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WESTERN CLASSICAL PHILOSOPHY

(First Half)



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Paper Introduction:

This paper deals with Western Philosophy, which contains Greek and Modern Philosophy. Here we shall discuss the philosophy of Plato, Descartes and Hume. It is worth mentioning that Plato belongs to Greek Philosophical School whereas Descartes and Hume are Modern Philosophers. It needs mention that Descartes was more particularly a continental rationalist and Hume was a British empiricist. Thus this paper deals with the major contribution of these three thinkers to philosophy. This paper includes three units.

Unit one will introduce you with Plato's theory of knowledge both his negative and positive account as described in his major works 'Theaetetus' and 'Republic' along with the example of the allegory of the cave. This unit also includes Plato's theory of ideas, Plato's idea of 'Good' and Plato's theory of justice.

Unit two will introduce you with the major works of Descartes. From this unit we will come to know why Descartes is called 'the father of modern philosophy'. It also includes Descartes's theory of knowledge, his philosophical method, theory of Cogito ergo sum, proofs for the existence of God, existence of the external world and the theory of mind-body relation.

Unit three will introduce you with the empiricist philosopher Hume and mainly with his philosophical skepticism, his theory of impressions and ideas, his idea of causation, his theory of the reality of the external world and Hume's arguments against the mathematicising attempts of Philosophers. Thus, this book has the following four units–

Unit 1: Plato

Unit 2: Descartes

Unit 3: Hume

Unit 1

Plato

Contents:

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- 1.5 The Theory of Justice
- 1.6 Summing Up
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1.1 Introduction

The two great architects of European or Western philosophy are- Plato in the ancient world, and Kant in the modern world. Whitehead once commented that the whole of European philosophy is nothing but a series of footnotes on Plato. This may explain the place of importance of Plato's ideas in the heartland of Western philosophy. Plato's system contains all the necessary elements of a philosophical system, namely, metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, aesthetics, and so on, systematically developed and woven around two isms, namely, realism and rationalism. The objects of knowledge are real, and what is real can be grasped by reason and reason alone. These are the two basic stands never compromised in any of the elements of Plato's philosophy.

Even though metaphysics constitutes the ground or the foundation of a philosophical system, in the order of its actual development, epistemology comes first. Let us, therefore, begin with Plato's epistemology. Epistemology is otherwise known as theory of knowledge.

1.2 Objectives

Plato's philosophical works constitute a system. Indeed, he is the first great system builder in the tradition of Western Philosophy. However, being an ever critical mind Plato never produced a complete and finished system; his thoughts continued to develop as fresh problems occurred to his mind. Hence, after going through this unit you will be able to—

- *discuss* Plato's theory of knowledge;
- *examine* Plato's theory of Ideas;
- *analyse* Plato's theory of justice.

Stop to Consider:

Life sketch of Plato:

Plato was born in the year c. 428/7 B.C. at either Athens or Aegina, and died in the year c. 348/7 B.C. He belongs to a teacher-student family having at least four all-time greats as its members. Socrates was the first teacher who taught Plato. Plato taught Aristotle and Aristotle taught Alexander the Great. Plato was primarily a philosopher. As a philosopher he prescribed for the banishment of poets from his ideal Republic. Yet, people have no hesitation to regard him as a great poet; many of the sentences that he produced are top class poetry.

Plato composed his philosophical treatises in the form of dialogues, and they are possibly thirty-six in numbers (based on the arrangement of Platonic Mss by one Thrasyllus). They are generally brought under four heads as (i) works of the early Socratic period, (ii) works of the transition period, (iii) works of the period of maturity, and (iv) works of old age.

1.3 Plato's Theory of Knowledge

Plato's theory of knowledge is both critical and constructive. While the critical, negative or destructive elements of Plato's theory of knowledge are to be found in the **Theaetetus**, the positive or the constructive elements are best illustrated in the **Republic**.

The conclusion of the **Theaetetus** is negative. There Plato is mainly concerned to refute certain false theories of knowledge. These false theories are: (I) Knowledge is sense perception; (II) Knowledge is true judgement or true opinion; (III) Knowledge is true judgement plus an account, or knowledge is justified true belief.

In the **Theaetetus** Plato explains sense-perception by dialectically combining the Heracleitean doctrine of flux with the Protagorean maxim that man is the measure of all things. The Heracleitean doctrine that things are in a flux, that there is no permanence or stability in any of the things, is true in so far as the world of sense experience is concerned. The objects of the sensible world, such as rivers, mountains, plants, etc. may appear to be relatively stable.

But actually they are in slow motion. The inner world of the sensible man is also in motion; it is in rapid motion. When one motion (slow motion) comes into contact with another motion (rapid motion), a third motion is produced (sense impression). But if everything is in motion, including human experience, then, indeed man is the measure of all things. This Protagorean maxim holds good with regard to the object of sense perception, rather the impressions of the senses. Thus by implication Plato holds that the world of change and becoming is not the only world, nor is the real world. Transcending the world of change and becoming there is a world, a real world, containing such objects as are not subject to change and becoming. Those eternal, unchanging objects, variously termed by him as Forms, Ideas or Essences, are the objects of knowledge. Those objects of knowledge are grasped not by senses but by reason and reason alone. But in order to establish those positive ideas about knowledge, Plato has first of all to

prove that sense perception is no knowledge. He does this. Let us now summarise his arguments against the view that sense perception is knowledge.

