we get from sensation is liable to change and thus unstable. Here, we are confronted with the question of how do we explain the unity and diversity of the universe and the relation between being and becoming, appearance and reality etc. These are the areas of enquiry in the ancient Greek tradition, especially from Thales. In order to answer such questions, Plato put forward the 'Theory of Ideas'. It is the central theory in Plato's philosophy.

2.1.1.1 Theory of Ideas

The idea recognises the fundamental traits shared by numerous particulars. According to Plato, idea is the essence of things. Essence is the common or general characteristics found in particular things. Since the essence is something which consists of the universal form, then the idea is universal and general. The idea does not represent any particular thing. For instance, the idea of a table represents not 'this table' or 'that table', but the general or universal table.

The idea is unitary because one idea resides in many individual things. For instance, the idea of a table is one, even

though there are many individual tables that exist. The Platonic conception of the idea is that which is eternal, permanent and that which exists independent of knowledge. Ideas are perfect; they possess the degree of perfection that individual things may lack. The idea of a table is perfect, universal and one. The particular table varies more or less from this perfect idea.

Plato views, an object cannot exist without the essence. Individual human beings are born, do perish and pass away. They are liable to change and mutation, while the essence of all human beings - 'humanness'- remains the same. It remains untouched by the individual man's birth, old age, death and decay. This essence is eternal, unchangeable and imperishable. It is not altered in any way and does not undergo any change.

Socrates, the mentor of Plato, believed that ideas have no inter-relationship among them, while Plato acknowledged the inter-connectedness of ideas. For Socrates, ideas are concepts and have no objective existence but rather reside in the mind as mental constructs. But, for Plato, ideas have objective existence. Hence, Plato's metaphysical position may be described as objective idealism. For instance, consider the concept of 'heaviness'. Many heavy things exist, and these things are a copy of the concept of 'heaviness'. For Plato, all such concepts have an objective existence in the physical world, and these objects are the copy of the concepts. All concepts, like goodness, beauty, virtue etc. are objective realities.

Idealism is the theory of associating reality with the ideas of the mind

The idea is the universal substance, unbounded by space and time. It is immaterial and is not found in the sensuous world. Whatever exists in the physical world is subject to birth and decay. The idea is indestructible and hence must be beyond space and time. For Plato, the ideas have their own divine realm and are non-spatial and non-temporal. Since ideas are rational, they may be understood through reason. Plato claimed that concepts (ideas) are substances that exist in itself independently of other things.

According to the German philosopher Eduard Gottlob Zeller, Plato's idea can be comprehended from teleological, ontological and logical perspectives. The idea is viewed as teleological because that is model or archetype for particular objects. Particular things are there for actualising the idea. The idea is ontological because that is thing - in itself and is independent being. That is logical because the universal idea cannot be comprehended through sense- experience. One can comprehend the idea only through rational cognition.

The British philosopher W. T. Stace regards Plato's idea as having epistemological and mystical significance. The idea is epistemological in the sense that, for Plato, without an idea, knowledge of objects is impossible. Mere sensation without concept cannot constitute knowledge. Stace also views Plato's idea as mystical because of its rational aspect. We cannot understand the idea through sense experience. The sensation can help only in the recollection of knowledge of ideas, and knowledge is based on rational cognition.

Plato believed that the world exists on two levels. One is the sensuous world in the physical realm, and the other is the rational or transcendental world of ideas.

For him, the transcendental world existed over and above the sensuous physical world. The transcendental world is the world of ideas, forms or concepts. Hence, Plato's philosophy is called the 'two-world' theory, two-world conception or the dichotomy of existence. For him, the diverse things in the world are condensed to certain ideas, and they are more or less expressions of the ideas.

The things in the world of sensation are transient, temporal and mortal, while the transcendental world of ideas is the world of perfection, immutable, non-temporal and immortal. Plato synthesised Heraclitus' all-change theory and Parmenides' no-change theory in his two-world theory. Naturally, certain aspects of things constantly change while others remain the same. For example, consider a tree. It passes through different stages of growth, from a seed to a gigantic tree. Despite the changes, the tree remains the same. By introducing the two-world concept, Plato reconciles 'change' and 'permanence'.

As the philosophy of Plato explains two world realities, it is known as 'metaphysical dualism'. One is the dynamic physical world, which is in constant flux and is perceivable through sensory experience. The other is the eternal, immaterial, and unchanging world of ideas. The world of ideas does not exist in spatio- temporal realm. This reality can only be understood by reason and it is known as the intelligible world. For Plato, the transcendental world is real than the world of objects.

Like the moonlight is a derivative of sunlight, the sensible world is a derivation of the world of ideas. The physical world lacked its originality and depended on the transcendental world of ideas for its reality. Hence, Plato's philosophy is also called 'ideal realism' or 'conceptual realism'. The things in the physical world are a copy of the idea of the transcendental world. The ideas are like models for the things in the physical world. This theory of Plato is known as the 'copy theory'. 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'.

> 'Ideal realism' is a metaphysical doctrine which combines the principles of idealism and realism.

The relation between sensible objects and the supra-sensible ideas existing in the transcendental world can be also explained by Plato's participation theory. According to this theory, particular things participate in the universal concept or idea. Participation theory justifies the temporal diversity of objects as the derivative of one universal idea. To the extent of participation, the individual objects are real. Nothing can entirely participate in an idea. This theory is the classical solution to the problem of universals. However, it faces the criticism that it is vague and unclear.

There are also other criticisms that emerged against the copy theory of Plato. The primary objection centred on how a particular thing can be a replica of something universal. The original and duplicate have no connection to one another. If reality is just a copy of ideas, it becomes entirely unreal. However, according to Plato, the world is both real and unreal. The matter is unreal, but

the idea is real. If we adopt Plato's copy theory, the world will cease to exist, and this makes copy theory insufficient.

2.1.1.2 Plato's Concept of Soul

In accordance with his dualist stance, Plato developed the idea of the soul. It posits that the body and the soul are two different and separate entities. The soul exists even before the physical manifestation and after the death of the physical body because it is immortal. Even when the body dies, the soul can still think. For Plato, the soul is superior to the body and the body is nothing but the shadow of the soul. In his work *Phaedrus*, Plato discusses immortality and the superiority of the soul. It is constantly reborn in the subsequent body after the death of the previous body and goes through a cycle of reincarnation until it is purged. According to Plato, a person's mental and psychological activities and responses are under the control of the soul, which he views as the animator of all living things. After death, the soul is still accountable for its actions. In this view, every soul must undergo reflection. People who practise greed and gluttony will transform into donkeys and other animals, while people who practise purity will spend time with Gods.

Plato made a separation between the soul and the body. He splits the embodied soul into three hierarchical sections by placing reason, high spirits, and appetites in descending order. Based on this tripartite division of the soul, Plato developed his hierarchical organisation of the ideal state. The appetite is very much related to the body. It is the abode of the lowest faculty and is associated with stomach, desire, wealth, greed, physical comforts, and sensual pleasures.

High spirit is the most spirited part and is lined with courage, bravery and warrior-like traits and is symbolised by the chest. It experiences strong emotions like anger, temper etc. when confronted with injustice. It loves to face and overcome great challenges. The reason is very much close to the soul. It is the highest faculty in the tripartite hierarchy of the soul and is associated with the mind. It is simple, indivisible, eternal, divine, immortal, and outside the boundaries of space and time. Apart from the reason, the spirit and appetite are mundane and mortal and are located within space and time.

2.1.1.3 Plato's Concept of God

For Plato, the noblest position an individual may have on earth is the service of God. According to him, God is transcendental, eternal and immortal. Godis the primary cause and the self-moving mover. He is the highest and most perfect being with goodness and righteousness. We cannot find the slightest hint of injustice, unrighteousness or evil in the God. He is simple and true in word and deed. He is the source of all good things and provides humans with food and enjoyment. He himself is uncreated and does not undergo any change.

By using eternal forms or archetypes, God creates an everlasting and uncreated universe. Plato's conception of God is not a creator, but an architect and the world is the creative artwork of God. Due to the flaws inherently present in material things, the perfection and order imparted by God to the universe are limited. Therefore, unlike what people mistakenly believe, defects are real and exist in the universe; and these defects are not just higher divine plans. In Platos' view, God is the self-determined being who created the world with the intention of making all people as good as himself.

2.1.1.4 Hierarchy of Ideas

Plato uses copy theory to describe the relationship between one universal idea and many particular entities in the cosmos. For him, the one universal idea involves many entities and cannot be thought of without them. The two concepts-one and many-are correlative and involve one another. Being a pluralist, Plato held that every concept had a separate existence. There is a hierarchy of thoughts in the transcendental realm.

It shows that; there exists higher more perfect reality beyond the physical world. If a pyramid is created, the idea of goodness would be on the top of a pyramid if a pyramid is created. It is the highest and supreme idea. All ideas are derived from the idea of good. It is impossible to discuss the idea of good, rather, it can only be realised. The next level of the hierarchy is the realm of intelligible or the forms themselves. This includes concepts such as justice, beauty, truth and equality, which are eternal and unchanging. Below the intelligible realm is the visible realm, which includes the physical world we perceive through our senses. The lowest level of the hierarchy is the realm of opinion or belief, which includes subjective opinions and beliefs of individuals.

2.1.2 The Allegory of The Cave

'The allegory of the cave' is the conversation between Socrates and Glaucon written in the book *Republic*. The word 'allegory' is derived from the Latin word 'allegoria', which means to infer something else. It is a simple story in which several characters stand in for real-life individuals, and it serves as an allegory to illustrate a bigger point about society or human nature. Allegories are similar to metaphors. However, the difference is that allegories are comprehensive narratives with characters, whereas metaphors are condensed forms of speech. It involves a comparison between two things that are otherwise unrelated.
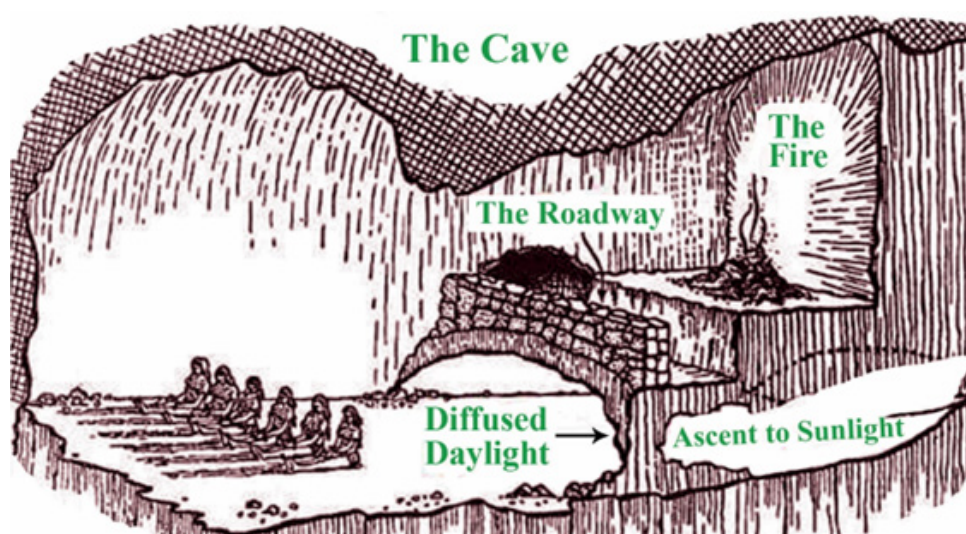

Fig 2.1.1 The Allegory of The Cave

In his magnum opus, *Republic*, Plato uses a vivid allegory of the cave to explain his double world philosophy. The cave metaphor begins with prisoners who spent their entire lives locked inside the cave. The prisoners have been shackled by neck and leg since childhood, preventing them from moving. The wall in front of them is the only thing that they can look at. Behind the prisoners is a fire, and people are passing by carrying objects that cast shadows on the wall in front of the prisoners. The prisoners believe that the shadows they see on the wall are the only reality and that there is nothing beyond the cave. It is because they are unaware of the existence of anything else. They recognise that the truth, as well as the reality, is only the shadows formed on the wall.

According to Plato, when a prisoner escapes from the cave, he has his first acquaintance with actual objects in daylight. The individual finally realises that the shadows are not real after seeing a fire. He realises that the objects outside the cave in the sunlight are different from the shadow image he had previously believed to be true. He also realises that a completely new world exists outside the cave that he has been ignorant of.

In this analogy, the cave represents the sensuous world that we see and experience, while the world of sunlight outside the cave represents the realm of forms. The prisoners represent ordinary individuals who believe that the perceptible physical world is true and real. They are destined to be mistaken and ignorant. The majority of people, like the prisoners in the cave, believe that the shadows are reality. The prisoner who escaped is the only one who saw the real world outside the cave. For Plato, that person is the philosopher, who recognized true reality and knowledge. When the prisoner who escaped returns to the cave and explains the reality of the world in the sunlight, no one in the cave believes him. This is the challenge a philosopher encounters when attempting to communicate the truth to ordinary people.

In conclusion, Plato's metaphysical philosophy is a profound exploration of the nature of reality and the relationship between the physical world and abstract concepts. Through his theory of Forms, Plato argues that there are eternal and unchanging abstract objects that exist independently of the physical world. This view has had a significant impact on the development of Western philosophy and continues to inspire scholars today.

Recap

♦ Idea is the essence of things

♦ Ideas are substances, general and universal and are beyond space and time

♦ Ideas are rational, immutable and imperishable

♦ Two-world conception; one is the material or physical world and the other is the transcendental world of ideas

♦ Physical world is the derivative of the world of ideas

♦ Copy theory- the physical world is the copy of the world of ideas

♦ Participation theory- Particular things participate in the universal idea

♦ Conceptual- realism or ideal realism

♦ Transcendental world is eternal, immutable and permanent

♦ Sensual world is liable to change

♦ Plato reconciles the all-change theory of Heraclitus and the never - change theory of Parmenides

♦ Soul and body are distinct and the soul is immortal

♦ God is transcendental, eternal and immortal

♦ The idea of Good is the supreme idea

♦ Allegory of the cave

Objective Questions

1. What is the general conceptual term used to refer to Plato's philosophy?

2. Name the theory of Plato, that holds the dichotomy of existence or double world conception.

3. How did Plato reconcile the all-change theory of Heraclitus and the no-change theory of Parmenides?

4. If ideas form a pyramid, according to Plato, what will be on the top of the pyramid?

5. What is the permanent and eternal world according to Plato?

6. How does Plato describe the notion of idea?

7. What is the method Plato employed in his philosophy?

8. What is meant by the dialectic method in Plato?

Answers

1. Conceptual realism/ Ideal realism

2. Two-world theory

3. With the help of copy theory and participation theory

4. The idea of Good

5. The transcendental world of ideas

6. The idea is the essence present in particular things

7. Dialectical method

8. The art of questioning

Assignments

1. Describe the Platonic conception of the transcendental world of ideas

2. Give a brief description of the characteristics of the ideas in Plato's philosophy

3. How did Plato reconcile the philosophy of Heraclitus and Parmenides?

4. Plato's philosophical theory is called ideal realism or conceptual realism. Discuss.

5. Illustrate the Platonic allegory of the cave

Suggested Readings

1. Weber, Alfred. (1897) *History of Philosophy*. trans. Frank Thilly, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

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

3. Copleston, Frederick. (1994) *A History of Philosophy (Vol. I) Greece and Rome*. New York: Image Books.

4. Annas, Julia. (2003) *Plato: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press.

UNIT 2

Plato's Epistemology

Learning Outcomes

By the completion of the unit, the learner will:

♦ be introduced to the fundamental features of Plato's epistemology

♦ be able to stress the importance of ideas in the theory of knowledge of Plato

♦ identify the limitations and criticism raised by Plato against sensory knowledge

♦ be aware of the cardinal virtues proposed by Plato

Prerequisites

Have you ever thought of the question, what is the ultimate reality? Is it possible to attain knowledge of reality with sensory faculties? In daily life, almost everyone believes what they perceive. However, if we compare our sensory capacities with other species, we understand their limitations. For instance, why cannot humans see the ultraviolet rays that a bee can perceive? Why cannot we, like turtles and worms detect the earth's magnetic field? Similarly, the average human hearing range is from 20 Hertz to 20,000 Hz, while certain animals, like dogs, can hear frequencies as high as 80 kHz. These instances demonstrate how narrow our perceptions are.

Another important question is whether all our perceptions are valid sources of knowledge or not. Are they reliable? Many illusions and hallucinations may occur in our daily lives. For example, in low light, we see a snake in a rope.

The perception of a mirage, the varied sense of colour in the same item under various coloured lights, and other similar illusions are very frequently

encountered in daily life. So, how do we know what the truth is? Plato, in his epistemology, critically evaluates human capabilities for knowing the truth, and the following discussions expose the same.

Key Concepts

Idea or concept, Opinion, Rational intuition, Conjectural Knowledge, Hypothetical knowledge, Reminiscence theory, Cardinal virtues

Discussion

2.2.1 Theory of Knowledge

The notion of ideas in Plato's Philosophy served as the foundation for his theory of knowledge. True knowledge, according to him, is objective, universal, and untouched by mutation or flux.

Pure knowledge cannot be comprehended through sensory experience. It is because the particular objects that exist in the physical world recognised through sensation are subject to change and are based on pure individuality. Hence for him, the transcendental universe of ideas, which is eternal and imperishable, is the source of true knowledge.

> Epistemology is the theory of knowledge

For instance, there are several trees in the physical realm. However, each one differs from the others in various ways. However, the essence of all trees, 'the treeness,' remains unchanged in all. The universal term 'tree' can represent all the specific trees found here. In contrast to numerous variations, all trees share a few fundamental traits. Consider another example of prime numbers. Natural numbers larger than one are known as prime numbers. They only have two factors i.e., 'one and the number itself', yet different prime numbers exist. However, primality, the quality of being a prime, is an essence or concept that every prime number shares.

Likewise, distinct human individuals share the fundamental essence of humanness, and the general phrase "human being" is sufficient to describe all specific individuals. Plato believed that while each particular human being is born, growing, evolving and eventually dying, the universal essence of humanness exists in a timeless and unchanging transcendental realm. Like a gigantic tree grown from a little seed, every object passes through different life stages. A seed sprouts into a tiny plant, grows into a shrub, and then into a large tree, which may eventually collapse. But the universal tree is unaffected by such changes. No matter what happens to the specific tree,

the idea of a "tree" or the "universal tree" remains the same.

Why does Plato reject sensation as a source of true knowledge? The most effective advocate of the notion that 'perception is knowledge' is the sophist Protagoras. He asserted that what I perceive to be real is true for me and what you perceive to be true is true for you. The Sophists believed that man is the ultimate standard or measure of everything. Plato criticises this Sophist doctrine in his *Theaetetus*. Plato dismisses sensation as a valid source of knowledge because they are constantly changing. For Plato, true knowledge must be unchanging, universal, invariable, and without any flux. The sensory knowledge gained through sensation always fails to fulfil the qualities of real truth.

If knowledge is merely a matter of perception, then it is impossible to understand the true essence of things because perception is nothing more than an appearance. For example, consider a mirage; it is the phenomenon of perceiving water on roads on sunny days. It occurs due to total internal reflection; an optical phenomenon occurs that causes the appearance of a pool of water. Another example of optical illusion is the bending appearance of the half-immersed stick in the water. The reason for this is the refraction of light. Another instance of perceptual appearance is how railway tracks that are kept separated appear to converge at a distance. This is because the proportion of our range of view that the rail tracks occupy is decreasing. Here, every instance of perception is incorrect because it merely provides us with an appearance and not true knowledge.

According to Plato, perception is the outcome of two movements, one coming from the side of the object and the other coming from the side of the perceiver. The taste of apple juice is an example. When a patient consumes it, it might not taste good. However, the same apple juice may appear sweet to a healthy one. Since perception involves both the perceived object and the percipient, as has already been stated, it is impossible to know the true nature of the thing. Without a percipient, the thing cannot be known. Each perception is very much dependent on the percipient. Hence, it is uncertain whether the object appeared to all individuals is the same.

The same thing may appear differently at various times to the same person. The same thing could seem to possess opposing qualities at different times. A rose that is red in the sunlight appears black when viewed in green light. To a strong individual, an object might feel light, yet to a weak one, it might feel weighty. It is impossible to distinguish the truth and falsity of perceptual knowledge since the perception is personal. Hence, universal true knowledge is impossible through sensation.

Plato states in the *Republic* that the philosopher is concerned with discovering the essential nature of things. He also asserts that knowledge and opinion are not the same things. Knowledge is not an opinion. The opinion is merely a wild guess. Whether an opinion is right or wrong, it is not considered as knowledge. A person's opinion can alter at any time. He cannot explain what justice is because it is impossible to determine the true nature of justice in the world of opinions. Knowledge is different from opinion because it exists independently of the changing objects. Knowledge is a state of being rather than becoming.

Knowledge, according to Plato, is neither perception nor opinion. After rejecting perception and opinion, Plato

formulated the theory of ideas as the only source of true knowledge. Plato's theory of knowledge is a more polished version of Socrates' notion of knowledge. According to Socrates, "Knowledge is through concepts" and consider the reason as the faculty of knowledge. Socrates engages with the dialectical process to arrive at the truth. Plato follows Socrates' dialectical approach with certain differences. According to Plato, ideas have independent existences and are not limited to the mind.

For Plato, ideas are the only true knowledge

There are four different levels of knowledge; conjectural, sensuous or practical, hypothetical, and rational knowledge. Conjectural knowledge is the lowest form of knowledge. It includes mere appearances such as illusions, hallucinations, dreams, pathological experiences, etc. The expressions such as 'the son of the barren women,' 'hare's horn,' and other deceptive appearances such as mirages, the illusion of rope as a snake, etc. are examples of conjectural knowledge.

Practical knowledge is also known as sensuous knowledge. It is the knowledge we learn through sensation. We gain knowledge about the world through our senses. This practical knowledge includes visual, auditory, gustatory, olfactory and tactile senses. However, it is merely the knowledge of appearance. Things are not what they seem to be. With the aid of logical deductions and inductive generalisations, we obtain specific conclusions from hypothetical knowledge. In mathematics, basic definitions are accepted as axioms and are not based on sensory information but are defined as such. For Plato, hypothetical knowledge serves as the link between sensory information and rational insight. It establishes the connections between the world of things.

In Platonic epistemology, rational insight is seen as the highest level of knowledge. By using the dialectical process, which is free from sensory information, rational knowledge is made possible. The knowledge we get through rational insight is universal, which also includes particular knowledge. Knowledge of ideas or concepts is only possible through rational awareness.

As previously mentioned, ideas or concepts are the foundation of knowledge and they can be attained through rational insight. For Plato, all beings are directly acquainted with concepts or ideas before the soul enters the body, that is, the concepts are inherent in the mind even before birth. We all have an intuitive, immanent understanding of what is true and real since it is already imprinted in the soul. The soul is pre-existent and naturally belongs to the domain of ideas. the soul blends into the body as a result of affinities with the world of sensation. When the concepts or ideas are degraded to the realm of sensation, knowledge becomes dim and lost.

This dim knowledge is remembered through education. The knowledge of the forms or concepts is still there which has to be recalled. Ideas, according to Plato, are produced not from observation but from the theory of remembrance or recollection. The ideas are acquired through teaching. For Plato, all kinds of knowledge is the recollection of the soul's

experience in the world of ideas. In this context, learning means recalling the past. The soul contains all things intrinsically. Plato referred to this as the philosophy of recollection.

2.2.1.1 Theory of Divided Line

Plato proposed the theory of divided line in the process of acquiring true knowledge. This metaphor describes the four stages or levels of knowledge that correlate to the four levels of reality. According to Plato, a concept or idea is true only if it corresponds to an actual concept or idea. For him, knowledge is the correspondence of the mind with reality. The ultimate level of knowledge is 'rational intuition' or 'rational insight', which is focused on forms or concepts.
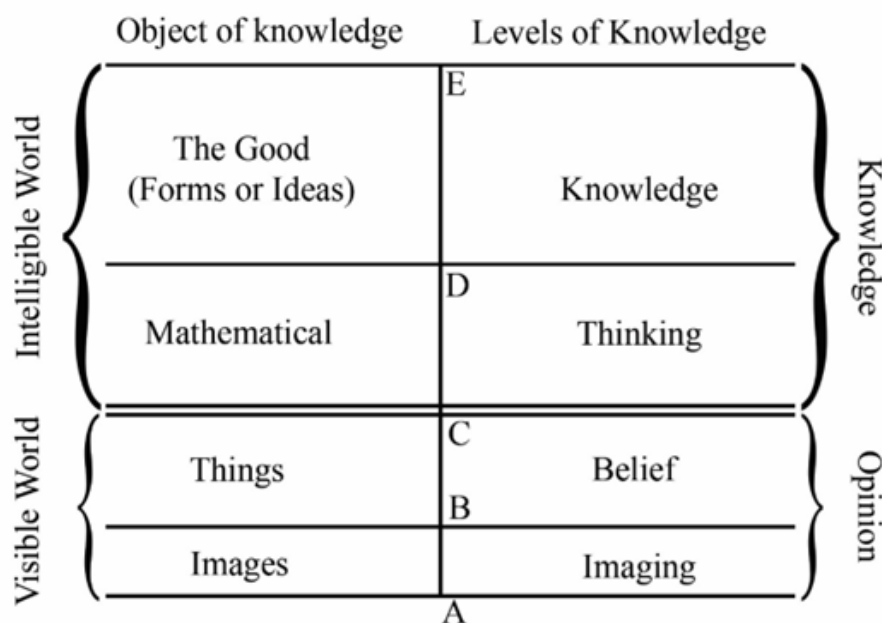
Fig 2.2.1 Theory of Divided Line

The smallest segment in this example, that is, A-C, symbolises the visible physical world. The longer segment, that is C-E, depicts the intelligible universe. The various levels of knowledge are illustrated using the divided line theory. Here, the higher component denotes knowledge and the lower part denotes opinion or belief. The vertical line, that is A-E, indicates that each point has some level of knowledge. A-E stands for the continuous process of mental enlightenment. However, there is a parallel progression from the lowest degree of truth to the highest when it moves from A to E. There are two unequal sections; the shortest and lowest part represents the sensible physical world, and the upper and largest part represents the intelligible realm of ideas.

The unequal division represents the lower degree of truth and actuality in the physical world compared to the intelligible realm. The degree of actuality and truth is higher in the intelligible universe. The things on the four distinct levels are not the four different kinds, but rather four different perspectives on the same object. The segment A-B reflects the most obvious type of mental activity. The mind is faced with images, shadows, and reflections here. The least amount of actuality exists in it. The belief comes after imagination which represents the knowledge of the visible world. The segment B-C is used to

illustrate this.

The two lower levels represent the visible world. The first section in the lower level is full of reflections and shadows, hence showing an unclear version of reality. It also includes the ideas that we get from second-hand stories from others. Rather than reality, it is full of imagination. The second level of the visible world includes belief. Through observations, we form knowledge about the visible world. But the problem with this knowledge is that, we form opinions about the world. Rather than reality, what we get here is opinions and beliefs. Plato held that these two levels of knowledge are not sufficient for viewing reality.

In the third level, illustrated as C-D, knowledge is gained by deduction, which is focused on geometrical and mathematical objects. When a person progresses from the observable physical world to the intelligible realm of ideas, a transition happens from the level of belief to the level of thinking. It also symbolises a shift from the world of opinion to the world of knowledge.

The highest and broadest portion of D-E represents the stage of the mind. It transcends sensory perception and all kinds of presumptions to a rational intuition of pure forms or concepts. These concepts serve as the guiding principles from which we derive all supplementary and specialised knowledge. Rational intuition represents the highest form of knowledge.

The philosopher must guide the pupil towards the understanding of forms or concepts using the dialectic technique. The ultimate goal of dialectics is to grasp 'the first principle of the whole.' Plato referred to this ultimate source of knowledge as 'the Good.' Plato uses an analogy to explain it. He compares the Good to the sun. All living things are made possible by the sun, which also gives us the ability to view them. Similarly, Good is the source of all being and reality, which allows the mind to see them.

2.2.2 Plato's Theory of Justice

Plato gives a significant place to the idea of 'Justice' in his philosophy. The Greek word 'Dikaisyne' is used for justice, and it is very similar to the word 'morality' and 'righteousness', which appropriately encompasses all of human beings' obligations. Plato as one of the pioneers of Western political philosophy considered justice to be the central question when dealing with politics. The Greeks gave importance to ethics, they viewed that the state comes into existence for the sake of the good life. The good life is possible through the meeting of their needs, and meeting one's needs is achievable only in the presence of justice. Plato in his *Republic* discusses justice in the form of dialogue.

> Justice is the highest among the cardinal virtues according to Plato

In *Republic*, Plato discusses the Greek doctrine of the four cardinal virtues. Cardinal virtues are the fundamental virtue on which all other virtues are based. The word cardinal is derived from the Latin word 'cardo' which means a hinge.

The four **cardinal virtues** are,

1. Prudence (Practical wisdom)

2. Fortitude (Courage)

3. Temperance

4. Justice

2.2.2.1 Prudence (Practical Wisdom)

In modern times, there is a distinction between natural intelligence and acquired knowledge. Natural intelligence includes analytic and synthetic ability and is measured by means of intelligent quotients. Acquired knowledge is obtained from observation. The Greek conception of a wise man generally emphasises theoretic and synthetic ability. However, this is not the view of Plato. Plato did value knowledge and reasoning skills as important for a person to develop prudence.

Literally, the word 'prudence' denotes 'discretion in practical affairs.' It is the mark of wisdom that denotes the correct reason in action. It is also considered as the capacity to choose the best course of action to be done in a specific circumstance at the right time, taking probable consequences into account. It is the application of a person's knowledge and capacity for correct and rational judgement in any given situation. Prudence or wisdom is not only the academic knowledge or book learning. Prudence, in Plato's opinion, is a quality that belongs to the aristocracy or the ruling class. It is extremely intentional and required for a responsible administration. It is the moral understanding of our responsibilities and our performance in a specific scenario. It is the virtue of the rational part of the soul.

2.2.2.2 Fortitude (Courage)

Plato stresses the ethical dimension of courage. For him, courage is needed to resist the fear of pain which drives a humam being away from the path in which wisdom directs them. Fear is the natural response to any threat. Hence, fortitude is essential to confront the fear of pain. It is the virtue of forbearance, strength and character trait of being untouched and unaffected in the face of danger, fear, and intimidation.

Courage is of two kinds: (1) active courage or valour, which means to continue with a course of action in the face of danger or even actual suffering. (2) passive courage or fortitude bears unavoidable suffering without any change. It is closely related to the virtue of perseverance or sticking to a line of action. Here, rather than action, the moral agent faces inertia or exhaustion. Both these forms of courage, valour and fortitude are traits of righteous character. They are cultivated through practice and will become habits of doing right in the face of suffering or difficulties. Courage should be accompanied by perseverance. Faith and hope are tied with valour and fortitude.

Physical courage and moral courage are frequently distinguished from one another. The physical courage may occur either as the courage or fortitude to face suffering that ordinarily arises from pain. Here, the flight instinct is weak and the intelligence is often low. Physical courage might also take the form of an intrinsic value. Moral courage is the complete awareness of the suffering that one will experience when following the right path. People differ in the types of pain that they fear the most. For example, some people fear the pain that comes from physical reasons and others fear the pain from social rejection. The pain in moral life is sometimes better to be avoided than faced. Instead of just tolerating the pain, acting morally in the midst of suffering is a virtue of righteous

quality.

A person is courageous if her/his spirited attitude does not change in the face of pleasures and discomforts. Courage or fortitude is the unique virtue of the fighting class. They have strong instincts with much energy. They are action-oriented people and do possess leadership and passion. Their inherent vitality can be best utilised by incorporating them into the warrior class. They will keep the ideal state safe.

2.2.2.3 Temperance

Temperance is a virtue that provides resistance against the attractive powers of pleasure- sensual or intellectual. It is not something negative, like repressing the appetite or impulses and desires. Plato described the concept of temperance in a more positive sense. It means using reason to determine how much of these desires should be fulfilled. Temperance is not regarded as an antagonist to pleasure. However, the aspect of 'going to an extreme' appears to be antagonistic to temperance.

Temperance necessitates a pleasant blending of the dominance of reason with the other impulses of human nature. It adds beauty to the moral life and entirely excludes extremism. The virtue of temperance also helps us to lead a moderate life devoid of addictions. To the question of who will govern the state, Plato answers that the suitable sovereign is the one who possesses the virtue of temperance.

Temperance satisfies the cravings of human being by reasoning in accordance with wisdom. It is a quality that entails self-regulation, abstinence, discretion, and moderation to manage one's appetite.

2.2.2.4 Justice

Justice is the most crucial one among the cardinal virtues. It is basically associated with impartiality, righteousness, and lack of bias. Justice guarantees that everyone in society is treated fairly, regardless of other considerations or prejudices. It implies fairness to all, with no favouritism or self-interest. It seeks to ensure that everyone is subject to a fundamental moral rule. The other cardinal virtues, such as wisdom, courage and temperance are virtues of an individual, while justice is the virtue of a society. Justice comprehends all social virtues like honesty, benevolence, love, courtesy, good, impartiality etc. It naturally implies that an unjust human being lacks all the virtues, such as courage, wisdom, and moderation or temperance.

Justice enables each person to do his/her own duties. Hence, for Plato, each person in a society needs to have some degree of freedom. Freedom here means freedom from interference. The realization that every member of a community has a duty to perform her own work implies a certain measure of equality among them. Plato says justice is the perfect order in which every human being does his/her duties according to the class and division of citizens.

According to Plato, justice in the state entails justice for the people who make up the state. In Plato's view, justice is achieved when the kings rule wisely, the soldiers fight courageously, and the arti-sans and the traders work tirelessly and generously. Justice is the harmonious working of intellect, emotion, and desire guided by reason. Plato considers it as the founding or preserving virtue because it is justice that holds all the virtues together.

Recap

♦ True knowledge is universal, objective and changeless

♦ Sensation is not a valid source of knowledge

♦ Plato's criticism of sophist's perception

♦ Kinds of knowledge as conjectural, practical, hypothetical and rational

♦ Rational intuition as the ultimate level of knowledge

♦ Four cardinal virtues, such as prudence, fortitude, temperance and courage

♦ Justice as the social virtue

Objective Questions

1. What is the foundation of Plato's theory of knowledge?

2. What are the characteristics of true knowledge, according to Plato?

3. Why did Plato reject perception as a valid source of knowledge?

4. Who says, 'Man is the measure of all things'?

5. Is opinion a kind of knowledge?

6. What is the ultimate level of knowledge?

7. What are the four cardinal virtues of Plato?

8. Name a social virtue.

Answers

1. Theory of ideas

2. Objective, Universal and Changeless

3. Perceptive knowledge is particular and mutable

4. Protagoras

5. No, it is mere guesswork

6. Rational insight or rational intuition

7. Prudence (Practical Wisdom), Fortitude (Courage), Temperance and Justice

8. Justice

Assignments

1. What are the limitations and problems of sensation as a means of valid knowledge?

2. Briefly explain Plato's theory of knowledge and ideas

3. What is the theory of recollection of knowledge?

4. Explain the theory of divided line.

5. Write a note on Plato's theory of Justice.

Suggested Readings

1. Copleston, Frederick. (1994) *A History of Philosophy (Vol. I) Greece and Rome*. New York: Image Books.

2. Lillie, William. (1967) *An Introduction to Ethics*. New Delhi: Allied Publishers

3. Weber, Alfred. (1897) *History of Philosophy*. trans. Frank Thilly, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

4. Collins W, Lucas. *Plato*. New Delhi: Deep and Deep Publishers,1990.

5. Guthrie, W. K. C. *A History of Greek Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, *(Vols: 3)* (1969), 4 (1975) and 5 (1978).

6. Pappas, Nikolas. *Plato and the Republic*. London: Routledge,1995.

7. Slezak, Thomas A. *Reading Plato*. London: Routledge,1999.

Aristotle

Learning Outcomes

This unit will lead the learner to:

♦ get a general outlook of the philosophy of Aristotle

♦ get familiarised with the fundamental principle of nature and the problem of change

♦ interpret Aristotle's concept of form and matter

♦ get exposed to the actuality and potentiality in Aristotles' Philosophy

♦ get familiarised with the theory of four causes

Prerequisites

In Plato's philosophy, we came across that the physical objects in the world are just copies of their originals and true nature of the same cannot be understood by sensation. Plato regards the physical world as not the actual one. Only abstract forms or concepts are real and they exist in the transcendental universe. Aristotle, who was the student of Plato argued that Plato's theory of forms was too abstract and disconnected from the real world.

Aristotle, Plato's disciple, plays an important role in this regard. Plato's ideas were referred to as "form" by Aristotle. According to Aristotle, "both matter and form coexist in this physical, actual universe." He, therefore, strived to prove the reality of the material world and disapproved the transcendence of ideas or forms. He made an effort to combine philosophy with a scientific perspective. The importance of Aristotle in the philosophical tradition is that he used empirical, practical, and common-sensical approaches to Philosophy.