- (i) That knowledge is perception is the theory of Protagoras and the Sophists. Its maxim is - man is the measure of all things. What it amounts to is that what appears to each individual true for that individual. But this is at any rate false in its application to our judgement of future events. In general, what appears to each individual to be the truth about the future frequently does not turn out so in the event.
- (ii) Perception yields contradictory impressions. The same object appears large when near, small when removed to a distance. Compared with some things it is light, with others heavy. In one light it is white, in another green, and in the dark it has no colour at all. Which of all these impressions is true? To know which is true, we must be able to exercise a choice, to prefer one to another, to accept this and reject that. But if knowledge is perception, then we have no right to give one perception preference over another. For, all perceptions are knowledge. All are true.
- (iii) The doctrine renders all teaching, all discussion, proof, or disproof, impossible. Since all perceptions are equally true, the child's perceptions must be just as much the truth as those of his teachers. His teachers, therefore, can teach him nothing.
- (iv) It destroys the objectivity of truth, and renders the distinction between truth and falsehood wholly meaningless. The same thing is true and false at the same time, true for you and false for me. Hence it makes no difference at all whether we say that a proposition is true, or whether we say that it is false. Both statements mean the same thing, that is to say, neither of them means anything.
- (v) In all perception there are elements which are not contributed by the senses. Even a simple judgement like "this piece of paper is white" is not a pure judgement of perception. It involves comparison, classification, identification, discrimination, and so on. None of these are yielded to me by the senses. The intellect itself introduces them into objects. Knowledge, therefore, cannot consist simply of sense impressions. With regard to the last argument as just explained, and this is indeed the most important of all the arguments, it is noteworthy that Plato, in disposing of the claim of perception to be the whole of knowledge, contrasts the private objects of the senses with the "common terms that apply to everything", and which are the objects of the mind, not of the senses. These common terms correspond to what he regards as Forms or Ideas which are, ontologically, the stable and abiding objects, as contrasted with the particulars or sensibilia.

Knowledge is not Simply True Judgement:

In the **Theaetetus** Plato also considers the view that knowledge is true judgement. He asks us to see at least that knowledge cannot be equated with judgement

simple, for false judgements are possible. He uses the “wax-block” metaphor and the simile of the “aviary” to explain how a false judgement may arise. So it is agreed that not every judgement be regarded as knowledge.

Therefore, Plato now takes up the view that true judgement is knowledge for discussion. Plato argues that knowledge and truth are different elements. Thus a judgement may be true, and yet the person who makes the judgement may not know that the judgement is true. In that case the making of a true judgement does not yield knowledge. For example, a man might be tried on a charge of which he was not actually guilty, although the circumstantial evidence was very strong against him and he could not prove his innocence. If, now, the defendout took up a different route of approach, and successfully played on the feelings of the jury, and the jury gave the verdict “not guilty”, their judgement would actually be a true judgement; but they could hardly be said to know the innocence of the accused, since exhypothesis the evidence is against him. Their verdict would be true judgement, but it would be based on persuasion rather than on knowledge. It follows, then, that knowledge is not simply true judgement.

Knowledge is not True Judgement Account:

As we have just seen, true judgement may mean no more than true belief, but true belief is not the same as knowledge therefore, the suggestion is that the addition of an “account” or explanation would convert true belief into knowledge. But what does giving an account mean?

1. It cannot mean merely that a correct judgement, in the sense of true belief, is expressed in words, since, if that were the meaning, there would be no difference between true belief and knowledge. We have seen that there is a difference between making a judgement that happens to be correct and making a judgement that one knows to be correct.
2. If “giving an account” means analysis into elementary parts (i.e. knowable parts), the addition of an account in this sense does not suffice to convert true belief into knowledge. The mere process of analysis into elements does not convert true belief into knowledge, for then a man who could enumerate the parts which go to make up a wagon (wheel, axle, etc.) would have a scientific knowledge of a wagon, and a man who could tell you what letters of the alphabet go to compose a certain word would have a grammarian’s scientific knowledge of the word.
3. One may suggest a third interpretation of “plus account”. It may mean “being able to name some mark by which the thing one is asked about differs from everything else”. But this kind of accounting is inadequate to convert belief knowledge. Plato points out that if knowledge of a thing means the addition of its distinguishing characteristic to a correct notion of that thing, then either is no correct notion or these are no new addition. Suppose that I have a correct notion of Theaetetus. To convert this

correct notion into knowledge I have to add some distinguishing characteristic. But unless those distinguishing characteristics were already involved in the correct notion of Theaetetus it could not be a correct notion at all.

If, on the other hand, my “correct notion” of Theaetetus includes the distinguishing characteristics, then it would be absurd to say that I convert this correct notion knowledge by adding the differentia, for really I do not add anything to the already formed correct notion.

It may be noted that Plato is here speaking of individual, sensible objects, as is clearly shown by his example he takes - a particular man, Theaetetus. The conclusion to be drawn is not that no knowledge is attained through definition by means of a difference, but rather that the individual, sensible object is indefinable and is not really the proper object of knowledge. This is the real conclusion of the dialogue **Theaetetus**, namely, that true knowledge of sensible objects is unattainable, and - by implication - that true knowledge must be knowledge of the universal and abiding.

True knowledge:

Plato assumes from the outset that knowledge is attainable, and that knowledge must be (i) infallible and (ii) of the real. In the Theaetetus, he shows that neither sense-perception nor true belief are possessed of both these marks; neither then, can be equated with true knowledge. Plato accepts from Protagoras the belief in the relativity of sense and sense-perception. He accepts, too, from Heraclitus the view that the objects of sense-perception, individual and sensible particular objects, are always in a state of becoming, and so are unfit to be the objects of true knowledge. But Plato will not accept a universal relativism or a universal flux. On the contrary, according to Plato, knowledge, absolute and infallible, is attainable, but it cannot be the same as sense-perception. There are also objects fitted to be the objects of true knowledge.