Key Concepts

The Problem of Change, Matter, Form, Actuality, and Potentiality, Four Causes, Becoming, Being

Discussion

In the western philosophical tradition, Aristotle is the most significant Greek thinker. He was born in 384 B.C. His father, Nichomacus, served as the court physician. Aristotle was a student of Plato and later served as a tutor of Alexander the Great. He joined Plato's academy at the age of seventeen. He denied the transcendence of Plato's ideas. After his teacher Plato died, he gave up the academy and started his own school called Lyceum. He employed both logical and observational methods. Instead of the realm of being, Aristotle was interested in the realm of becoming. He has a reputation for being an all-around genius and a noble philosopher. His major writings include *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Metaphysics*, etc.

2.3.1 Form and Matter

Aristotle's intellectual endeavours focus mainly on studying the order of nature by explaining the fundamental principles of nature. Questions such as what is the essence of this natural world and how shall we explain them are the main problems for Aristotle. He believed that there must be a certain number of basic principles at work in nature by which natural processes can be explained. Making an investigation into the principles of nature, he understood that the natural world consists of a *plurality of individual substances* such as physical objects, plants, animals, humans and so on.

> All physical objects are compounds of matter and form

He observed the fact that not only a plurality of objects or individual things exist in the natural world, but they also change or grow, for instance, from a seed to a tree. How shall we explain this process of becoming or changing has been a significant question in his metaphysical inquiry. Keenly interested in explaining changes in the natural world, particularly the existence of physical objects, Aristotle observed that all sensible things existing in our world are composed of two principles: matter (*hulê*) and form (*morphê)*. This doctrine has been designated as Aristotle's "hylomorphism", which suggests every physical object is an admixture of matter and form. Aristotle presents explanations for matter and form in the first book *Physics*, in which he explains how physical objects come into existence.

After defining nature as the totality of objects, which are material and subject to change, Aristotle inquired how the world must be if change is possible. To put it in another way, he was interested in studying the fundamental principles of nature by examining what takes place in the process of change. The investigation in to the nature of objects and their processes of change led him to draw a significant distinction between form and

matter. Aristotle claims that every object is composed of matter and form which are the fundamental duality or co-principles of the reality of things in the natural world to exist. A bronze statue is a well-known illustration of this distinction: bronze is the matter, while the statue's figure is the form.

Aristotle defines matter as what a thing is made of, whereas form is what determines matter. However, neither matter nor form can exist independently as far as the existence and change of physical objects is concerned. An object cannot be conceived without a matter and a form because they are inseparable aspects of the individual substance. Even a lump of bronze would have some form though the form may not be that of a statue. Similarly, though a statue is not made of bronze, it would be made of something (matter). However, matter and form are not physical parts of substances or objects. We must not think that matter is a physical component of the substance and form is non- physical addition. Instead, matter and form should be seen as logical parts of objects that describe what a particular substance is.

Aristotle's hylomorphic framework of the natural world defines form as the universal aspect of objects, the essential unity shared by all things of the same type. For instance, the form of a (particular) bronze statue should be understood to belong to the (universal) form of the statue. In other words, the form of a particular thing is constituted by the essential qualities of the class to which it belongs. Form, for this reason, denotes the "whatness" of the thing, which is the essential determination or organic structure of things. We perceive an object by receiving its form; it, however, includes 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.

Matter, on the other hand, is that which confers particularity and uniqueness to an individual thing or object. In other words, the matter is the stuff or the substratum that the thing is made of. According to Aristotle, the matter is what changes form because the processes of change of a substance in the natural world are analysed as a material transformation. Think of a lump of bronze that's shaped into a statue as an illustration. The matter is bronze, which changes its form (that of a lump) and gains a new form (that of a statue). If the bronze statue were melted down, the form would have changed but the matter would remain the same.

The form-matter distinction, for this reason, allows Aristotle to explain how something can change and yet remain the same. If there were no unchanging matter, we would have no grounds for claiming that the lump of bronze was in some manner the same bronze as that which made up the statue. It is the matter which underlies and persists in the processes of change to which the different qualities pertain in the object. An object changes its form, which means that matter assumes different forms, a series of forms, one form following another.

Plato held that only form is real as well as eternal, while individual objects are subject to change. But Aristotle argues that form cannot be separated from matter or object. Plato views material objects as subject to change as they are not real in themselves, and correspond to an ideal, immutable, eternal form. Aristotle rejected Plato's theory of forms and asserted that universal form and particular matter are fused into the substance as the form and

matter co-existed. Aristotle establishes his theory of form and matter by criticising the Platonic concept of forms. On these grounds, Aristotle claims form is the mover, matter the thing moved. Therefore, according to Aristotle, motion or change is explained as the union of form and matter since form causes motion or change in matter.

2.3.2 Actuality and Potentiality

Explaining the nature of things and their changes, though matter and form provide plausible rationales, one might inquire how their unity can be explained. Aristotle introduces two more concepts, potentiality (*dunamis*) and actuality (*entelecheia*), solving the question of the unity of form and matter. Answering the question of what change is, Aristotle says that change is the actuality of the potential qua

such. Whereas form and matter are inseparable and yet distinguishable aspects of a single substance, Aristotle introduces potentiality and actuality as the stages in the development of a substance.

Though every individual object changes or grows, and all that is perceived is changeable, Aristotle takes the potentiality being an earlier and the actuality a later stage in the processes of change. Aristotle defines the distinction using particular instances of changes in substances in which the potential lies latent within an object; the actuality is the completed thing. For example, a seed is a potentiality of a tree, and a tree is the actuality of a seed. The difference between actuality and potentiality, however, is relative; the same object may be actual about one thing but merely potential about another. For example, the oak is the actuality of the acorn, but the potentiality of an oak table.

> Potentiality is the earlier and actuality is the later stage in the development of a substance.

Though every object has the potentiality to actualize a substance, Aristotle distinguishes between two different senses of the term potentiality. The first meaning of the term is the power which a thing has to produce a change. For instance, the acorn, which later becomes an oak, is a potential oak. The second meaning of the term denotes not the thing's power to produce a change but rather its capacity to be in the state of the actuality of a substance. Consider, for example, a piece of wood which can be carved or shaped into a table or a bowl. The piece of wood, nevertheless, can actualize (at least) two different potentialities because it is potentially a table and a bowl. In short, it is the matter that has the potential to change a substance from one form to another.

Considering the change that happens to a substance, Aristotle believed that the principle of potentiality was important.

However, when a thing reaches its growth or purpose, one could say its potentiality has become actual. For this reason, a tree can be said to actualize the potentiality of a seed. Considering the actuality of things, it is the form that is manifested and, thereby, being actual. When the potentiality of an object is actualized, it always has form and is, in a sense, actual. Aristotle, on this ground, calls the form the principle of reality, or actuality. Therefore, the matter (in the case of wood) is linked with potentiality; the substance (in the case of the table or the bowl) is linked with actuality.

In short, according to Aristotle, a change must occur in the object for its potentiality to become an actuality. However, he claims that actuality is prior in substance to potentiality. It is because potentiality can only occur if there is some existing thing prior which is capable of becoming another thing. Objects come to be, by acquiring their distinctive form, which must have existed before it actualized in the substance. In short, according to Aristotle, for an object's potentiality to become actuality and take on a new form, there must be a pre-existing matter within the object that can be shaped and transformed. Giving the accounts of actuality and potentiality, Aristotle concludes that motion or change is the realisation of the potentialities of a thing to be actualized.

2.3.3 Four causes

As mentioned above, investigation in to the processes of change and the existence of objects in the natural world has been the heart of Philosophical endeavor. He observes that material objects change, and that their changes are caused. The cases of change have been a central concern in Aristotle's exploration of the nature. According to him, the order of nature and the processes of change described through potentiality and actuality, form and matter is governed by causes. His fascination with analysing the change and the order of nature allows him to look more deeply into the workings of nature in terms of causes.

Analysing the change or movement in nature, Aristotle claims that we know a thing only when we have grasped its causes. However, in Aristotle's view, to ask for a cause is to seek why something is the case. Aristotle recognizes four principles in any process of change: material cause, formal cause, efficient cause and final cause. The material cause is determined by the material that composes the moving or changing things. In other words, the material cause is what a thing is made of. For a table, that is a wood; for a statue, that is a bronze or marble. Aristotle illustrates the material caused by the matter of bronze (its qualities such as malleable, brown, heavy, and so on) from which the sculptor plans to fashion his statue. Aristotle's first type of cause, often called "cause as matter," is defined as "the constituent from which something comes to be." The statue made of bronze expresses the cause of its being because bronze is the constituent stuff or substratum of the bronze statue. Aristotle's first type of cause, therefore, is known as material cause.

Four causes of Aristotle are Material cause, Efficient cause, Formal cause and Final cause

Formal cause denotes a change or movement caused by the arrangement, shape or appearance of the thing which is changing or moving. It represents the pattern or structure, which is to become embodied in the thing when it is fully realised. An object's particular essence is determined by the matter from which it is produced. The formal cause of a statue is the general plan or idea of the statue as conceived by the sculptor. In short, the formal cause signifies "the form", "the account of what-it-is-to-be", e.g., the shape of a statue. Aristotle's second sort of cause, 'the form and pattern', is normally referred to as the 'formal' cause.

The efficient cause, often called moving cause, denotes the active agent which produces the thing as its effect. For example,

the efficient cause of a table is a carpenter or the art of carpentry. It is often described as the source of the object's principle of change or stability. The efficient cause of the statue includes the chisels and other instruments used by the sculptor in his work. Therefore, the efficient cause is often known as the primary source of the change. Being an agency of the change or movement, efficient cause consists of things apart from the thing which is changing or moving. The final cause denotes the end or purpose toward which the process of change is directed. In other words, it signifies the end/goal for which an object is created. Put bluntly, since the purpose of an object must also be considered a cause, the final cause represents a change of thing to be what it is. For a seed, it is an adult plant; in sculpturing, it is the fully realised and completed statue.

All four (kinds of) causes could explain the existence of an object and its change. Consider the production of an artefact like a table. The wood enters the explanation of the production of the statue as the material cause. The wood is not only the material by which the table is made of; it is also the subject of change resulting in the production of the table. Similarly, the wood is carved to acquire a new shape, the shape of the table. This formal structure enters into the explanation of the production of the table as the formal cause. The carpentry by which the production of the table is made of, enters into the explanation of the efficient cause. The efficient cause resides in the art of wood-crafting which is responsible for the production of the statue. The final cause explains the purpose of the table for which it is made; it could be for dining. Aristotle's four causes illustrated a table: material (wood), formal (structure), efficient (carpentry), and final (dining). According to Aristotle, "the God" is the highest state of pure form and the lowest state of pure matter.

Recap

- Aristotle believes in the plurality of individual substances

- All sensible things are composed of two things: matter and form

- Matter is what a thing is made of

- Form is what determines the matter

- Form and matter are inseparable

- Form is the universal aspect, the essential unity shared by all things.

- Matter is the stuff or substratum. Matter confers particularity and uniqueness to an individual thing or object

- All objects are composed of form and matter, actuality and potentiality.

- Potential is the early stage and actual is the later stage.

♦ Actuality and potentiality are relative.

♦ Material cause is that from which a thing is made of.

♦ Formal cause is like a plan, that which a thing essentially is.

♦ Efficient cause is like a moving cause, an active agent through which a thing is produced.

♦ The end or purpose for which a thing is made is the final cause.

Objective Questions

1. What is the name of the school that Aristotle founded?

2. What is the metaphysical problem that Aristotle faced?

3. How does Aristotle define 'matter'?

4. For Aristotle, what is meant by the term 'form'?

5. Which are the four causes discussed by Aristotle?

6. What is an active agent or a moving cause?

7. How does Aristotle define God?

Answers

1. Lyceum

2. The problem of change

3. The matter is what a thing is made of.

4. What determines the matter is the form

5. Material cause, Formal cause, Efficient cause and Final cause

6. Efficient cause

7. Lowest state of pure matter and the highest state of pure form

Assignments

1. Do you reject the transcendence of the idea? Explain the reality of the material world in the light of Aristotle.

2. Make a note of potentiality and actuality

3. Explain the four causes suggested by Aristotle with an example.

Suggested Readings

1. Ainsworth, Thomas. "Form Vs. Matter (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy/Summer 2020 Edition)." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2020/entries/form-matter/.

2. Barnes, Jonathan. (2000) *Aristotle: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford Paperbacks.

3. Cohen, Marc S., and C.D C. Reeve. "Aristotle's Metaphysics (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy/Winter 2021 Edition)." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2021/entries/aristotle-metaphysics.

4. Copleston, Frederick C. (1993) *A History of Philosophy: Greece and Rome*. Image Publication, New York.

5. Falcon, Andrea. "Aristotle on Causality (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy/Spring 2022 Edition)." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta, plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2022/entries/aristotle-causality.

6. Thilly, Frank. (1982) *A History of Philosophy*. Indian University Press, Allahabad.

UNIT 4

Introduction to Aristotle's Ethics and Politics

Learning Outcomes

By studying this unit, the learner will:

♦ get a general idea about Aristotle's ethics including his virtue ethics

♦ develop an idea about Aristotle's notion that man is a political animal

♦ be able to identify the interconnection between Aristotle's ethics and politics

♦ get familiarised with the aim of Aristotle's ethics and politics

Prerequisites

What is happiness? And, what makes us happy? We usually take some particular things or particular situations as happiness. Most of the time, we find happiness in wealth, honour, pleasure, and health. A sick person says that happiness is to be healthy and a poor man says that happiness is to have enough wealth and so on. We agree that it is good to have wealth, honour, pleasure and health. But, is any of them happiness? Aristotle says 'No'. All the qualities mentioned above are only a means to the highest virtue, happiness. Aristotle begins his ethics with the question of ultimate happiness.

What a human being primarily is? How can we fundamentally define ourselves? Is human being primarily an animal like a cow or buffalo? If a human being is an animal at first, what is it that makes him/her unique from other animals? Is it the rationality and consequently thinking capacity? That is, whether a human being is primarily a rational/thinking animal? Or, is human being primarily an emotional being? Or, is it the linguistic capacity which makes the human being unique from other animals? Are we primarily linguistic animals? Or, are we *homo economicus* - rational persons who make economic calculations and

decisions that are always in our own interest and benefit? Again, is not human being by nature (in essence) a moral being? Are we not basically persons who act upon well-defined standards of right and wrong? Are we not held morally accountable and even punished for the wrongs/crimes we do while the dogs or lions who kill other animals to eat or humans for whatever reason are not morally held accountable? The lions or dogs which attack or kill humans are not held to be engaging even in impermissible or blameworthy behaviour? The point is that there have been various descriptions of what is human being in essence. Aristotle says that a human being is basically a social creature – someone embedded in society and social groups. That human being is primarily and naturally a political animal – someone who is supposed to live under laws and governance for the sake of his/her own highest good and the highest good of the community/society.

Key Concepts

The highest goodness, Eudaimonia, Virtue ethics, Political animal

Discussion

Plato and Aristotle are widely known across the world as the great beginners of philosophy. That is so because they built great systems of philosophy in general and specific branches of philosophy. It is with the same reason the Ionian and Eleatic philosophers of ancient Greek were overshadowed in the light of their successors - Plato and Aristotle. Their consistent speculations and comprehensive systems specially in ethics and politics have been philosophical bedrocks for the later ages.

Aristotle's views on ethics and politics are very much influenced by that of Plato. Plato details his theory of the state and politics in the *Republic* based on his ethics. Plato views virtue as the highest good and the *polis*/city state as the enabler of the same. The individual in isolation from society cannot attain the good and therein lies the justification of the formation of the state. We expect the state to secure general welfare and promote happiness.

2.4.1. Aristotle's Ethics

The *Nicomachean Ethics* is Aristotle's best-known work on ethics. Ethics is considered the science of the good for human life and the aim of Aristotle's ethical enquiry is political science. Aristotle not only considers ethics and politics as inherently related but also ethics as coming before politics. Ethics is the foundation of Aristotle's concept of politics and establishment of *polis*.

It needs to be said that ethics and politics have a complex relation in Aristotle. He also upholds political or social science as a subject which studies the good for human beings. In that sense, he views ethics as a branch of political or social science. Copleston says: "we might say that

he treats first of individual ethical science and secondly of political ethical science in the *Politics*."

We know that ethics is the study of right and wrong actions. The fundamental question that it deals with is: how should human beings act? But Aristotle changes the question: how should human beings live to live better? Or, how should human beings act in order to lead a happy life? In Aristotle, action and ethics are necessarily related to a happy life. That is to say, ethics is a necessary thing for a better/ happy/good life.

What is these happiness? What is the good of human beings? These vare the fundamental questions with which Aristotle starts his ethics. The Aristotelian ethical enquiry is into the highest good (eudaimonia). The foundational ethical question raised by Aristotle can be rephrased like this: what is that good for the sake of which we desire and achieve all other subordinate goods? Aristotle sets himself to discover the best good.

> Virtue is the highest good and the *polis* is the enabler of the same

Eudaimonia, a phrase much famous in Aristotle's ethics, means the highest good for humans, the only good which we desire for its own sake (as an end in itself), not for the sake of something else (as a means toward some other end). Aristotle's whole ethical inquiry is into Eudaimonia, the highest human good or the highest human happiness. The phrase 'eudaimonia' cannot be translated as pleasure since it is not identical with the highest good.

As we already said, Aristotle is not much concerned about right action, rather about the highest good/happiness which facilitates the right action. In that sense, Aristotle will consider any action right if that particular action is conducive to or advantageous for leading a good life. The attainment of one's good/end is the primary criterion for an action to be right.

As Aristotle is concerned about actions conducive to human being's goodness/ good life, we could say that Aristotelian ethics is teleological. A theory of morality according to which the rightness/ wrongness of an act is determined in terms of that act bringing about good/bad state of affairs. In the following section how Kantian deontological ethics is different

from that of Aristotelian teleological ethics is discussed.

2.4.1.1 Virtue Ethics: "How Should I Live?"

From what we have discussed till now, it is clear that Aristotle's ethics is virtue ethics. Virtue ethics is one of the major approaches in normative ethics which is concerned with questions such as: what are the criteria of morally right and wrong actions? or, how moral standards are arrived at and justified? Virtue ethics is a wider term for ethical theories which emphasise the role of virtue and character in moral philosophy.

Aristotelian virtue ethics is centred on virtue and characters and is in contrast to the ethical theories which emphasise duties and rules, and, the consequences of actions. Kant famously advocated deontological ethics which affirms that morality of an action should be based on whether that action itself is right or wrong under a series of rules and duties while Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill upheld utilitarian ethics which stresses that morality of an action should be based on the conse-

quences of the respective action. The term deontology comes from 'deontic' which means 'relating to duty and obligation.' According to the utilitarian ethics, actions that foster happiness or pleasure are right while the actions that cause unhappiness or harm are wrong.

> Kant's ethics is centred on duty while Aristotle's is centred on virtue and characters

The difference between virtue ethics and other two ethical approaches can be made clear with an example. In the matter of helping a person in need, a deontologist will point to the fact, in such an act, the agent will be acting in accordance with moral rules and principles such as "do unto others as you would be done by." And, a utilitarian will point to the fact that the consequences of the act (help) will maximise the well-being or happiness of the person in need. However, a virtue ethicist will consider nothing but the fact that helping a person in need is a charitable or benevolent act. His/her moral advice in that situation could be of moral advice: "Act as a virtuous person would act in your situation."

That is, virtue ethics does not aim primarily to identify universal principles or maxims which are applicable in any moral situation. Nor does it concern itself with right action. In sum, virtue ethics concerns itself with wider different questions such as "how should I live?", "what is the good life?" and "how should I live better." Here, while the first type of question deals with specific issues in definite situations, the second type of question is concerned with an entire life. In this line, Aristotle is concerned with the question: "what kind of person should one be in order to get the action right all the time?"

2.4.1.2 What is Virtue?

The obvious answer to "how should one live?" is that one should live virtuously. That is, one should have a virtuous character. But what is the virtue and virtuous character? Aristotle takes efforts to demonstrate virtue and he does it in its relation to vice.

For Aristotle, virtue is a mean/middle position between two extremes of human feelings or actions, both of which are vices, one being a vice through excess and the other being a vice through defect or shortcoming.

To give an example, if you have an excess of feeling of confidence and if the feeling triggers an action, there you have rashness, and, if you have an excessive lack of confidence, on the other hand, and if the feeling triggers an action, there you have cowardice. In this case, the mean will be something between rashness and cowardice. The virtue here is courage while both extremes are vices. The condition 'if the feeling triggers an action' is brought here because it is with human actions that ethics is concerned.

Another example of a mean position could be in the case of the action of giving money. The excess of giving money is extravagance while the defect with regards to giving money is illiberality or being miser. The virtue, liberality/generosity, here is the mean between two vices of excess and defect.

2.4.2 Aristotle's Politics: Man is a Political Animal

Politics is one of the key books by Aristotle. We have already seen how ethics

and politics are mutually connected in Aristotle. If in the *Ethics*, his concern is about the happy/good life for man, in his *Politics,* his concern is about how politics or the political community plays crucial role in bringing about the virtuous life and consequently happy/good life of the community as a whole.

"Man is a political animal." This is the fundamental position of Aristotle's political philosophy. If Descartes in the modern times calls man as a thinking being, it is Aristotle of the ancient Greek who described him for the first time as a political animal.

Aristotle's insistence on man's allegiance to political life becomes evident in the following words. Being a political animal is the natural state of a man and those who live out of the city are outcast like a 'bird which flies alone.' Aristotle famously states: "Hence it is evident that the state is a creation of nature, and that man is by nature a political animal. And he who by nature and not by mere accident is without a state, is either above humanity, or below it; he is the 'tribeless, lawless, heartless one,' whom Homera denounces—the outcast who is a lover of war; he may be compared to a bird which flies alone."

> "Man is a political animal." It means that we are destined to live as socio-political beings. That political behaviour is our innate quality/character

Human beings are creatures of flesh, blood and desires, with capacity of speaking and moral reasoning. Their nature is to live in social relationships such as families, cities and communities along with others. Aristotle views that man is a social creature and he becomes a true human being only among others while living in a society governed by its customs and laws. To live in a political community is natural and beneficial to the human beings.

Politics begins by explaining the significance and relevance of the State which is the highest kind of community, which aims at the highest good. He says: "the end of the State is the good life. . .. And the State is the union of families and villages in a perfect and self-sufficing life, by which we mean a happy and honourable life." It must be noted that Aristotle's whole discussion is concerned with City States the small states in Greece.

Aristotle, despite being a great thinker of all time, can also be viewed as a man of prejudice and misjudgment of his time. He expresses and upholds some of the views, especially with regard to women and slaves, which are not justified in the very wildest sense in today's time. Aristotle's politics is founded on subordination of a few sections like women and slaves. In the family, men are superior to women and the masters are superior to slaves. This superiority of the few, according to Aristotle is quite natural. The important thing is that Aristotle strongly believes that only in such a state wherein some are superiors/rulers and some are inferiors/the ruled, the highest good can be achieved.

Which comes first, part or whole? This is an important question in Aristotle's philosophy in general and in his *Politics* specifically. Aristotle begins with family in order to justify the political life of human beings. In his time, family was considered as the fundamental relations of man and woman, master and slave, both of which are natural relations. When many families are combined, we have a village and when many villages are combined, we have a state. This is the chronology of the social institutions.

> Aristotle believed that some are superior to others by nature

The State, despite being later in time than the family, is prior to it. The State is even prior to the individual, by nature. By nature, we are not individuals, rather social and political animals among others. Because, he says, "what each thing is when fully developed we call its nature." In that sense, a human society which is fully matured and developed is a State. No individual can fulfill his/her purpose without being part of a State.

The view that 'whole is prior to the part' in Aristotle's philosophy, in general, is famous. Here, the priority of the State is very significant. In this sense, one could say that he prioritises the Politics to his Ethics as the Politics is the whole. The conception of organism is the foundational thesis of the notion 'whole is prior to the part.' A leg is a leg only in a body which is the whole. A leg is no longer a leg once it is detached from the body. That is, a leg can be defined by its purpose and its purpose is defined and fulfilled only when it is part of a body. Aristotle's point is that an individual cannot fulfil his purpose unless he is part of a State.

Recap

♦ *Nicomachean Ethics* is Aristotle's best-known work on ethics – the science of the good for human life

♦ Aim of Aristotle's ethical inquiry is political science

♦ Political or social science is the subject which studies the good for human beings

♦ The highest good for humans is the only good which we desire as an end in itself, not as a means toward some other end

♦ Aristotle considers an action right if that particular action is conducive to leading a good life

♦ Kantian deontological ethics is different from that of Aristotelian teleological ethics

♦ Virtue is the middle position between two extremes of human feelings or actions both of which are vices

♦ "Man is a political animal"

♦ To live in a political community is natural and beneficial to human beings

♦ The conception of organism is the foundational thesis of the notion 'whole is prior to the part.'

Objective Questions

1. What is the name of Aristotle's book on ethics?

2. What is the point of Aristotle's statement: "Man is by nature a political animal. And he who by nature and not by mere accident is without a state, is either above humanity, or below it; he is the 'tribeless, lawless, heartless one'"?

3. Which comes first, part or the whole?

4. What is a right action, if at all, for Aristotle?

5. Aristotelian teleological ethics is called as?

6. What is a virtue?

7. What is natural for Aristotle? Individual life or political life?

8. What is the basis of the notion 'whole is prior to the part' in Aristotle?

Answers

1. Nicomachean Ethics

2. Man gets the highest happiness in the state

3. Whole

4. Right action is that action which is conducive to leading a good life

5. virtue ethics

6. It is the middle position between two extremes of human feelings or actions, both of which are vices

7. political life

8. concept of organism

Assignments

1. Explain the notion of virtue ethics in Aristotles' Philosophy.

2. 'Man is a political animal', dicuss with reference to Aristotles' Philosophy.

Suggested Readings

1. Barnes, Jonathan. (2001). *Aristotle: A Very Short Introduction,* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

2. Kenny, Anthony. (2012). *A New History of Western Philosophy*, *Vol. 1. Ancient Philosophy,* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

3. Russell, Bertrand. (2016). *History of Western Philosophy*, London: Routledge Classics.

4. Salkever, Stephen. (2009). *The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Greek Political Thought*. In *Series: Cambridge Companions to the Ancient World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

5. Sedley, David. (2003). *The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Philosophy*. In *Series: Cambridge Companions to Philosophy.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

6. Cottingham, G. John. (Ed.) (2021). *Western Philosophy: An Anthology* (Blackwell Philosophy Anthologies), New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell.

3 BLOCK

Medieval Philosophy:
Western and Islamic

UNIT 1

Characteristics of Scholastic Philosophy

Learning Outcomes

This unit will give the learner an opportunity to:

♦ be familiarised with the peculiarities of scholastic philosophy

♦ get exposed with the relation between philosophy and theology in the scholastic period

♦ get acquainted with the major points of discussions like God, faith and reason in scholastic philosophy

♦ have an awareness about the relation between Greek and scholastic philosophy

Prerequisites

In our life, we might have been confronted with a question at least once in our lifetime, does God exist? We might have reflected on this question several times and may or may not have found an answer. Do you remember any such situations in life that you seriously engaged with this question? How did you respond to that situation? If you analyse the answers that you gave in such situations, they might have either been from the perspective of faith or reason or both. Generally, faith is conceived as a strong conviction of something without showing doubt that lacks visible proof. It is also viewed as a leap into the darkness. Even if faith does not demand a justification like a scientific fact, rational support can make faith strong.

When the question of faith is confronted in philosophy, thinkers of different traditions approached the problem from different dimensions. How can philosophy and faith go together? Is rational knowledge and faith contradicted? Can men have blind faith in something? These questions were more serious subject matters of philosophy in the medieval period. Engaging with these questions may enlighten us to have more clarity on the faith and reason that we uphold in our life.

Key Concepts

Faith, Reason, Divine theology, Natural theology

Discussion

Introduction

Philosophy has developed in history with an element of wonder that has been used in many ways, and its conceptual development happened in history based on the problems it confronted. Bertrand Russell the British philosopher, essayist and logician conceived philosophy as something in between science and theology. He made this comment on philosophy since it culminates in speculative and rational aspects within it. For instance, the thinkers of the Greek tradition had their specificities in formulating their thoughts. They tried to explain the universe rationally, with the scientific spirit leaving aside the mythical explanations.

The thinkers in the medieval era came up with a unique approach to philosophy.

They are the historical successors of the philosophers of antiquity who took a different path by relating philosophy with faith and religion. Two major events that happened during this period are,

1. It witnessed the decline of the glorious Greek philosophical era and the Roman Empire.

2. It witnessed the emergence of Christianity as a more organised religion with concrete philosophical support.

The general assumption about the philosophical era of medieval philosophy is that it began with the end of the Roman Empire in Italy and ended with the Renaissance period- that is, it began around the fifth century AD and ended with the fifteenth century AD.

The name 'Renaissance' means rebirth and was initially used to designate a resurrection of the arts and literature that began in mid-fourteenth century Italy. Here the term is used to refer to the period from 1400 to 1600, but there are ways in which Renaissance philosophy can be seen as a rebirth, for it encompasses the rediscovery of Plato and Neo-Platonism, the recovery of such ancient systems as Stoicism and scepticism, and a renewed interest in magic and the occult (Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy).

When we deal with the medieval period, the focus of attention is directed towards scholastic philosophy. However, we must not forget other significant philosophical traditions emerged during this period, such as Arab, Jewish and Byzantine.

Among these philosophical traditions, scholastic philosophy was prominent because of its close connection with Christian theology. Scholasticism is generally understood as the philosophy discussed in the Middle Ages and is mostly connected with the catholic faith. Since the religion of Christianity had a strong upper hand over other religions, both theological and philosophical doctrines reached the intellectual heights than other

philosophical traditions of their time. The prominent scholars of this tradition were Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Anselm, Alexander, Bonaventure, Duns Scotus and William of Ockham.

Among the other traditions, Arab philosophy took its growth in Islamic lands and was mainly written in Arabic and Persian languages. It began in the ninth century and ended with the death of Ibn Rushd. Al- Farabi, Ibn Sina, Al-Ghazali, Ibn Tufayl and Ibn Rushd are some of the significant figures of this tradition. During this period, the Arabic thinkers mainly used the term *hikmah – wisdom,* to refer to the philosophic enquiries than the specific term *falsafa - philosophy*. The philosophic expositions of the Greeks strongly influenced their philosophic reflections that they adopted some platonic and Aristotelian ideas to establish their philosophy.

The philosophical endeavours of Jews happened in Islamic and Christian countries and were written in Arabic or Hebrew languages. The Jews played a significant role as intellectual intermediaries and translators who made cultural transmission possible, leading to the creation of the Renaissance and, eventually, the enlightenment possible. It began not long after the Arab tradition with which it has a close connection.

Like Arab thinkers, Jewish thinkers also used the term 'wisdom' in a larger sense to refer to the philosophic enquiries of their time. They tried to make a philosophical approach towards the concepts such as God, creation, miracles, commandments etc. discussed in the *Talmud* (it is the collection of ancient Jewish laws which govern the religious and non-religious life of Orthodox Jews), *Bible* (It is the collection of sacred religious scriptures followed by Christianity, Judaism and many more religions in the world) and *Midrash* (it is a mode of biblical interpretation prominent in the Talmudic literature).

The Byzantine philosophy was written in Greek in the Christian empire of Byzantium. One of the general characteristics of Byzantine philosophy is that they highly incorporated theological doctrines in their philosophy. However, the scholars point out that Byzantine philosophy managed to keep a border between philosophy and theology. They achieved an excellent scholarship in ancient Greek philosophy. They viewed philosophy as a study that led to the ultimate end that bought a closer communion with God by transcending the realms of nature and cognition. The major themes they discussed throughout their philosophy are the origin or creation of the world, the divine existence of God, the problem of evil, the connection between faith and reason, the problem of human free will, moral requirements for leading a good life etc.

3.1.1 Characteristics of Scholastic Philosophy

In the strict sense, scholastic philosophy is an inquiry that occurred between the ninth and fourteenth centuries. After the establishment of the fundamental doctrines and the success of Christianity as an organised body of systems, theologians began to construct philosophy to rationally justify the faith they upheld. Before this period, the Greeks engaged with questions about the nature and existence of the first principles, the nature of goodness and the nature of truth. In the scholastic era, these questions were reframed as what is God's nature and existence and how to reconcile between the truth of faith and the truth of reason.

The main thrust of Scholastic philosophy is directed to enquire about what is God's nature and existence and how to reconcile between the truth of faith and the truth of reason.

The major figures of the scholastic tradition played both the roles of philosophers and theologians. The double role they played tried to give a rational backup for the dogmas of the Catholic Church. So the relation of theology with philosophy became one of the prominent themes of medieval thought. The well-known historian Windelband viewed Scholasticism as a scientific systematisation of Church doctrine, fully expounded, examined and developed.

The scholastic thinkers used different methods of explanation to develop their philosophy. While adopting these methods, they were highly influenced by their predecessors, especially the Greek philosophies of Plato and Aristotle. Like Plato, the thinkers like Augustine employed the dialogical method in his philosophy. On the other hand, Aquinas wrote his works as a philosophical treatise by following the method of Aristotle.

Apart from this, Aquinas also wrote his works in the form of philosophical debate that began with a philosophical question which is further developed in formulating different questions and tentative answers. It got more applause from the scholastic tradition. Thinkers like William of Ockham and Duns Scotus followed this method in constructing their philosophy.

3.1.1.1 The Importance of Theology in the Scholastic Tradition

The word theology is generally approached in two different ways as divine theology and natural theology. The former

meant the divinely revealed knowledge that has enough clarity of everything. It is a knowledge coming from God and it is about God itself. Faith is the only source that works in divine theology. Here God is the basic idea from which everything begins.

On the other hand, in natural theology God is not a basic idea from which everything begins. It is seen as an end of a philosophical inquiry. Here the primacy is given to reason rather than faith, that is, rational knowledge is used to derive knowledge about the basic or fundamental fact. Aristotle viewed theology in this perspective and it created an impact in scholastic philosophy too.

Scholastic philosophy and scholastic theology had a parallel growth in the middle ages. We can find a rhythm in the development, culmination and decay of theology and philosophy during this period. However, with their specific stand, some other thinkers critically viewed the relation between philosophy and theology and considered medieval philosophy unworthy of serious study. The subservient position of philosophy to theology is one of the primary reasons for this unworthiness. They took for granted that European philosophy contained only two main periods, the ancient and the modern.

While admitting the subservient position of philosophy, we must also consider that this subordination is material, not formal. That is, both philosophy and theology formally preserve their independence in the scholastic tradition. However, there are certain theological matters in

which philosophy cannot contradict the conclusions of theology. The scholastic thinkers fully admitted this fact by considering the infallibility of the word of God. They were particular with one thing that the philosophical reasoning must not contradict dogmas that are already established as true.

It is true that, to a certain extent, scholastic thinkers used philosophy as a tool to substantiate the dogmas of the Christian faith. They used philosophy to substantiate the religious faith within the strength of reason. The scholastic intellectuals were well aware that mere faith would not give any acceptance of religion within the culture. Their philosophical attempt tried to provide a rational justification for the established dogmas of the Christian church. They tried to formulate a philosophy in support of theology to provide a solid philosophical and theological foundation for the religion, which is considered as the intellectual expression of the church.

Even though the scholastic thinkers tried to provide rational support to the Christian faith in times of conflict between faith and reason, they were more lean towards to faith than reason. However, they were not too conservative and receptive to the new ideas. Being committed Christians they could not allow a sceptical approach towards the principles of faith. So they tried to provide a systematic account of the Christian beliefs in the light of the philosophical theories developed with the influence of Greek philosophy, especially the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle.

3.1.1.2 Major Themes Discussed in the Scholastic Philosophy

The prominent discussion in scholastic philosophy revolves around the questions concerning faith and reason. From the above discussion, we get the idea that Scholastic philosophy accounts for different formulations of faith and reason in their philosophy. Some of the church fathers and the mystics gave supreme importance to faith by negating the role of reason in constructing truth. According to them, faith leads to true knowledge because it comes from God himself. On the other hand, reason works with the human mind and awakens the intellect; in their view, this arousal is incapable of creating true knowledge.

Another group of scholastic thinkers tried to bridge the gap between faith and reason by considering reason as a vehicle to carry out the knowledge aroused from faith. The significant proponents of this view are Anselm of Canterbury and Augustine of Hippo. Like the former, they too gave supreme importance to faith, but unlike them, reason works here as a helping hand to grasp what we already believe. Here reason gets a higher status but is not compatible with faith. Faith comes first and formulates the truth, and reason has to make intelligible what we believe. It is evident in the statement of Anselm "…unless I believed, I should not understand."

Another group of scholastic thinkers held the idea that the truth derived from reason is compatible with the truth acquired through faith. These are the unique attempts of the thinkers like St. Thomas Aquinas to eliminate the contradiction between faith and reason. They were great

philosophers who established a rational system of philosophy independent of revelation. According to them, one truth is compatible with another. Here they maintained the theological, philosophical and scientific doctrines without negating the magnitude of each one of them. 'What is true can never be false' is the basic principle of this claim. So if some statements are true on the basis of faith the same cannot be false in terms of reason and science.

The extreme rationalists take a different position from the above three. They differentiated the truth derived both from faith and reason. According to them, truth derived from reason is incompatible and independent from the truth acquired through faith. They accept this difference, and like other thinkers, they are not worried about reconciling the two. Their point of argument is that both faith and reason are two different means that produce different kinds of truth. They exist at different levels, and there is no need to bring a necessary relationship between them. William of Ockham who introduced Ockham's razor to philosophy, holds this position.