They are not sensible particulars as are in Heraclitean flux, but must be stable, abiding, fixed, capable of being grasped in clear and scientific definition. If we examine those judgements in which we think we attain knowledge of the essentially stable and abiding, we find that they are judgements concerning universals. If, for example, we examine the judgement “The Athenian Constitution is good”, we shall find that the essential element in this judgement is the concept of goodness. The Athenian Constitution as a given empirical fact is more or less irrelevant. What we really mean is that this universal type of constitution carries with the universal quality of goodness. Our judgement, as far as it attains the abiding and stable, really concerns a universal. Again, scientific knowledge, as Socrates saw in connection with ethical valuations, aims at the definition. A scientific knowledge of goodness, for instance, must be enshrined in the definition “Goodness is “whereby the mind expresses the essence of goodness. Hence true knowledge is knowledge of the universal.

Knowledge of the highest universal will be the highest kind of knowledge, while “knowledge” of the particular will be the lowest kind of “knowledge”. Plato’s positive doctrine of knowledge, in which degrees or levels of knowledge are distinguished according to objects, is set out in a famous passage of the **Republic** that gives us the simile of the line whose schematic diagram is as follows :

	noisis or pure reason	arche or original objects	nerta or the core of the objects of knowledge
epistimi or knowledge	diania or understanding	mathematics or mathematical objects	
	pistis or sense	jowa etc. or aim mals etc.	
doxa or opinion	eikasi or imagination	eikones or images	doxata or the world of the objects of of belief

The development of the human mind on its way from ignorance to knowledge, lies over two main fields, that of opinion (doxa) and that of knowledge (episteme). Opinion is sharply distinguished from knowledge, and so are the objects of opinion distinguished from the objects of knowledge.

While opinion or doxa is said to be concerned with “images”, episteme or knowledge is concerned with originals or archetypes. If a man is asked what justice is, and he points to imperfect embodiments of justice, e.g. the action of a particular man, a particular constitution or set of laws etc., having no inkling that there exists a principle of absolute justice, a norm or a standard, then that man’s state of mind is in a state of belief or opinion or doxa. But if a man has an apprehension of justice in itself and sees particular examples of justice as only superficial copies or images of that ideal then his state of mind is in a state of knowledge. The opinion state of mind is qualitatively different from the knowledge - state of mind, and yet it is possible to progress from one state of mind to the other, to be “converted” as it were. When a man comes to realise that what he formerly took to be originals are in reality only images or copies, when he comes to apprehend in some way the original itself, then his state of mind is no longer that of doxa or opinion; he has been converted to knowledge.

The line is not simply divided into two sections; each section is subdivided. Thus there are two degrees of knowledge and two degrees of opinion. The lowest degree, that of **eikasia**, has as its objects images, shadows, reflections in water and in solid, smooth, bright substances, and everything of the kind. The object of the **pistis** are the real objects corresponding to the images of the eikasia. Actually,

the objects of **eikasia** as well as of **pistis** are of the same nature; they are copies, images or reflections, and not originals.

While the empirical objects represented by **pistis** are copies of the original Ideas, the objects of the **eikasia** section are copies of copies. The man who judges that external nature is true reality, and who does not see that it is more or less “unreal” copy of the invisible world of the Ideas or Universals, has only **pistis**. He is not so badly off as the dreamer who thinks that the images that he sees in dream are the real objects, still he has not got **epistimi** or knowledge.

The higher division of the line has its two subdivisions. Plato says that the object of **diania** or understanding is what the soul is compelled to investigate by the aid of the sensible objects, which it employs as images, starting from hypothesis and proceeding, not to a first principle, but to a conclusion clearly, Plato is here speaking of mathematics. The triangle that we draw on a blackboard is not the real triangle, still an empirical image of the triangle is helpful in making a geometrical demonstration. The objects of **noisis**, on the other hand, cannot be comprehended by employing any kind of image; they can just be intuited by pure reason. The state of mind in question, that of **noisis**, is the state of mind of the man who uses the hypothesis of the understanding as starting points, but passes beyond them and ascends to first principles. Having clearly grasped the first principles, the mind then descends to the conclusions that follow from them, again making use only of abstract reasoning and not of sensible images.

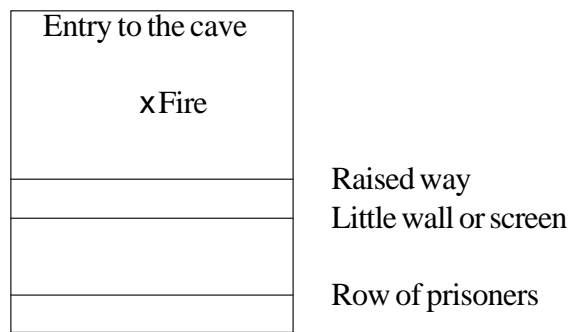
Check Your Progress:

1. Discuss Plato’s theory of knowledge.
2. Write a note on true knowledge.
3. ‘Knowledge is not simply true judgement’ .– Explain.

The Allegory of the Cave:

Plato further illustrates his epistemological position by the famous allegory of the Cave in the seventh book of the **Republic**. Let us briefly snatch the allegory.

Let us imagine an underground cave which has an opening towards the light. In this cave are living human beings, with their legs and necks chained from childhood in such a way that they face the inside wall of the cave and have never seen the light of the sun. Above and behind them, i.e. between the prisoners and the mouth of the cave, is a fire, and between them and the fire is a raised way and a low wall like a screen. Along this raised way there pass men carrying statues and figures of animals and other objects, in such a manner that the objects they carry appear over the top of the low wall or screen. The prisoners, facing the inside wall of the cave, cannot see one another nor the objects carried behind them, but they see the shadows of themselves and of these objects thrown on to the wall they are facing. They see only shadows.



Wall on which shadows are thrown

In the allegory the prisoners represent the majority of mankind who remain all their lives in a state of dream, or illusion or imagination. They behold only shadows of reality and hear only echoes of the truth. Their view of the world is most inadequate, distorted by their own passions and prejudices, and by the passions and prejudices of other people as conveyed to them by language and rhetoric. And though they are in no better case than children, they cling to their distorted views with all the tenacity of adults, and have no wish to escape from their prison-house. Moreover, if they were suddenly freed and told to look at the realities of which they had formerly seen the shadows, they would be blinded by the glare of the light, and would imagine that the shadows were far more real than the realities.

However, if one of the prisoners who has escaped grows accustomed to light, he will be able to look at the concrete sensible objects, of which he had formerly seen but the shadows. This man is in a state of **pistis** or sense-perception, having been converted from the state of dream or imagination. If he now further perseveres and comes out of the cave into the sunlight, he will see the world of sun-illuminated objects, and lastly, through only by an effort, he will be able to see the sun itself, which represents the Idea of the Good, the highest Form, the universal cause of all things right and beautiful- the source of truth and reason. He will then be in a state of knowledge.

The allegory of the cave makes it clear that the “ascent” of the line was regarded by Plato as a progress. The progress of the human mind from darkness to light, from hazy beliefs to clear perception, is not a continuous and automatic process : it needs effort and mental discipline. Hence his insistence on the great importance of education, whereby the young may be brought gradually to behold eternal and absolute truths and values, and so saved from passing their lives in the shadowy world of error, falsehood and prejudice.

1.3.1 The Theory of Ideas

The negative aspect of Plato’s theory of knowledge is that sense-perception is no knowledge. Our senses give us only subjective and fleeting impressions of the object. With their help we cannot know the object. Yet we somehow know the sense objects like the river, the mountain, the tree, etc., we give them names,

recognise them, and, further, we communicate our experiences with regard to them. In Plato's opinion, sense objects, so far as they are knowledge, that is, so far as they are more than bare sensations, are so only in respect of the concepts of whose instances they are. Our knowledge is knowledge through concepts, and the theory of Ideas is the theory of the objectivity of concepts. That the concept is not merely an idea in the mind, but something which has a reality of its own, outside and independent of the mind, and is capable of being intuited by the faculty of reason and reason alone - is the substance of Plato's theory of Ideas.

Plato's theory of Ideas is founded upon the view that truth means the correspondence of one's ideas with the facts of existence. Suppose I ask you the question "what is beauty?" You point to a rose, a woman's face, and so on. But I did not ask for many things, I asked for one thing, namely beauty. By beauty we mean not many things, but one. If beauty is a rose, it cannot be moonlight. If all of them are beautiful then they must be similar to each other in respect of the standard 'beauty'. We do not discover this standard beauty anywhere in the object. Yet the idea of beauty is no fiction. This beauty exists outside the mind and it is something distinct from all beautiful objects. Now beauty, justice, goodness, the horse in general, are all concepts. According to Plato's theory these concepts are objective realities to which he gives the technical name Ideas.

Let us see what the characteristics of the Ideas are:

In the first place, Ideas are substances. Substance means, for the philosopher, that which has its whole being in itself, which is the source of its own reality. In this technical sense the Ideas are substances. They are absolute and ultimate realities. Secondly, Ideas are universal. The Idea of the horse is not this or that horse. It is the general concept of all horses. It is the universal horse. Thirdly, Ideas are not things, but thoughts. But they are not thoughts in the mind of a person or in the mind of God. They are objective Ideas, which have reality on their own account. The concepts in our mind are indeed copies of objective Ideas. Fourthly, each Idea is a unity. It is one amid the many. Fifthly, the Ideas are immutable. A concept is the same as a definition, and the whole point in a definition is that it should always be the same. Sixthly, the Ideas are- the Essences of all things. The definition gives us what is essential to a thing. Seventhly, each Idea is, in its own kind, an absolute perfection. The perfect man is the one universal type-man, that is, the Idea of man, and all individual men deviate more or less from the perfect type man. Eighthly, the Ideas are outside space and time. Ninthly, the Ideas are rational, that is to say, they are apprehended through reason. Lastly, towards the end of his life, Plato identified the Ideas with the Pythagorean numbers. We know this from Aristotle, but it is not mentioned in the dialogues of Plato. It results from this whole theory of Ideas that there are two sources of human experience, sense-perception and reason. Sense-perception has for its object the world of sense; reason has for its object the Ideas. The Ideas are absolute reality, absolute being. Objects of sense are absolute unreality, not-being, except

in so far as the Ideas are in them. They are, therefore, half way between being and not - being.

Aristotle observes that Plato's theory of Ideas has three sources-the teachings of the Eleatics, of Herac litus and of Socrates. From Herac litus, Plato took the notion of a sphere of Becoming, and it appears in his system as the world of sense. From the Eleatics he took the idea of a sphere of absolute being. From Socrates he took the doctrine of concepts, and identified the Eleatic Being with the Socratic concepts. This gives him his theory of Ideas.

Plato's teaching regarding the relation of sense objects to the Ideas is obscure. The Ideas are the absolute reality by which individual things must be explained. The being of things flows into them from the Ideas. They are "copies", "imitations" of the Ideas. In so far as they resemble the Idea they are real; in so far as they differ from it, they are unreal. Sense-objects are poor and imperfect copies of the Ideas. They are mere shadows and half-realities. Sometime Plato used the expression "participation" to explain the relation of sense-objects to Ideas. Things participate in the Ideas. The Ideas are thus both transcendent and immanent; immanent in so far as they reside in the things of sense, transcendent in so far as they have a reality of their own apart from the objects of sense. However, it is very difficult to understand what this "copy" or "participation" really means.