Apart from faith and reason, God's existence is another important theme discussed in scholastic philosophy. The difference in approach that we found in faith and reason can also be seen in their approach towards God's existence. Those who gave supreme importance for faith demanded no proof for the existence of God. Their faith in God's existence was not based on any proof. They believed first from which they formed their understanding.

There were also thinkers who formulated views that do not contradict both faith and reason. They did not consider the idea of God as self-evident.

For them, it is a derived idea by employing the natural human reason. Another group of thinkers gave status to God beyond human comprehension. They believed that humans can neither prove nor disprove the existence of God.

Another important theme that is discussed in medieval philosophy is the creation of the world. They addressed this question by considering God as the creator of the world. In relation to this, the major questions raised by the thinkers are the following, why God created the world, how God created the world and when God created the world.

Scholastic thinkers also discussed the problem of evil. If God created everything, who is responsible for the presence of evil in this world was another important question confronted by them. This discussion gave rise to the questions related to the free will of man. If God created man then who is responsible for the evil acts done by men. These questions will be discussed in detail when we deal with the philosophies of scholastic thinkers individually.

Conclusion

Scholastic philosophy is generally considered an intellectual exercise of the church fathers to safeguard the faith constituted by dogmas. It emerged in the middle ages and began to flourish with the support of the Catholic Church. Later the predominance of rationality critically viewed the philosophical subjects discussed by scholastic thinkers and wholly abandoned them by showing their worthlessness of it. They pointed out the failure of scholastic philosophy in implementing rationality to comprehend everyday matters.

The medieval thinkers who made a clear-cut difference between faith and

reason and the mystics who completely rejected reason played an important role in reducing the importance of scholastic philosophy. Like major proponents of Scholastic philosophy, they were not at all concerned about the reconciliation of faith and reason, which was the core subject matter of scholastic tradition.

Apart from these problems and criticisms confronted by scholastic thinkers, we must acknowledge the relevance of some of the topics they discussed in today's philosophical discussions. The questions regarding the problem of evil and free will are still relevant in the ethical and social matters of current philosophical discussions.

Recap

♦ The emergence of Christianity as a more organised religion with concrete philosophical support

♦ Rational Justification of faith

♦ Reconciliation between the truth of faith and the truth of reason

♦ Scholasticism is a scientific systematisation of the doctrines of the church

♦ Divine theology: God is the basic idea from which everything begins

♦ Faith is the only source that works in the divine theology

♦ The subservient position of philosophy to theology is material and not formal

♦ Faith leads to knowledge, and the reason is incapable of creating the same

♦ Faith creates truth, and reason functions as a vehicle to carry out the knowledge aroused from faith

♦ Truth derived from reason is incompatible and independent from the truth acquired through faith

♦ The idea of God is self-evident

♦ The idea of God is not a self-evident but derived idea

Objective Questions

1. What are the major traditions that existed during the medieval period?

2. What is the general assumption about the philosophical era of medieval philosophy?

3. What is the word medieval Arabs used to refer to philosophy?

4. What is the word medieval Jewish thinker used to refer to philosophy?

5. How did Windelband describe scholasticism?

6. Who were the prominent thinkers of the Greek tradition that influenced scholastic tradition?

7. What is the method Augustine adopted from Plato?

8. What is meant by divine theology?

9. What is meant by natural theology?

10. What is the major reason critics propose to consider medieval philosophy unworthy of serious study?

11. What was the primary purpose of philosophy in the scholastic tradition?

12. How did Anselm conceive faith and reason in relation to knowledge?

13. What was the position of the extreme rationalist concerning faith and reason?

Answers

1. Scholastic, Arab, Jewish and Byzantine

2. It began in the AD fifth century and ended with the AD fifteenth century

3. *Hikmah*

4. Wisdom

5. Scientific systematisation of Church doctrine

6. Plato and Aristotle

7. Dialogical

8. Divinely revealed knowledge that has enough clarity of everything

9. Derived rational knowledge about the basic facts

10. Philosophy's subservient position to theology

11. To provide a rational justification for the established dogmas of the Christian church

12. Faith produces knowledge and reason is the vehicle that carries it

13. Truth derived from reason is incompatible and independent from the truth acquired through faith

Assignments

1. Discuss the characteristic features of scholastic philosophy.

2. 'Scholastic philosophy and scholastic theology had a parallel growth in the Middle Ages.' Do you agree with this? Substantiate your answer.

3. Scholastic philosophy revolves around the question concerning faith and reason. Explain.

Suggested Readings

1. Kenny, A. (2005). *A New History of Western Philosophy Vol. 2 Medieval Philosophy*. Oxford: Clarendon Press .

2. Marenbon, J. (Ed.). (1998). *Routledge History of Philosophy Vol. 3 Medieval Philosophy*. London : Routledge.

3. Wulf, M. D. (1909). *History of Medieval Philosophy*. (P. Coffey, Trans.) New York: Longmans, Green, and Co.

4. Wulf, M. D. (1910). *Scholasticism Old And New An Introduction to Scholastic Philosophy Medieval and Modern.* (P. Coffey, Trans.) London: M H. Gill & Son, Ltd.

Saint Augustine

Learning Outcomes

By studying this unit the learner will:

◆ get a general awareness of the role of faith and reason in Augustine's philosophy

◆ be exposed to the theory of divine illumination in Augustine's philosophy

◆ be familiarised with Augustine's conception of sense knowledge

◆ be acquainted with how Augustine confronts the problem of evil in his philosophy

Prerequisites

In our childhood days we had a set of beliefs that shaped our thought and even our way of life. Do you remember any of them or do you still carry out any such belief? When life grew into other stages with an intellectual quest we understood that some of the beliefs that we upheld in our early life were wrong and some of them were right. Accordingly, new sets of beliefs get added to our life along with those beliefs that we continue to carry. It may cause serious changes either positively or negatively in our lives. In the following analysis we come across one of the major thinkers of medieval philosophy, Augustine of Hippo who underwent different transmissions of faith both in the intellectual and spiritual aspects of life.

Key Concepts

Divine illumination, Moral evil, Voluntarism

Discussion

Introduction

Scholasticism had various appearances during the medieval period and witnessed different philosophical approaches to establish the faith of the Catholic Church. The early scholastic period was dominated by the theological and philosophical writings of Saint Augustine. He was very much influenced by Plato's philosophical ideas and developed his philosophy in a neo-platonic form. The scholars pointed out that most of Augustine's philosophical writings are filled with a spirit of Christian neo-Platonism.

In the history of the Catholic Church, Augustine is considered as one of the most influential philosophers and theologians who gave valuable contributions to both philosophy and theology. He was an officially ordained priest, Doctor of the church, Bishop and most influential patristic writer. Throughout his life, Augustine battled against Donatism, Arianism and Manichaeism, the heresies against the Catholic faith.

Augustine began his philosophical inquiry in search of happiness. What makes us happy or what can fulfil our desire and ensure peace was the major philosophical question he confronted initially, which led to the search for God in the later intellectual developments. He kept a safe distance from considering philosophy as a speculative search for knowledge in all these inquiries. A firm conviction led his search for the truth is that, only through it one could attain true happiness.

The philosophical discussions of Augustine are centred on three important subject matters: the soul in itself, the soul and its relation to the surrounding world and the soul and its relation with the absolute reality- God. Among these three, Augustine gave more stress on the last one, grounding upon the philosophical foundations of platonic and neo-platonic ideas. He considered man's knowledge as the basis and model for the analogical knowledge of God and everything that comes from God.

He had a Christian vision of truth while developing epistemological, metaphysical and ethical ideas to confront the questions related to the above mentioned subject matters. So even when he speaks philosophy, it is grounded in his strong convictions in the dogmas of the Catholic Church. However, he did not have this firm conviction from his early life but went through different life experiences that shaped his faith in this way. Let us go through a small biographical sketch of Augustine to clarify the same.

3.2.1 A Biographical Sketch of Saint Augustine

Augustine was born in Tagaste, North Africa, to a pagan father, Patricius and a Christian mother, Monica, who profoundly influenced her son. He was not a catholic at the beginning of his life but was interested in engaging with theological and philosophical questions from the early period of his life. After his early education in his native city and the nearby city Madaura, Augustine went to Carthage to study rhetoric. During this period, he was led to experience various intellectual currents of that time.

Augustine questioned the illogicality of the Christian faith that he received mainly from his mother, Monica. He also opened himself to all experiences of life and tried to find a satisfying answer to Christian belief about the presence of evil in this world. It made him a Manichaean in this period, believing that the world is governed by two principles- good and evil. However, later he abandoned this too, became a sceptic, and began to doubt everything.

In a while, he heard the sermon of St. Ambrose, who introduced him to neo-platonic thought, especially with the philosophy of Plotinus. It changed him again and led him to embrace the faith of the Catholic Church. The intellectual conversion that he had from scepticism to neo-platonic ideas led to religious conversion and embrace Christian faith. He was converted to the Catholic faith by St. Ambrose of Milan, who gave Baptism to St. Augustine in 387.

After this great event, he returned to Tagaste, where he was born and lived a life according to the monastic rules and regulations. He received priestly ordination and became the bishop of Hippo in North Africa, which he held until his death in 430. During this period, he dedicated his life to fight against all heresies prevalent against the catholic faith and propagating the catholic faith with his writings. He grew in faith with deep conviction in the grace of God. So he gave more importance to the grace of God than any other philosophy and strongly believed that it is through the grace of God that men can achieve an absolute state of happiness.

3.2.2 Epistemology of Saint Augustine

Like other thinkers, he did not aim to formulate a theory of knowledge to establish systematic metaphysics. For him, the most significant goal a human being has to attain is true happiness and beatitude. The intellectual and academic purposes that the theory of knowledge does in other philosophies are secondary for Augustine.

In Augustine's view, no one is happy and feels sufficiency unless and until they find the truth. He explains it from a subjective experience when he felt an urgent need to seek the truth. Augustine spiritualised this inquiry and interpreted it as a search for Christ and Christian wisdom. He also tried to universalise this subjective experience with his epistemological doctrines.

The main point of Augustine's argument is that the only knowledge worth having is the knowledge of God and self. All other knowledge, such as metaphysics, the science of logic and ethics, are subordinated to the knowledge of God. In other words, all knowledge has significance only in relation to the knowledge of God.

Unlike other thinkers, Augustine followed the dictum "believe in order that you may understand". In comparison with faith and reason, he prioritised the former over the latter. He made clear that even though we cannot understand everything we believe, we must be prepared to accept the revealed truth of faith solely on the church's authority, which is the direct representation of God here on earth.

Augustine's dictum "believe in order that you may understand"

Later, when Augustine developed his epistemological theory, he questioned the sceptical position that doubted everything. Augustine pointed out that the sceptic cannot doubt everything as they state. They have to be certain of some truths; only then the negation of some other truth will be valid. For instance, in the disjunctive propositions among the two alternatives, one will be true and the other false. In such cases, we cannot reject both the alternatives given in the proposition.

Further, he states that everyone who doubts knows that s/he doubts so that one who doubts is certain of at least one truth that she/he doubts. Likewise, Augustine also affirms the truth of mathematics. When someone says that five plus four makes nine, s/he does not say that they ought to make nine; rather, they do make nine. Augustine also uses doubt to prove the existence of the actual object, further developed by the modern Philosopher Descartes, to derive the self-evident principle.

Augustine states that when we doubt everything possible to doubt, the very fact of doubting proves our existence. That is, we can doubt the existence of the objects in the world or the existence of the transcendental realities such as God, soul etc., and this doubting becomes possible only for a being that exists. So the very fact of doubt shows the existence of the one who doubts. With a being that exists, Augustine adds understanding and living. According to him, existence proves the life and understanding of the individual as well. That is, the doubting individual cannot be aware of anything unless s/he is alive, and s/he must also become aware of the understanding ability that works in doubting. So an individual that doubts can be aware of three things that the being exists, lives, and understands.

3.2.2.1 The Lowest and Highest Levels of Knowledge

Augustine follows the path of Plato, who considers the knowledge derived from the senses as the lowest kind. According to him, the rational soul of man attains real knowledge with absolute certainty when it reflects on eternal truths. Augustine considers this unchanging truth as real knowledge. The same cannot be produced from engaging with the changing material world. However, Augustine understands the necessity of this knowledge in leading a practical life.

Augustine identifies certain differences in the sensation that works between the humans and the brute. In his view, sensation normally works in both, but the significant difference is that men can have and do have a rational knowledge of worldly things. They can deliberately memorise and recall what they sensed when needed and perform any other operation with the use of reason which the brutes cannot do. It gives a higher status to human sense knowledge in comparison with the brute.

Between the lowest knowledge of sensation and the highest knowledge of the eternal things, Augustine identifies a midway in which the human mind judges corporeal objects with rational standards. At this level, a culmination of both senses and reason creates practical knowledge to make good use of temporal things. It differs from the wisdom that works in contemplating eternal things. The former always emphasises the practicality of the world and is directed toward action. On the other hand, wisdom focuses on the contemplation of eternal and spiritual objects.

'How can we attain the certainty of knowledge?' was the important question that Augustine confronted in formulating his views on knowledge. He characterises the eternal truth as never-changing, absolute and remains beyond all doubts. How does the finite changing human mind attain this absolute truth that governs and rules the human mind itself? Augustine considered this a serious issue to be sorted out because he firmly believed that in apprehending eternal and necessary truths, the human mind takes part in the content of the divine mind.

> Divine illumination - The divine light that comes from God illumines the human mind to see the characteristics of the everlasting truths

In order to explain man's relation with eternal and necessary truths, Augustine uses the concept of divine illumination. In his view, God illuminates the human mind to attain the changeless characteristics of the eternal truth. To make it more precise, the divine light that comes from God illumines the human mind to see the characteristics of the everlasting truths.

Augustine developed the notion of divine illumination with Platonic and neo-Platonic influences. Plato, in his philosophy, used the concept of 'reminiscence' to know the certainty of the eternal and necessary truths. Augustine followed the same path of Plato to develop the concept of divine illumination. Like Plato used the metaphor of the sun to explain the idea of Good, Augustine uses the same metaphor to explain the notion of divine illumination.

In Augustine's view, the eternal and never-changing truths are superior to the human mind. The human intellectual capabilities are insufficient to grasp the eternal truths, so we need external support from a higher being - God enables us to apprehend what transcends our mind. As the sunlight makes the worldly things visible, the divine illumination makes the eternal truths visible to the human mind.

By God's grace, our minds get illumined to understand the divine truths.

3.2.3 Problem of Evil in Augustine's Philosophy

The problem of evil arises in Augustine's philosophy in relation to his conceptualisation of God. The essential characteristics that Augustine attributed to God are omnipotence, omnipresence and eternity. He considered God of the cause of everything and finds the fullness of justice, wisdom and goodness in God. With the creation of the world, God also created time and arranged everything in a perfect way. According to him, God created everything not out of compulsion but out of the free-will and remains eternal and timeless. So everything that exists in this world carries a divine will with it.

Augustine advocated the theory of voluntarism in his philosophy- a theory that gives primacy to the will over the intellect. According to Augustine, the will is love, and he considers the will's primacy as the intrinsic law of being. Voluntarism also emphasises the absolute freedom enjoyed by God from having external necessities in his choices. From the infinite possibilities, God chose a finite number and actualised it by his will.

From the above statements, we can derive a significant problem that Augustine faced in his philosophy- the problem of evil. If God has created everything and everything that exists is an expression of goodness, then from where does evil come? Does God create evil? How does God, which is full of goodness, create evil? Augustine discusses this problem in his famous book *City of God, Book XII* where he intended to make the human responsible for their sin.

Augustine answered the questions related to the problem of evil by considering it as the privation of Good. Privation refers to the absence of something that nature ought to have. Augustine received the idea of privation from the philosophy of Plotinus and used the same to defend against the Manichaean idea of evil. He shows the presence of evil with the absence or negation of goodness and believed that good is possible without evil, but evil cannot exist without good. There is no such thing as real evil or to say it is not an actual entity and not created by God because everything created by God is full of Goodness.

Augustine brings all kinds of evil under the concept of privation. We can distinguish three kinds of evil in Augustine's philosophy. They are metaphysical, physical and moral evil. The metaphysical evil is the deficiency or lack in the being. It is caused by the lack of perfection in a being. For instance, men lack many qualities that other creatures have, like the capacity to fly like birds or swim like a fish. It is a lack in the being of man. Under this aspect, evil is present in all living beings because, in Augustine's view, there is only one perfect being with all qualities, and that is God.

Physical evil consists of the privation or lack in the physique of being. Being normal human beings, we are supposed to have some essential qualities and privation of them is considered as physical evil. For instance, blindness is the privation of sight in a being that ought to have sight to fulfil the essential requirement of its nature. These lacks in a being are referred to as physical evil.

Moral evil consists of privation or lack of good. It is the action done contrary to the will of God. God created everything in perfect order and harmony. When a man turns away from God, there is disorder. Augustine considers it the worst evil- a state away from God or the highest good. He places man's free will as the cause of moral evil; that is, it is created not by the creator but by the created will.

According to him, the human will in itself is good. It is placed as the intermediate good and positioned between good and evil. It has free movement with no compulsion behind it. Either the will of man can turn towards the higher state of God and find the blessed life or take the evil path by fully immersing in the mutable things.

Augustine holds that men who use the freedom of the will have a moral obligation to choose between good and evil. There is an inner conscience that would tell us either to do or not to do certain things. Augustine interpreted it as the voice of God. Since God has implanted the will, there is a compulsion from God to choose the Good path. Even then it is our choice to heed or not heed the voice of God.

However this does not mean that God is unaware of what we will opt for in a particular situation. Rather, it only shows that God does not intervene in the will's choice and make it liable for our actions.

However, the human will is free to turn away from the highest good and true happiness and embrace the changing material things. When it turns away from God, it starts to act against the divine law that creates an absence of goodness within the individual. Augustine named this absence of good in the individual as moral evil. If men want to turn towards the higher realm of happiness, they must receive grace from the higher being- God. Augustine places the grace and mercy of God as a perfect means to attain the highest truth. In his view, if men have God's grace, they can reach a higher state of goodness with their will.

and the problem of evil contributed much to the development of western philosophy. Many successive thinkers gave importance to these notions and developed their epistemological and ethical theories. For instance, the father of modern philosophy, Rene Descartes got inspiration from Augustine's epistemological approach to derive a clear and self evident idea. He owes much to Augustine in creating the famous maxim 'cogito ergo sum - I think therefore I am' from which he began his philosophy. Likewise most of the medieval thinkers of his time accepted the philosophical explanation for the problem of evil and adopted the same view in their philosophy. Apart from that there are also thinkers who did not take the philosophy of Augustine seriously. They problematised the primacy of faith in his philosophy and considered it as less worthy for the serious philosophical enquiry.

Conclusion

Augustine's approach to epistemology

Recap

♦ Augustine developed his philosophy in a neo-platonic form

♦ Augustine philosophically and theologically encountered Donatism, Arianism and Manichaeism, the heresies against the Catholic faith

♦ Attain happiness was the principal aim of Augustine's philosophy

♦ Augustine followed the dictum "believe in order that you may understand"

♦ The only knowledge worth having is the knowledge of God and self

♦ An individual who doubts can be aware of three things; that the being exists, lives and understands

♦ The rational soul of man attains real knowledge.

- The eternal truth is ever-existing/never changing, absolute and remains beyond all doubts.

- The divine illumination makes the eternal truths visible to the human mind.

- Augustine considered God- the cause of everything and finds the fullness of justice, wisdom and goodness in God.

- Augustine advocated the theory of voluntarism in his philosophy- a theory that gives primacy to the will over the intellect.

- Evil as the privation of Good.

- Moral evil is the action done contrary to the will of God.

Objective Questions

1. Who Influenced Augustine from the Greek tradition?

2. What were the three important subject matters that Augustine dealt seriously in his philosophy?

3. What is the ultimate goal for Augustine that a human being can attain?

4. What is the knowledge that Augustine considered as most worthy to attain?

5. What are the three aspects of being that Augustine derived from doubting?

6. How do we attain the knowledge of the eternal truths in Augustine's philosophy?

7. What is meant by Voluntarism in Augustine's philosophy?

8. How did Augustine define moral evil in his philosophy?

9. How did Augustine define physical evil in his philosophy?

10. What is identified as the cause of evil in Augustine's philosophy?

Answers

1. Plato

2. The soul in itself, the soul and its relation to the surrounding world and the soul and its relation with the absolute reality- God

3. True happiness and true beatitude

4. The knowledge of God and self

5. The being exists, lives and understands

6. Through divine illumination

7. The primacy of the will over the intellect

8. As the privation of the Good

9. As the privation in the physique of being

10. The freedom of the will

Assignments

1. 'Believe in order that you may understand.' Explain the epistemology of Saint Augustine by using this statement.

2. Write a note on the levels of knowledge put forward by Saint Augustine.

3. 'Evil as the privation of Good.' Explain.

Suggested Readings

1. Copleston, Frederick. (1962). *A History of Philosophy Vol. 2 Medieval Philosophy.* New York: Image books.

2. Kenny, A. (2005). *A New History of Western Philosophy Vol. 2 Medieval Philosophy.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

3. Marenbon, J. (Ed.). (1998). *Routledge History of Philosophy Vol. 3 Medieval Philosophy.* London : Routledge.

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

5. Wulf, M. D. (1909). *History of Medieval Philosophy.* (P. Coffey, Trans.) New York: Longmans, Green, and Co.

6. Wulf, M. D. (1910). *Scholasticism Old And New: An Introduction to Scholastic Philosophy Medieval and Modern.* (P. Coffey, Trans.) London: M H. Gill & Son, Ltd.

Saint Thomas Aquinas

3
UNIT

Learning Outcomes

This unit will enable the learner to:

♦ get a general awareness of Aquinas' philosophy

♦ be familiarised with the notions of faith and reason in Aquinas' philosophy

♦ get exposed to the idea of God in Aquinas' philosophy

♦ be familiarised with the proofs for the existence of God discussed by Aquinas

Prerequisites

In our personal lives, we might have been confronted with many situations in which we lost our religious convictions or were taken up with other convictions of faith that were different from the faith we upheld. If we analyse such situations we may realise the role of reason in determining the changes happening in our faith. If reason works along with the faith what happens to it? In our reflective mind there might have occurred several situations in which serious confrontations of both happened. It is a process that we undergo in our daily life. In the following discussions, we come across a thinker, Thomas Aquinas, who spent most of his life studying the relationship between faith and reason and its applicability in knowing the existence of God.

Key Words

Motion, Cause, Contingency, Perfection, Purpose

Discussion

Introduction

When we get into the discussions of the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas, the primary question that the scholars put forth is related to his relationship with philosophy and theology. Scholars consider him both as a philosopher and a theologian and point out that philosophy in Aquinas is indistinguishable from the theology he proposed. However, Aquinas found a difference between philosophy and theology in their approach to the subject matters. In his opinion, philosophy begins with facts and then passes to God; and theology begins with God and passes to the facts.

Aquinas was a priest and a Dominican friar with a deep knowledge of philosophy and theology. When it comes to philosophical matters, he trusted more on Aristotle's philosophy and used it to formulate his philosophical conceptions on different subject matters. Like Aristotle, he never undermined the importance of reason in knowing the truth and used the same to rationally demonstrate the existence of God.

Aquinas admitted two stages in the attainment of rational knowledge. They are the senses and the intellect. They are intimately related in the process of acquiring knowledge. Through senses, we gain knowledge about particular things while the intellect produces knowledge of the universals. Here the intellect depends fully on the materials produced by the senses to form the knowledge about the universals.

For Aquinas, showing justice to Aristotle's philosophy was not an easy task since he had to protect the essence and nature of both philosophy and theology. Footing on Aristotle's philosophy, Aquinas took up the challenge to introduce concrete philosophy without corrupting the essence and nature of theology. By keeping objectivity as one of his philosophy's essential characteristics, Aquinas justified himself and remained away from the criticisms faced by other scholastic thinkers.

As stated above, objectivity is the chief characteristic of Aquinas' philosophy. Unlike other scholastic thinkers, Aquinas built his philosophy by trusting in the power of human intellect and considered the essence of material things as the immediate object of it. Like Aristotle, Aquinas also began his philosophy with sense experience and formulated complex concepts from it. Considering these features, scholars, to a larger extent, separate his philosophy from Christian spirituality and general medieval outlook.

Important works: *Summa Theologica, The Summa Contra Gentiles, Treatise on Happiness, On Law, Morality, and Politics, Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, Treatise on the virtues*

3.3.1 Faith and Reason

The relation between faith and reason is a complex issue addressed in scholastic philosophy, which is generally used to state the relation between philosophy and theology. Some medieval thinkers like Augustine held that there is no difference between philosophy and theology. According to him, human intellect has to

depend completely on the divine power to extract intelligibility from the data of experience. So, whatever knowledge that we gain, results from divine providence. However, there were also thinkers like Aquinas who differentiated between philosophy and theology by stating the importance of the natural capability of the reason for acquiring truth.

In opposition to voluntarism, which gives the primacy of the will over the intellect in Augustine, Aquinas proposed the primacy of the intellect over the will. According to him, reason precedes volition; that is, in man, the act of understanding precedes the movement of the will, and it is even extended to the rational demonstration of God's existence.

Aquinas conceives reason as a faculty of the intellect which is used to cognise the essence of things. In other words, reasoning is considered as the movement of the intellect toward understanding. He also views this capacity of reasoning as a distinguishable feature of humans that differentiate them not only from animals who lack this faculty of understanding but also from other types of intelligent beings such as God and angels who understands immediately without the aid of reason. The reason may refer to other sorts of knowledge, including knowledge gained by probability, intuitive knowledge and scientific truth.

With the influence of Aristotle's philosophy, Aquinas gave importance to reason and stated that human reason was endowed with a natural ability to acquire knowledge of objects. According to him, there is only a single truth, either in the field of faith or in the field of reason. There cannot be something that is true according to faith and at the same time false according to reason. What is affirmed by faith as knowledge is also affirmed by reason and vice versa.

However, Aquinas differentiated the field of faith from the field of reason and gave a higher status to the former. He conceived faith as a gift from God for making us perfect. If we are perfected by faith then that necessarily follows the perfection of our intelligence. Thus the faith itself empowers reason by providing the ability to penetrate more deeply in its own rational sphere. So there is no question of conflict between faith and reason as we normally think.

Aquinas speaks of two sources of certitude that work in men; the certitude of vision and the certitude of will. The former works in relation to our understanding and the latter gives certitude to our beliefs. Concerning the notion of understanding, Aquinas uses the term 'vision' to represent the metaphorical way of understand things with the intellect. Understanding is always considered an epistemic state, providing a clear vision of something.

When it comes to the matter of faith, Aquinas attributed certitude of will to prove the same. In faith itself, he differentiated between the truths that can be demonstrated with the aid of reason, such as the existence of God, the immortality of the souls etc. and the truths that are only the matters of revelation, such as trinity, incarnation, sacraments, original sin etc. According to him, the latter is not the object of philosophy on which the human intellect cannot penetrate. They are truths that must be accepted by us only because God has chosen to reveal them to us.

While establishing the subject matters of natural theology, Aquinas made a distinction between the belief of the learned and the belief of the simple. The simple believers need not demand a justification for their faith; rather, they trust in the revelations of faith. Their

belief is a leap into the darkness and entirely depends on the revelation. On the other hand, learned people always try to give rational justification for their faith as it is done in natural theology.

3.3.2 Proofs for God's Existence

Being a theologian and a philosopher Aquinas approached the notion of God with most care by focusing not only on scriptures and the biblical tradition but also on the reason with which he tried to demonstrate the existence of God. Like Aristotle, Aquinas conceives God as pure form or pure actuality. In him there is no element of materiality. As mentioned above, Aquinas offers two ways of faith and reason to know God. When it comes to faith, it is considered as the direct knowledge attained by the revelation; that is, God can reveal himself to whom he wants.

God's knowledge, when it is conceived as a matter of reason, is indirect and happens with mediation. It begins with aposteriori knowledge and rises to conceptual or rational knowledge. Here, in all these processes, the knowledge of God passes from the known to the unknown or from effect to the cause or from conditioned to the unconditioned.

The term *aposteriori* literally means "from what comes later" and signifies a kind of knowledge that comes after sensory experience.

Being authentic to his faith, Aquinas conceived the knowledge of God as the supreme end of all human cognitive activities. For him, God is the beginning and end of all things; everything comes from God and returns to Him. Along with Aristotle's causation theory, Aquinas conceived God as the efficient and final cause of the world. God created, sustained and remained as the final end of everything. Every movement of perfection is directed towards the ultimate end- God.

One of the major aims that Aquinas tried to fulfil through his philosophy was to give a rational justification for God's existence. He spent a significant amount of time arguing that many propositions concerning God can be proved in philosophical terms. That is, we can give strong philosophical reasons for demonstrating God's existence which begins from the sensible world without any prejudices and presuppositions.

This rational demonstration is not immediate knowledge; rather a mediate knowledge which begins with the sensory experience of the material world. Since sensory knowledge has only access to knowledge of the material world, we cannot apply the same to know the nature of God because there is nothing material in God. However, he uses sensory knowledge as a foundational knowledge on which he builds his rational demonstration.

In Aquinas' point of view, there are five ways by which human intellect can prove or demonstrate the existence of God. Each begins by focusing on some general character of things known to us with sensory experience and then we apply our rational intelligence to move to another level of explanation that transcends our knowledge. Now let us look into the five proofs that Aquinas gave in order to prove the existence of God.

The first of the five proofs of Aquinas

begins with the principle of motion. According to him, our senses experience movement or motion in our life and every motion presupposes a mover which produces that movement. Here motion is understood on the basis of the idea of actuality and potentiality proposed by Aristotle. Aquinas, by following the theory of Aristotle states that a thing can be moved from potentiality to actuality only by a thing that is in actuality. In that sense everything that is moved is moved by an other and that other is moved by another other. Since there cannot be an endless series of motion or changed things we come to a remedy of unmoved principle of motion. That is, there must be a being which causes changes in things without being changed or moved and that is God. Here Aquinas uses the Aristotelian idea of prime mover or unmoved mover which produces initial motion in things and remains constant forever. He follows the same pattern of argument in the following proofs too.

Aquinas based the second proof on the cause effect relation in the sensible world. If we look around, we see the presence of new things in the world and there are causes behind every new existence. Nothing can be the cause of itself; in order to be the cause of something it must exist prior to that thing. So there are causes and as Aquinas states, they are related as the members of the series. But it is impossible to have infinity in the series of causes, so there must be a first cause which itself is not caused and that is God.

The third proof begins from the fact that some beings come into existence and pass away; they are contingent and not necessary beings. If they were permanent beings, then they would neither come into being nor pass away. Aquinas argues that there must be a necessary being which must be the reason for the existence of the contingent being and that necessary being is God.

Aquinas states the forth argument based on the degree of perfection, of goodness, of truth etc. These qualities are present in the existing beings and things to a greater or lesser degree. These lesser and higher degrees of perfection necessarily imply the existence of a being with the highest degree of perfection. In other words, the degrees of perfection are not intelligible unless they are related to the highest in that order and that is God.

In the final argument Aquinas states that everything in nature realises an end or purpose. It presupposes an intelligent guide who created a purpose behind everything and that intelligent guide is God.

Aquinas in developing these proofs relied more on Aristotle's philosophy and tries to prove the existence of God from the notion of motion, cause, contingency, perfection and end or purpose. These proofs share some knowledge about the essence of God but that cannot be considered as the complete or comprehensive knowledge of God.

Conclusion

Aquinas throughout his philosophy argues for the unity of truth which he found in both reason and faith. The conflict of reason and faith was the major riddle that the scholastic philosophers confronted in their thought. While considering this issue some of them totally negated the role of reason and fully depended on faith in acquiring truth. This was one of the major reasons for considering this period as 'Dark Age'. Aquinas in developing his philosophy gave enough attention to develop it as a product of rational reflection with-

out denying the importance of faith. So we cannot impose the general criticisms faced by scholasticism to Aquinas' philosophy which reconciled the conflict between faith and reason in an ideal manner.

Recap

♦ Thomas Aquinas is both the philosopher and the theologian

♦ Philosophy begins with facts and then passes to God; on the other hand, theology begins with God and passes to facts

♦ Aquinas aimed at introducing concrete philosophy without corrupting the essence and nature of theology

♦ Primacy of the intellect over the will

♦ The capacity of reasoning as a distinguishable feature of humans

♦ What is affirmed by reason as knowledge cannot be rejected by faith and the same is applicable to the revealed truths affirmed only by faith

♦ The certitude of vision and the certitude of will

♦ The belief of the learned and the belief of the simple

♦ Aquinas conceives God as pure form or pure actuality

♦ Aquinas conceived the knowledge of God as the supreme end of all human cognitive activities

♦ Aquinas conceived God as the efficient and final cause of the world

♦ Aquinas begins the proof of God with the principle of motion

♦ The second proof is based on the cause-effect relation in the sensible world

♦ The third proof is from contingency

♦ The fourth proof is based on the degree of perfection, of goodness, of truth etc

♦ The fifth proof is from the purpose of everything that exists in the world

Objective Questions

1. What is the source of universal knowledge in Aquinas' philosophy?

2. Who is the Greek Philosopher that had a major influence on Thomas Aquinas' philosophy?

3. What was the significant task that Aquinas carried out in his life?

4. What is the chief characteristic of Aquinas' philosophy?

5. How does Aquinas describe reasoning in his philosophy?

6. What is the division that Aquinas brought in relation with the truth of faith?

7. How does Aquinas conceive God in his philosophy?

8. What is the supreme end of all human cognitive activities in Aquinas?

Answers

1. Intellect

2. Aristotle

3. He introduced concrete philosophy without corrupting the essence and nature of theology

4. Objectivity

5. The movement of the intellect toward understanding

6. The truths that can be demonstrated with the aid of reason and the truths that are only the matters of revelation

7. As pure form or pure actuality

8. The knowledge of God

Assignments

1. Analyse Aquinas' arguments for the compatibility of faith and reason, and the ways in which reason can support and enhance faith. Discuss the implications of this compatibility for contemporary debates on the relationship between faith and reason.

2. Discuss how Aquinas understands the relationship between reasoning and the senses, and how he thinks that reasoning can lead us to the knowledge of the world beyond what we can perceive through our senses.

3. Discuss the arguments that Saint Aquinas used for establishing the existence of God.

Suggested Readings

1. Copleston, Frederick. (1962). *A History of Philosophy Vol. 2 Medieval Philosophy.* New York: Image books.

2. Kenny, A. (2005). *A New History of Western Philosophy Vol. 2 Medieval Philosophy.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

3. Marenbon, J. (Ed.). (1998). *Routledge History of Philosophy Vol. 3 Medieval Philosophy.* London : Routledge.

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

5. Wulf, M. D. (1909). *History of Medieval Philosophy.* (P. Coffey, Trans.) New York: Longmans, Green, and Co.

6. Wulf, M. D. (1910). *Scholasticism Old And New An Introduction to Scholastic Philosophy Medieval and Modern.* (P. Coffey, Trans.) London: M H. Gill & Son, Ltd.

UNIT 4

Introduction to Islamic Philosophy

Learning Outcomes

In this unit, the learner will :

- get an overview of Islamic philosophy and its nuances

- get a general awareness of the various philosophical engagements especially in logic and politics in the Islamic philosophy

- get familiar with major philosophers known in the Islamic philosophical traditions especially the Arab Peripatetic and Illuminationist streams

- know the common similarities and philosophical engagements between the Islamic philosophy and the Christian philosophy at the medieval time

Prerequisites

Is there a west in complete separation from the east? Can an age be exclusively reserved for one school of thought or world-view? Does an exclusive identification of the west with Christianity and the east with Islam make sense at least through a philosophical lens? Most of the time, when we hear the phrase 'medieval philosophy,' our mind goes to the philosophical speculations that occurred in Western Europe during the middle ages, starting from the fall of the Roman Empire in A.D 4th and 5th centuries to the Renaissance of the 15th century. But there are nuances in such a view. From what we have learned about the mythological and theological origins of ancient Greek philosophy, we cannot think of medieval philosophy as a stand-alone. There has been an irresistible influence and impact of Greek Classics on scholasticism. There have also been undeniable impacts of Scholastic philosophy in Medieval time on Islamic philosophy and vice-versa. The intellectual encounters have happened both in inter-religious and intra-religious senses.

Key Concepts

A*l-falsafa*/*al-Hikmat*, Peripatetic philosophy, Illuminationism, Theology

Discussion

What is Islamic philosophy? Is it primarily a philosophy produced by Muslims? It will be difficult to respond to it positively for two reasons; one, there are many philosophers who are not Muslims and yet they work in the domain and problems of Islamic philosophy, two, there are many Muslims who work as philosophers but yet they are not interested in Islamic issues in their philosophical thoughts and works. Then, is Islamic philosophy something which is exclusively written in Arabic? It will be difficult to respond to it with 'yes' either because a huge chunk of Islamic philosophy has been written in non-Arabic languages, in particular Persian. Then the next question is whether Islamic philosophy is a philosophy which is interested in dealing with the conceptual features of Islamic theological issues? Not necessarily, for sure, as there are many thinkers who have extensively worked on logic and grammar, part of Islamic philosophy, but without any direct religious relevance in those works. In that sense, what is Islamic philosophy has been a matter of unresolvable debate.