SAQ:

Write a note on negative aspects of Plato's theory of knowledge. (within 50 words)

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1.4 The Idea of the Good (Agathon)

It is essential to the understanding of Plato's philosophy, both moral philosophy and the philosophy of knowledge, to realise the place held in it by the conception of the 'good'. For Plato, the good is at once: (A) the end of life, that is, the supreme object of all desire and aspiration; (B) the condition of knowledge, or that which makes the world intelligible and the human mind intelligent; and (C) the creative and sustaining cause of the world.

- (A) The good does not in the first instance involve ordinary moral associations of our world' good'. To the philosophers among the Greeks the good meant the object of desire. The good or desirable at any given moment to any given man is that which he would rather be or do or have than anything else: To Plato it is a sort of ultimate truth that man is a being who lives for something, i.e, he has a good. This is only

another way of saying that man is a rational creature. By a 'rational person' we generally mean one who does not make a fool of himself, he is a creature of means and ends; everything that he does is regarded by him as a means to something. This is the connection between reason and the good. It is owing to this connection that man is what we call a moral being. He is capable of morality because he has reason, and reason compels him to live for an end or ideal.

- (B) From the point of view of the study of human life, the necessity of living for something is due to the presence of reason in man now turning from human action to nature as the object of science, the same function is assigned to reason as before. Every object in nature, as in art, contains or expresses some good or end. Things in nature do not simply exist without any reason; or to say the same thing in a different way, nature is not a blind nature. It has its telos or end.

At this point we must be careful not to misunderstand the teleological view of the world. Teleology in its crude form is the notion that nothing has any meaning unless it is shown to be serviceable to man. But teleology in any real philosophical sense means something very different. The good or end of the thing is the immanent principle that we have to suppose in it in order to explain it, and which is involved in calling it a whole at all. If you take any complex object (and all objects are complex), that is any object which is a whole of parts, the only way to explain it or understand it is to see how the various parts are related to the whole; that is what function each of them serves the good or end of the whole. The progress of knowledge is the increased realisation of the fact that each thing has thus its function, and the world is, in Plato's thinking, luminous just so far as it reveals this fact.

- (C) The good is represented by Plato not only as the end of like and the cause of things being understood. But also as the source of the being of everything in the world; it actually makes things what they are, and sustains them or keeps them in being. If you are asked what anything is, every answer you give describes a function of the thing. The being of a thing is its function or ergon when a man ceases to do that which makes him himself, he has really ceased to be that man; if he is performing no civic function he is citizen, just as if you cut off a foot from the body it is not a foot. This is simply the principle which makes Plato say that the good is the source of the being of things. The reality of things is what they mean; what they mean is determined by their place in the order of the world; and what determines their place in the world is the supreme good, the principle of that order.

Let us now connect Plato's conception of the good with his theory of Ideas. As Plato investigates the relations of the one and the many, Being and non-being, he observes that they are correlative ideas which involve each other.

A one which is not many is as absurd an abstraction as a whole which has no parts. Similarly, being cannot totally exclude not-being. By applying these principles to the world of Ideas, we can very well say that the world of Ideas is many, since there are many Ideas, but it is one, because the Ideas are not isolated units, but members of a single organised system. There is in fact a hierarchy of Ideas. Just as the one Idea presides over many individual things of which it is a common element, so one higher idea presides over many lower Ideas. And over this higher Idea, together with many others, a still higher Idea will rule.

Then there must be one highest Idea, which is supreme over all the others. This Idea will be the one final and absolutely real being which is the ultimate ground, of itself, of the other Ideas, and of the entire universe. This Idea is, Plato tells us, the Idea of the good. We have seen that the world of Ideas is many, and we now see that it is one. We now get to the passage in which the Idea of the good is introduced in the **Republic**. There Plato works out the comparison of the good with the sun through a theory of light and of vision. **First**, the good is the source of intelligence in the mind and intelligibility in the object, just as the sun is the source of vision in the eye and of visibility in the object. Truth is the reflexion of the good, the world is intelligible and the soul intelligent in proportion as the good is strongly or weakly reflected. **Secondly**, as the sun is the source not only of light and vision, but also of the actual generation and growth of the organic world, so the good is the source not only of truth and knowledge, but actually of the life and being of the world.

1.5 The Theory of Justice

Plato is one of the earliest thinkers to have formulated a theory of justice. His most celebrated work, **The Republic**, begins with the question-What is justice? He tries to answer the question in two ways. In the first place he explains what justice is not. In this connection he takes up some of the representative views of justice for criticism. In the next place he gives his own positive account of justice. In substance Plato's conception of "justice is that it is a virtue to be discovered in the soul of an individual human being and also in the collective life of the society. Justice in the individual soul and in the life of the society are not two virtues. They are one and the same virtue, one exhibited in a smaller scale and the other exhibited in a larger scale. In every case, justice has to do with the inner organisation of the inner life from which the outward conduct follows. Further, justice has its metaphysical connotation as well. It is connect with the telos of the world as being determined by the Ideas of the Good.

The first representative opinion about justice that Plato considers is the one explained by an old rich man, Cephalus, who has spent his life honourably in business, and who now feels that he should share the joy of philosophic thinking,

though actually his head is not meant for philosophic thinking. With Cephalus morality is summed up in the formula 'to have been true in word and deed, and to have paid one's debts to gods and men'. This says all that a good man needs wish to say. Plato does not really criticise this view.

All that he points out is that justice has its social aspect which Cephalus' view does not take into consideration. Because Cephalus is a rich man he is in a position to pay his debts to men and Gods. But others who have remained poor may not be so lucky, but justice is not just a matter of luck.