> Peripatetic school applies the Aristotelian philosophical method in the Islamic philosophical tradition

Islamic philosophy is an intellectual amalgamation of philosophy, logic, theology and mysticism. It is neither a religious dogmatic theology nor a collection of some translated works of Greek texts. Instead, it is an independent and original philosophy based on divine and Islamic intellectual foundations. Apart from concentrating only on philosophical concepts, Islamic philosophy also deals with theology, Sufism, law, logic, and natural and mathematical sciences.

A*l-falsafa* or *Al-hikmat* is the Arabic term used to denote philosophy in general and Islamic philosophical ideas in particular. Bayt al-Hikma, the House of Wisdom, founded in Baghdad, the capital of the empire of the seventh Abbasid caliph Al-Ma'mun (A.D. 786-833) served for long as an observatory and, more significantly, as a library and centre for the study and translation of Greek philosophical and scientific texts into Arabic. The interesting point is that the translators, attached to Bayt al-Hikma, were most often Christians.

3.4.1 Arab Peripatetic philosophy (Peripatetic Islamic philosophy)

The phrase 'peripatetic philosophy' refers to that philosophy which follows the Aristotelian philosophical method and tools, especially his logic and metaphysics. Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi, Ibn sina and Ibn Rushd are in general known as the Arab Peripatetic philosophers (Peripatetic Islamic philosophers) for their introduction and extensive usage of

the Aristotelian logic and method in the Islamic world.

The era of Abbasid caliphate in the Islamic world is known for the rise of Arab peripatetic philosophy. The Abbasid caliphate encouraged and facilitated massive text-editions, collections of essays on particular themes and historical periods, and annotated translations of Greek thought into Arabic. Many commentaries on the Greek philosophers made by Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina became much influential.

3.4.1.1 Al-Kindi

Abu Yusuf Ya'qub Al-Kindi, who is reported to have lived between A.D. 800 and A.D 870, is known as the father of Arab philosophy. However, he was against Neo-platonists and Peripatetics on fundamental issues like the creation of the world, the possibility of miracles and prophetic revelation. He defines God as the 'First Cause' or 'the One, the cause of the cause'. This kind of definition based on causality comes from Aristotelian philosophy, where he discusses the four causes. Although Aristotle uses the term First Cause, he does not explicitly say if it is God. When Al-Kindi discusses God's attributes, he uses negative theology, describing God only in negative terms like 'not a substance', 'not a matter, 'not a contingent being', etc. According to him, the philosopher cannot make any positive statements about God. It is a method of Plotinus who said, "We state what is not; what is, we do not state".

To explain the world in his treatise *On Definitions and Descriptions of Things*, Al-Kindi accepts the emanation theory; everything emanates from the uppermost cause, the One, through passing and developing from the reflection of the first intellect. Later, Al-Farabi develops this theory by explaining the ten intellects and terrestrial bodies. Nevertheless, it does not explain the divine creationism of the world acceptably held by the orthodox community.

Negative theology is a form of theological thinking and religious practice which attempts to describe God only in negative terms like 'not a substance', 'not a matter' etc.

Al Kindi's famous treatise is *On First Philosophy*. The first philosophy is another name for metaphysics, as Aristotle called it. According to Al-Kindi, the first philosophy is the knowledge of the first cause since the rest of the philosophy is contained in its understanding. The main intention of writing this treatise is to establish the proof of His divinity and its explanation. For Al-Kindi, philosophy is not confined only to the world of senses; it also includes divine knowledge. Thus, his philosophy is an amalgamation of physics, metaphysics, science and theology. Al-Kindi's conceptualization of God is different from the mainstream Islamic conceptualizations. Instead of Allah, the common name of Islamic God in the Quran and Holy Scriptures, Al-Kindi uses the 'Creator' and the First Cause. While the term 'Creator' has been used only once in Quran, the First Cause has not been used in the Quran and other Holy scriptures at all.

According to Al-Kindi, God is the only actual cause. The world emanating from the First Cause depends on and differs from the Cause which is limited by time and space. The oneness of the True One and the plurality of the world are different; everything except God has five predicables: genus, species, difference, property and accident. Although Al-Kindi supports

the emanation theory, he does not contradict the Islamic tradition in stating that the world is created out of nothing. After Al-Kindi, Islamic philosophy grew up and later was classified into two essential schools, peripatetic and illumination.

> Two schools of Islamic philosophy; peripatetic and illuminationist

3.4.1.2 Al-Farabi

Abu Nasr Al-Farabi is a Turkish-origin Islamic philosopher who reportedly lived between A.D 870 and 950. As a recognition of his logical achievements, he was designated as the 'second teacher'. Al-Farabi is best known for his rigorous reworking of Platonic and Aristotelian metaphysics, logic and political philosophy. Apart from the logical writings, Al-Farabi has written commentaries on *Organon,* a famous collection of Aristotle's six works on logical analysis and dialectic and independent treatises on political philosophy, philosophy of religion, metaphysics, psychology and natural philosophy. He has an excellent commentary on the *De Interpretatione*, (translated as 'On Interpretation'), the second text from *Organon* and one of the earliest philosophical works dealing with the relationship between language and logic in a formal way. The larger aim of his logical writings is to describe the relationship between philosophical language and ordinary language. Since Greek philosophical works and ideas were translated and brought into Arabic, the earliest Arab philosophers had to find the right Arab words for each philosophical term. Al-Farabi's earliest effort was to harmonise the striving approaches to studying a language. The main reason for this effort is that the practitioners of the native Arabic language accused the philosophers of substituting Greek grammar for Arabic grammar because the philosophers had used philosophical words in Arabic.

According to Al-Farabi, logic is a universal grammar that applies rules to any language, while grammar, on the other hand, provides rules limited to only a particular language. Although logic and grammar are two distinct rule-based sciences, Al-Farabi tries to establish logic as an independent philosophical study of language that harmonies with grammatical science. Apart from the discussion on linguistic topics, he has made significant contributions to syllogisms, theory of demonstration and epistemological issues.

In his metaphysics, Al-Farabi holds emanational cosmology borrowed from Neoplatonism. The Neoplatonic metaphysics gives the foundational basis for his work, *The Political Regime.* Nevertheless, his emanation theory is a mixed version of the Islamic concept of nature, metaphysics and its relation to natural philosophy. The emanation theory is basically drawn from the theories of Ptolemaic geocentrism and divine metaphysics. According to his cosmology, the universe is fixed with various concentric spheres such as the outermost sphere, known as the first heaven, the sphere of fixed stars, and the spheres of Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the Sun, Venus, Mercury, and the Moon. Most of the concepts drawn by Al-Farabi for his emanation theory can be seen in many sources, especially in Aristotelian metaphysics, where God is not an efficient cause; instead, he is the first cause of motion.

Al-Farabi's emanation theory/ emanational cosmology is inherently connected with his emanation of intellect. He characterises God as an intellect whose self-understanding causes the emanation of other intellects. When God thinks about itself, the first intellect emanates from God. Then, the third intellect emanates from the second intellect which is thinking about God, and the first heaven emanates by virtue of the second intellect's self-contemplation. This process continues as each intellect emanates from its previous intellect by thinking about God, and each heaven emanates from the last intellect by the intellect's self-contemplation, arriving finally at the tenth intellect other than God and the last heaven, the moon.

While the rest of Al-Farabi's philosophy is Aristotelian in character, supported by Neoplatonic elements, his political philosophy is Platonic. Since Plato's political philosophy is based upon his metaphysical foundations, Al-Farabi's two significant works on political philosophy -*Kitab al-Siyasah al-Madaniyyah* (translated as *Book on Caution on the Path of Administration*) and the *Madinah Fadilah* (translated as *Virtuous City*) - contain his metaphysical views. Here, Farabi brings ethical issues, moral virtues, and mostly the issues related to political theory, such as the requirements of an ideal state and the characteristics of a ruler.

3.4.1.3 Ibn Sina

Ibn Sina, known as Avicenna, is one of the most famous Islamic philosophers who lived between A.D 980 and 1037. He has contributed some unique philosophical ideas to Islamic philosophy. The uniqueness comes from his attempt to merge Platonism, Aristotelianism, Neoplatonism, Farabianism and other Greek and Islamic concepts. Ibn Sina's most important works include the *Canon of Medicine, Healing, Deliverance, Sources of Wisdom*, and *Remarks and*

Admonitions. His philosophy is known as Oriental philosophy.

Ibn Sina classifies philosophy as theoretical and practical. The former contains the knowledge of the truth and aims to make the soul perfect through learning alone. The latter seeks the knowledge of good and strives to perfect the soul by understanding what must be done.

Ibn Sina's classification of existence into necessary and possible (contingent) has played a significant role in Islamic philosophy since it led to the emergence of arguments for the existence of God. The necessary existent is a being whose non-existence is impossible, and the possible existent is a being that can either exist or not; some of the possible existents have come into existence like the world, and some of them did not exist yet. However, the possible existence has the potential to exist, and whether it exists or not does not matter. The existence of a necessary being is based on two principles: the chain of possible beings cannot be infinite, and this chain cannot be necessary since it contains viable units. This leads to an essential cause which is a necessary being known as God. According to Ibn Sina, God is the only necessary being, and the rest are either contingent or impossible.

Keeping some variations from Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina also holds the emanation theory. In his emanation theory, everything other than God emanates from the Necessary Being. Firstly, the celestial intellects come into existence through the process of emanation, followed by the celestial souls, the celestial bodies and terrestrial beings. The emanation process of these things happens in eternity. This emanation is necessarily linked to the outcome of God's essence. For his concepts of the eternity of the world,

denial of the resurrection of the body, and ignorance of God about the particulars, Ibn Sina faced strong criticism from Islamic philosophical traditions like al-Gazali, al-Shiristani and Mulla Sadra, and also from European philosophers like William of Auvergne and Thomas Aquinas.

However, Ibn Sina had an extraordinary impact on the medieval scholastic philosophers. Thomas Aquinas' proofs for the existence of God from efficiency and contingency, and his distinction between the existence and essence, are borrowed from Ibn Sina. In his book *Being and Essence*, Aquinas refers to Ibn Sina.

3.4.1.4 Ibn Rushd

Abul-Walid Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Rushd (1126-1198), often Latinized as Averroes, is a Spanish Muslim philosopher. Ibn Rushd, the greatest commentator on Aristotle is known as the last notable Muslim peripatetic philosopher. Even though the biographical reports mention him as a jurist rather than a philosopher, he is celebrated as a Muslim philosopher in the West. His famous work *Incoherence of the Incoherence,* which gained so much popularity in the history of philosophy, is mainly a critique of *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* by al-Gazali. Here he refutes each objection raised by Gazali against the peripatetic philosophers and defends the philosophical ideas of peripatetic philosophy. The philosophical debate between al-Gazali and Ibn Rushd is famous in the current discourse of Islamic philosophy.

However, Ibn Rushd challenges emanationism and argues that the act of God's creation of the world is based on the supreme power of God towards what He creates. Thus, we can speak of God, His knowledge, and His essence metaphorically. He refutes Ibn Sina's distinction between a necessary being and a possible being and negates the independent reality of divine attributes. God is a necessary being only by comparison with the other things in the world; thus, we cannot make statements about His essence. Rather than philosophical works, most of Ibn Rushd's works are written on Islamic jurisprudence and theology. However, he has engaged with Plato and Aristotle and has commentaries on Plato's *Republic* and Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.

3.4.2 Al-Gazali and His Refutation of Peripatetic Philosophy

Abu Hamid Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Gazali (1058-1111) is a prominent figure in Islamic philosophy, theology and mysticism. At an early age, he wrote a philosophical work called *The Aims of Philosophers,* which explicitly talks about philosophical issues and problems in detail. At this time, Gazali's main problem was the question related to truth and certainty which he considers as an important philosophical problem. He criticises the philosophy arguing that it seeks only the truth, not the certainty. Reading the work mentioned above, the Christian thinkers of the Middle Ages counted him as a philosopher like Ibn Sina and Ibn Rushd.

Al-Gazali criticised views such as eternity of the world, impossibility of God's knowledge of particulars and the non-resurrection of the body, upheld by Peripatetic Muslim philosophers

In his later life, Al-Gazali wrote *The Incoherence of the Philosophers* as a rebuttal of the philosophers. In this work, he raises severe criticism against the Muslim philosophers with the same technique the philosophers use, demonstrating that they could not prove the creation of the world by God, nor the spiritual part of the human soul. Mainly, his criticism is against three problems raised by the peripatetic Muslim philosophers: the eternity of the world, the impossibility of God's knowledge of particulars, and the denial of bodily resurrection. Moreover, he charged infidelity against those who raised these three issues. The main target of this criticism is Ibn Sina. The conflict between reason and revelation and the need to prioritise the latter over the former has been one of the central philosophical points of Al-Gazali. As we know, the same debate has been significant in medieval Christian philosophy as well.

When Al-Gazali discusses the theory of causality, he denies the necessary connection between the cause and the caused (effect). According to him, God creates the cause, the caused, and the linkage between them. Moreover, he argues that whenever we see a fire on cotton, we can see its burning. But, this does not imply a necessary connection between fire and burning, and it also does not mean that whenever we see a fire, there should be a burning. Nevertheless, this is a customary or habitual connection between the cause and the effect, and God can change the current natural rules to the new rules. Modern empiricist philosopher David Hume (1711-1776) follows al-Gazali in this theory that the relation between the cause and the effect is customary, however purely using an inductive method/reasoning.

According to Al-Gazali, the world is not a perfect one that God could create. Instead, He created it, and He would have been able to create infinite numbers of worlds with endless laws.

3.4.3 Suhrawardi and Philosophy of Illuminationism

Shihab al-Din Suhrawardi (1154-1191) is a well-known Muslim philosopher known as the master of illumination. He is the founder of the illumination tradition parallel to the peripatetic tradition in Islamic philosophy. As he was executed in Aleppo in 1911, he is sometimes called the Executed Master. Five years before his execution, he completed his major work called *Philosophy of Illumination*. He chose *Philosophy of Illumination* to name his major work and to distinguish his philosophical school from the peripatetic school. Along with the *Philosophy of Illumination*, other essential works in the philosophy of illumination are the *Intimations*, the *Apposites*, and the *Paths and Havens*.

Suhrawardi uses terms such as the Illuminationist theorem, Illuminationist rules, and Illuminationist lemma to describe philosophical problems. He used these terms to denote main issues in logic, epistemology, physics and metaphysics. Rather than pointing to some particular problems, these terms distinguish the philosophy of illumination from the peripatetic tradition. Suhrawardi's other aims are to coin new words distinguished from traditional philosophical terms, or non-philosophical vocabulary of mystical and theological texts, and to add unique qualities linked to some particular concepts. Furthermore, in most of his works, he severely criticises the peripatetic philosophy, especially its master Ibn Sina. Here he distinguishes

between peripatetic philosophy and Oriental philosophy, and his main concern is how the peripatetic tradition holds the matter-of-fact.

Suhrawardi distinguishes metaphysics into *metaphysica generalis* and *metaphysica specialis*; the former discusses the standard discussions like existence, unity, substance, time, motion, etc., and the latter concerns with the supra-rational problems like God's existence and knowledge, dreams, visionary experience, subject's imagination and similar things. Like metaphysics, logic is also a field where Suhrawardi became a profound figure as

he influenced many logical works on some specific problems in Persia.

The exciting thing about Illuminationist philosophy, as its name indicates, is that it uses unique Islamic technical terms to denote some philosophical ideas. This point is also the fundamental departure of illuminationist philosophy (rather, *Islamic philosophy*) from the Arab peripatetic philosophy wherein the former developed an independent tradition of Islamic philosophy. The illuminationist philosophy is more or less inclined towards the Islamic science of spirituality (*Tasawwuf* translated as mysticism).

> Illuminationist philosophy developed an independent tradition of Islamic philosophy

Suhrawardi radically changes the terminology used hitherto in the Islamic philosophical world and uses the symbolism of light to describe the ontological problems and cosmological structure. The peripatetic Necessary Being is called the 'Light of Lights' in illuminationist tradition. This school of philosophy holds that everything shares the same essence, the light, but there is a difference in the intensity of this essence that determines an

object as it is. In other words, all humanity is somehow part of the divine light – *noor*. We are the same in essence. The difference or gradation is only with respect to our intimacy to the *noor*. The basic difference between Islamic peripatetic philosophy and the illuminationist philosophy is that while the former is founded on logic, the latter is based on divine light.

> Illuminationism upholds that all the humanity is part of the divine light – *noor*

Some of the Quranic verses have been viewed by the mystics and philosopher-mystics of Islam especially the Illuminationists as allegorical hints. Illuminationism has significantly drawn its philosophical and mystical inspiration from the famous light - verse in Quran. "God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The example of His Light is like a niche wherein is a lamp; the lamp is in

a crystal, and the crystal, shining as if a pearl-like radiant star, lit from the oil of a blessed olive tree that is neither of the east nor of the west. The oil would almost give light of itself though no fire touches it. Light upon light! God guides to His Light whom He wills. God strikes parables for people. God has full knowledge of all things" (Quran 24:35).

Recap

♦ The book *The incoherence of the philosophers* gave primacy to faith over reason

♦ Arab Peripatetic philosophy follows Aristotelian method, logic and metaphysics

♦ Ibn Sina holds emanation theory

♦ Emanation theory says, everything other than God emanates from the Necessary Being

♦ Al-Gazali rebutted philosophy in the book *The incoherence of the philosophers*

♦ God is a necessary being and everything else is a contingent being for most of the Islamic philosophers

♦ Suhrawardi distinguishes metaphysics into *metaphysica generalis* and *metaphysica specialis*

♦ Illuminationism attempted to build a unique Islamic philosophical tradition separated from the Arab Peripatetic traditions

♦ Illuminationism basically derives its philosophical/mystical inspiration from the concept of 'Light' in the Quran

♦ Illuminationism views the universe shares the same essence and the divine light

♦ Illuminationism uses the symbolism of light to describe ontological problems of cosmological structures

Objective Questions

1. What is negative theology?

2. What is another name for metaphysics, and who called it?

3. Why is Farabi called the second teacher?

4. How does Farabi distinguish logic from grammar?

5. What are the two kinds of existence, and who coined them?

6. What are the three problems against which Al-Gazali raised the objections?

7. Why did Suhrawardi coin new terms to denote some philosophical issues?

Answers

1. Description of God in negative terms.

2. First philosophy, Aristotle.

3. for his logical achievements.

4. Logic is universal grammar that gives rules applicable to any language while the grammar gives rules limited to only a particular language.

5. Necessary existence and possible existence. Ibn Sina.

6. The eternity of the world, the impossibility of God's knowledge of particulars, and the denial of bodily resurrection.

7. To distinguish Illuminationism from Peripatetic philosophy.

Assignments

1. Analyse the concept of illuminationism in the philosophy of Suhrawardi. How does it differ from the peripatetic philosophy of his predecessors?

2. Compare and contrast Al-Farabi's philosophy with that of other Islamic philosophers, such as Ibn Rushd and Ibn Sina.

3. How does Al- Gazali refute the peripatetic philosophy? Discuss.

Suggested Readings

1. Fakhry, Majid (2004), *A History of Islamic Philosophy*. Columbia: Columbia University Press.

2. Nasr, Seyyed Hossein (2006), *Islamic Philosophy from Its Origin to the Present: Philosophy in the Land of Prophecy*. United States: State University of New York Press.

3. Nasr, Seyyed Hossein, Leaman, Oliver (Ed) (1996), *History of Islamic Philosophy*. New York: Routledge.

4. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/arabic-islamic-metaphysics/.

4

BLOCK

Modern Philosophy: Rationalism

UNIT 1

Characteristics of Modern Philosophy

Learning Outcomes

The unit will enable the learner to:

- ♦ get a general awareness of how modern philosophy differs from Greek and Medieval philosophy

- ♦ get acquainted with the importance of knowledge in modern philosophy

- ♦ get exposed to a new phase of philosophy that stresses on human reason

- ♦ be familiarised with the peculiarities of modern philosophy

Prerequisites

In each period, human thought was shaped by different interests. In the Greek tradition, thinkers focused on metaphysical and ontological questions. They enquired about the substance out of which everything came into existence. In the scholastic tradition, attention was changed to matters of faith. The scholastic philosophers used philosophy to substantiate their theological claims.

Both these philosophical streams did not give much attention to humanbeing's intellectual capabilities. However, with the rise of natural science, philosophical inquiry got a new disposition that gave supreme importance to human rationality. Thinkers started to trust the power of reason to establish their thoughts. Herein philosophy got a new phase in which it started discussing various subject matters that the former thinkers so far kept at a distance.

Rational, Innate, Tabula rasa, Sense perception

Discussion

4.1.1 Characteristics of Modern Philosophy

In the history of the west, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have long been acknowledged as successful period that contributed much to the development of philosophy. Rationalism, empiricism and critical philosophy were the significant streams of thought that developed during this period. The philosophers who contributed to this period made a creative and fresh approach to philosophy by studying, responding, and critically engaging with their contemporaries and recent predecessors.

In this new era, philosophy was awakened with independent, reflective and critical thinking demanding freedom in thought, action and feeling of the individual.There were reflections of humanistic tendencies in modern philosophical thinking that gave a central position to humanbeings in the universe. It resulted in rejection of the domination of church doctrines accepted by all on the basis of faith.

Most of the modern thinkers celebrated the intellectual capabilities of humanbeings in their philosophy and placed that idea as the centre of all their philosophical concepts. They also maintained a sound relation with science to have authoritativeness in the field of philosophy. This reorientation of thinking resulted in changes in the political, intellectual and religious situation of that time.

The states became more democratic with the presence of egalitarian institutions that demanded equal rights and justice for all humanbeings. The spirit of independence became prominent in this period with implementation of the constitution in the states. The same effects were reflected in the economic field, where slavery and economic inequalities started to decline, and the rays of economic equality began to rise.

Considering intellectual independence as their goal, modern thinkers negated the role of revelation and mystical intuitions along with subjective factors such as feelings and emotions from their philosophical thinking. We generally say that modern thinkers brought philosophy from heaven to the earth and made it secular. They placed reason as the characteristic mark of their thought with a clear vision of the sharp distinction between the traditional philosophy and the philosophy they proposed.

Modern thinkers, unlike the Greeks, deviated from searching for the first principles of being to the question of human knowledge. Their major aim was to arrive at intellectual independence of human thought. This thinking pattern began in England with the philosophy of Francis Bacon and in France with Rene Descartes. Most of the thinkers in the modern period considered knowledge as universal and necessary judgements. They aimed at reach in mathematical certainty and thus to bring clarity and orderly deduction in philosophical thinking.

Unlike the ancient and medieval thinkers, Modern philosophers made a new

direction for thought by challenging assumptions of absolutism and collectivism. Individualistic tendencies became the characteristic mark of modern philosophy that strived for the emancipation of the individual from the authority of the church. Ego, the most fundamental principle of subjectivity, has become the centre of attention in modern philosophical thought. The modern philosophers questioned the blind acceptance of authority that gave importance to otherworldly life. Their primary concern was the life and the freedom of the individual here on earth.

The thinkers in the modern era did not accept anything which was dogmatically asserted by the authority. For instance, Rene Descartes, who is considered as the father of modern philosophy, applied the method of doubt to arrive at a strong and self-evident idea that he could not find in Greek or Scholastic thought. These innovative approaches that modern philosophers made contributed to all major areas of philosophy, which are still debated in the current philosophical community.

Modern thinkers gained significance of their thought from the novelty they brought into their philosophy. They approached philosophy as a means to increase our knowledge of the world. Before them, the thinkers in the medieval period focused more on writing commentaries on the existing philosophies. They followed the path of their predecessors without bringing any drastic changes in their philosophical endeavours. If we look into the philosophies of both Augustine and Aquinas, the prominent thinkers of the medieval period, we understand that their philosophy was a Christianised version of the philosophies of both Plato and Aristotle, respectively.

Modern thinkers tried to abandon the approach of medieval thinkers and started to write original and creative philosophies. Unlike the medieval thinkers, the thinkers of the modern era did not philosophise within the formally recognised academic climates created in universities. They preferred open spaces where they could think freely and develop thoughts without considering much about their predecessors in history. It gets proved when we look into the academic status of significant thinkers like Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Berkeley and Hume in this period.

The use of the vernacular languages was another major initiative that modern thinkers possess compared to medieval thought. When medieval thinkers used Latin, the official language of the church, to express their philosophy, most of the modern thinkers used vernacular languages to express their thoughts. For instance, Descartes and Bacon wrote both in vernacular and Latin, and Locke and Hume wrote in English. It helped them to address different issues in their thoughts and keep the originality in their thinking. However, there was no absolute negation of the use of Latin in philosophy. There were also thinkers like Spinoza who used Latin to compose philosophy.

During this period, the domination of the Christian church declined, and the state came in front of power; that is, ecclesiasticism gave way to nationalism. Along with that, the intellectual climate that favoured theology changed its focus to natural science. It tried to explain the inner and outer world without any supernatural presuppositions. Reason and logic became the final criteria both in the field of science and philosophy. It resulted from the availability of Newtonian unified theory of the mathematical structure of nature that gave an entirely new picture of the natural world. With its effects, the philosophers got clarity in many things and a secure foundation to develop their philosophies.

Modern thinkers attacked the dogmatism of the church that questioned the spirit of independence of humans. Medieval thinkers majorly used philosophy to substantiate their claims in theology. Modern thinkers critically questioned the medieval approach and clearly stated that the temporal order was self-sufficient to explain everything. For instance, Francis Bacon criticised both Greek and medieval thought in his philosophy. He stated that the past had accomplished nothing; its foundations, methods and results were wrong. In his opinion, both Greek and Medieval thinkers gave a distorted picture of reality. So he wanted to begin all over again, freeing our minds from inherited prejudices and presuppositions. According to him, real knowledge is the knowledge of natural science, and induction is the method to gain the same.

The significant difference between the medieval and modern thinkers is that the latter were the first philosophers who developed philosophy with fresh and new ideas without depending much on the thoughts of their predecessors. It does not mean that all of them stood against the church. Some of them, like Locke and Descartes, were believers, but unlike philosophers in the medieval period, they were not theologians in the professional sense.

Even though modern thinkers kept a safe distance from theological speculations, they did not eliminate the study of spiritual substances from their philosophy. Their attempt was to make a systematic account of the spiritual substance in philosophy with the support of rational arguments. Descartes' philosophical conception of God and the theory of monads put forward by Leibniz remain as the best example of it.

One of the important slogans of the modern thinkers is *sapere aude* meaning 'dare to know', which is also translated as 'have courage to use your reason'.

During this period, rational thoughts got more appreciation in both philosophy and science. Human reason became the highest authority in the search for knowledge. It changed the focus of attention of philosophy from the theological contemplation of supernatural concepts to the natural causes that work in the physical and mental world of humans. In other words, faith in supernatural things turned to faith in human reason, giving more attention to life in this world.

However, this does not mean that the thinkers of the modern era were fully freed from the impact of history. Scholars have pointed out that the thinkers like Descartes, Locke and Francis Bacon were subjected to the influence of history to a greater extent than they themselves recognised. However, their approach towards the concepts was different in comparing their predecessors.

The major division we come across in the pre-Kantian modern philosophy is rationalism and empiricism. The scholars of both these traditions have been classified as rationalists and empiricist based on the difference in the source of knowledge. The major thinkers we discuss in the rationalistic tradition are Rene Descartes, Benedict Spinoza and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. While, the prominent empiricist thinkers are John Locke, George Berkeley and David Hume.

In the rationalist perspective, the sense perception or experience cannot yield

universal and necessary knowledge. They play only a secondary role by illustrating what the intellect has already acquired. The rationalist gave an independent status for reason in acquiring knowledge; that is, the intellect can both obtain and constitute knowledge.

According to them, universal and necessary ideas exist in our minds before any perception with the senses. They used the words like innate, inborn or *a priori* to refer to the knowledge gained by reason. However, it does not mean that a newborn perceives some truths from the moment of its birth. Instead, rationalists viewed certain truths as virtually *a priori* in the sense that they are not formed out of inductive generalisation from experience. Here the experience provides just an occasion for the mind to perceive truth.

On the other hand, empiricists believe that there are no inborn or innate truths/ideas. According to them, all knowledge begins with sense experience or the source of knowledge is experience. At the time of birth, mind is a clean sheet of paper, *tabula rasa*, on which the impressions are printed with experience. *A posteriori* is the word that empiricists generally use to represent the knowledge gained after experience. This does not mean that they negate reason; rather, states that reason gets all its material from the senses to formulate true and necessary knowledge. They accept rational knowledge but negate the idea that there are truths which are natural or innate or *a priori* to the human mind.

We consider John Locke who rigorously criticised the innate or *a priori* conception of knowledge proposed by rationalist thinkers as the father of British empiricism. According to him, all ideas originate from sense perception and introspection. The epistemology that he put forward systematically analyses the source, certainty and extent of human knowledge, which begins with experience.

Conclusion

Early seventeenth century witnessed a systematic change in philosophical thinking with the inter-relation of philosophy and science. In this era, the main focus of philosophy turned towards the life in this world from the supernatural elements discussed in the earlier philosophy. Epistemological progress that philosophy achieved during this period strengthened the subject to deal with the various matters related to human life. These changes were the results from the political, economic and scientific situations of that time.

However, when the philosophy progressed, thinkers questioned the application of human reason in every field of life. They pointed out that more stress on the rational capabilities of men took away the spontaneity of life in this world. The definite structure that reason created to define philosophical concepts limited the immense possibilities of life. The streams that developed later in philosophy like phenomenology and existentialism questioned the over-importance of reason that used to describe morality, inter-human relation and daily affairs of human life.

Recap

♦ Modern thinkers brought philosophy from heaven to the earth and made it secular

♦ The major aim of the modern thinkers was to arrive at intellectual independence of humans

♦ They aimed to reach mathematical certainty in philosophical thinking

♦ Reason and logic became the final criteria both in the field of science and philosophy

♦ Individualistic tendencies became the characteristic mark of modern philosophy

♦ The modern thinkers did not accept anything which was dogmatically asserted by the authority

♦ The use of the vernacular languages

♦ Scholars classified rationalists and empiricists based on the difference in the source of knowledge accepted by both

♦ In the rationalist perspective, the intellect can both obtain and constitute knowledge

♦ According to rationalism, universal and necessary ideas exist in our minds before any perception with the senses

♦ Mind is a clean sheet of paper- *tabula rasa*

♦ *a priori* and *a posteriori*

Objective Questions

1. What were the major streams of thought in the modern period?

2. Which is generally considered as the period of modern philosophy?

3. What was the major focus area of modern philosophical thought?

4. Whose philosophy is generally considered as the beginning of modern philosophy in England?

5. What is the significant difference between medieval and modern thinkers?

6. Who were all considered significant rationalist thinkers in the modern period?

7. Who were all considered as major empiricist thinkers in the modern period?

8. How do rationalist thinkers conceive knowledge?

9. How do empiricist thinkers conceive knowledge?

Answers

1. Rationalism, empiricism and critical philosophy

2. Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries

3. Human knowledge

4. Francis Bacon

5. Medieval thinkers were primarily theologians but modern thinkers are primarily philosophers

6. Rene Descartes, Benedict Spinoza and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz

7. John Locke, George Berkeley and David Hume

8. A priori or innate

9. A posteriori or after experience

Assignments

1. How modern philosophy differs from Greek and Medieval Philosophy? Explain.

2. Make a short note on Importance of reason in modern philosophy

3. Explain the role of human knowledge in modern philosophy?

Suggested Readings

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

2. Falckenberg, Richard. (2006). *History of Modern Philosophy*. US: Biblio Bazaar.

3. Kenny, A. (2005). *A New History of Western Philosophy Vol. 3 The Rise of Modern Philosophy.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

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

Rene Descartes

Learning Outcomes

In this unit, the learner will be:

♦ familiarised with the problem faced by Descartes in philosophy and its solution by introducing a new method in philosophy

♦ exposed to the creative use of doubting in Descartes' philosophy

♦ introduced to the metaphysical dispositions in Descartes' philosophy

♦ able to understand the mind-body dualism in Descartes' philosophy

Prerequisites

Doubts arise on so many occasions in our lives. When there is no sufficient light, if we see a rope, we may doubt it is a snake. It is a normal doubt that can occur in our day-to-day life. Have you heard of any philosophies that consider doubt as their central concern? We use a common word to address them - sceptics. The sceptics do not believe in any knowledge system and constantly question the claims of knowing something accurately by using mainly our senses and intellect. The main criticism they faced by upholding this position is that it does not lead to any fruitful end or result.

Can we use doubt to attain progressive results? If we look into the development of science, we come across a different approach to doubt. The scientists doubt, experiment, and reach a new conclusion that leads to discoveries and the development of the world. Here in the following unit, we are going to come across a philosopher who used 'doubt' to have a strong foundation for his thought.

Key Concepts

Method of doubt, Substance, Relative substance, Modes, Interactionism

Discussion

Rene Descartes, the philosopher and mathematician, developed philosophy with a unique perspective that made a clear break from the past. The primary aim of Descartes' philosophy was not to produce a novel philosophy; rather, to have a well-ordered philosophy with clarity and precision of reason. So he brought reason in front and negated other means like faith to attain philosophical truth.

Descartes wanted to get away from the scholastic uncertainties by bringing clarity and precision to his thought. His fundamental aim in dealing with philosophy was to construct a comprehensive scientific system with the clarity and certainty of mathematics. So he always aimed to formulate a system of true propositions that are self-evident and unquestionable, which is free from all presuppositions.

How can we achieve mathematical clarity in philosophy was the question that Descartes gave most priority in his philosophy. Before confronting this question, one must clarify what Descartes meant by philosophy. According to him, philosophy is the study of wisdom. Here, wisdom refers to the perfect knowledge of all things that man can know for conducting his/her life, preserving his/her health and discovery of all arts.

Descartes focused more on the pragmatic aspect of philosophy, so he added physics or natural philosophy along with metaphysics under the general heading of philosophy. According to him, everything in nature, even the physiological processes and emotions, must have a mechanical explanation without the aid of forms or essences. Along with it, he also traced interdependency between all sciences, bringing unity and connection among them with the application of the mathematical method.

According to Descartes, there are no multiplicities of truths that offer different choices before us. Truth is always one to which we can attribute absolute certainty. Since all sciences are interconnected, they formulate this single body of truth. He arrived at this conclusion by applying the mathematical method to all sciences. With the feasibility of the mathematical method, he asserted that all sciences are ultimately one or organically connected.

Descartes used the tree of wisdom, a metaphor, to represent the unity of all sciences. In his opinion, metaphysics is the root of the tree in which he intuitively apprehends the thinking self and proceeds to establish the standard of truth, the existence of God and the existence of the material world. He identified the tree's trunk with physics which depended on metaphysics to acquire a scientific standing. In his view, the ultimate principles of physics follow from the metaphysical principles. Descartes considers the practical sciences, such as mechanics, ethics and medicine as the branches of the tree of wisdom.

Important Works: *Discourse on Method, Meditations on First Philosophy, The Passions of the Soul, Principles of Philosophy*

4.2.1 Cogito Ergo Sum

As stated above, Descartes wanted to construct a philosophy with absolute certainty, like mathematics. He chose mathematics because it provides the most certain demonstration while proving its conclusion. For instance, in Mathematics, 2+2=4. Here we know that the answer was four when 2+2 was added. Descartes demanded the same clarity while establishing philosophical knowledge. It becomes clear with another example; imagine that now you are reading a book, and it is obvious with the faculty of your eyes. It is also evident that the particular book you read differs from other objects on the table. Descartes expects the same visibility and clarity in philosophical thinking.

While intending to develop philosophy with mathematical certainty, Descartes searched for a strong foundation - a clear and self-evident idea that he could not find in the previous philosophies. He challenged all beliefs, systems and methods of knowledge to arrive at the same. In his view, the scholastic system was a collection of divergent opinions that lacked certainty. He could not find any single thought in the history of philosophy to rely on to gain a self-evident truth. So Descartes claimed that to clear all the prejudices from the mind, the metaphysical enquiry must begin with doubting everything that is possible to doubt. This method is generally known as methodical or methodological scepticism.

When we analyse the methodic doubt in Descartes, it is necessary to have a glimpse of the features that he attributed to it. The doubt that Descartes used to begin his philosophy is universal in character. It does not exclude anything from its range. Every proposition that can be doubted comes under it. In other words, doubt is applied universally to all that is possible to doubt.

Descartes practices doubt not for doubting as the sceptics do but as a method to attain certainty. For him, it is provisional; that is, he considers it a first step or a preliminary stage in achieving certainty. He also does not aim at negating every proposition that he already believed or substituting the same with the new one. This approach is different from the attitude of sceptical doubt. For sceptics, doubt is an end in itself, but for Descartes, it is a means to reach self-evident truth. In other words, Descartes practices doubt to arrive at certainty from the probable or indubitable from the doubtful. He conceptualised the use of methodic doubt only in the theoretical sense. He was very clear about the inapplicability of it in practical life, where we take opinions and suggestions.

Scepticism is a theory that asserts the impossibility of certain knowledge. It doubts all kinds of knowledge claims and challenges the definiteness of knowledge.