The next opinion about justice comes from Cephalus' son Polemarchus. Borrowing a maxim from the poet Simonides, he says that justice consists in helping friends and harming enemies. Plato argues that Polemarchus is only explaining an expedient, a harmful and shallow expedient indeed, that divides the society into warring camps - the camp of the friends and the camp of the enemies. From the point of view of the society each one is a dignified citizen, and no one is an enemy. Even if you say that a different society or the people of a different society may be your enemies, you just cannot champion the cause of harm. To do harm to somebody is to get him worse. For the person who is thus at the receiving end it is unjust. But can justice produce injustice? No, it can not. The third important view is that justice consists in the interest of the stronger. In the **Republic** Thrasymachus, a Sophist, upholds this view. According to Thrasymachus, 'justice' has no general meaning. It means one thing for the stronger and another thing for the weaker. What we ordinarily call justice, that is, law-abidingness, is meant for the weaker sections of the society, for they cannot afford to be law-violators, and certainly, they are not the laws-makers. For the stronger, however, justice is self-seeking. They are more intelligent than others and they are in power-positions, i.e., in the government. While they make the laws they conceal their own personal designs. But the laws are made in such ways as that if they are obeyed they will bring the most of advantages to the law-makers themselves: They are, therefore, unjust persons, if of course, by 'just' and 'unjust' we mean moral qualities. Really speaking, morality is nothing but the absence of opportunity. Stronger persons find all the opportunities, and they, therefore, prove themselves to be superior to the weaker ones in respect of intelligence, strength as well as happiness. Plato argues in detail to prove that injustice is neither the source of intelligence, nor of strength, nor of happiness. Injustice destroys the unity of purpose, and needless to say, unity is strength and division is weakness. Persons who at every moment of their lives are self-seekers do not know that for everything there is a limit, and therefore, they have no intelligence. Their lives will be thoroughly mundane, and they will never know what happiness is.

After critically disposing of the representative opinion about justice Plato concentrate on building his own theory of justice. In the first place he asks us to see the intimate connects between men and their society. Whatever is good or beautiful, bad or ugly, in human nature get reflected in the mirror of the society, and the society in turn makes men what they are, therefore, neither men nor their society can be studied in abstraction from each other.

And society being a large image of man, Plato proposes to discover justice in the society first. However, justice being an ideal virtue it can be discovered in an ideal society. But as the ideal society does not exist Plato proposes to construct an ideal society. This ideal society is what he Calls the Republic.

As Plato observes, men are determined by nature to live together. Thus a society may naturally spring up. But however natural the birth of a society may be, in order to perfect a society its members need to make sincere efforts.

The solid foundation of any perfect or advanced society is education. Thus Plato first outlines the system of education of his ideal society. The education in Plato's Republic will be compulsory, state-controlled and state-funded. The state should take care of educating its children male and female, both in respect of body and mind-music for the soul and gymnastic for the body. After primary education is completed a selection will be made. Those who will be found to be naturally gifted for: philosophic thinking will be selected for higher education, and the majority of these children who will not be selected for higher education will go for different crafts. They will be artisans. Those who will receive higher education will again undergo a trial at the completion of their education. The highest and the best will be selected for being the rulers of the Republic, and the rest will be their auxiliaries that means, soldiers, peace-keepers and executives. In this way the society will be divided into three great classes of people. Being the products of education, people will naturally see that they exist for each other, that their well-being depends upon their mutual understanding, harmony and cooperation. In respect of nature people are of different elements - some are gold-natures, some are silver-natures, and some are bronze or iron-natures. Gold is a precious metal, very bright and is in short supply. Yet if you want to go to battles, if you need strong swords, spears, etc. you need iron rather than gold. In this way each element in society has its well-defined place in it, and nothing is dispensable. From the point of view of the society each elements is equally worthy. Yet the hierarchy and order must be maintained. The guardians, since they know best in which lies the good of the society, should be the supreme commanders. The auxiliaries should come under their subordination, and the artisans should come under the subordination of both the guardians and the auxiliaries. It can now be seen which virtues are prominent in which elements of the society. The wisdom of the society lies in the wisdom of the guardians, courage lies in the auxiliaries, temperance in the artisans, and justice as a virtue of the society is prominent in the entire body of the society. It is reflected in the harmonious relationship of the three classes of the society, each functioning within its well-defined limit to a general purpose of the society.

Now, if we regard a society as the image of the soul, then in a human soul, too, we may discover three great elements corresponding to the three great classes of the society. These three elements are— reason, spirit and appetite. Reason being the faculty of knowledge is the highest element of the soul, spirit comes next, and appetite is its next. For a well-balanced man all these three elements are equally necessary, but reason should be allowed to be the guide of the other two elements,

namely, spirit and appetite. When these three elements work in perfect harmony and coordination in a man's nature, we discover all the four virtues in him. It has reason and wisdom, spirit and courage, appetite and temperance, and over all justice in its nature.

Thus, according to Plato's conception justice is not an expedient, nor a superficial property of human conduct, but something like the health of the soul and the health of the society. Injustice is just its opposite. It is like disease, and justice is preferable to injustice in the same way as health is preferable to disease.

Check Your Progress:

1. Critically examine Plato's theory of Justice.
2. Write a note of Plato's conception on Agathon.

1.6 Summing Up

After going through this unit now you are in a position to analyse Plato's contribution towards Western Philosophy. Plato is regarded as one of the major architect of western philosophy. His theory of knowledge provides us as actual way to analyse the real aspects of human life. Again his theory of justice helps us to analyse the needs of justice in individuals well or social life. Thus from his theory of justice we come to know that it is an essential ingredients of human life. Thus this unit will help to Plato's contribution to the growth of western philosophy.