How far can the methodic doubt be extended? Descartes begins doubting with the senses. In his opinion, senses often deceive us. Seeing rope as a snake in the

night is an example of it. These kinds of deceptions forbid us to trust the sense knowledge. But the senses are not the only cause for this deception. It includes the false interpretation of the perceived objects by the intellect, which is very much related to imagination and memory. Thus Descartes applies the method of doubt to senses, intellect, memory and imagination.

Further Descartes extends the methodic doubt to doubt the existence of our bodies and their actions. In his opinion, we cannot have a definite knowledge of our bodies because when we dream, we believe that we confront realities, but they are nothing but illusions. Since there are no definite means to distinguish between waking and dreaming, the body and its action come under doubt.

After doubting the above-mentioned means of knowledge, Descartes extended the methodic doubt to doubt the certainty of mathematical truths. However, Descartes was explicit that we cannot apply the same principle that he used to doubt sense perception to doubt mathematical truth. We do not experience any contrary instance in mathematical truth; for example, 2+4 always makes 6. So to doubt mathematical truth, Descartes brought forth a hypothesis of an evil genius, a demon whose main job is to deceive man with his clear and distinct ideas. In Descartes' opinion, 2+2=4 may not be true because we might have been deceived by the evil genius to think in that manner.

Descartes applies methodic doubt in every field of knowledge. However, doubting, everything implies at least one thing that we doubt, and one cannot doubt without thinking and if one thinks one exists. Thus Descartes arrives at an indubitable truth- the famous dictum

"*Cogito ergo sum*- I think therefore I am" from "*dubito ergo sum*- I doubt therefore I exist". For Descartes, in the very act of doubting, the existence of the subject is manifested. Here Descartes asserts nothing but the existence of a thinking subject. He arrives at this self-evident truth by simple intuition- I intuit the impossibility of thinking without my existence. This affirmation confirms nothing but the existence of a thinking being which he considered as the first and foremost self-evident truth to begin his philosophy.

When Descartes employed the methodic doubt to doubt all the propositions to arrive at a self-evident idea, he never intended to reject all other truths apprehended by other philosophers. The logic of his method of doubt was that, when doubt is pushed to its farthest limit we will reach a position where we can have no more doubts. With the application of methodic doubt, he rediscovered the truth of the propositions in an orderly way by proceeding from the strong foundation of indubitable propositions.

With the principle of 'cogito ergo sum' the philosophy of Descartes provides a fundamental principle and a criterion of true knowledge. It provides a guarantee only for the present and does not remove the doubt of the past and the future and also of what we clearly experience. To prove the same, Descartes brought the concept of God into his philosophy. With the aid of a faithful God who cannot deceive us, he proved the body of the thinking being, other bodies in the external world and moral principles.

4.2.2 Metaphysics

Under this heading, we mainly discuss three major concepts of Descartes' philosophy: substance, attributes and modes. According to Descartes, the

substance is an existent thing that requires nothing but itself to exist. When the definition is applied strictly, there exists only one single substance that fulfils this criterion: God. He also provides proof for God's existence, including causal, cosmological and ontological arguments. God, for him, is self-caused and needs no other cause from outside for its existence because if God is the effect of some other being, then that being is the effect of another which may lead to an infinite regress without any end to explain the causal explanation of the effect.

Apart from the substance, Descartes admits the existence of two relative substances; they are mind and body. They exist independently of each other but depend on the substance for their existence. He describes the mind as a thinking thing and the body as an extended thing. According to him, the substance cannot be completely apprehended in a bare state. They must be grasped along with their attributes.

Descartes describes attribute as an essential characteristic property of substance without which we cannot conceive the substance. That is, the attribute is what we clearly and indubitably perceive in a thing or the distinctive feature of the substance on which all other attributes, properties and qualities depend for their existence. For Descartes, thought is the principal attribute of the mind, and extension is the principal attribute of the body. That is, the mind is a thinking thing, and the body is an extended thing.

In his opinion, the mind begins to think at the time that it is infused into the body of an infant and always remains with the same disposition. On the other hand, extension is the essential character of the body because we cannot conceive of the figure or action without extension.

The extension in breadth, depth and length constitutes the nature of worldly substances.

The above-mentioned principal attributes are always together with the substances, but there are modifications or modes which are separable from the substance. Modes are separable not in the sense that they can exist separately from the substance of which they are modifications; rather, the substance can exist without those modifications. For instance, thought is the essential character of the mind, and the mind has different thoughts sequentially- thoughts about a particular event or thing that is subjected to change. Here the latter is the modification of the thought, and the mind exists without these thoughts but not vice versa. In the same manner, extension is essential to the body but not a particular size, figure or quantity.

We can represent the order of being proposed by Descartes as follows,
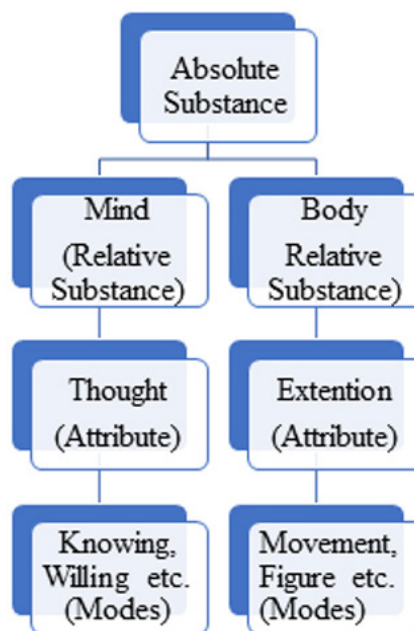
4.2.3 Mind-Body Dualism

Descartes proposed a philosophy that treats mind and body as totally opposed. As stated above, the body's attribute is the extension which is passive, and the mind's attribute is thinking, which is active and free. In his view, the body is completely free from thought, or the body cannot think, and the mind is completely free from the extension.

Descartes did not restrict thought only to the mind's intellectual or even cognitive activities. In his famous book *Discourse on Method* Descartes describes the mind as a thinking thing that understands, conceives, doubts, affirms, denies, wills, imagines, refuses and feels. Frank Thilly points out that the thinking mind of Descartes embraces everything which is presently labelled as consciousness.

Descartes, while explaining the dualism of mind and body, tried to give a mechanical explanation for the body. Mind is fully eliminated from the space where physics is given full freedom. He also did not make any difference in dealing with all bodies including humans and animals. According to him, both are machines, and function mechanically based on the arrangements of organs.

The metaphysical position of Descartes compels him to adopt a dualist position that admits two relative substances, mind and body, as distinct that exclude one another, which means there can be no interaction between them. The mind that thinks cannot create any changes in the body that extend and vice versa. Even if this is the case, Descartes is reluctant to affirm this conclusion because of the contrary experience of life that reveals the intimate union between the two. For instance, hunger and thirst or the passion and emotions of the mind are not exclusively mental affairs. They have effects not only in the mind but in the body too. Likewise, the sensations of light, colour, sound, pain etc, are not completely bodily affairs.

The major problem that Descartes faced with mind-body dualism was that the essences of body and mind contradict each other, but the modifications that happen in both create effects that affect both simultaneously. That is, the body at times, affects the mind, and the mind creates its impact on the body. It puts Descartes in a dilemma because the metaphysical dualism that he proposed does not permit him to make any relation between mind and body.

Descartes finds a solution by shifting the problem of the union between body and mind from the metaphysical plane to the physiological plane with the theory of interactionism. According to this theory, the mind and body being two different substances make a causal interaction with each other. He brought the idea of a pineal gland which is considered as the seat of the soul, to solve the mind-body problem. It is through the pineal gland, situated in the brain, that both the mind and body interact with each other. Descartes faced severe criticism from many philosophers concerning his position on the mind-body relation. How does the material part of the body become the seat of the soul which is immaterial in nature?

Geulincx and Malebranche addressed the problem of mind-body relation with the theory of occasionalism. According to this theory, all beings have ontological dependence upon all powerful God. So neither body nor mind has any direct role in creating the relationship. It is designed and executed by the omnipotent God. It states that there is no real causal interaction between body and mind and places God as the active causal agent for this relation. In

their view, the occasional intervention of God is the real reason for the correspon- dence between mind and body.

Recap

- ♦ Doubting is a method.

- ♦ Method of doubt is different from the doubt of the sceptics.

- ♦ Method of doubt is applied to derive clear and distinct idea.

- ♦ Descartes arrives at a clear and distinct idea by simple intuition.

- ♦ Method of doubt has a universal application.

- ♦ "Cogito ergo sum- I think therefore I am"

- ♦ Substance is an existent thing which requires nothing but itself in order to exist.

- ♦ There are two relative substances mind and body

- ♦ The mind is a thinking thing and the body is the extended thing.

- ♦ Modifications or modes are separable from the substance.

- ♦ Theory of interactionism

- ♦ Theory of occasionalism

Objective Questions

1. What was the aim of Descartes' philosophy?

2. How far is the method of doubt applied in the philosophy of Descartes?

3. What hypothesis Descartes used to doubt the certainty of mathematical truth?

4. What is the self-evident truth that is derived from the method of doubt?

5. How does Descartes define substance?

6. What are the relative substances accepted by Descartes?

7. How Does Descartes define the mind?

8. How does Descartes define the body?

9. What is the theory proposed by Descartes to describe the mind-body relationship?

10. How does the relation happen between mind and body according to Descartes?

Answers

1. To derive self evident truth

2. Universally

3. Evil genius

4. Existence of a thinking being

5. Substance is an existent thing which requires nothing but itself in order to exist.

6. Mind and Body

7. Thinking thing

8. Extended thing

9. Theory of interactionism

10. With the help of a pineal gland situated in the human brain

Assignments

1. Make a brief note on 'cogito ergo sum'.

2. Give a brief account of the metaphysical teachings of Descartes?

3. Explain the problem of mind - body relation in Descartes philosophy?

Suggested Readings

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

2. Falckenberg, Richard. (2006). *History of Modern Philosophy.* US: Biblio Bazaar.

3. Kenny, A. (2005). *A New History of Western Philosophy Vol. 3 The Rise of Modern Philosophy.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

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

3

UNIT

Baruch Spinoza

Learning Outcomes

The unit will enable the learner to:

♦ get exposed to the different approaches Spinoza took from other rationalist thinkers concerning significant philosophical concepts

♦ get a general awareness of the metaphysical notions of Spinoza's philosophy

♦ familiarised with the concept of pantheism in Spinoza

♦ get exposed to Spinoza's approach towards mind-body relation

Prerequisites

When we look around the world, we see the cry of many. There is sickness, pain, natural disasters, wars, the fleeing of refugees etc. If you are a believer of God, you might have asked why God created such a world with lots of disparities. Why could not he create a better world where there is no evil, no disparity between the rich and the poor, and everyone lives a happy life? Why do we consider other individuals as enemies and a threat to our life? Why do we fail to create positive relations with other individuals?

Could you find a satisfactory answers to these questions? We engage with the above-stated questions presupposing that whatever happens outside us is distinct from us. Can we ask such questions if we consider everything as a single whole? Whatever happens, either positive or negative, is not distinct from us but of which we are also a part. This is the perspective that Spinoza offers in his philosophy. We can address these problems by making a creative engagement with the philosophy of Baruch Spinoza, especially with his idea of monism that affirms the oneness of substance.

Key Concepts

Substance, Attributes, Modes, Pantheism

Discussion

Baruch Spinoza, the Dutch philosopher, developed a unique system of thought that took rationalism to a whole new level. His unique idea was that there is only one substance, and he identified that substance with God or Nature. This way, Spinoza's thoughts become materialistic and idealistic at the same time. His philosophy does not negate the material or disregard the infinite eternal substance. This is why his philosophy has become dear to varying schools of thought that often oppose each other. In Bertrand Russell's view, Spinoza is the noblest and most lovable of the great philosophers. His thinking has grown in popularity in recent times as well.

Spinoza, the man of wisdom, was greatly influenced by Cartesian Philosophy. Like Descartes, he also aimed for a complete knowledge of reality which he tried to obtain deductively. Hence, his philosophy began with axioms and definitions and proceeded to propositions which he explained in geometrical order. His philosophy, with this character, continues to influence scientists and theologians alike for its unique way of synthesising the material and the mental into one eternal substance.

Descartes made a clear distinction between substance and nature, mind and body. In his view, the substance is absolutely independent, and both mind and body that are mutually independent depend on the substance for their existence. Spinoza slightly deviates from this position, stating that if the substance needs nothing other than itself to exist and everything else depends on the substance for its existence, then there can be nothing outside the substance. Hence, thought and extension are not relative substances but attributes of the single substance- God.

Spinoza gave a geometrical form of presentation to his philosophy. He used definitions, axioms, postulates, propositions and demonstrations to philosophise the issues related to the natural world. He stressed the infallibility of geometrical methods and considered it as important to develop the true philosophy.

Spinoza's first book published in 1663 was an exposition of a part of Descartes' work *Principles of Philosophy*. Although Spinoza believed that there were some logical issues with Cartesian philosophy, he was influnced by Descarte's thinking. It was published in 1663. Spinoza sets forward to correct these issues with his unique definition of substance.

Spinoza's magnum opus, *Ethics*, was published posthumously in 1677. It is with this book that his Philosophy becomes clear and famous. This work has five parts that treat different subjects, such as God, the nature and origin of the mind, the origin and nature of emotions, the power of the intellect and human freedom.

Now let us have a brief sketch of Spinoza's Life. He was born in Amsterdam into a Jewish family and was educated in the Jewish religious tradition. He studied

the Old Testament and the Talmud at a very early age. He was also influenced by neo-Platonism, and later, he studied the Jewish philosopher Moses Maimonides. Spinoza also knew many languages, including Hebrew, Dutch, French, Latin and Italian.

However, Jewish philosophy and religion did not satisfy Spinoza's intellectual rigour. This led him to drop his faith at the young age of twenty. As a result, he was excommunicated from the religion. He then decided to lead a quiet life of contemplation and philosophising. He did not get into academia like most thinkers of his time. He took up the profession of grinding lenses for optical instruments to earn his livelihood. Later, Spinoza became famous with his profound

love of truth and simple mode of unselfish life.

4.3.1 Metaphysics

Substance, attributes and modes

Spinoza developed the notion of substance from Descartes. The substance is the basis of Spinoza's metaphysics. The notion that there has to be one ultimate infinite substance for all the other things in the world to exist becomes the starting point of Spinoza's thought. According to Spinoza, nothing can be conceived without presupposing this substance. It is the absolutely independent underlying principle of everything. Since it is independent, it must be infinite; otherwise, it cannot be independent.

> Spinoza gives the definition of substance in *Ethics* as follows "By substance I mean that which is in itself, and is conceived through itself: that of which a concept can be formed independently of the concept of anything else".

Spinoza does not place any external cause for the existence of the substance. If a thing is caused, it has to be explained in terms of or, in other words, conceived through other things. Such a thing cannot be a substance or an ultimate entity or the one necessary entity. A substance is not caused by or made of anything else; it is its own cause (causa sui). This means that its essence involves existence. It does not require any other cause to bring it into existence. According to Spinoza, it belongs to the nature of substance to exist, and hence it exists necessarily. There can only be one substance, and not anymore, and that substance is God or Nature.

With this position, he deviated from the philosophy of Descartes, who conceived both mind and body as relative substances. For Spinoza, body and mind are not relative substances but attributes

of the single independent substance- God. Thus he could get away from the issues related to the dualistic nature of substance. Spinoza places two important concepts, attributes and modes to understand how the substance is seen as nature and things around us.

For Spinoza, an attribute is that which the intellect perceives as constituting the essence of substance. The substance is infinite, and it has an infinite number of attributes. However, our finite minds can only know two, the attributes of extension and thought. God or Nature expresses itself in infinite ways. We are physical and mental beings, which is why we can know those two attributes of God, which are related to our being, extension and thought. These two attributes are essential to the substance and must always exist everywhere. We cannot know about any of

the other attributes of the substance as our finite mind cannot perceive them.

Attributes exist independent of other attributes. They cannot influence one another even though they are always found together everywhere. Hence the mind cannot affect a change in body or space and vice versa. This is because both are independent and do not have anything in common with each other.

Attributes appear in specific ways called modes. Modes are affections or modifications of the substance. Motion and rest are the two main forms of expression in the field of extension while intellect and will are the modes of thought. Nature that we see around, all the material things in this universe are modes. The unique idea of Spinoza's philosophy is how the substance, which was earlier explained to be the infinite, ultimate entity, is also the finite and limited material that we see around us, including ourselves.

In Spinoza's view, no mode or thing is directly created by a transcendent God. All modes are created by the modes preceding them and those modes by the ones that preceded it, and so forth. Modes are formed out of necessity and not by the design of God as if to say it could intervene and stop the chain of finite causality. Spinoza does not think that the substance directly creates finite modes or that finite modes come next in the order of production to substances. He thinks there must be certain other modes between the substance and the finite mode. They are the infinite and eternal modes, immediate and mediate modes.

The difference between substance and modes can be stated in the following way.

Substance	Modes
Causa Sui- cause of itself	Caused by other things
Everlasting	Perishable
Perfect	Imperfect
Necessary	Contingent
Independent	Dependent
Existence and essence are identical	Existence and essence are separate
Not subjected to change	Changes always

The physical universe, a complex system that has the same energy throughout, even when its parts undergo changes by accumulation and loss of energy, is a self-contained system of bodies. This can be said in the language of motion and rest, which is the logically prior state of the substance under the attribute of extension. Movement in nature cannot happen externally for Spinoza as if a certain God initiates motion.

Motion and rest are hence the primary characteristics of Nature itself, as there can be no external cause for things in Nature. As it is a primary characteristic, it will be preserved and will remain as constant. According to Spinoza, this is the infinite, eternal and immediate mode of God or Nature under the attribute of extension.

These complex bodies are composed of particles. These particles can be considered as individual bodies like our human bodies. They lose and gain particles and undergo changes. However, their identity is retained as long as the proportion of motion or rest, or energy as how physics

addresses a similar idea now is preserved. Similarly, we can conceive of bigger and more complex bodies and proceed to infinity and think of the whole universe as one single body, one individual whose parts are different, undergoing changes but the individual as a whole remains unchanged.

4.3.2 Pantheism

Theism is the belief that God exists separate from the world as a transcendent being. Spinoza deviated from this popular notion and advocated pantheism which states that God and the universe are not separate entities. 'All is God and God is all' is the fundamental principle of pantheist thinking. The thinkers who follow this concept identify God with the world process and deny the transcendental characteristics of God. They identify everything with God and God with everything.

Spinoza is a pantheist in the sense that he conceived God as the only reality with infinite attributes. He believes that God is not apart from the world. God is the immanent principle of the universe. God and the universe are not separate but one and the same. God is the ultimate substance not determined by or limited by anything; hence it does not cause anything, nor is it caused. The universe is in God.

God is the one and only substance for Spinoza. It is not limited by anything. It is eternal, unique, infinite and excludes all imperfections. God is the cause of itself, and nothing can act upon it as it is not limited or finite. Spinoza calls God 'natura naturans' - the active principle or source of reality. God is the infinite being with infinite attributes. Spinoza's idea of God was unique compared to the Scholastics and Descartes, as he said God was not distinct from the world. All finite beings

and things in the world are modifications of the ultimate substance God. So Spinoza calls God 'Natura naturata'- the world of the infinite and finite modes.

Finite minds and finite bodies are two modes of God under the attributes of thought and extension respectively. God has infinite attributes, as we have already seen, but these are the only two which we can know. God is free, according to Spinoza, because it exists by the necessity of itself and is self-determined. This does not mean that God was free to choose to create the world. Modifications of God happen out of necessity.

4.3.3 Psychophysical parallelism

Descartes' central dilemma in his philosophy was related to the mind-body problem. He was a dualist who believed that the mind and body are different substances. How they interacted with each other became a problem in his thought. He suggested a non-philosophical answer for it by saying that the pineal gland helps with the interaction.

For Spinoza, however, the problem does not exist. His philosophical system is not dualist like Descartes' Philosophy. Mind and Body are not two distinct independent substances; rather, two parallel attributes of the same substance. The two attributes of substance, extension and thought are always present together everywhere. So whenever there is a change in the body there is a corresponding change in the mind, that is, they do not interact but run parallel to each other.

In Spinoza's view, all things have minds, and all minds have bodies. He surpasses the problem of causality of mind/consciousness by saying that it is not caused by the body, nor does it cause the

body to exist. Body and Mind are both formed necessarily from the substance. Even the substance cannot do anything to cause it. It is a necessary formation. The causal order of Mind and the Body are one and the same; in other words, the psychical and the physical are parallel. They are the attributes of the same eternal, unique substance – God.

Recap

- Spinoza's book *Ethics* is divided into five parts that treat different subjects

- There is only one substance, and Spinoza identified that substance with God or Nature

- The substance is the absolutely independent underlying principle of everything

- The substance is self-caused

- Spinoza's thoughts become materialistic and idealistic at the same time

- Thought and extension are not relative substances but attributes of the single substance- God

- Attribute constitutes the essence of substance

- Modes are affections or modifications of the substance

- Motion and rest are the two main forms of expression in the field of extension

- Intellect and will are the modes of thought

- God is the immanent principle of the universe

- Mind and Body are two modifications of the same substance

- The psychical and the physical are parallel

Objective Questions

1. How does Spinoza begin his philosophy?

2. What are the major points discussed in Spinoza's work *Ethics*?

3. What does Spinoza consider as the absolutely independent underlying principle of everything?

4. How does Spinoza conceive mind and body in his philosophy?

5. How does Spinoza describe attributes?

6. How does Spinoza describe modes?

7. How does Spinoza conceive God in his philosophy?

8. What are the main fields of expression in the field of extension?

9. What are the main modes in the field of thought?

Answers

1. With axioms and definitions

2. God, the nature and origin of the mind, the origin and nature of the emotions, the power of the intellect and human freedom

3. Substance

4. Attributes

5. The essence of substance

6. Modes are affections or modifications of the substance

7. God is the immanent principle of the universe

8. Motion and rest

9. Intellect and will

Assignments

1. How Spinoza conceives substance, attribute and mode in his philosophy? Explain.

2. 'All is God and God is all' explain.

3. How Spinoza addressed the problem of mind and body in his philosophy? Explain.

Suggested Readings

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

2. Falckenberg, Richard. (2006). *History of Modern Philosophy*. US: Biblio Bazaar.

3. Kenny, A. (2005). *A New History of Western Philosophy Vol. 3 The Rise of Modern Philosophy.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

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

UNIT

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz

Learning Outcomes

The unit will enable the learner to:

- get a general awareness of how Leibniz's philosophy differs from other rationalist thinkers

- be familiarised with the theory of monadology

- get exposed to the significant characteristics of monads in Leibniz's philosophy

- get acquainted with Leibniz's solution to the mind-body problem

Prerequisites

We can find certain tendencies in the world that try to prioritise one over the other and create divisions based on some specifications such as belief, economic status, nationality etc. Its effects are evident in the exploitation of the marginalised or the exploitation of nature or dividing people based on caste, creed and colour. Those who impose this division always find reasons to do these injustices towards their fellow beings. There are voices against this attitude from those who accept plurality and differences. They try to create harmony in the world with an inclusive attitude. If we look into the philosophy of Leibniz, we can find the same attitude.

Leibniz conceived the world in its multiplicities and tried to form a harmony with the idea of God – the supreme monad. This is one of the thrust areas that Leibniz focuses on in his philosophy. How he addresses the multiplicities or pluralities present in the world with the theory of monads is the major question that will be addressed in the following discussion.

Key Concepts

Monads, perception, apperception, appetition, pre-established harmony

Discussion

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz is a German philosopher and mathematician who made great contributions to modern rationalism. He is famous not only in the circle of philosophy but outside the circle, especially in mathematics, with his multiple contributions. He is a well-known philosopher, historian, natural scientist, mathematician, diplomat and jurist. Scholars called him 'Aristotle of the modern era' by considering his scholarly contributions in various fields. He used scientific knowledge to construct a system that would reconcile mechanism and teleology, science and theology, modern and ancient philosophy.

Like other rationalist thinkers, Leibniz was also concerned mainly with two problems: the relationship between God and the world and the relationship between body and mind. Descartes and Spinoza considered the physical and the mental realms as two absolutely closed systems, with the difference that the former permitted the interaction between the two with the help of a pineal gland. At the same time, the latter negated it in all circumstances. Both agreed that the corporeal universe is a machine and explained it mechanically like natural scientists. This position was criticised by the thinkers who followed the scholastic tradition stating that it is a godless doctrine that failed to consider the divine purpose in the world. When Leibniz began to philosophise, he confronted these problems and tried to bring harmony between them.

Leibniz always conceived the universe as a harmonious whole governed by logical and mathematical principles. So he used the demonstrative method in philosophy which he conceived as a true method to deal with complex concepts in philosophy. The major influences that he had from the history of philosophy were the teachings of Aristotle and scholastic thinkers. Leibniz wanted to reconcile the scholastic speculative theology that stresses faith with rational modern philosophy and science. He conceived mathematics and metaphysics as the fundamental sciences that give a strong foundation for all knowledge systems.

Before entering into the detailed discussions of his philosophy, let us briefly examine his biography. Leibniz was born at Leipzig in 1646. He was an intelligent boy who engaged with different Greek and scholastic philosophies at the early age of thirteen. His university studies began at the age of fifteen under James Thomasius, who gave a systematic account of the thinkers like Bacon, Hobbes, Descartes, Spinoza, Kepler and Galileo. Knowing the contributions of these thinkers to philosophy and science played a major role in shaping Leibniz's thoughts.

After these initial engagements, Leibniz turned his studies to mathematics under the guidance of Erhard Weigel and then turned to Law studies in which he took a doctorate from Altdorf. He was offered a university chair in the same place, which he refused, stating that he had very different things in view.

Another important event in his life was the dispute concerning his discovery of infinitesimal calculus. When Leib-

niz published this work, he was unaware that Newton had already written on the same subject. Leibniz published his work around three years before Newton's work on the same subject got published. Even though he had a tremendous intellectual life with the most distinguished achievements, the end of his days was embittered by neglect. The academy that Leibniz founded in Berlin did not even notice the death of Leibniz that took place in 1716.

> **Major Works:** *The Monadology, Essays of Theodicy, New Essays on Human Understanding, Discourse on Metaphysics, Meditations on Knowledge, Truth, and Ideas, On the Ultimate Origination of Things, On Nature Itself*

4.4.1 Theory of Monads

Leibniz described monads as particular, independent, ultimate self-sufficient substances. In his view, monads do not possess shape, figure or extension as it is the simplest substance. By simple, he meant without any parts. That is, he considered it as simple substances out of which compound substances are formed. All empirical things are composed of it; they are the true atoms of nature and, in a word, the elements of things. He places these simple substances beyond production and destruction. There is no conceivable way by which these simple substances (monads) can come into being or be destroyed by natural means. He conceived them as physical units that make things active. Hence, he deviated from his predecessors, stating that the essential characteristics of the universal substance are not an extension but force and activity.

Leibniz changed the static concept of nature with the dynamic view and placed force as the source of the mechanical world. He prioritised force over extension and pointed out that bodies do not exist by virtue of extension, but extension exists by virtue of a force. There is a force in the body that goes before all extension; that is, extension presupposes the existence of force.

Monads are without any differences in quantity or figure as they do not have it, but each monad is qualitatively different. The law of identity of indiscernibles, which is the fundamental principle of Leibniz's metaphysics, affirms that no two monads are exactly alike. Each monad develops according to its inner quality and constitution. They represent the universe in a way different from the representations of the other.

No monad can influence another or produce any change in it. The change is impossible because the quality, which is the essence of each monad, cannot be transferred to the other. So Leibniz conceives monads as windowless; nothing can go out, and nothing can come into it.

> The law of identity of indiscernibles was formulated by Leibniz in his work *Discourse on Metaphysics* which says that no two distinct things are exactly the same. This is generally referred to as Leibniz's law.

Monads are found in a hierarchical order of existence. There is no leap or break in the line from the lowest to the highest. Each monad in the series differs from the next by an infinitely small degree of quality. This order propounds another important law established by Leibniz – the law of continuity. This principle states that everything that exists falls into a chain of order without any leap or break and forms a close connection with one another.

Each monad is not inert but has an inner potential and tendency to act. Leibniz defines it as 'being capable of action'. It means there is a force, a principle of activity in the monad that can be distinguished from the activities it becomes part of. This is the principle or force that leads it to these activities. Leibniz calls this positive tendency to action as *conatus.* This conatus is the principle within the monad which fulfils itself without any external force or stimuli.

Leibniz maintained that the world of bodies consists of an infinite number of monads. These monads, which are unextended, simple entities, combine to form extended compound substances. Monads consist of prime matter, which is the passive matter and conatus, which is the principle of action or the active force. They together form the body. It is called the secondary matter, which is also called mass by Leibniz. It is an aggregate of monads or substances. A dominant monad acts as a substantial form, making it an organic and unified body rather than a mere collection of monads. This is what Leibniz calls a corporeal body.

An animal or a human is not a mere aggregate of monads but a corporeal substance as it has a unified and organic body by virtue of a dominant monad. Each monad reflects in itself the whole universe, which means that it has perception. He

clearly states that no monads can exist without a perception of some kind. In this sense, monads are conceived as the living mirror of the universe. Each monad has changed in perception corresponding to the changes in the environment.

Every monad is in the process of evolution and realises its nature with an inner necessity. Leibniz calls this action of the internal principle an appetition. Therefore all monads have perception and appetition. This does not mean that it has consciousness or desire. Leibniz uses appetition as another name for the spontaneity of the monad - the power internally present in all monads to unfold its whole nature.

Leibniz has another concept called apperception which is distinct from perception. Apperception is the reflective consciousness of the perceptions. Not all monads have apperceptions, not at all times by the same monad. It can be said to be degrees of perception. Some monads only possess confused perceptions, without distinctness, memory and consciousness. These monads are in a state of slumber. Plants have a dominant monad of this quality. Sometimes humans, too, have this condition.

Monads which have memory and feeling along with perception are at a higher degree. We can consider it as an intermediate class that generally includes animals. Dogs will run when we wave a stick at them because of the memory and feeling associated with a former perception. They are devoid of self-consciousness or reason.

When perception is accompanied by consciousness, the perception becomes distinct from the perceiver who is aware of the perception. Such souls are called 'rational souls' or 'spirits'. They come to a higher level than the previous ones with

the capability of true reasoning. Humans are rational souls who are the only beings capable of knowing necessary truths about the soul and the spirit and the monad and being able to reflect on their perceptions.

It does not mean that they are always in a state of consciousness regarding their perception. In his view, each of the two higher classes not only possesses their specific qualities but also possesses the characteristics of the inferior monad. That is, the monads that are specifically found in humans also have qualities found in plants and animals. A mill worker may be unconscious of the noise of his machine. That is, he might not have a distinct awareness of it because of habit; as Leibniz puts it, 'in three-fourths of their actions (men) act simply as brutes'.

Leibniz placed God above all the monads and conceived God as the monad of all monads or the supreme monad. For him, God is a supernatural, super-rational, the most perfect and the most real being. God, being perfect, is freed from all changes, developments and evolutionary processes like other monads. He conceived God as absolute goodness, omniscience and omnipotence. He places the idea of God as an innate idea and asserts that we can arrive at the idea of God only through internal reflection. In order to prove the existence of God, Leibniz gives various arguments that include ontological, cosmological, proof based on eternal truths, and proof from the order and harmony of nature.

4.4.2 Pre-established harmony

The relation between mind and body is one of the significant concepts dealt with by modern thinkers. In dealing with this subject matter, they formulated different theories concerning the metaphysical position they took in their thought. For instance, Descartes, who maintained a dualism in metaphysics, fell into a dilemma in dealing with the mind-body relation. Taking all these into account, Leibniz gave a theory of pre-established harmony to explain the relationship between mind and body.

Leibniz negated the pseudo-Aristotelian idea of mind-body relation, which states that something passes from one to the other when an interaction happens between mind and body. For instance, my mind has an idea of a chair not because it has passed through the eyes to the mind using some medium or because my eyes are struck in that way God chooses to reveal to me something of his idea of a chair. According to Leibniz, the idea of a chair in an individual's mind is not shaped by any external agency; but rather generated by the mind itself. It is already there in mind, unfolding at the exact moment when light affects the eyes. The same thing happens in the opposite direction when the mind causes an event in the body. Apart from this, no other kind of relationship happens between body and mind.

Leibniz states that from the time of creation, the mind is pre-programmed by God so that the two shall go together. In other words, the relation between mind and body is a harmony pre-established by God. He completely got out from the causal interaction of both and pointed out that there is perfect parallelism or concomitance between the mental and the physical states.

"The source of mechanics lies in metaphysics", says Leibniz and thus he makes a good attempt to reconcile between science and religion.

The monads that behave in accordance with their own purpose form a unity or the ordered universe. It is the same as the several clocks stuck at the same hour by keeping the exact time in all the clocks. It resulted from the perfect construction of the clocks that keep the exact time without any mutual influence or assistance. Leibniz also compares the concomitance of all monads with the musical band in which each musician is placed in such a way that they follow their notes without seeing or hearing one another and form a beautiful harmony of music. With God's activity, each monad which is a world in miniature form and windowless, acts in accordance with the harmony pre-established at the time of creation.

Recap

- ♦ Leibniz was concerned mainly with two problems: the relationship between God and the world and the relationship between body and mind

- ♦ He conceived mathematics and metaphysics as the fundamental sciences

- ♦ Monads as particular, independent, ultimate self-sufficient substances

- ♦ He prioritised force over extension

- ♦ The law of identity of indiscernibles - no two monads are exactly alike

- ♦ Leibniz conceives monads as windowless

- ♦ The law of continuity

- ♦ Each monad reflects in itself the whole universe - Perception

- ♦ Every monad is in the process of evolution and realises its nature with an inner necessity - Appetition

- ♦ Apperception is the reflective consciousness of the perceptions

- ♦ God is the monad of all monads

- ♦ The relation between mind and body is a harmony pre-established by God

Objective Questions

1. What are the two major problems confronted by Leibniz in his philosophy?

2. What is the method that he conceived as proper to philosophy?

3. What are fundamental sciences, according to Leibniz?

4. How did Leibniz describe the concept of Monad?

5. Why did Leibniz say that no monad can influence another or produce any change?

6. How does Leibniz describe the law of continuity?

7. How did Leibniz describe apperception?

8. How did Leibniz describe appetition?

9. How did Leibniz conceive God in his philosophy?

10. How do mind and body relate in Leibniz's philosophy?

Answers

1. The relationship between God and the world and the relationship between body and mind

2. Demonstrative method

3. Mathematics and Metaphysics

4. The particular, independent, self-sufficient ultimate substances

5. The change is impossible because the quality which is the essence of each monad cannot be transferred to the other

6. Everything that exists falls into a chain of order without any leap or break and form a close connection with one another

7. The reflective consciousness of the perceptions

Assignments

1. Explain the theory of monads in Leibniz's philosophy?

2. What were the major philosophical problems confronted by Leibniz and how he treated them different from other rationalist thinkers? Explain.

3. How does Leibniz tackle the problem of mind and body? Explain.

Suggested Readings

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

2. Falckenberg, Richard. (2006). *History of Modern Philosophy.* US: Biblio Bazaar.

3. Kenny, A. (2005). *A New History of Western Philosophy Vol. 3 The Rise of Modern Philosophy.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

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

5

BLOCK

Modern Philosophy: Empiricism

John Locke

Learning Outcomes

This course will enable the learner to:

♦ give a reflection on the empiricism of John Locke

♦ be aware of the concept of tabula rasa

♦ briefly discuss the rejection of innate ideas in Locke

♦ get a general idea of the primary and secondary qualities of matter

Prerequisites

Rationalism and empiricism are the two main schools of thought in philosophy. According to rationalism, the reason is the source of knowledge and is innate in character. Rationalist thinkers explain the world by using mathematical principles and completely negate the knowledge derived from the faculty of the senses. They believe in the universal and necessary knowledge and found innate ideas as the only source of real knowledge. This over - emphasis on *a priori* or innate knowledge and the total negation of the faculties of sensation in acquiring knowledge was questioned by another stream of thinkers who emphasised the role of experience in acquiring knowledge. We commonly address them as empiricist philosophers. They negated innate ideas and argued that the only way to acquire knowledge is through experience. Among the empiricist thinkers, John Locke with whom we are going to engage with, played a significant role in giving a systematic outlook to empiricism.

Key Concepts

Innate ideas, Tabula rasa, Sensation, Reflection, Simple ideas, Complex ideas

Discussion

John Locke is a 17th-century British empiricist philosopher. He received his education at Oxford University and held several influential roles in government. In the modern era, Locke was the first to raise questions concerning epistemology and to provide a systematic response.

Empiricism is a philosophical position that emphasises empirical experience as a source of knowledge. In contrast to rationalism, it holds that knowledge begins with sense experience. Empiricists oppose the theory of innate ideas. Locke also challenges the prevalent view of rationalists that considers knowledge as innate. For Locke, a child's mind at the time of birth is a 'tabula rasa, (blank sheet) and knowledge exists outside the mind.

> Empiricism is school of thought which held 'experience' as the source of knowledge

For empiricists, knowledge is something that is acquired through experiences. This experience is two-fold. The first one is an external experience or sensation. Through sensation, we get the sensible characteristics of physical objects. The other mode of experience is the inner experience which is obtained through reflection. We gain the functions of the mind such as willing, perceiving, thinking, and so forth through reflection.