1.7 References/Suggested Readings

- | | | |
|------------------|---|---|
| Anders Wedberg | : | <i>A History of Philosophy (Vol.3)</i> |
| Copleston | : | <i>History of Philosophy</i> |
| O'Connor | : | <i>A Critical History of Western Philosophy</i> |
| N.K. Smith | : | <i>The Philosophy of David Hume</i> |
| A. Flew | : | <i>Hume's Philosophy of Belief</i> |
| Paton | : | <i>Kant's Metaphysic of Experience</i> |
| Korner | : | <i>Kant</i> |
| Bennett | : | <i>Kant's Analytic</i> |
| Strawson | : | <i>The Bounds of Sense</i> |
| P. Edwards (Ed.) | : | <i>Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Relevant Articles)</i> |

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Unit 2

Descartes

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- 2.1 Introduction
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2.1 Introduction

Modern Philosophy marks the awakening of the reflective spirit against authoritarianism, tradition and absolutism. Reason is the edifice for both science and philosophy. The most significant tenet of modern philosophy is its independent search for truth. Modern philosophy stands on tri-dimensional pillars for its development. These are:

1. Its rationalistic feature giving priority to human mind,
2. Its naturalistic feature which seeks to explain every problem taking the help of natural presuppositions, and
3. Its scientific temperament in solving problems related both with life and nature.

Moreover modern philosophy arose directly as a protest against scholastic philosophy. Scholasticism means the “philosophy of the schools”. Scholasticism developed in the universities fundamentally in Paris and spread over to Oxford during the period from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries. In this unit we shall discuss Rene Descartes and his several important philosophical ideas.

The primary focus of Rene Descartes’s philosophy is not scholastic in nature. He is better influenced by scientific concerns of New Science and the threats to that science which faced problems because of skepticism. Descartes is always said to be the father of modern philosophy. One of his most important ideas is his rationalism. Human mind helps in acquiring knowledge by means of innate ideas. So the mind has a wide range of principles which are not derived from sense-experience.

Descartes was born in 1596 at La Haye, Touraine and son of a noble family. Like Socrates he was convinced that it is reason which can give us certainty in knowledge. Descartes was a very typical rationalist like Socrates, Plato, St. Augustine, advocating that reason is the only path to knowledge. Like Socrates, Descartes did not trust the general views of his time and engaged himself to give a strong foundation to philosophy. Descartes joined army and *traveled* to different places around Central Europe, the way Socrates did and questioned people in Athens. Later on he lived in Paris and in 1629 he went to Holland, contributing himself to mathematics and philosophical works. It is in 1650, he died of pneumonia at Sweden. Descartes is known by his deeds and not by his years because he was only 54 at the time of his death. His greatest contribution in the field of philosophy is to find a body of ‘certain and self-evident truths, such as everyone endowed with common sense and the faculty of reasoning will accept’.

Descartes has several published works. Amongst them the book ‘Principles of Philosophy’ contains metaphysics in its first part and the other three parts deal with physics in general. His philosophical tune echoes in accepting philosophy as a whole. According to him philosophy originates from metaphysics and its growth comes from different sciences. So this is why Descartes’s pursue for philosophical quest is for certainty in knowledge. So in this unit we shall discuss the epistemological theory as propounded by him. Moreover, in this unit we shall deal thoroughly Descartes’s philosophical method and the spiritual substance (*res cogitans*). We plan to deal with other important problems of Descartes’ and also his analysis with the relation of mind and body which made him a dualist. He has been severely criticized by the thinkers of opposite camp i.e. ‘Empiricism’ because of advocating ‘Rationalism’. Lastly this unit will give a picture that how Descartes finally influenced all other rationalist thinkers like Spinoza, Leibniz and many others with the agenda to shift to the use of mathematical models which is one of the hallmarks of the New Science and as such called to be the father of modern philosophy.

2.2 Objectives

After going through this unit you will come to know the fundamental issues dealt by Descartes while advocating this theory of knowledge. So this unit will help you to:–

- *describe* Descartes’s philosophical method
- *discuss* his ‘*cogito ergo sum*’
- *find the* distinction between mind body relationship
- *can find* out what type of ideas are ‘innate ideas’
- *analyze* Descartes’s causal argument for the existence of God.

2.3 Descartes as the Father of Modern Philosophy

Few of the ancient peoples advanced far beyond the mythological stage and perhaps none of them can be said to have developed a genuine philosophy except

the Greeks. Wonder is said to be the origin of philosophy in Greek philosophy. For e.g. the philosophy of Thales, Anaximander and many other important thinkers originated in wonder.

But the history of the new era may be viewed as an awakening of the reflective spirit, as a revolt against authority and tradition as a demand for freedom in thought, feeling, and action. Gradually philosophers realized that the cause of thinking must not rest in scholasticism. Scholasticism is a body of thought remarkable for its order and symmetry. But it is inadequate as a representation and expression of the force of life. The thoughts of the period from the fifteenth to the sixteenth century have been described as 'the upturning of a volcano'. The time is indeed the volcanic epoch in European thought. It is the outcome of Renaissance and Reformation movement. Many new discoveries and inventions became the impact of new learning. People refused to accept any older beliefs without giving a second thought to it

'Knowledge is power' is the key note in the minds of the people. Nearly all the great leaders of modern thought from Francis Bacon, Thomas Hobbes are interested in the practical values of life. They develop an implicit sense of inadequacy in the scholastic principles and doctrines. But none of them could give us a new and strong foundation where upon to build philosophy with clear, consistent and reasonable evidence.