'An Essay Concerning Human Understanding', 'A Letter on Toleration', 'Two Treatises of Civil Government' are some of the best-known works of Locke. He established psychology as an empirical discipline and pioneered the use of the historical method in philosophy.

5.1.1 Refutation of Innate Ideas

Innate ideas are the ideas present in human beings from the very birth itself. Such ideas were said to have a mysterious origin. The God is believed to have engraved the innate ideas in our minds. The term 'innate idea' is most frequently used for the Platonic as well as the Cartesian views, which say some of our knowledge is inborn. For instance, Descartes, the rationalist, regards intrinsic thoughts as the underlying premise of logical reasoning. The belief in innate ideas constitutes the main pillar of rationalistic philosophy.

> Innate ideas are the ideas with which we are born

Innate ideas are the unchanging truth, and thus they do not depend on sensory experience for their validity. It is believed that the innateness of ideas is undeniably tested by their universality. Locke argued that innate ideas obstruct free inquiry since they appeal to authority rather than reason. Thus, to advocate his empiricist philosophy, Locke rejects the innateness of ideas. For him, there is nothing in the intellect which was not previously in the sense'. In Locke's view, every learning of knowledge occurs is between the time of birth and thereafter. For him, we get knowledge only through sensation or experience.

Locke rejects the doctrine of innate ideas on the following grounds; if there are innate ideas, they must be equally and universally present in every mind. The believers of innate ideas hold that certain ideas are universally known. In other words, they are universally accepted and must originate from within our minds and not from elsewhere, e.g. the idea of God. However, Locke countered this argument by claiming that no thought, including the concept of God, exists in everyone's mind. Some people, such as savages and children, have no concept of God in their minds. God and immortality are concepts that vary across civilizations, countries, and eras and the same idea may vary simultaneously in different people living in the same society. If it is innate, it must exist equally as well as uniformly without any exception. For Locke, as there is no widespread acceptance of the concept of God, it cannot be claimed to be innate.

Even if all minds had innate ideas, this would not be able to prove their innateness. For Locke, everyone has the same concept about fire and the sun in mind, but it is not an innate idea. According to Locke, the idea of fire is derived from experiences.

The universality of an idea does not imply that it is innate.

If there are innate ideas, they must possess certainty and necessity. Adherents to innate ideas hold that some truths, such as mathematical principles, are unquestionable and eternal. They contend that if the mathematical premise is based on experience, it lacks this assurance. As mathematical principles possess certainty and necessity, they must be innate. But for Locke, abstract relationships between ideas serve as the foundation for mathematical principles. Hence, they are not innate, as believers of the rationalist innate ideas assume.

Proponents of intrinsic ideas contend that certain concepts exist in our minds unconsciously. These are present in our minds, even if we are not aware of the same. According to Locke, it is absurd and inconsistent to believe that the mind is not aware of the thoughts that are already there. Innate ideas are general truths which are derived from conclusions drawn from specific facts or experiences. These specific facts are attained from perception.

The proponents of innate ideas hold that these concepts always exist in our minds, just as powers or potentials, waiting to be realised. They claim that our minds have certain innate powers or potentials. For instance, even a newborn child can distinguish between pain and pleasure events. Locke agreed with the rationalist argument that there are certain innate mental abilities like the primal instincts, the drive for pleasure, and the urge to avoid pain etc. But Locke argues that those potentials or abilities are linked to emotions or feelings only. Those potentials are not knowledge and have nothing to do with knowledge. Regarding the question of knowledge, Locke claims that knowledge is not innate. All our

knowledge is generated from experience, and there is no knowledge prior to experience.

Locke's denial of innate ideas has drawn a lot of criticism. According to linguistic philosopher Noam Chomsky, even if numerous languages have different surface grammar, there is an innate language factually in the human mind that allows us to learn and use language. Chomsky here proves that deep structure of languages is innate. Modern psychology also asserts that many undiscovered things exist in the human mind. These arguments point to the possibility of innate ideas.

5.1.2 Theory of Knowledge

As we discussed earlier, Locke says all our knowledge is obtained from experiences and no innate ideas exist in the mind. He described the mind as a 'tabula rasa.' The term 'tabula rasa' refers to an 'empty cabinet', or 'white paper', or 'blank slate', or 'void of all characters'. From the very beginning, the mind is bare and clear; nothing has been imprinted on it. On this clean blank sheet, the experience begins to imprint ideas or leave its mark.

According to Locke, experiences are of two kinds- sensation and reflection. The sensation is the external perception and is the source of exterior objects. In contrast, reflection is an internal perception and is a source of information about inner mental processes like knowing, willing, feeling, doubting, etc. Apart from sensation and reflection, there does not exist even a single idea in the mind.

> For Locke, 'Mind is tabula rasa'

5.1.2.1 Simple ideas

According to Locke, whatever is known via sensation is "simple ideas", and these simple ideas are not knowledge itself, rather it is the content or raw material of knowledge. Simple ideas, which are the building blocks of knowledge, are atomistic in nature, they are not divisible. The mind receives the simple ideas in a linear method; one after the other. The mind is passive during the sensation since it only perceives ideas. The simple ideas can be received in four different ways.

The simple ideas derive from a single sense organ, like the idea of colour, sound etc. Furthermore, simple ideas derive from more than one sense organ simultaneously. For e.g., the idea of space and time, rest and motion etc. Likewise, some simple ideas originate from internal senses or reflection. Here, the mind investigates its own action in response to numerous concepts provided to it. For instance, the ideas of thinking, seeing, comparison, separation, volition etc. Moreover, simple ideas derive from both sensation and reflection. E.g., the ideas of pleasure, suffering, existence, power, and unity.

5.1.2.2 Complex ideas

By comparing, compounding, and abstracting simple ideas, we get a number of complex ideas. The sensation supplies the raw materials for thought. Complex ideas establish relationships, and the mind is active here. Mental processes such as perception, memory, judgement, and comparison enable the formation of complex ideas. There are three sorts of complex concepts. They consist of concepts of relations, ideas of substance, and ideas of modes.

The idea of Modes: The ideas of modes are complex ideas; they are incapable of existing on their own. For instance, the concept of a triangle in mathematics and the concept of murder in morality, etc. There are two different types of modes: simple modes and complex modes. The repetition or aggregation of only one sort of simple idea makes up a simple mode. It is the various combinations of the same kind of simple ideas, without any other mixture, such as space and time. On the other hand, the complex mode is made up of many combinations of various kinds of simple ideas. It consists of simple ideas from several modes that the mind has blended. For example, theft, murder, and beauty. The concept of beauty may arise from a combination of simple ideas related to colour, shape, symmetry, and other aesthetic qualities that the mind blends together to form a complex idea of beauty. Similarly, the concept of theft may arise from a combination of simple ideas related to property, ownership taking without permission and so on.

Sensation or reflection does not directly lead to the concepts of substance and relation. They appear only after the mind is supplied with simple ideas. Hence, Locke keeps away from the sensationalistic accounts of knowledge, when explaining the complex ideas of substance and relation. As it appears after the simple ideas moreover they are secondary.

The idea of Substance: Substances are the self-sustaining bodies that provide the basis for primary and secondary qualities. It underlies a number of experienced simple qualities. For instance, the idea of a red rose is constituted by a number of qualities such as its redness, fragrance and shape etc. These qualities cannot exist themselves but need something to which they can inhere. This something is the substance in which qualities exist. The substance of red rose is not the sum total of all these qualities, but it is the substratum which carries all the qualities together in it.

For Locke, there are two types of substance,such as material substance (Body) and spiritual substance (Soul, God). Even though he is an empiricist, Locke believes in the existence of the mind and God. According to Locke, there is sensitive certainty for the presence of matter, intuitive certainty for the soul or mind, and demonstrative assurance for God.

Matter: According to Locke, material substance involves the perception of physically existing things and serves as the foundation for primary qualities. He distinguished between primary and secondary qualities. Primary qualities are those that are inseparably constant in the physical thing. These qualities are both implicit and constant. Extension, solidity, number, figure, motion, and the rest are examples of primary attributes that can be attained through sensation or physical perception.

According to Locke, secondary qualities do not exist in the physical object and do not express anything that exists in the substance itself. The secondary qualities, as opposed to primary qualities, are affected by the experience of the perceiver and the sense organs that actually viewed things. They include qualities like colour, sound, and taste. The secondary traits are relative because they depend on the perceiver. As a result, the same dish may taste different to two persons.

The primary qualities can exist without the secondary qualities, and they can exist even if there is no individual to perceive them. While secondary qualities

are dependent on the individual who perceived the object and are dependent on the object's primary qualities. There is no secondary quality in the absence of the perceiver. Locke was a realist; realism holds the reality of the external world exist independent of the knowing mind. In particular, he is a scientific or critical realist, which sees the reality of primary quality as to be real and the secondary quality as based on the subjective state of mind. Later, Berkeley challenged and rejected Locke's classification of these primary and secondary qualities.

According to Locke, the matter is the substratum in which primary characteristics exist and secondary qualities are inferred by the individual. For instance, a chair has a lot of sensible qualities like weight, colour, shape, hardness, etc. There is something that links these qualities together in the intricate concept of a chair. This physical foundation for these qualities gave rise to the concept of material or corporeal substance.

Soul or Mind: The mind or soul is a complex idea of immaterial, spiritual substance. It serves as the foundation for the qualities of mental processes such as perception, thought, willingness, feeling, and memory. These qualities can be attained through reflection. The primary qualities of the mind are thinking and the willingness to initiate movement. Despite the fact that this is true, it is still unclear how the mind can initiate the body to move by will. Thought or thinking is not the essence of the mind; rather, it is the action of the soul. Hence, while the qualities are recognized, the true nature of the mind remains a mystery.

God: The reality of God can be drawn from the external world, as its creator. For Locke, there are unknowable substances in God, yet he does not claim to understand God's true essence. God is only immaterial. We can construct the complex idea of God out of the simple ideas of virtues and powers that we perceive in ourselves through reflection. From the experience of existence and duration, wisdom and power, pleasure and happiness, etc. we can create the complex idea of God by enlarging each of them to an infinite degree and later merging these infinite ideas together.

The idea of Relation: The idea of relations are constituted by comparing one idea with the other. Firstly, the mind brings one thing to another and later directs all attention from one to the other, finally recognizing the relationship between them. The idea of relations are made up of simple ideas.

The idea of causation is the most comprehensive relationship that exists between ideas, and this relationship is generated both from sensation and reflection. Through senses, we learn that things change, qualities and substances begin to exist, and their existence is dependent on the actions of other qualities and substances. That which produces any simple or complex idea is called cause, and that which is produced from the cause is the effect. For instance, hydrogen and oxygen are the cause of the effect of water. The cause is that which makes another thing and the effect is that which depends on another thing for its beginning. Creation, making, alteration and generation are different kinds of causation. Even though there are many other relationships like the relations of time, place, extension, moral relations, relations of identity and diversity etc. the idea of cause and effect is the most extensive and significant relationship in science.

For Locke, knowledge is derived through induction. Knowledge starts

from particular experiences and makes a general conclusion. Hence,his theory of knowledge is called the posterior theory of knowledge.

The three kinds of knowledge which Locke distinguished are intuitive, demonstrative and sensitive knowledge.

Intuitive knowledge is immediate knowledge with the highest degree of certainty. There is no room for doubt in it. It does not require any proof or mediation of any other ideas. The existence of the self is known through this intuitive knowledge. In contrast, demonstrative knowledge is mediated and it requires mathematical or logical proofs. Ethical and mathematical knowledge is demonstrative. The existence of particular external objects is assured through sensitive knowledge. It is based on sense experience. All physical knowledge is sensitive knowledge.

According to Locke, human knowledge is confined to perception or sensory experience. But it is impossible to perceive all the huge and minute things that exist here like the bacteria and the huge earth. Hence, the knowledge gets through sensation is not certain. Locke argues it is intuitive and demonstrative knowledge that is necessary as well as certain. Locke accepts the correspondence theory of knowledge. For him, the truth or falsity of knowledge is dependent upon the correspondence of reality to it. The ideas correspond to the respective qualities. Three elements make up Locke's theory of perception: the knower, the idea, and the object of knowledge.

In conclusion, John Locke's philosophy is centred around his refutation of innate ideas and his theory of knowledge based on empiricism. He argued that all knowledge is derived from experience and that there are no innate ideas. This idea challenged the prevailing views of his time and has had a significant impact on modern epistemology. Locke's theories continue to be studied and debated today, particularly in the fields of philosophy of mind and psychology.

Recap

- ♦ Experience is the source of knowledge

- ♦ There are no innate ideas

- ♦ Mind is tabula rasa

- ♦ Whatever knowledge is acquired is during the period of birth and thereafter

- ♦ Experience is either sensation or reflection

- ♦ Sensation gives simple ideas and comparing and contrasting these simple ideas creates complex ideas

- ♦ Modes of complex ideas are ideas of modes, ideas of substance and ideas of relations

- ♦ There are two types of substances- material substances (Body) and spiritual substances (Soul, God)

- ♦ The matter possesses both primary as well as secondary qualities

- ♦ Locke accepts the correspondence theory of knowledge

- ♦ Locke is a realist, especially a scientific/ critical realist, who believes in the existence of objects independent of the knowing mind

Objective Questions

1. What is regarded as the source of knowledge according to empiricists?

2. Which is the term used by Locke to refer to the 'mind'?

3. Does Locke believe in the innate idea?

4. Which are the two types of experience mentioned by Locke?

5. What are the three kinds of knowledge mentioned by Locke?

6. What is Substance for Locke?

7. What is the main distinction between primary and secondary qualities?

8. Which theory of truth does Locke believe in?

9. What is realism?

Answers

1. Experience

2. Tabula rasa

3. No. Locke refutes innate ideas

4. Sensation and reflection

5. Intuitive, Demonstrative and sensitive

6. The substratum of primary qualities

7. Primary qualities are inseparably inherent, in the object. Secondary quality depends on the perceiver

8. The correspondence theory of truth

9. Realism believes in the existence of objects, independent of the knowing mind

Assignments

1. Do you think that ideas are innate? Make a note of your opinions on Locke's arguments

2. Discuss the epistemological arguments of John Locke

Suggested Readings

1. Copleston, Frederick. (1994) *A History of Philosophy (Vol. I) Greece and Rome*, New York: Image Books.

2. Weber, Alfred. (1897) *History of Philosophy*, trans. Frank Thilly, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

3. Masih, Y. (2017) *A Critical History of Western Philosophy: (Greek, Medieval and Modern)* 7th ed. Motilal Banarsidass.

UNIT 2

George Berkeley (1685- 1753)

Learning Outcomes

This unit will introduce the learner to:

♦ the empiricist philosophy of George Berkeley

♦ Berkeley's rejection of abstract ideas

♦ Berkeley's subjective idealism

♦ Berkeley's criticism of Locke's distinction of primary and secondary qualities

Prerequisites

As we discussed in the previous unit, empiricism asserted that knowledge could only be gained by sense experience. Footing on this basic notion, John Locke, distinguished between primary and secondary qualities and claimed that the latter are mind-dependent. The second prominent empiricist philosopher George Berkeley proceeded from this point. He devoted most of his time for studying the question of whether an object's attributes are innate in the object itself or depend on the perceiver. Being a religious thinker, he gave importance to spirit and ideas that negated the independent objective existence of the world. He viewed that all the traits of objects are inherent and believed that anything exists only because it is being perceived. Locke's empiricism prioritised sense experience over innate ideas and attempted to refute those ideas with his epistemological theories. Berkeley took this thought to further stage and gave importance to the subject's perception, which led to subjective idealism.

Key Concepts

Substance, Abstract ideas, Perception, Primary and Secondary qualities, Idea, Representationalism, Presentationism, Epistemological monism, Esse est percipi

Discussion

George Berkeley is an Irish philosopher, who lived in the 18th century. He was the Bishop of Cloyne of the Anglican Church and had served as a tutor and fellow at Trinity College, Dublin for around thirteen years. He promoted subjective idealism and strived to deny the existence of material substances or substrata.

> The Principles of Human Knowledge (1710), Three Dialogues (1713) and Alciphron are the most important works of George Berkeley

George Berkeley made a conscious effort to challenge materialism, which was in full bloom in his era. A trend of depending on the matter to describe all natural phenomena began due to the scientific discoveries of Newton and Boyle together with the improvements in mathematics. The majority of philosophers believed that matter is superior to everything else. They denied the existence of a supreme divine creator to establish the independent existence of matter. The rejection of any faith in the supreme creator or God resulted in atheism and agnosticism. The very existence of humans and consciousness were explained in terms of pure mechanics. The mind is either deemed epiphenomena or non-existent and therefore deteriorated into the second position.

Being a strong religious person, Berkeley denied the over importance of matter and all such related tendencies. He established idealism by utilizing John Locke's basic empiricist notions and attacked materialism and atheism. Berkeley viewed matter as an abstract idea and rejected its existence by taking a spiritualist position in his philosophy. According to him, reference to an 'unknown substratum' with the characteristics of a solid substance is an absurd claim. He denied the independent existence of matter and proposed sensationalism as a method for attacking science, which supports matter. Berkeley could see that what is called matter is an abstract idea and hence by rejecting the abstract idea, 'matter' could be rejected. He also believed in spiritualism, which necessitated the rejection of materialism.

5.2.1 Rejection of Abstract Ideas

Berkeley's rejection of abstract ideas plays a significant role in his overall philosophy of subjective idealism, which tries to challenge the existing view that there is an independent, objective reality that exists outside of our perceptions. By rejecting the existence of abstract ideas as independent entities, Berkeley clearly stated that our perceptions are the only

reality we can know, and rejected a world outside of our minds.

An attribute, idea or concept is said to be abstract when it is viewed independently of the object to which it belongs. John Locke believes strongly in the concept of abstract ideas. For Locke, ideas include all sensory qualities such as smell and colour, impressions such as memory and imagination and the mind's own processes such as reflections and synthesis of sensible ideas etc. According to him, abstract ideas allow people to group particularly sensible objects.

Berkeley in contrast to Locke asserted that each idea is specific and concrete, and there is nothing abstract. According to him, humans do not have the power to form abstract thoughts. He argued that abstract ideas such as 'whiteness' or 'squareness' cannot exist as abstract entities in and of themselves, but only as mental representations that are formed through our perception of specific instances of white or square objects.

According to Berkeley, an abstract idea is something that goes in opposition to the ordinary sense. These are creations of the human mind independent of the external world. For instance, when we think of a man, we envision someone short or tall, fair or dark, plain or intellectual, and so on. The question is, how can one idea incorporate all of these elements while excluding none? When we think of man, we do not think of an abstract person, but of a specific man with certain characteristics. We cannot think of an ideal individual to symbolise the abstract concept of humanity without endowing that individual with specific features. We are unable to create an abstract concept of humankind because we are unfit to envision a completely generic person. Thus Berkeley claims that this abstract concept is nothing more than mere imagination.

Locke, who adheres to the empiricist school, believes in the existence of material things. But Locke claims that he didnot know what this matter is. Berkeley, who is a subjective idealist, claims that there are no such things as material. He denies the existence of matter and claims that the concept of an unknown and unknowable substance is meaningless. It is impossible to think of anything unrelated to the mind. Individual material items, he claims, are nothing more than a collection of different qualities, which are merely ideas. Nothing remains after extracting the qualities from the object. As the thing is a collection of ideas, it cannot exist apart from the mind that perceives it. According to Locke, materiality is the source of ideas. However, Berkeley contends that there is no matter separate from the mind and as the matter is passive and inert, it cannot be the source of ideas.

Rejection of the reality of matter does not eliminate the existence of the physical world and its material objects. For Berkeley, the physical world exists only because of being perceived by an infinite mind or a collection of finite minds. Thus, Berkeley believes only in the existence of finite and infinite mental substances.

Berkeley rejected Locke's division between the primary and secondary qualities. He argues that both these traits depend on the mind of the perceiver. Hence, there is no need to separate them into two. Berkeley challenges Locke's categorization and contends that the supposedly primary attributes are just as secondary as the others. All sensory properties, including those of extension and solidity, are referred to as "ideas." According to Berkeley, the ideas of extension and solidity come to us through the sense of touch and are therefore mental

sensations.

The concept of extension cannot be separated from the concept of colour and other secondary attributes. Because, it is impossible to view something that is extended but colourless. There is no separation between the primary and secondary qualities. They are inseparably united. A substance cannot be withdrawn from a secondary quality and left behind. Berkeley asks, how could we know the primary qualities if they could exist independently of the mind?

Since the primary and secondary qualities are mental constructs, Berkeley referred to both of these as "ideas." A material item is simply a collection of ideas. Berkeley has relied on what is referred to as sensationalism and nominalism in order to disprove abstract concepts and hence matter.

5.2.2 Theory Of Knowledge

John Locke put forward the representational theory of knowledge. For him, the mind can directly perceive only mental images or sensory ideas of material objects. These ideas are the immediate object of knowledge. For Locke, it is impossible to directly know the substance. There is a distinction between the mental representation of an object and the object itself. The mental representation is termed 'ideas' by Locke and it represents the qualities of substance. Hence, we can infer the substance and the qualities through ideas. It is a three-factor theory. Here, the ideas mediate between the object and the knower. Hence, it is known as epistemological dualism or the representationalism of Locke.

George Berkeley criticises the representationalist theory put forward by Locke.

According to him, if something is said to be the representation of some other thing, then we must know about both of them. It is impossible to assert representationalism with the knowledge of only one thing. As discussed in the previous unit, Locke made a distinction between primary and secondary qualities. Hence, the idea of primary qualities is the image of primary qualities, whereas secondary qualities are not. Because for Locke, secondary qualities are not inherent in the material object but depend on the perceiving mind. Berkeley wonders that, if we do not know what the original was indeed, then how can we say that something represents something else?

Berkeley rejects the epistemological dualism of Locke by considering all qualities as ultimately mental and subjective. Berkeley argues, if only ideas are known, then how can we say that qualities and substance exist? How do we infer the unknown substance and qualities from the only known ideas? He argued that the representationalism of Locke leads to scepticism. If knowledge is only possible through ideas, there occurs an *infinitum*. That is, in order to know one idea, we depend on another idea. This process continues and leads to an infinite regress.

For Berkeley, the sensible quality is called the idea. There are two distinct sorts of knowledge of ideas: ideas created by memory and imagination and ideas imprinted on the senses. The ideas that emerged from the senses are ideas of specific perceptible attributes, for instance, heat, colour, etc. They might be a group of attributes. For Berkeley, the ideas are immediately presented to us, and we merely have knowledge of them. Berkeley's theory is hence referred to as "presentationism." Berkeley also asserted the interchangeability of ideas and qualities that resulted in epistemological monism. This philosophical position of

Berkeley claimed that there is only one kind of knowledge or way of knowing and that all other forms of knowledge can be reduced to this one basic form. He takes this position grounding on the idealist philosophy, which holds that the material world is nothing but a collection of ideas in the minds of perceivers. He believed that perception was not just a passive process of receiving sensory inputs but rather an active process of constructing meaning out of those inputs.

For Berkeley, it is impossible to examine extensions without the colour of an object. Hence, it is absurd to hold that the primary qualities exist in an object and secondary ones depend upon the perceiver.Both primary and secondary qualities have the same kind of existence. If the secondary qualities are considered as something mental, the primary qualities too must be mental.

In Berkeley's view, both primary and secondary qualities are relative. Berkeley says that every motion and number is relative. As the moving streamer moves in connection to the man standing on the bank, the same man in the boat is considered to be stationary in that relationship. Therefore, if secondary qualities are claimed to be relative, primary qualities should likewise be relative; both depend on the perceiver. Likewise, similar to secondary qualities, primary qualities too depend on the sense- organs. Extension, which is a primary quality can be understood through either vision or touch. Hence, it too depends on the perceiver.

In Berkeley's view, both primary and secondary qualities are relative. Unlike Locke, he argues that if secondary qualities are claimed to be relative, primary qualities should likewise be relative. That is, both qualities depend on the perception of the perceiver. For instance, the extension which is a primary quality for Locke can be understood through either vision or touch. Hence, it also not have an objective existence as Locke viewed. It depends on the perception of the subject and considered as subjective.

To substantiate this subjective idealist position Berkeley used a Latin phrase in his philosophy 'esse est percipi' which means to be is to be perceived. That is, the existence of a thing consists in the being perceived. It emphasised the close relation between perception and existence in Berkeley's philosophy. He did not pay any attention to the objective existence of the world. The ultimate reality according to him was the ideas and the perceptions. When we say that there is a sound, that means it is heard. The argument of Berkeley is that, without experience, we cannot infer the existence of anything. Berkeley makes perception as the necessary condition for the existence.

'Esse est percipi' means 'to be is to be perceived'.

world. There are many things on this earth that we do not perceive but still exist. How do these things exist without human perception? Berkeley knew the limitation of human perception and wanted to arrive at a new source that perceives everything that exists in the world. According to Berkeley, this source was God. He believed that God was the ultimate cause and sustainer of all the ideas we perceive in the world. We can say that God plays a central role in the entire philosophy of Berkeley.

By denying the objective existence of the world, Berkeley argued that all things exist in the mind of God. According to him, the material world is merely a collection of ideas or perceptions that exist

in the minds of God and finite minds. He conceived God not only as a creator of the physical world but as an active being who sustains the world with his perception. He argued that everything in the world, including human beings, is created for the sake of God's glory. In Berkeley's view, the ultimate goal of human life is to come to know and love God. Concludingly, we can state that God is a crucial figure in Berkeley's philosophy, serving as the foundation of his idealist metaphysics and the ultimate explanation for the existence and nature of the world.

Recap

♦ Berkeley is an immaterialist who refuted matter

♦ Berkeley's philosophy heavily relies on the 'spirit' and 'ideas' of things

♦ Berkeley denies abstract ideas and says it is not possible to create abstract ideas from particular experiences

♦ There is no distinction between primary and secondary qualities

♦ Material objects are a collection of different qualities

♦ Berkeley criticises the representationalist theory of John Locke and puts forward presentationism

♦ Presentationism is also known as epistemological monism

♦ The existence of an object depends on being perceived

♦ 'Esse est percipi' means 'to be is to be perceived'

Objective Questions

1. What did Berkeley have to say about abstract ideas?

2. What is Matter, according to Berkeley?

3. Does Berkeley believe in secondary qualities?

4. Who held the representationalist theory of knowledge?

5. What is the theory that Berkeley upheld to state the immediate presence of the ideas to us?

6. What is the other term used for presentationism?

7. What does the phrase "esse est percepi" mean?

8. What sort of idealism does Berkeley adhere to?

Answers

1. From our particular experiences, it is impossible to create abstract ideas

2. Matter is nothing but a cluster of qualities

3. No, there is no distinction between primary and secondary qualities

4. John Locke

5. Presentationism

6. Epistemological monism

7. To be is to be perceived

8. Subjective idealism

Assignments

1. Do you believe in the abstract idea? Explain the possibility of abstract ideas in the light of George Berkeley.

2. Make a note on Berkeley's refutation of primary and secondary qualities

3. Discuss subjective idealism of Berkeley with an example

4. Briefly explain the difference between representationalism and presentationism

Suggested Readings

1. Kenny, Anthony. (2006) *A New History of Western Philosophy (Vol. 3) The Rise of Modern Philosophy*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

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

3. Copleston, Frederick. (1994) *A History of Philosophy (Vol. 5) Modern Philosophy: The British Philosophers from Hobbes to Hume*, New York: Image Books.

4. Scruton, Roger. (1995) *A Short History of Modern Philosophy* (ed. II) *From Descartes to Wittgenstein*, London: Routledge Publications.

3 UNIT

David Hume

Learning Outcomes

This unit will enable the learner to:

♦ get familiarised with the concept of impressions and ideas in Hume's philosophy

♦ get introduced to Hume's fork

♦ get a general idea about how Hume's empiricism ends in scepticism

♦ get an idea about Hume's rejection of soul substances and cause-effect relationship

Prerequisites

The empiricist philosopher Berkeley strongly believed in God and placed him at the centre of everything. Hume questioned the possibility of such knowledge and established boundaries of human experience. To Hume, we are unable to comprehend anything beyond what we can gain from our experience. Despite his significant contributions to philosophy and other fields, Hume's ideas were controversial in his own time. He faced severe criticism from both religious and secular authorities. However, his work has had a lasting impact on subsequent philosophers, and he is commonly regarded as one of the most significant thinkers of the Enlightenment era. Immanuel Kant, who gave a new vision to western philosophy, admitted Hume's importance in the development of philosophy and pointed out that it was Hume who aroused him from his dogmatic slumbers.

Key Concepts

Impressions, Ideas, Hume's Fork, Relations of Ideas, Matters of Fact, Hume's Fork, Causation

Discussion

David Hume is one of the prominent empiricist thinkers who shook the foundations of western philosophy. He was born in Edinburgh, United Kingdom. His autobiographical note 'My own life' provides a detailed explanation of his life and philosophy. *A Treatise of Human Nature* was his first work and it was published at the age of 27. The second work *Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding* brought a reputation for Hume and his philosophical convictions.

Hume's Philosophical implications paved the way to question the theories which were taken for granted for decades. His notion of scepticism made a huge impact on the world of philosophy itself. Hume's ideas of world, self and personal identity were quite different from what his predecessors conceived. He refuted the theory of causality and showed that the validity of the process of induction is inherently problematic. His philosophy was also an attempt to question the prevalent notions of morality and ethics.

5.3.1 Impressions and Ideas

David Hume's philosophy is fundamentally based on the nature of human knowledge. Being an empiricist, he accepts the fundamental empiricist epistemology of Locke and Berkeley and points out that the conclusion they had arrived makes room for scepticism and nihilism. Hume examines that there are two kinds of contents of the mind, such as impressions and ideas. They are the building blocks of all human understanding. Impressions are the most lively, strong, vivid, immediate and direct perceptions. They are of two types, Impressions of sensation and impressions of reflection. Impressions of sensation derive from our senses whereas impressions of reflection are derived from mental discourses, feelings and emotions. Impressions are simple and prior whereas ideas are considered to be posterior. Ideas can be both simple and complex and they are faint copies of impressions.

There is a difference between forcefulness and vivacity among impressions and ideas. For example, listening to music and remembering that music is not at all the same. When listening to music we are almost part of it and could examine that harmony with all its vivacity and intensity. Impressions are considered to be livelier and more forceful than ideas. All human knowledge is built by compounding various impressions. If there is no impression, there is no idea. A blind man will never have any idea about the colour because he could not get any impression about it. Every idea we have is a copy of a similar impression. Impressions of sensations arise from unknown causes and impact the senses, giving rise to perceptions of sensations such as heat or cold, pleasure or pain. Similarly, an idea of pleasure or pain produces in the mind a faint copy of the same impression.

For Hume, there is a unity principle among ideas. Simple ideas are associated to produce complex ideas such as the simple ideas of colour, smell and taste produce the complex idea of an apple. For Hume, our knowledge is not entirely loose and disconnected; they introduce one another or associate together with

a particular regularity. The feeling of thirst will be quenched after drinking water. Similarly, the process of clapping produces sound, in short, all things around us are connected with certain regularity of resemblance, contiguity in time and place and cause and effect. Every impression is separate and distinct. In short, we can conclude that various kinds of separate and distinct impressions are the origin of all human experience. They are the building blocks or the very nature of all knowledge.

All our knowledge and understanding are possible with the relationship between various ideas. Even the possibility of human life depends on the mind's capacity to relate one idea with another. If it is raining, we will go for an umbrella, because our mind can relate the idea of rain with the idea of an umbrella. For Hume, it is through these relations of ideas that a practical life is possible on the earth.Otherwise, it is not possible. Relations of ideas are the objects of human inquiry. They have a significant role not only in philosophy but also in the day-to-day lives of the whole mankind. Hume's Philosophy is an attempt to inquire about the nature and possibility of these relations of ideas. Hume says that logically two types of relations are possible and all our reasoning is based upon these two relationships. Hume names these basic forms of reasoning as relations of ideas and matters of fact.

5.3.2 Hume's Fork

According to Hume, foundations of all knowledge rely upon the human experience. Sense impressions are the root of all understanding. Reliable human understanding can be of two types, matters of fact and relations of ideas. This is called Hume's fork. No knowledge is possible without the relations of ideas and matters of fact.

Relations of ideas are nothing but the ideas and the relationship between them. One idea is related to another in a certain way. Relations of ideas are *a priori* and necessary. Truths concerning relations of ideas are self-evident. The truth of their propositions is based upon the relation between the ideas and need not be proved through any further application. For example, when we say 2+3=5, there is an assertion in the relationship between two and three. This is called the necessary relationship and nothing will make any change in this relationship. The truth of these propositions is independent of verification. They do not need any further evidence for their relationship. Geometry, arithmetic and algebra are examples of relations of ideas. The truths of these propositions depend only on the meaning of certain symbols that occurred in that particular proposition. The peculiarity of the relations of ideas is that they are formal in nature and not empirical. The Pythagorean theorem is regarded as another classical example of relations of ideas. According to the theorem, the square of the hypotenuse will be equal to the sum of the squares of the other two sides of a right triangle. The truth of these propositions is entirely based on the symbols used here and has nothing to do with the empirical world.

The second kind of relationship is matters of fact; they are *a posteriori* statements and need to be proved through verification. Relations of matters of fact are discovered through empirical evidence. They are not intuitively certain and we can deny them directly without any contradiction. If someone says this room is too hot, someone else could go there and empirically verify that proposition. There

is nothing that necessitates the room being hot. The peculiarity of matters of fact is that they are contingent in nature; it can be true or false. There is nothing that makes this proposition necessarily true or absolutely certain. Matters of facts are based on the belief in cause-effect relationships.

Hume's fork, or the division between rationalism and empiricism, is characterized by the fact that the two prongs never intersect, much like a fork in the road that never crosses.

5.3.3 Hume's Scepticism

Rejection of Soul Substance

Hume's philosophy is an attempt to show the limitations of human reason. Though he is a sceptic, he does not talk about the impossibility of the practical world. He does not deny the existence of things beyond our perception. His scepticism is not so radical that Hume wants to show that human understanding is limited. We cannot comprehend the whole reality; there are certain limits to human rationality. Our knowledge is necessarily restricted.

It is true that our practical day-to-day life is impossible without the belief in a soul substance or personal identity. Hume also agrees with that. But he asks whether such a belief in personal identity or soul substance is philosophically possible. Berkely advocated the independent existence of soul substance, ideas and God. But Hume conceives these notions in a different way. Hume's conception of the mind or soul is nothing but a bundle of impressions. He argues for the impossibility of the soul as a substance. In this regard, Hume's conception of the soul has a close resemblance with the *Nairatmyavada* or the no-soul theory of Buddhism.

According to Hume, human being possesses limited capacities of reason, and our rationality cannot go beyond common life. Metaphysics is, therefore, something that is not comprehensible and is impossible. Rational cosmology and rational psychology are something beyond our capacities of understanding. We did not have any access to something that is beyond impressions and ideas.

According to Hume, to call something as knowledge it must have originated from some impressions. He asks from what impression the notion of soul substance is derived. There is no such impression which proves the essence and existence of the soul. It is not possible to have an idea of such a simple, immaterial, indivisible and imperishable thinking substance. The indivisibility, immateriality or imperishability cannot be validated through empirical experience.

Hume asserts that there is no impression which substantiate the idea of a substance. He rejected the common conceived notion of substance. In his view, there is no logic in saying that perceptions are lying in a material or immaterial substance. Perceptions cannot be situated in a definite space or body. We cannot say that our pleasure or pain is occupied in a definite place. Sometimes a beautiful flower may cause a certain kind of happiness in us. But we cannot say that the impression of flowers and the impressions of happiness are situated in one definite place.

Hume adopts an experimental method to analyse the soul. He says that, by examining himself, he found that self is nothing but the bundle of various perceptions. One after another they occur rapidly, the per-

ceptions of pleasure or pain, heat or cold, and love or hatred appear and disappear. Hume says that the concept of spiritual substance or mind is the theatre where the various perceptions come and go or appear and disappear. There is no such continuing principle like soul within us. The traditional notion of mind is the bundle of various impressions with the nature of perpetual flux. Mind is not something that is simple; there is no evidence to prove so. According to Hume, the only assurance of the mind is that it is nothing but a bundle of various distinct impressions.

Hume's rejection of personal identity is significant while discussing his rejection of the soul substance. Personal identity is based on the continued existence of the self. But there is no impression to prove the continued existence of the so-called self. Impressions are neither constant nor invariable. Hence, they could not suggest the existence of a simple, immaterial imperishable soul or any personal identity. Personal identity is something that has been created by the mind in imagination with the help of past experiences or memory.

> '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'- David Hume

Cause-Effect Relation

All human understanding concerning relations of ideas and matters of fact has its foundations in the cause-effect relationship. We always go for a connection between the observed events in the present with an unobserved future event. The classical question that Hume asks is thus ;how do we know that the sun will rise in the east tomorrow? We may answer that it has risen in the east this morning, and it also has risen in the east yesterday. Here we ascertain the event by connecting various events obseerved in the past together and conclude that the sun will rise in the east tomorrow. Hume questions this tendency of connecting past events and reaching a dogmatic conclusion. For Hume, we could never see any logical certainty behind matters of fact. There is always an element of doubt. We can say with certainty that 7+5=12, but, we cannot say that it will rain after seeing the rainy clouds. That is the difference between relations of ideas and matters of fact.

Hume questions the origin of the idea of causation. From what impression the cause-effect relationship is derived? We call certain things causes. But, Hume says, the so-called causes did not have any particular quality to being called causes. We say that A is the cause of B or this particular thing is the cause of that particular event. Hume questions this notion of causation and this necessary connection between two events. He found the idea of causation as not something that is *a priori* but purely *a posteriori*.

The relation of causality can be derived from three principles, contiguity, temporal priority and necessary connection. The considered causes or effects are contiguous in nature. By observing two events, we tend to believe that there is a necessary causal connection. Or one necessarily follows the other. The cause must be temporally prior to the effect. When we clap our hands together the sound of clapping comes only after joining the hands together. There we assume a temporal priority because the sound of clapping never comes before the hands have joined.

The importance of temporal succession is emphasized. Hume later founds contiguity and temporal priority are not the essential elements to describe the cause-effect relationship.

Hume criticises about the very important notion of the necessary relationship between cause and effect. He repeatedly questions the origin of such kinds of necessary connections. From what impression the idea of a necessary relationship in causality has derived? For Hume, impressions are basic units of all human understanding. For Hume, if there are any such necessary causal relationships exist, then there will certainly be some impressions of them. Without finding any impressions about the necessary causal relationships Hume took his sceptical stand towards the cause-effect relation. Hume concludes it is baseless to assert that a particular cause must necessarily produce a particular effect. It makes no sense to believe that anything that has existence is derived from certain causes.

Our idea of causation is derived purely from observation. The necessary connection that we attribute to the cause-effect relationship is a mere product of repeated experiences or observations. Nothing is intuitive in it. We observe that one event is always followed by another and assumes then that one is the cause and another is the effect. It has been repeatedly seen that the sun rises in the east every morning. Hume also accepts this fact. But the question raised by Hume was on what basis could we ascertain this fact? From what impression could we say that the sun will rise in the east tomorrow? There is no certainty in it because there is no impression that proves any necessary relationship between the sun and the morning. Hume says, 'you can say there is sun and there is morning'. But there is no logic in saying that there is a necessary connection between the sun and the morning. Expecting one after

another is just only an inference; nothing necessitates here.

Hume says that the thing behind these frequently repeated events is nothing but the constant conjunction. The so-called causal-effect relationship is the internal impression of the mind. The cause - effect relationship is something that has been created by the mind. We cannot say that there is some objective reality for the necessary cause-effect relationship, because we could not perceive any impression regarding their necessary connection. Hume accepts that we are observing two events constantly conjoined with one another. But this is something that the mind superimposes in the world of events. Hume calls it the habit of the mind or the tendency of the mind to see an inherent relationship behind two events. When there is smoke, we assume the presence of fire. In our previous experience, we have observed them constantly together. The mind brings the necessary connection through repeated observations and imposes it into the world. In simple words, Hume observes that the association of ideas or assuming one idea from another is nothing but purely a custom of the mind. It is based on the constant conjunction. What we call cause- effect relation is only a psychological necessity and not a logical necessity.

Here by taking all these into account, Hume explains his problem of induction. It is true that all the cause-effect relationships are exactly based on induction. In induction, we observe various particular events and come to a generalisation. The crows that we have seen yet are black in colour and considering those particular experiences we reach the conclusion that all the crows are black in colour. Hume points out that there is a problem while generalising all the past and present observations to the future. We cannot

ascertain a future event from regularly conjoined experiences in the past. It is not possible to completely rule out the possibility of a leap occurring in the process of induction. Because, in induction we are deducing some unperceived future events from some past perceived inferences. For Hume, the inferences derived from induction are absolutely problematic. There is no logical necessity, no certainty, no 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.

Recap

- Two kinds of contents of the mind are impressions and ideas

- Impressions are immediate and direct perceptions

- Two types of impressions- Impressions of sensation and Impressions of reflection

- Impressions are *a priori*

- Every impression is separate and distinct

- Ideas are *a posteriori*

- Ideas consist of both simple and complex

- Simple ideas are associated with complex ideas

- For Hume, sense impressions are the root of all knowledge

- Matters of fact & Relations of ideas

- Relations of ideas are *a priori* and necessary

- Matters of fact are *a posteriori*

- Hume attempts to show the limitations of human reason

- For Hume, human understanding is limited

- Hume is a sceptic

- Soul is nothing but a bundle of impressions

- Metaphysics is not comprehensible and therefore impossible

- Beyond impressions and ideas, we have no access to any knowledge

SGOU - SLM - BA - PHILOSOPHY- INTRODUCTION TO WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

♦ Objects are not necessarily connected; it is the ideas that get connected in our mind by association

Objective Questions

1. What is an impression?

2. What are the two types of impressions?

3. How did we get impressions?

4. What are the two types of human understanding?

5. What is the soul, according to Hume?

6. Why is Hume known as a sceptic?

7. Why did Hume reject metaphysics?

8. What is the argument of Hume in order to reject causation?

Answers

1. Immediate and direct perceptions

2. Impressions of sensation and Impressions of reflection

3. From sensations

4. Matters of fact and Relations of ideas

5. It is a bundle of impressions

6. He doubts the knowledge of the existence of everything beyond impressions and ideas

7. Metaphysics is not comprehensible and impossible

8. Objects are not connected; it is the idea that gets connected in our minds by association

Assignments

1. Write a note on Hume's concept of impressions and ideas.

2. What do you think of Hume being called a sceptic? Why?

3. Discuss Hume's fork

Suggested Readings

1. Kenny, Anthony. (2006) *A New History of Western Philosophy (Vol. 3) The Rise of Modern Philosophy.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

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

3. Copleston, Frederick. (1994) *A History of Philosophy (Vol. 5) Modern Philosophy: The British Philosophers from Hobbes to Hume*. New York: Image Books.

4. Scruton, Roger. (1995) *A Short History of Modern Philosophy (ed. II) From Descartes to Wittgenstein*. London: Routledge Publications.

6
BLOCK

Critical and Dialectical Philosophy

UNIT 1

Introduction to the Method of Critique

Learning Outcomes

This unit will enable the learner to:

- get an idea about what does philosophy as criticism mean

- get a general picture of the critical turn in philosophy and know the significance of the mind/reason in critical philosophy

- understand the power of the faculty of mind as well as its limitation in attaining knowledge as understood by the critical philosophy

- get exposed to various philosophical schools which contributed to the rise of critical philosophy

Prerequisites

Every historical point takes different philosophical turns. The philosophical turns give an overall framework for human beings to think about themselves and the world. The ancient Greek started philosophising by speculating about the universe/nature. The medieval philosophy took a theological turn. The concept of God took the central position of thought of that era. The enlightenment philosophy starts with a critical turn in philosophy. God was replaced with a human being who is bestowed with a powerful mind/reason. An autonomous human being was placed at the centre of the universe. The enlightenment era is known as 'the century of philosophy *par excellence*' because of the tremendous intellectual and scientific progress of the age. That age demanded a special turn into philosophy of human mind/reason and autonomous human beings.

Key Concepts

Critique, Epistemological turn, Mind, Human autonomy, Freedom

Critical philosophy is a methodological movement in philosophy primarily attributed to the famous enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). The critical philosophy arose when philosophy understood that its task was criticism rather than justification of knowledge. Kant's characterization of his time as 'age of criticism' in the foreword to the Critique of *Pure Reason* (1781) sheds light to this new philosophical method.

Kant explains the critique as that "to which everything must be subjected." Critical philosophy gives much status and stature to human reason and upholds that, whatever fails to stand the test of a free and public examination of reason are just subjects of suspicion and cannot claim the high esteem. The fundamental significance of the human mind/reason in Kant's philosophy is the basis of critical philosophy.

> Everything must be tested by a free and public examination of critical reason

It is more or less accepted in the intellectual world that Kant's systematic and comprehensive philosophical enquiry later on developed into a full-fledged critical philosophy. However, it would be wrong to say that Kant inaugurated critical philosophy. In order to understand the background of critical philosophy, one needs to get the picture of the 18th century when the philosophical world was dominated by empiricists and rationalists and conflicts between both schools.

Primarily, critical philosophy is a shift of the focus of philosophy from traditional metaphysics to epistemology. The philosophy at this age is no longer interested in speculating over the nature of the world around us but in critiquing our own mental faculties. The philosophical investigation is done in this age into what can we know, how do we know, where is the boundary of our knowledge, etc. In a different word, it is turning philosophy on its head in an attempt to find the answers to its own problems.

The core concept of critical philosophy is critique. Critical philosophy takes the critical method towards its own problems. It starts from the faith of modern philosophy in the power of the human mind/reason to critique the existing beliefs and customs and to attain knowledge. As we know, critical/enlightenment philosophy bestows a huge amount of faith and freedom in the human mind, rationality and the powers of human reason to obtain and limit knowledge.

Bestowing the mind with a creative role in obtaining human knowledge reaches its culmination in Kant. Kant investigated how the mental/rational process through which we know the world affects and transforms what we know. That is called the Copernican revolution. Here Kant's pronouncement is that human beings can find answers to the philosophical problems in the very examination of our own mental faculties rather than by the metaphysical speculation about the universe.

The empiricist and rationalist phi-

losophers began the project of critical philosophy. The empiricist, rationalist and sceptic philosophical schools rigorously and critically examined the human mind, its nature, scope, characteristics and its limitations. The philosophical urge/trend to dig deep into human mind/reason and to produce comprehensive treatises on it is so telling about the originary philosophical problems existing at that time. It must be noted that the treatises on human mind were written by the empiricist, rationalist and sceptic philosophers alike.

Some of the treatises on human faculties written in the age of criticism are the following: John Locke's *An Essay concerning Human Understanding (1689),* George Berkely's *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710), Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature (1739),* and *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding (1748),* Leibniz's *New Essays on Human Understanding* (1765). Then Kant makes an official launching of critical philosophy through his path breaking three books, *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) *and Critique of Judgement* (1790).

Critical examination of the human mind, its nature, scope and limitations

---

Kant extended the examination of the human mind into judgement. The knowledge claims are human judgements. Rather, we can say judgements represent knowledge. Thus, Kant launched a rigorous examination of all possible kinds of knowledge, in metaphysics, epistemology, ethics and aesthetics. The first *Critique* examined the judgements of knowledge, the second the judgements of morality and the third the judgements of beauty and taste. This, he thought, will make it easy to examine the structure of the human mind.

All the philosophical schools of that time were interested in studying the human mind, its nature, scope and limitation. And, they seriously thought that by studying the human mind, they could grasp the essence of human understanding and knowledge. Towards that aim, they even made rigorous analysis of the contents of mental faculties such as sensations, perceptions, impressions, ideas, emotions, thinking and reasoning, abstract ideas, etc.

If, on the one hand, critical philosophy is about the faith of modern philosophy in the power of human mind/reason to attain knowledge, on the other hand, it is also about the decline of faith in the power of human mind and mental faculties as it is stressed in scepticism. The critical philosophy, in sum, is the contradictory philosophical engagements with the mind/ reason.

Hume's scepticism, with sheer doubt about faculties of the human mind, was a grand entry to critical philosophy. Enlightenment or modern philosophers questioned every sort of tradition and authority with the use of reason. And, the reason became a platform to stand on and critically evaluate everything including society, tradition, God, religion and belief in supernatural powers. Every institution was critically approached and evaluated. Here, Hume turned the system upside down. He applied the same method to reason and examined the very reason critically. The critical examination of the mind/reason landed him in scepticism.

Hume's attempt was to state that much

of the knowledge-claims we make are not knowledge claims at all. He affirmed that all knowledge about matters of fact (empirical/physical facts) is based on our mere beliefs and customs. That inductive inference and causality are merely based on assumptions. We cannot necessarily infer that the sun will rise in the east simply because the sun rose in the east yesterday and has been rising so for decades. The cause-and-effect relationship in matters of fact is not a necessary relation and thus does not give us any knowledge. It is merely a habit of mind and that gives us only a probability. All we get knowledge is in relation to ideas in mathematics and geometry. Here, Hume rejected the reasoning and inferring faculty of mind.

In sum, critical philosophy is about reason critiquing itself. It is the reason, which undermined every authority, turning into itself and undermining its own authority. In that sense, we can genuinely see the seeds of critical thinking in Hume. Hume made a marvellous impact on Kant, especially with regard to the limitations of our understanding, and critical philosophy. Kant was attracted to both rationalists and empiricists. But he took a critical distance from both. One aim of Kant's critical philosophy is to overcome the scepticism established by Hume.

Critical philosophy did not falsify its predecessors. Rather, it appropriated various traditions and merged them. It reconciled them by absorbing the insights from both. It attempted to find out what actually makes both compliment in an attempt to make the philosophy comprehensive.

To conclude, we can clearly see the 'scientific' and systematic aspirations of critical philosophy. As an aim, it wanted to detach philosophy from pure metaphysical realms and thus make it popular among human beings. It wanted to bring a correct determination of various concepts to 'common human understanding' (common sense) and achieve a necessary, final, and non-historical form for philosophy. The prime motive of all this was human freedom. Needless to say, the prime concentration of the enlightenment and modern philosophy later was on human freedom and emancipation.

Recap

♦ Critical philosophy took its prime task as criticism of mind, reason and knowledge

♦ Kant called his own age the 'age of criticism'

♦ Critique means everything must be subjected to the scrutiny of mind/reason

♦ Whatever fails to stand the test of a free and public examination of reason are just subjects of suspicion

♦ Critical philosophy enormously examined about what can we know, how do we know, where is the boundary of our knowledge, etc

- The first Critique of Kant examined the judgements of knowledge, the second the judgements of morality and the third the judgements of beauty and taste

- Enlightenment philosophy is identified with critical philosophy

- Enlightenment philosophy put in huge faith in the human mind, rationality and the power of human reason to obtain knowledge

- Scepticism, which doubted the power of the human mind to obtain knowledge, also contributed to the rise of critical philosophy

- Scepticism is about reason, which undermines every authority, turning into itself and testing and undermining its own authority

Objective Questions

1. What is the foundational idea of critical philosophy?

2. What is the fundamental divergence of critical philosophy?

3. What did critical philosophy replace the God of medieval philosophy with?

4. If 'faith' is the fundamental theme of medieval philosophy, what is its counterpart in critical philosophy?

5. What did Kant's three Critiques deal with?

6. Why did Kant focus on three judgements?

7. Is there a 'scientific' and systematic aspiration in critical philosophy?

8. What is the focus of critical philosophy?

9. What is the prime concentration of the enlightenment philosophy?

10. Did enlightenment conceptualise freedom and emancipation of human beings from an external authority like God?

Answers

1. Criticism

2. From metaphysics to epistemology

3. Human beings

4. Reason

5. Epistemology, ethics and aesthetics

6. Because all our possible judgments, according to Kant, could be put in these three campuses

7. Yes

8. Epistemology

9. Human freedom and emancipation

10. No

Assignments

1. Make a note of the critical turn in philosophy and how significant the mind/reason is in critical philosophy.

2. Discuss the power and limitation of the mind in attaining knowledge as understood by the critical philosophy.

3. Briefly discuss the various schools which paved the rise of critical philosophy.

Suggested Readings

1. Kenny, Anthony. (2007). *A New History of Western Philosophy. Vol. 4. Philosophy in the Modern World*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

2. Ameriks, Karl. (2000). Ed. *Cambridge Companion to German Idealism,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

3. Ameriks, Karl. (2006). *Kant and The Historical Turn: Philosophy as Critical Interpretation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

UNIT

Basic Notions of Kantian Critical Philosophy

Learning Outcomes

This unit will enable the learner to:

♦ get a general idea about Kant's critical philosophy

♦ know the role of reason in Kant's epistemology, ethics and politics

♦ get an idea about syncretism of Kant's philosophy

♦ get an introduction to the basic ideas of Kant's ethics and politics

Prerequisites

Have you pondered over the phrases such as 'individual rights,' 'individual dignity,' 'right to privacy,' etc. That you frequently hear from our courts? Have you pondered over the concept of the individual which has dominated all our social and political debates? From where did we reach this age? The answer is the 'enlightenment age.' The enlightenment philosophy, especially the Kantian philosophy, founded itself on the primacy of human reason and individual autonomy. All of us are rational beings and our rationality makes us unique from other animals. Then why not make universal rationality as the centre of all our enquiries into knowledge, morality and politics? The enlightenment thinker Immanuel Kant founded his philosophy on some fundamental concepts such as human reason and its autonomy, autonomous individual and human freedom. These concepts became the bedrocks of modern ethics and politics.

Key Concepts

Autonomy of reason, Mind making nature, A historical reason, Duty-based ethics, Self-legislation, Self-governance

Discussion

Kant (1724-1804) is the epoch-making 18th-century German philosopher whose towering reputation is expressed in the phrase 'post-Kantian' in the field of philosophy as Darwin and Sigmund Freud's reputation is expressed in the phrases 'post-Darwinian' and 'post-Freudian' in science and psychoanalysis. The distinction of philosophy as pre-Kant and post-Kant indicates the irreversible change Kant brought in the philosophy. Kant is known as the philosopher of enlightenment.

Kant is counted as the father of critical philosophy which paved the way for enlightenment. Philosophy, according to Kant, must analyse and clarify. The analytic rigour and urge for clarity are evident in Kant's metaphysics, epistemology, ethics and social and political philosophy. The sea-change Kant brought in in the philosophy is evident in the comprehensive and systematic structure for epistemology, ethics and aesthetics he built with much analyticity and clarity. Kant introduced rich technical terms in order to respond to the traditional philosophical problems and to explain his philosophical alternative.

Kant shifted epistemology in general towards the centre of philosophy and gave an irresistible authority to the model of natural science. To do that, he launched a strong critique of the traditional metaphysics and introduced a different metaphysics – the metaphysics of the human being and the world. His epistemology and ethics are founded upon that.

Kant wrote the famous three texts which became central to later philosophy; *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) and *Critique of Judgement* (1790) with epistemology (theory of knowledge), ethics (theory of morality) and aesthetics (philosophical study of beauty and taste) as their central area of philosophical concern respectively.

6.2.1 Syncretism in Kantian Philosophy

Kant's philosophical system is a syncretism of British empiricism of John Locke, George Berkeley and David Hume that stressed the role of experience in the rise of knowledge (the view that 'all our knowledge comes through experience alone), of rationalism of Leibniz that stressed the role of mind/reason in the rise of knowledge and of the scientific/positivist methodology of Isaac Newton. Kant became one of the most difficult and original thinkers of philosophy because his philosophy is built on such a synthesis of various streams of very different origin and nature.

The larger question in the *Critique of Pure Reason* is "what can we know?" Kant primarily responds to the philosophical problems raised by the schools of thought such as rationalism, empiricism and scepticism. Rationalism, mainly asso-

ciated with Leibniz, claimed that we could know the world based on reason. On the other hand, skepticism held that we could not have objective knowledge of anything at all. Kant accepted fundamentals from both and kept a critical distance from both.

The rationalist and idealist philosophy of Leibniz (1646-1716) and his disciple Christian Wolff (1679–1754) had much influence on Kant. Kant was specifically attracted to and influenced by the innate theory or innate ideas; mind is born with certain ideas, knowledge, and beliefs, instead of mind learning them through experience. However, at the same time, Hume denied all sorts of innate ideas and subsequently upheld scepticism. Hume's scepticism made a huge impression on Kant as well. Kant famously said: "I freely admit that it was the remembrance of David Hume which, many years ago, first interrupted my dogmatic slumber and gave my investigations in the field of speculative philosophy a completely different direction."

> Kant's investigation is into our capacity/faculty of knowledge and its limitations

Hume's problem of causality and Leibniz's problem of *a priori* knowledge (knowledge which is not based on experience) in combination triggered Kant's question of the objectivity of knowledge. It is in this background that Kant makes investigation into what we can know and where lies the boundaries of our knowledge. He definitely dismissed any absolute distinction between the subject/ the knower and object/the known.

Kant famously distinguished between noumenon–the thing-in-itself and phenomenon – the thing as it appears to an observer. The phenomena are the appearances which constitute our experience and noumena are the things themselves (which are presumed) which constitute reality. Kant's point is that a human being's speculative reason can only know the phenomenon and can never get any hold of or penetrate to the thing-in-itself. The speculative reason is a contemplative and detached one which we use to put-forth purely theoretical analysis to speculate over a thing and predict the outcome. In opposition to the speculative reason, Kant places the practical reason which deals with the moral questions – what one ought to do. It is the common human capacity for resolving, through reflection, the question of what is right and what is wrong/what one ought to do.

Kant challenged both the empiricist and rationalist schools. He affirmed that neither experience nor reason can alone provide the knowledge. The first provides content without form while the second provides form without content. "Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind." In other terms, there is no knowledge which does not carry the marks of experience and reason together. Only in their synthesis, knowledge is possible. According to Kant, such knowledge is still objective as it transcends the point of view of the knower and makes authentic claims about the independent world.

6.2.2 Kant's Copernican Revolution

Kant's larger aim is to render the metaphysis, the discipline of being, scientific. In order to do that, he believed

that a revolution was unavoidable as that of Copernicus. Till Copernicus, earth was considered the centre of the universe. Copernicus rejected the notion that earth is the centre of the universe and kept the sun in its place. In the field of astronomy, this witnessed a shift from geocentric understanding of the universe, centred around earth, to a heliocentric understanding of the universe, centred around sun.

The Copernican revolution in Kant can be summed up in a simple sense as 'mind making nature.' Till Kant, the prevalent question was about (how) our knowledge can conform to the objects existing 'out there.' Kant upheld that, instead of this question, we must start from the supposition about objects necessarily confirming our knowledge/mind. Kant's intention, no doubt, is to give the human mind an autonomy in the activity of knowing. We will discuss more in detail the autonomy of mind/reason in Kant.

The Copernican revolution can be explained in the following way: our mind is not a passive recipient of information obtained by sense organs, rather, an active participant and contributor. Knowledge is possible only when our mind plays an active role in organising, ordering and systematising our experiences. Our knowledge of the world is possible only according to certain categories (frameworks) such as space, time and substance which are not objective realities existing 'out there' independently of the mind. They are not objective realities untouched by the mind. Rather, the concept of space – distance between objects – is built into our mind from the beginning. Our brains are hardwired to experience the world in that way. For example, as soon as a baby is experiencing anything, it is experiencing it spatially. The concept of space is a condition of having a mind. All minds have them.

Kant's point is that our mental faculties play a crucial role in shaping our experience of the world. The mind comes to the front in Kant but without rejection of the experience. For him, all our knowledge of the external world is filtered through our mental faculties. In other sense, our experience of the world is only possible because the mind provides a systematic structuring of its representations. Kant distinguishes this structuring of the mind from the mental representations which the empiricists and rationalists analysed. The rationalists and empiricists considered only the results of the mind's interactions with the world, not the nature of the mind's active contribution and structuring.

6.2.3 Autonomy of Reason

Kant establishes the concepts of reason and 'universal human subjectivity' into the philosophy strongly. One could say that Kant founded his epistemology, ethics and politics upon the human subject and reason.

Kant is generally interpreted as having orientation towards a primary ahistorical reason and optimistic vision of reason and philosophy while Hegel is generally interpreted as having orientation to a historical conception of reason and philosophy. Ahistorical reason (the human reason which is abstracted from historical specificities and demands) is the quintessential Kantian thesis in epistemology, ethics and social and political philosophy.

Ahistorical conception of reason is very much clear in Kant's essay on enlightenment. For Kant, enlightenment is an era where human beings use their own reason without taking guidance from outside (when human beings are able to completely detach themself from tradi-

tion and social and historical structures). In the famous essay "What is Enlightenment" Kant says: "Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-imposed nonage. Nonage is the inability to use one's own understanding without another's guidance." Kant advocates that by using one's own reason, abstracted from history, society and traditions, one can throw off the shackles of self-imposed immaturity and can be free.

> Human mind/reason was given autonomy

Two concepts of human reason and freedom go hand in hand in Kant. Kant's social and political philosophy champions the enlightenment in general and the idea of freedom in particular. The use and autonomy of human reason is the fundamental thesis upon which Kant founded the enlightenment project and the social and political philosophy.

Kant's distinction between two ideas of the faculty of reason, theoretical reason and practical reason is known to us. The distinction is made with regard to the employment of the reason in two fields. According to Kant, while the theoretical reason makes it possible for us to obtain knowledge (to cognize what is), the practical reason guides us to how to act (to determine what ought to be).

6.2.4 Deontological Ethics

Ethical theorists can be largely put in two sections; those who consider an action right or wrong depending on the motive/intention behind it and those who consider the rightness and wrongness of an action depending on the consequences it produces. Kant is surely in the first camp.

Kant introduces a very different system of ethics in the history of philosophy by founding it on duty. This duty-based ethics is called 'deontological ethics.' Deontology is the normative ethical theory which upholds that any action should be judged to be right or wrong based on whether that action itself is right or wrong under a series of well-defined rules/maxims, rather than based on the consequence of the action. In simple sense, deontological theory determines an action to be right if that action is done out of a sense of duty/obligation. It upholds that certain actions are intrinsically right or wrong regardless of their consequences.

For Kant, human beings are subjected to moral judgement (their action is judged right or wrong) and made accountable for their actions because we have an ability to deliberate on and give reason/justification for our actions. Thus, moral judgement should be made by looking at our reasons for acting something, not looking at the consequences of our actions. Kant's point here is that, we can only subject the intention/motives of our actions to our own reason (we can only put intention/motive of our actions into critical scrutiny of our reason). We can never do the same with the consequences of our actions. Thus, we cannot make the consequence of an action criterion for determining the rightness and wrongness of the action.

Kant rejects eudaimonism. Happiness cannot be the ultimate purpose of morality as it is in Aristotle. If the overarching concept in Aristotle's virtue ethics is happiness, it is duty in Kantian ethics. What is right and wrong action is determined solely by the duty aspect of the action.

Kant's key point is that ethical actions must follow universal moral maxims/laws such as 'do not lie, do not kill.' Any action is justified/declared to be right if that

action follows the universal moral law and principles. The implication in deontological ethics is that your action can be right even if it produces harms/bad results. In sum, you do not need to weigh the benefits and costs of an action. The only point considered here is whether you have done that act in conformity with a moral norm or in accordance with universal moral laws.

Deontological ethics says that an action is good if it follows the rules regardless of the outcomes. Utilitarian ethics says that action is good if the consequences are good (consequentialism). Virtue Ethics says that action is good if it is what a virtuous person would do.

In order to explain his deontological ethics or duty-based ethics, Kant brings the concept of categorical imperative. Categorical imperative is a rule of conduct, command or moral law that is absolute and unconditional which all persons must follow regardless of their desires or circumstances. It is a rule of conduct binding on everyone regardless of their time and space and its validity does not depend upon any desire or end. 'Thou shall not steal' is an example of categorical imperative.

Kant rejects the ethics of consequences/results (consequentialism) because it is based on hypothetical imperatives which according to Kant have no moral sanction. The hypothetical imperatives are those which are not unconditional and categorical, rather associated with desire/need, such as 'do not steal, if you do not want to be ashamed.'

Kant formulates the only one categorical imperative in the moral realm: "Act only according to that maxim (rule) by which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law." This means, if you want to test whether your certain action is right, you just need to conceptually apply it to all. If that works for all, that is right for you and for all. If not, that is wrong for you and for all. What is right for one person is right for all (universally) and what is wrong for one person is wrong for all (universally). Kant formulates the second categorical imperative in a clearer way: "so act as to treat humanity, whether in your own person or in another, always as an end and never as only a means." The third categorical imperative states that "act as if you are a member of the kingdom of ends."

To take an example, if you want to see a specific act - an act of disrespecting an elder person - is right, then you just must universalize the maxim/principle of the action. Here, you realise that your certain action is not qualified to be universal, and that makes your specific action wrong. One of the problems with Kant's ethical theory is that, according to it, it would be unethical to lie about the hiding place of your friend to someone who is determined to murder him. Usually, we think that lying on such an occasion is not only right but also necessary/compulsory. However, in Kant's ethical theory, the consequence is not a criterion for something to be right or wrong.

As his ethics is purely founded on the formal or logical statements of maxims/principles, without any consideration of specific historical contexts in which moral action is demanded, Kantian ethics is

called ethical formalism. Scholars have criticised Kant's ethics for it being too formal and logical without being sensitive to specific contexts and demands. That criticism makes sense very much as specific contexts and situations of the actions play a crucial role in our judging them to be right or wrong.

Kant's thrust on universal reason and its use to make universal law has a special significance. As he extracts morality purely from a well-defined moral norm founded on universal human reason, he believes that human inclinations, desires, emotions and interests and even consequences should not play any role in deciding moral action. Only the sense of duty should play the role. For Kant, the virtuous man is someone whose reason is the master of all passions and desires.

6.2.5 Legislative Reason and Self-governance

From what has been said till now, it is clear how reason is autonomous in Kantian philosophy. The reason could test our moral principles/maxims only because the demands of practical reason are the same on all rational beings. If you want to act as an autonomous being, you must act according to the universal rules autonomously chosen by all rational agents. The privilege of the rational over the animal and the privilege of the rational over the emotional in Kantian philosophy cannot be overemphasised.

> The enlightenment notion of autonomous human reason historically evolved into what we call 'legislative reason' today. Democracy is about self-legislation and self-governance

Kant's view of morality solely founded on the reasoning/rational nature of human beings in its universal applicable sense made a crucial role in the making of democracy. Kant could be viewed as the enlightenment philosopher who stressed not only on the moralising characteristics of human reason but also on the legislative power of the same. The universal reason, universal moral code of conduct and the universal maxim to treat every human being as an end in himself/herself paved the way for the concept of self-legislation of rational individuals. The rationalisation and legislation of human beings for themselves is what we call democracy today.

Kantian philosophy propounded the ideal of individual dignity and modern morality of duties and rights. Kant's drawing of moral principles from rational self-consciousness rather than from God, community or nature, is pivotal in making the modern world view possible.

Despite all his great contributions to reason, dignity of human beings, universal morality and principle of equality (human being as 'an end in itself'), Kant like Aristotle is reported to have upheld that women were subordinated to men. Scholars criticise that women were excluded from moral and political agency in Kant's writings. This means that Kant himself could not use his reason against the prejudices of his time. Do we have a reason which is not ingrained in our own society and history could be the philosophical take away from Kant.

Recap

- Kant did give an irresistible authority to the model of natural science

- Hume awakened Kant from his dogmatic slumber

- Kant's philosophical system is a syncretism of British empiricism, rationalism and of the scientific/positivist methodology of Isaac Newton

- Neither experience nor reason can alone provide the knowledge

- Kant stated: "Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind."

- The Copernican revolution in Kant can be summed up as 'mind making nature.'

- Kant gave human mind an autonomy in the activity of knowing/knowledge

- Our mind is not a passive recipient of information obtained by sense organs, rather, an active participant and contributor

- Kant establishes the concepts of reason and 'universal human subjectivity' into the philosophy strongly

- Knowledge is possible only when our mind plays an active role in organising, ordering and systematising our experiences

Objective Questions

1. "For Kant, happiness is the ultimate purpose of morality." Is this true/ false?

2. What is the basis for the distinction of theoretical and practical reason in Kant?

3. Kant supports historical conception of reason. Is it true or false?

4. Kant puts forth a universal conception of reason. Is it true or false?

5. What is enlightenment, for Kant?

6. For Kant, human beings are subjected to moral judgement and made accountable for their actions. Why?

7. How did Kant formulate categorical imperative?

8. For Kant, human beings should be dealt with as means to some end. Is it true or false?

9. What are the major concepts in Kant's philosophy that paved the way for the idea of self-legislation of rational individuals?

Answers

1. No

2. employment of reason

3. False

4. True

5. "man's emergence from his self-imposed nonage."

6. We have an ability to justify our actions

7. "Act only according to that maxim (rule) by which you

can at the same time will that it should become a universal law."

reason, universal moral code of conduct and the universal maxim to treat every human being as an end in himself/herself

8. False

9. Concepts such as universal

Assignments

1. Briefly explain the role of reason in the philosophy of Kant.

2. Discuss the syncretism of Kant's philosophy.

3. Make a short note on the ethical theory put forward by Kant. Compare this with other prevalent ethical theories.

Suggested Readings

1. Ameriks, Karl. (2006). *Kant and The Historical Turn; Philosophy as Critical Interpretation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

2. Mukherjee, Subrata. Ramaswamy, Sushila. (2004). A *History of Political Thought: From Plato to Marx*. Delhi: Prentice Hall India.

3. Scruton, Roger. (1982). *Kant: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

4. Kenny, Anthony. (2007), *A New History of Western Philosophy. Vol 3. The Rise of Modern Philosophy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hegel's Dialectical Philosophy

UNIT 3

Learning Outcomes

This unit will enable the learner to:

♦ acquire a general idea about Hegel's dialectical philosophy

♦ be exposed to the fundamental themes of dialectical philosophy

♦ engage with the contradictory nature of Hegel's philosophy and its impact on later philosophies

♦ be aware of Hegel's historicist position with regard to his predecessor

♦ get an idea about themes such as reason, progress and freedom in their relation to history

Prerequisites

Do human beings always think alike? Do we have a universal reason? 'Yes' was the answer of enlightenment philosophy. And 'No' is the answer of post-enlightenment dialectical philosophy. We cannot assume that we have a neutral reason which can be applied to every human history. Many things which were reasonable and legitimate even a decade back are no longer reasonable and legitimate. That is because our allegiance to our own history is much more forceful than a universal reason. We emerge from and exist in a certain history. All of us have different historical backgrounds in terms of caste, colour, religion, region, social status, etc. Thus, we cannot assume that human beings have some essential 'reason' despite their historical background. Had our essence been 'reason,' human kind at different points in history would not have different conceptual-

izations of themselves and the world. The modern people did not understand themselves and the world as the ancient Greek did. The medieval people did not consider themselves and the world as the modern did. Today, in a 'post-modern' world, in a world of giant technologies, we have a very different conceptualization of ourselves and the world. The reasoning/thinking in all these ages have been different. The point is that we, human beings, do not have a frozen essence/identity. Rather, our essence is made historically. History is a movement of differences and contradictions.

Key Concepts

Dialectics, German idealism, History and reason, Phenomenology, Historicism, Contradictions

Discussion

G.W.F Hegel (1770-1831) is the famous German philosopher who succeeded Kant and left a legacy which no philosopher left behind. Along with Kant, Fichte and Schelling, Hegel was one of the famous advocates of German idealism, the movement in German philosophy which began in the 1780s and lasted until the 1840s.

Despite differences, all the above philosophers shared a common minimum commitment to idealism, the philosophical doctrine which upholds that there exists a difference between appearances and things in themselves and thus the objects of human cognition are appearances, not things in themselves. The Kantian distinction between phenomena and noumena which we studied in the previous unit had an irresistible influence in the evolution of the German idealism. His successors radicalised this philosophical doctrine by asserting that a thing must be an object of our consciousness if it is to be an object at all.

The point that a thing must be an object of our consciousness has been differently and strongly articulated by twentieth century phenomenology. The twentieth century phenomenology is founded on the principle of intentionality – that consciousness is inherently directed to outside and thus is always consciousness of something. One cannot deny the influence of Hegel's philosophy, especially the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, on twentieth century phenomenology.

Hegel developed a dialectical scheme in order to understand the movement and progress of human consciousness/idea and consequently that of history. The Hegelian dialectics is more or less understood through a triad; thesis, antithesis and synthesis. It says that there will be an idea/thought at first and then the idea/thought will witness sprouting a conflictual idea/thought *within* itself. The conflict of these two ideas will then generate a reconciled version of both. It must be noted that Hegel has not used anywhere the triad of

thesis, antithesis, synthesis, but that it was attributed to Hegel.

Hegel's significant philosophical contribution is the idea that history evolves in dialectical ways, in successive phases of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. According to this interpretation, the history of humankind is the history of the conflict of consciousness. In sum, Hegel's dialectical philosophy shows us how an idea/thought gets undermined from *within* when dig deeper into it and evolves to something else. This is the classical idealist interpretation of Hegel, especially initiated by Marx.

However, there is a resurgent interest in Hegel nowadays. There are scholars who vehemently criticise reduction of Hegel's philosophy to consciousness/idea/thesis and labelling Hegel as a pure metaphysician who has nothing relevant to contribute to the world, society and social history.

6.3.1 Hegel's Critique of Kantian Philosophy

One of the main aims of Hegel's philosophical project was to develop a position which can remedy the flaws in Kant's philosophy. Hegel does not dismiss anything, be it that of previous eras, historical stages or philosophical positions of earlier philosophers completely. To completely dismiss anything will be against Hegel's own philosophy. Hegel uses the phrase *aufheben* which means to cancel, preserve and transcend the earlier stage or state.

Hegel made explicit critique of Kantian reason, epistemology, moral and political philosophy. The larger phenomenological project of his magnum opus, *Phenomenology of Spirit,* is to revive the concept of consciousness and reason as it is understood in the traditional western philosophy especially in the enlightenment philosophy. Hegel critiqued the Cartesian mind-body dualism and showed that consciousness/mind and body are intertwined in the world. This is the identification of thought and being (world) in Hegel.

The text elucidates immanent critique of human experience after human-consciousness bumped into various historical eras consisting of certain customs, rituals, reason and worldviews. At each historical stage, the consciousness takes something as its primordial object of knowledge and takes the then reason and truth as absolute and ultimate. But it then starts to realise the conflicts and contradictions in the consciousness within each mode of experience. It is thus Hegel argues for the historicity of knowledge, reason and truth.

The consciousness and reason, according to Hegel, is not fully autonomous, as it is in Kant. There is no universal rational essence of human beings. That is, there is no universal reason which is detached from society and historicity and this is his main criticism of the enlightenment project.

Kant conceptualised human beings, especially through enlightenment philosophy pioneered by him, primarily as a cognitive being who can think and theorise the world in a disembodied way. It upheld that we can detach ourselves from our historical, social and traditional routes and life-worlds. That we can imagine ourselves reasoning and thinking after being detached from customs, rituals, beliefs and practices in which we are rooted in. Thus, the enlightenment philosophy imagined a universal rational subject out of human beings.

In contrast to this, Hegel presents

various shapes that consciousness/reason has historically taken and affirms that the shapes of consciousness are intertwined with history. He elucidates that human consciousness is historical and presents the inherently social elements of reason. In sum, the reason for Hegel is fundamentally in history and society, within social institutions, culture and rituals, norms and ethos. Attaining a pure reason abstracted from all these is not possible.

The Kantian dictum 'dare to use your own understanding' is meaningless as our consciousness, reason and understanding are constituted and shaped historically and socially. In contrast to the rational subject who is disembodied and disengaged from the world, as conceptualised by Kant, Hegel affirms the social ontology of the self.

As in epistemology, Hegel launches a staunch critique of the universal morality founded by universal rationality propounded by Kant. In the previous unit, we saw how Kant upheld an ethical theory which extracts moral laws from pure reason, in complete separation from emotions and feelings and explains the moral judgements in terms of their logical forms such as 'laws' or 'universal prescriptions' (ethical formalism). However, Hegel conceives of the life of a people as rooted in the world of mores, customs, institutions and laws.

Hegel shows crisscrossing of several aspects and spheres of human life and experience. While Kant abstracts passions, mores and customs from rationality and morality, Hegel shows how they are an interweaved whole.

6.3.2. History and Historicism in Hegel

Hegel has an unparalleled relevance in philosophy due to his thoughtful consideration of history. One of Hegel's central beliefs is that history has some meaning and significance. He took history very seriously with a purpose, unlike Kant who attempted to say what human nature is and must always be on purely rational/philosophical grounds. In contrast to Kant, Hegel's point is that the very foundations of human nature and condition changes historically. That is, human nature at one historical point in time cannot be the same at another point in time.

Hegel stated that there is no fixed essence for human beings, given by nature or created by God. In this sense, Hegel took a stand in opposition to essentialism which is well established in Platonism, Aristotelianism, Stoicism and religious traditions such as Christianity and Islam. This is Hegel's historicism. While Hegel's historicism also stands against the view that there is no such thing as human nature but only a complex set of behaviours, it is primarily directed against Kant's philosophy founded in universal rational essence.

> The reason is historical and social. We do not have a universal reason.

Hegel's works such as *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History: Introduction* (1837), *Reason in History (1822-30), Lectures on the History of Philosophy* (1840) including the magnum opus which is known as the epitome of Hegel's philosophical framework and system building, *The Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), all have seriously engaged with history. Hegel's rigorous engagements with the relation of philosophy and history made far reaching impacts in the worldviews after him.

The *Phenomenology of Spirit* elegantly presents a theory of philosophical anthropology, in close connection to Hegel's theory of historical development. The text traces the development of historical consciousness through various stages from consciousness to understanding to self-consciousness to reason to culture to spirit. How the human consciousness is historical, social and temporal has been a significant philosophical point in the text.

The *Phenomenology* produced numerous interpretations of Hegel, both different and contradictory ones. This is understandable given the difficult content and inaccessible structure/organisation of the text. For many scholars, each section of the book stands alone with its own content and form and while for many others, the whole of the text needs to be prioritised to the parts. Attention to the parts rather than whole and vice-versa ended up in varietes of commentaries and interpretations.

In the *Philosophy of History*, Hegel gives an outline of world history, from the early civilizations of China, India and Persia, through ancient Greece to Roman times including European history. He philosophises world views in different historical points from slavery to feudalism and to reformation culminating in enlightenment and the French revolution which, according to Hegel, ended up in the reign of terror. While giving a historical outline, Hegel kept his work mainly as the work on philosophy of history.

Hegel's philosophy of history and history of philosophy became a contentious theme after Hegel. The question was this: what is the purpose and significance of history in Hegel, if there is anything at all? Is Hegel's intention is to say that history is nothing but the working out of the purpose of some Creator according to his plan? That is, does Hegel have some metaphysical,

mystical or religious intention? This scheme of interpretation would say that, according to Hegel, human consciousness after passing through various stages in history can grasp and understand the truth in its totality and entirety in the absolute spirit.

If not the above, what is the purpose of history? It is that insights from human history and reflection on the same will give us capacity to determine and understand the direction of history and the destination it will eventually reach. Hegel himself has said that 'the philosophy of history means nothing but the thoughtful consideration of it.' The philosophy witnessed many nuanced debates surrounding the topic. Drawing inspiration from Hegel and others, the founders of critical theory placed history at the centre of their approach to philosophy and society. We could see how history is dominant in the thoughts of Frankfurt School established in 1923.

6.3.3 Dialectics as a Philosophical Method

The credit of developing the dialectics as a philosophical method to look at, observe and analyse human history, as we see it today, goes to Hegel. The notions of dialectics, change and development throughout world history is fundamental to Hegel's understanding of the history as it is clear in all his writings.

Hegel's famous philosophical fable of the master-servant dialectic became a method/tool to analyse various dynamics in human consciousness and human-social relations. The master-servant dialectic is one of the most discussed and debated chapters in *Phenomenology*. Hegel here presents a story of two independent consciousnesses (two human beings) who

encounter one another and engage in a life-and-death struggle because each one sees the other as a threat to itself. Until the confrontation, each self-consciousness had established itself as the measure of all things. It had considered itself as an objective standard against which it measured all what it encountered. If there exists only one human being, he/she will not need to look at others in order to find the objective standard with regards to anything.

Now, however, the presence of another self-consciousness establishes a new objective standard wherein the feelings, desires, and powers of each self-consciousness become subjective standards which must be measured against the new objective standards. Through the master-servant dialectic, Hegel wants to introduce an intersubjective space with inherent and necessary conflicts of the two partakers. Now each self-consciousness must struggle at its maximum in order to realise the extent of its strength in relation to the other.

In this 'life and death struggle,' Hegel shows how one self-consciousness gets dominance over the other; that is, how one self-consciousness becomes the master and the other becomes the servant. However, a twist comes in the dialectic when the servant starts to work upon the demand of the master. According to Hegel, the servant comes to a critical consciousness in the work – 'formative activity.'

There has been an enormous impact of the master-servant dialectic on social, cultural, psychological and political theory. The recent phenomena of identity based-movement and rights-based movements have been read very much from the perspective of Hegel's master-servant dialectic and the concept of 'recognition' drawn from it.

The master-servant dialectics has been specifically used by now for emancipatory projects by various thinkers in social, cultural and political theory. For example, there is much scholarship on the self-other relation in general, man-woman relation in feminist theory, black-white relation in black philosophy from the perspective of Hegel's dialectics. The famous educationist Paulo Freire employs Hegel's dialectic in the field of pedagogy, education and social change, etc.

6.3.4 The Hegel Dilemma

Hegel became a philosophical dilemma from whom there was no escape. The philosophers after him had no option to stay away from Hegel's shadows. They had to either engage with Hegel's philosophy or to dispense with it.

Phenomenology of Spirit was interpreted and reinterpreted in different, incompatible and contradictory ways. The main reason for this is the ambiguity and slippery nature of Hegel's writings. The text was seen both as a work of orthodox Christianity ending in an absolute spirit/God who guides history for his own purpose and as a full-scale attack on Christianity.

Terry Pinkard, who has written enormously about Hegel, explains the multi-sided views and acceptance of Hegel and his magnum opus: "Hegel's thought has been praised and blamed for the development of existentialism, communism, fascism, death of God, theology and historicist nihilism." While for many scholars especially in later continental tradition Hegel is a philosopher who had some tremendous answers about human kind, the twentieth-century Anglo-American philosophy has more or less outrightly rejected Hegel as a charlatan.

Whether Hegel is primarily a metaphysician/idealist or not is the point from which Hegel-dilemma starts. It is Marx who first put forth a metaphysical interpretation of Hegel. While Hegel is dominantly interpreted as an idealist philosopher, as it was initiated by Marx, there has been a resurgent interest in reading Hegel as a non-metaphysician – a social philosopher who had engaged with philosophical insights with human-social relations and history. According to this scheme of interpretation the consciousness in Hegel is always already intertwined with the world, its social, institutional, political and legal structures and institutions. This is against the typical idealist interpretation of Hegel.

What is the real meaning of the concept of 'absolute spirit' in Hegel has been the centre of many heated debates. The scholars who interpret the absolute as an endpoint of human consciousness in Hegel's philosophy would say that Hegel's philosophy of history is leading towards an absolute closure (a full-fledged system) which has no openness. In that sense, Hegel is interpreted as a totalitarian philosopher. There are also interpretations which say that Hegel's dialectics is open-ended leading to an open-ended understanding of history.

The idea of freedom, as much as history, has been very important in Hegel's philosophy. The odyssey of the mind/consciousness in the *Phenomenology* is the odyssey towards progress and freedom. But Hegel dismisses the enlightenment idea of abstract freedom; a complete freedom for individuals from society and history (from social and historical entanglements), as Kant envisions it. In contrast to this, Hegel put forth the sociality of freedom founded on the sociality of reason; individual's freedom as existing among other individuals and as a member of the society. Hegel's philosophy most of the time is interpreted as an attempt to reconcile the conflicting aspects of modern individual and modern institutions. In the *History of Philosophy*, Hegel says that world history is nothing but the progress of consciousness of freedom.

As we are historical and social beings, we have only a situated freedom

However, it must be noted that one of the severe criticisms against Hegel, unleashed by Marx, was that the former is a status quoist – someone who is content with the current situation without leading to change and freedom. The famous statement by Hegel 'real is rational and rational is real' meant for many as Hegel's attempt to find rational legitimacy to the system and world view existing in his time. Marx wanted to 'change' the system.

Phenomenology which starts from the very primitive structure of consciousness ends in absolute spirit passing through various stages. But, does that mean that Hegel conceptualised the history of humankind in a linear sense? Is history, according to Hegel, moving from unfreedom to freedom and truth? Is it moving towards better from worse in a linear sense? Again, there are contradictory interpretations. Many scholars argue that Hegel's concept of history is moving in a linear sense wherein consciousness is progressing in each stage. At the same time, many others argue that Hegel does not view history and progress as a straight line. Rather, for Hegel, history is a zigzag way shaped by the various ways in which people bump into events

and tragedies and thus historically make   of the world.
their own conceptions and understanding

Recap

♦ Dialectics as a philosophical method to observe and analyse the human history and the world goes to Hegel

♦ History of humankind is the history of the conflict of consciousness

♦ Both reason and history are important in Hegel

♦ Hegel's philosophy primarily is criticism of Kantian philosophy

♦ Hegel and Marx have been the proponents of dialectical idealism and dialectical materialism respectively

♦ Kantian philosophy is based on a universalist approach to reason

♦ Essentialism is the worldview that there is something natural/essential in human beings, given by God or nature.

♦ The core point of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is that human consciousness is historical and social and that it develops through various stages in history

♦ In *Philosophy of History*, Hegel gives an outline of world history

♦ There is a purpose and significance of history in Hegel

♦ Dialectics, change and development throughout the world history is fundamental to Hegel's understanding of the history

♦ Hegel's master-servant dialectic and the concept of 'recognition' drawn from it has made many contributions to social, cultural and political theories and identity-rights movements

Objective Questions

1. Did Hegel accept the 'reason' in enlightenment philosophy and Kant as such?

2. What was his critique of the enlightenment reason and what did he do with the same?

3. What is the difference between the two streams such as dialectical idealism and dialectical materialism?

4. Who made the dialectic as a prominent philosophical method in contemporary philosophy?

5. What is the common point/foundation of historical idealism (dialectical idealism) and historical materialism (dialectical materialism)?

6. What is the common understanding of the concepts of 'reason' and 'history' in philosophy?

7. What does Terry Pinkard mean to say in the quote: "Hegel's thought has been praised and blamed for the development of existentialism, communism, fascism, death of God, theology and historicist nihilism?"

8. What is the Hegel-dilemma?

9. What is the linear progressive concept of history?

10. What are the fundamental concepts in dialectical conception of history (materialist or idealist)?

Answers

1. No

2. Hegel's critique of the enlightenment reason was that it was universal. He historicized the reason

3. The dialectical idealism propagates that history is conflicts of ideas/ thoughts and the dialectical materialism propagates that history is the conflicts with

regard to material conditions and social relations	Hegel-interpretations by later scholars
4. Hegel	8. The fact that philosophers after Hegel could not evade Hegel. They either engaged with him or confronted and dismissed him
5. History	
6. Reason is most of the time identified with universal/ philosophy while history is identified with particularities of culture, region, ethnicity, religion, etc	9. Human history is moving in a linear way towards more progress and more freedom
7. The complex and contradictory nature of	10. Change and development of human beings throughout history

Assignments

1. Explain how Hegel used dialectics as a philosophical method.

2. 'Consciousness is intertwined with history.' Explain this statement based on Hegelian philosophy.

3. Discuss Hegel's attitude towards enlightenment reason.

Suggested Readings

1. Singer, Peter. (1993). *Hegel: A Very Short Introduction,* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

2. Mukherjee, Subrata. Ramaswamy, Sushila. (2004). A *History of Political Thought: From Plato to Marx*. Delhi: Prentice Hall India.

3. Houlgate, Stephen. (2004). *An Introduction to Hegel: Freedom, Truth and History,* New Jersey*:* Wiley-Blackwell.

4. Kenny, Anthony. (2006). *The Rise of Modern Philosophy, Vol. 3*, *A New History of Western Philosophy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

5. Copleston, Frederick. (1994). *A History of Philosophy, Vol. 4, Modern Philosophy: From the Post- Kantian Idealists to Marx, Kierkegaard, and Nietzsche*, New York: Image Books.

6. Russel, Bertrand. (2004). *History of Western Philosophy*, London: Routledge.

Marx and Dialectical Materialism

UNIT 4

Learning Outcomes

In this unit the learner will:

- ♦ get exposed to the general idea about Marx's social and political philosophy

- ♦ be familiarised with the material conception of history by Marx

- ♦ be acquainted with Marx's conceptions of human being, alienation and history

- ♦ identify Marx's impact on the political landscape of the 20th century

Prerequisites

Does history witness change or development? We will answer with a simple 'Yes.' But what are the major elements which contribute or constitute the movement of history? For example, we live in an independent India. India for hundreds of years was under the clutch of colonial rule. In our movement to freedom, we can see a movement of history (of India and the world). India's freedom struggle which led to the independence in 1947 needs to be considered not only as a movement of history of India, but also that of the world. Because, many global stakeholders are involved in it. Upon the movement of history of India from that of colonialism to an independent nation, the history moved from one stage to another stage. But what triggers the movement of history? Is it the conflict of ideas and views? Or, is it the social and material conditions sucha as poverty and struggle between the riches and the poor? Or, are they both? Can ideas and material conditions be separated infact? Marx looks at history through the lens of the movement founded on the material conditions. The history witnesses change, transformation and development out of the conflicts in the material world, not in the conceptual realm, he affirms.

Key Concepts

Historical materialism, Dialectics, Social philosophy, Change and revolution, Socialism and communism.

Karl Marx (1818–1883) is the German social philosopher who is often treated as a revolutionary political figure and an activist, rather than a philosopher. His thoughts inspired the foundation of many communist states in the twentieth century. Marx was not much interested in the typical philosophical areas and themes, especially in metaphysics, but in the social and political philosophy.

Peter Singer begins his book *Marx: A Very Short Introduction* by stating the impact Marx made on the world. He states: "Marx's impact can only be compared with that of religious figures like Jesus or Muhammad. For much of the second half of the twentieth century, nearly four of every ten people on earth lived under governments that considered themselves Marxist and claimed – however implausibly – to use Marxist principles to decide how the nation should be run. In these countries Marx was a kind of secular Jesus; his writings were the ultimate source of truth and authority; his image was everywhere reverently displayed. The lives of hundreds of millions of people have been deeply affected by Marx's legacy."

A trained philosopher who made rigorous engagements with his contemporary philosophers, Marx enormously contributed to political and moral philosophy, philosophy of science, history and religion. Marxism became the official philosophy of a powerful political movement. Marx wrote *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* in 1844 and Marx and Friedrich Engels together wrote the *Communist Manifesto* in 1848. He published *Das Kapital (Capital: A Critique of Political Economy)* in 1867.

6.4.1 Historical and Philosophical Background

Marxism as a social and political philosophy emerged as a historical culmination of various factors such as German classical philosophy, French Socialism and British Economics. Marx wrote extensively on themes such as philosophical anthropology, theory of history, capitalist society, morality, ideology, politics and communist future of the world.

Marx came under the influence of the philosophy of G.W.F Hegel at Berlin. Hegel had been the professor of philosophy at Berlin until his death in 1831. Marx's growth as a social philosopher is not only indebted to Hegel, but also developed from Hegel and his dialectics.

Marx both accepted and appreciated Hegel's philosophy and simultaneously reoriented and shifted the same. More than

once, Marx acknowledged that he was indebted to Hegel. As we have seen, Hegel is viewed as the philosopher to develop the first philosophical system founded on the notion of historical lens or change. This later became the quintessential Marxian thesis as well. But, of course with severe changes.

Marx held Hegel in high esteem for being the first philosopher to present the general forms of the motion of history through the dialectic: "The mystification which the dialectic suffers in Hegel's hands by no means prevents him from being the first to present its general forms of motion in a comprehensive and conscious manner." Marx based his philosophy on the dialectic of Hegel but after stripping what he called the 'mystified' elements in the same and bringing it into the world of matter from that of thoughts and ideas.

What is the mystification in Hegel's philosophy of history? Marx stated that Hegel approached history and historical change based on the dialectic of the idea/spirit. For Hegel, Marx argues, the conflict in idea/thought triggers the historical change/development. But it is not the reality for Marx. He placed the matter, material conditions and social existence, instead of idea/thought, as the foundation for the historical change. This is the meaning of one of the most discussed statements of Marx: "it is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence which determines their consciousness."

Marx was not interested in doing philosophical interpretation of the world, but to change it. The change, historical transformation, revolution and emancipation are some of the fundamental notions upon which Marx founded his social and political philosophy. His point of criticism especially with regard to Hegel and philosophers in general was that the philosopher merely conceptualised and interpreted the world without triggering social change and transformation. The speculation about the world was not an area of interest for Marx. "The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point, however, is to change it," Marx famously stated.

> Both Hegel and Marx viewed that human beings are located in history. That we do not have a universal essence.

Hegel and Marx, as two giant philosophers, have many commonalities as well as differences. Both Hegel and Marx located human beings within history. Human nature is historical for both. That is, there is no universal, once and for all fixed nature. This was done in opposition to Kant who had a blind/indifferent approach to history and emphasis on human reason. Hegel and Marx located the epistemology within the context of a historical self-formative process. Human reason and knowledge are situated in history; our reason emerges and exists only within the society and there is no ahistorical reason or knowledge. Both agree with the fact that human beings can be free only with others in society. There is no freedom for individuals outside the society as envisaged by Kant and the enlightenment philosophy. Life in the commune/community and freedom in the same are important for both.

6.4.2 Marx on Alienation

Alienation is one of the most significant ideas in Marx's social and political

philosophy. Marx uses alienation in two contexts, that of society and religion. Needless to say, the alienation in the social (economic) context has been the fundamental Marxian concept upon which he founded his idea of history and historical change.

The alienation simply means the separated state of human beings from their own human nature in the modern capitalist society. In other words, alienation is an economic issue in Marx. Marx makes severe criticism of Capitalism, the free market economy in which private individuals rather than by the state own and control property according to their interests, and demand and supply. And much of his capitalist criticism is built on the concept of alienation.

Marx's point here is about the 'alienated labour' in capitalist society. It is about the alienation of producers/workers from their own works/products. The alienation happens according to Marx in various levels and meanings.

One is the alienation of the worker from his/her own products. It must be noted that Marx talks about alienation at the emergence of capitalist, industrial society in Germany. Marx captures one of the fundamental characteristics of the capitalist society/system. In that society, there is so much production (as well as consumption) of things. Marx witnessed hundreds of workers in factories producing various things. But they produce not out of their needs and uses, but to make 'commodities' to be sold out so that their masters will get the benefit. Here, in this sense, workers are alienated from products of their own labour/works. They are also alienated in the very process of labour as most of them were to work under the masters' force and pressure. Marx richly

explicated how economic exploitation is an essential feature of the capitalist mode of production in its greed to produce and benefit more.

Another important aspect of alienation according to Marx comes in individual working alone. Individuals in capitalist society are promoted to work for their own self-interests. This approach makes them alienated from their own fellow human beings. As we said, Marx prioritised our existence in society, not as individuals. Along with this reason, the work in the capitalist system becomes a mere matter of commodity- with which workers have only a depersonalised relation. In this sense, workers are alienated from themselves. Marx views alienation as a theory of history, as a theory of the working class in general.

The alienation is also a significant concept in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit.* However, Hegel uses it in a different wider context. The alienation for Hegel is an ontological aspect of human beings. It is the very part of our beinghood. According to Hegel, we become alienated from our own inborn inhibitions in order to become part of the larger community/ society. Without getting rid of many inborn characteristics, we cannot be part of civil society. This process is inevitable and necessary for Hegel. However, Marx uses it specifically in an economic context in the capitalist society. Marx brings in the idea of 'fetishism' along with alienation. That is where human-made products escape the control, achieve independence and turn into an oppressor.

6.4.3 Marx on Social History

Marx, as his predecessor Hegel, dealt with history with purpose and thoughtful

consideration. They have commonalities and differences. Both uphold the view that we have only a historical essence. We do not have a fixed essence given either by God or nature, once and for all. Rather, in the process/movement of history, we make our essence.

Marx devoted himself to an extensive study of history and elaborated a materialist conception of history, in contrast to what he called Hegel's idealistic conception of history. This was later published as *The German Ideology* - a set of manuscripts originally written by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels which was published in 1932.

Marx's materialist conception of history is founded on Hegel's dialectic. He accepted Hegel's dialectic of history, but for him history was not the dialectical manifestation of the Spirit/idea/thought. The historical development/motion is not founded on conflicts of ideas/thoughts as it is in Hegel, Marx argues. Human history is not a result of any idea/concept/thesis getting in conflict in human minds. Rather, it is the result of men and women engaging with the social and material world and transforming the same through the creation of their means of existence. Marx's focus here is on how history changes, develops, or transforms through conflicts of the classes/groups/societies with regards to their social and economic relations. For him, a proper understanding of the course and laws of history is essential in order to direct history to achieve the goal we have. Marx's goal was a communist state.

The materialist conception of history is an attempt by Marx to explain all ideas, be it political, religious, or ethical, as the product of the particular economic stage that society has reached. In other words, in this conception of history, Marx views religion, politics, culture, law, ethics, etc. as realms of ideas (ideology) and the economics as realm of material production. And, he says that the material productions work as the foundation of society upon which the ideological structures are built.

Marx looked into history and analysed how societies had evolved from primitive communities/tribes to slavery (slave economy) to feudalism which consists of landlords and peasants and finally to contemporary capitalism which consists of haves and have-nots. The materialist interpretation of history, not the philosophical interpretation, only can help us change history towards something better. Thus, Marx moved away from the Young Hegelian movement and expressed his disagreements with their ideology in his works such as *Holy Family* (1844), the *Theses on Feuerbach* (1888) and the *German Ideology* (1932). Here, Marx expressed his disinterest in interpreting the world and interest in changing it.

Two points specifically about the Marxian understanding of history: one, Marx stresses the active nature of human subjects in history. Human beings are active agents in history. They are historical forces for Marx. They change the course of history from time to time. Human beings work through which they change the course of history. Marx stresses the working nature of human beings.

The work has basically positive aspects and has the potential to be creative and fulfilling for Marx. This is the same in Hegel and many existentialist philosophers. The positive aspects of work are stressed to reject the Christian notion of the negative character of the work. The Christian notion holds that human beings are cursed to work on the earth for the 'original sin' by Adam who disobeyed God in heaven. Human beings descent to and work/labour on the earth is not the Christian 'fall' for

Marx or Hegel.

Secondly, Marx talks about social history. He focuses on the organisations and collectivities. The history he looks at is not an individual's history. It is rather the social history and social relations of classes. We already said how Hegel's whole philosophy is interpreted as an attempt to reconcile individuals and modern society. Marx radicalised the concept of reconciliation and wanted to do away with all private properties.

6.4.4 Marxism as a Political Ideology and WorldView

Marx's life, philosophy and career were overwhelmingly political. He wrote whatever he wrote with political intention in mind. And, the social and political philosophy he put forward became a major political force in the world after him.

Marx believed in and propagated social transformation, revolution and universal emancipation. Marx and Engels were convinced that an effective transformation of society could be achieved only by revolution, by a class-war in which the proletariat, the working class, would seize power. Marx dreamt of an egalitarian society with universal application.

Marxism is a philosophical doctrine and political ideology meant to bring in social change and transformation. Marxian philosophy triggered and guided the many left-wing socialist or communist revolutions which changed the politics of the 20th century. After the fall of the Soviet Union and the communist regimes there, democratic socialism came into being inspired by Marx's philosophy.

Marx's aim has been criticised and challenged by many of his critics as 'utopian socialism' - a socialist idea which is never going to come. Marx' ultimate political aim is a social organisation without government founded on egalitarian principles. The state should 'wither away' for Marx in the end. One could say that Marx, in this sense, had a definite goal of history. While Marx's followers present him as a social philosopher who presented a 'scientific' theory of history, the critics view it as a 'deterministic' and 'dogmatic' concept of history- a concept of history with a predetermined goal and thus 'unscientific.'

Recap

- ♦ Hegel had a tremendous impact on Karl Marx

- ♦ Marx argues that Hegel's dialectic (as well as philosophy) was full of mystification and that he demystified it

- ♦ "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence which determines their consciousness."

- ♦ The social relations and material conditions trigger historical development and change, not ideas/thoughts/concepts, for Marx

- The speculation about the world was not an area of interest for Marx

- Marx located the epistemology within the context of a historical self-formative process.

- Human reason exists within history, not as a universal category as seen in Kant

- Marx makes severe criticism of Capitalism

- For Marx, economic exploitation is an essential feature of the capitalist mode of production

Objective Questions

1. Did Marx develop the dialectical account of history on his own?

2. What is the materialist conception of history in sum?

3. Is historical materialism and dialectical materialism the same?

4. What is alienation in Marx simply?

5. What does Marx mean with social history?

6. What is the meaning of the historical essence of human beings?

7. Material and social conflicts trigger the development of history in Marx. Is it true or false?

8. The materialist interpretation of history is the same as the philosophical interpretation of history. Is it true or false?

9. Marx approached the work in a positive sense. Is it true or false?

10. Marxism is a philosophical doctrine and political ideology. Is it true or false?

Answers

1. No

2. The conception that historical development happens out of materialist conditions

3. Yes

4. Human beings' separation from what they produced

5. collective history of human beings in classes and groups

6. Human beings have no fixed essence. Their essence is made in accordance with historical changes and developments

7. true

8. false

9. true

10. true

Assignments

1. Marxism is a philosophical doctrine and political ideology. Explain.

2. Discuss how Hegelian dialectics and Marxian dialectics differ.

3. 'It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence which determines their consciousness.' Explain.

Suggested Readings

1. Singer, Peter. (1980). *Marx: A Very Short Introduction.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

2. Mukherjee, Subrata. Ramaswamy, Sushila. (2004). A *History of Political Thought: From Plato to Marx*. Delhi: Prentice Hall.

3. Copleston, Frederick. (1994). *A History of Philosophy, Vol. 9. Modern Philosophy: From the French Revolution to Sartre, Camus, and Levi-Strauss.* New York: Doubleday.

4. Carver, Terrel. (1991). Ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Marx*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Model Question Paper
Set -01

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

QP CODE: ………   Reg. No   : ....
                                                  Name   : ……........

BA Philosophy with Sepcialization in Sreenarayanaguru Studies Examination- Semester I
Discipline Core - 1- B21PH01DC- Introduction to Western Philosophy
(CBCS - UG)
2022-23 - Admission Onwards

Time: 3 Hours   Max Marks: 70

Section-A

Objective Type Questions. Answer any ten, each question carries one mark (10X1=10)

1. What is the general term used to refer to Plato's philosophy?

2. Philosophical, mythological religious and supernatural ideas were mixed in the ancient Greek. True or False?

3. What is the basic symbol of the Illuminationist Islamic philosophy?

4. Critical philosophy took its prime task as criticism of what?

5. What is the method that Leibniz conceived as proper to philosophy?

6. Virtue ethics shifts the question of ethics from 'what is the right action' to '…….'?

7. Who came up with the famous statement 'Man is the measure of all things'?

8. What initiates the motion, according to Anaxagoras?

9. Philosophical approach and inquiry of the ancient Greek was cosmological. True or False?

10. What is the word medieval Jewish thinker used to refer philosophical thinking in their time?

11. Whose philosophy is generally considered as the beginning of modern philosophy in England?

12. Why the critics consider medieval philosophy is not worthy of serious study?

13. What is the source of knowledge, according to empiricists?

14. According to Aristotle, what is an active agent or moving cause?

15. For Empedocles, what are the two mythical laws that support the union and disunion of the elements?

Section-B

Very short Questions (not more than five sentences). Answer any ten, each question carries two marks (10X2=20)

16. "Philosophy begins in wonder." Explain in three-four sentences.

17. Summarize in three sentences: "Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind."

18. Why did Hume Reject 'causation' in his philosophy?

19. Write three important books/treatises about human mind written by empiricists/ rationalists.

20. What is the difference between natural theology and divine theology?

21. What were the characteristic marks of Sophist's philosophy?

22. What are the major points discussed in Spinoza's work 'Ethics'?

23. Give two instances to say that mythology and philosophy in the ancient Greek were mixed up.

24. How Does Descartes define mind and body in his philosophy?

25. 'Virtue is knowledge.' explain

26. Define the concept 'Tabula- rasa'

27. Explain the hierarchy of ideas suggested by Plato

28. Define Berkeley's concept of 'presentationalism'

29. What is the discussion about the primal stuff of the universe? Write the views of any

three philosophers whom you like.

30. What is impression according to David Hume

Section-C

Short Questions (not more than page). Answer any five, each question carries four marks (5X4=20)

31. Analyze Kant's notion of universal reason and its significance in enlightenment philosophy.

32. Analyze the difference between Arab Peripatetic philosophy and Illuminationist Islamic philosophy

33. Is human being a social and political animal by nature? Explain and evaluate the question in the light of Aristotle's politics.

34. Critically evaluate the reconciliation of faith and reason in medieval philosophy?

35. 'Cogito ergo sum.' Explain.

36. 'All is God and God is all.' Explain with reference to Spinoza's philosophy.

37. What are the four causes proposed by Aristotle?

38. Briefly explain the atomistic philosophy of Democritus

39. Make a note of Plato's theory of knowledge

40. Explain Locke's concept of ideas

Section-D

Essay Questions (not more than four pages). Answer any two, each question carries ten marks (2X10=20)

41. Assess the nature and features of philosophical enquiry in the ancient Greek

42. Justify the statement: "Kant gave an active role to human mind/reason in epistemology (obtaining knowledge), morality (judging what is right and what is wrong) and legislation (law making) and self-governance."

43. How does Leibniz use the theory of monads to create harmony by reconciling the multiplicities of the world?

44. Empiricism attacks innate ideas. Discuss.

Model Question Paper
Set -02

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

QP CODE: ……

Reg. No   : ....

Name   : ……........

BA Philosophy with Sepcialization in Sreenarayanaguru Studies Examination- Semester I
Discipline Core - 1- B21PH01DC- Introduction to Western Philosophy
(CBCS - UG)
2022-23 - Admission Onwards

Time: 3 Hours   Max Marks: 70

Section A

Objective Type Questions. Answer any ten, each question carries one mark
(10X1=10)

1. Kant's philosophy prioritized history over reason. True or false?

2. What is the name of Marx's dialectical account of history?

3. What is the name of the most popular argument that sophists taught to their students?

4. Who were the prominent thinkers of the Greek tradition that influenced scholastic philosophy?

5. Who is the father of modern philosophy?

6. What is the specific word that medieval Arab thinkers refer to philosophical thinking?

7. How do we attain the knowledge of the eternal truths in Augustine's philosophy?

8. According to Hegel, we have only a historical essence; our essence changes in accordance with history. True or false?

9. Which is known as social virtue, according to Plato?

10. What are the two types of human understanding, according to Hume?

11. Who were the major proponents of atomist philosophy?

12. Kant made distinction between theoretical reason and …?

13. What is the ultimate level of knowledge, according to Plato?

14. What does the phrase 'esse est percipi' means?

15. Kant's categorical imperative suggests that we can use our fellow beings as a means/ way to obtain some benefit of ours. Is this true or false?

Section-B

Very short Questions (not more than five sentences). Answer any ten, each question carries two marks (10X2=20)

16. Why do we study the history of philosophy? Does it have any scope?

17. How does Spinoza describe modes?

18. What is virtue for Aristotle?

19. Name the major schools of philosophy existed during the medieval period?

20. What is alienation in Marx?

21. What is voluntarism according to Augustine?

22. How did Leibniz describe the concept of Monad?

23. What are the characteristic features of Socratic Method?

24. What is Marx's take on capitalism?

25. How does Spinoza conceive substance in his philosophy?

26. What is Hume's concept of 'matters of fact'?

27. What is 'substance' according to John Locke?

28. How does Aristotle describe Actuality and Potentiality?

29. Note down the differences between the primary and secondary qualities according to John Locke

30. Explain the 'subjective idealism' of George Berkeley

Section-C

Short Questions (not more than page). Answer any five, each question carries four

marks (5X4=20)

31. Examine the importance of human mind/reason, individual autonomy and dignity in Kant's enlightenment philosophy.

32. Analyze the problem of substance and change in Greek philosophy?

33. Write about the relationship of science and philosophy in the ancient Greek.

34. Why does Aristotle think that social/political life is necessary for us?

35. Explain proofs for the existence of God in Aquinas' Philosophy.

36. How does Augustine solve the problem of evil without negating omnipotent and omniscient God?

37. How do you differentiate rationalism from empiricism?

38. What are the characteristic features of monad in Leibniz's philosophy?

39. Plato tries to reconcile the 'all change' theory and 'no change' theory. Do you agree with this statement? Why?

40. Explain Berkeley's rejection of abstract ideas

Section-D

Essay Questions (not more than four pages). Answer any two, each question carries ten marks (2X10=20)

41. Make a critical judgment of Hegel's dialectical philosophy vis-à-vis Marx's

42. Aristotle's virtue ethics is significantly different from Kant's deontological ethics. Evaluate and assess the statement.

43. Critically analyze different theories of mind-body relation proposed by rationalist thinkers.

44. 'When I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other'. Justify this statement in the light of Hume's skepticism.

സർവ്വകലാശാലാഗീതം

വിദ്യയാൽ സ്വതന്ത്രരാകണം
വിശ്വപൗരരായി മാറണം
ഗ്രഹപ്രസാദമായ് വിളങ്ങണം
ഗുരുപ്രകാശമേ നയിക്കണേ

കൂരിരുട്ടിൽ നിന്നു ഞങ്ങളെ
സൂര്യവീഥിയിൽ തെളിക്കണം
സ്നേഹദീപ്തിയായ് വിളങ്ങണം
നീതിവൈജയന്തി പാറണം

ശാസ്ത്രവ്യാപ്തിയെന്നുമേകണം
ജാതിഭേദമാകെ മാറണം
ബോധരശ്മിയിൽ തിളങ്ങുവാൻ
ഈ ജ്ഞാനകേന്ദ്രമേ ജ്വലിക്കണേ

കുരീപ്പുഴ ശ്രീകുമാർ

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

Regional Centres

Kozhikode
Govt. Arts and Science College
Meenchantha, Kozhikode,
Kerala, Pin: 673002
Ph: 04952920228
email: rckdirector@sgou.ac.in

Thalassery
Govt. Brennen College
Dharmadam, Thalassery,
Kannur, Pin: 670106
Ph: 04902990494
email: rctdirector@sgou.ac.in

Tripunithura
Govt. College
Tripunithura, Ernakulam,
Kerala, Pin: 682301
Ph: 04842927436
email: rcedirector@sgou.ac.in

Pattambi
Sree Neelakanta Govt. Sanskrit College
Pattambi, Palakkad,
Kerala, Pin: 679303
Ph: 04662912009
email: rcpdirector@sgou.ac.in

Introduction to Western Philosophy

COURSE CODE: B21PH01DC

YouTube

Facebook

Instagram