The task is left to Rene Descartes, born at the time of Renaissance to overcome all the difficulties of the era and to develop a systematic and strong foundation for philosophy. Descartes took the help of free-thinking – the most vital principle of the era and worked to give a criterion of philosophy and hence forth to build a constructive philosophy. He started the trend of modern philosophy in his doctrine of reasoning.

Descartes was a great mathematician and he tried to develop philosophy as certain and distinct like mathematics so that none can doubt the ultimate impact of philosophy. He believed that only the mathematicians have been able to find self-evident and certain proposition He started his philosophy with the simple word 'doubt'. But this simple word had revolutionized the whole scholastic principles. Descartes question was 'Is there an ultimate in knowledge which can guarantee itself to me as true and certain? Consequently can I obtain from it a criterion of truth and certainty?

His aim was to find a body of certain and self-evident truths. Scholastic philosophy could not give us such truths. No accurate science can be built upon the unstable foundation given to us by scholastic philosophy. Therefore Descartes said that we must get rid of these scholastic opinions and build up sciences on a new foundation.

According to Descartes when we come to know the views of others it is to know history and never philosophy. We all accept that $2+2 = 4$ so if we can discover similar truths in philosophy then only we can have a philosophy which will be as certain as mathematics. As is it said that Descartes took recourse to the method

of doubt, to find out a criterion of truth and certainty. He says that we can doubt that a material world really exists or even doubt mathematical truths. There is no limit to this reflective doubt. The limit is in our self-consciousness. It questions everything that is doubttable. In his philosophy, 'I or self of consciousness is very important. The reality of 'I' or 'Ego' of Descartes's is inseparably bound up with the fact of definite act of consciousness. But he does not deduce the 'ego' from the act of consciousness. He realizes it as a matter of fact along with this act. The act and the ego are the two inseparable factors of the same fact or experience in a definite time. So Descartes opines that 'to doubt means to think, to think means to be' i.e. 'Cogito ergo sum'. It is the basis of all our knowledge.

Thus we can say that Descartes is rightly called as the father of modern western philosophy. In spite of his tremendous contributions in many aspects of philosophical thinking, yet he did not get out of criticisms. The greatest contribution that we can see is that, Descartes philosophy extended beyond the ideology of Scholasticism. In fact it was the turning point of philosophy—a new outlook of philosophy—a new meaning for philosophy.

Stop to Consider:

- Descartes was struck by the excellence of mathematics.
- In order to make philosophy truly scientific, he hoped to make its method pattern on mathematics.
- Descartes did not despair for knowledge. According to him, knowledge must attain certainty equal to that of demonstrations of arithmetic and geometry.
- Descartes called his own enquiry 'universal mathematics' in Rule IV of his *Regulae*.
- Today this 'universal mathematics' is called as 'meta-mathematics'.

2.4 Descartes on Epistemological Problem

Epistemology as a branch of philosophy deals with the problems related with knowledge. When we discuss Descartes on Epistemological problem we have to highlight here that Descartes is the initiator of modern Rationalism. Rationalism as a theory of knowledge advocates that reason is the only source of knowledge. He was ultimately followed by Spinoza and Leibniz in the trend of rationalism.

Knowledge is possible by our intellect which Descartes calls as 'intuition'. Intuition is undoubted and immediate apprehension by reason. Descartes propounded that there are certain basic principles of reality. These basic principles are innate in nature and can be known by intuition. Knowledge of God, self and the world are deduced from the innate ideas. Innate ideas are God gifted ideas. These ideas are imprinted by God at the time of birth. The e.g. of innate ideas are causality, infinity, certainty, eternity, perfect Being of God. The fundamental features

of innate ideas are: clear and distinctness. Descartes applies the method of mathematics to philosophy and here Paulsen calls this method as 'mathematical rationalism'. Descartes takes the principles of intuition and deduction in his theory of rationalism. Intuition makes the 'First principles' possible and 'remote conclusions' are deduced from them. Intuition is prior to deduction.

According to Descartes ideas are of three kinds. They are viz., (1) adventitious ideas, (2) fictitious ideas and (3) innate ideas. Those ideas which are possible because of our sensations are called adventitious ideas. These adventitious ideas are not clear and distinct. Those ideas which are created by the mind by the conjunction of different ideas are called as fictitious ideas. Fictitious ideas are created by the imagination and hence these ideas are also not clear and distinct. Both adventitious and fictitious ideas are doubtful. According to Descartes innate ideas are 'implanted in the mind by God at the time of birth'. Innate ideas are beyond the sensation and imagination and hence these ideas are clear and distinct. By innate ideas, Descartes meant pure and abstract ideas. Innate ideas are therefore self-evident ideas and a-prior. Amongst all the innate ideas, the idea of God is the most important innate ideas. Innate ideas always exist in the mind. We can say here that Descartes explains by innate ideas as 'ideas or truths impressed upon the mind, principles which the soul finds in itself, and at other times, the native capacity of the soul to produce such knowledge in the course of human experience'.

The Rationalist thinkers advocate that there are certain fundamental principles of reality which are innate in nature. These principles of reality are recognized as true because they are known by intuition or reason. These principles of nature are not with the control of sensation.

We see that the innate ideas show a pathway to further development in modern philosophy. John Locke, the empiricist thinker severely criticized these innate ideas but it was finally modified both by Spinoza and Leibniz. Kant, the German thinker who tried to reconcile both rationalism and empiricism, dealt with the problems of innate ideas in a well knit fashion. Another important point can be found in modern rationalism. This is that certain type of knowledge is possible in the analysis of self-consciousness. The essential truth of such interpretation is that reality is interpreted in its best way by the analogy of the reality of the self.

Stop to Consider:

Life Sketch of Rene Descartes:

Rene Descartes was born in 1596. He hails from a noble family and lived in a number of different European countries at various periods of his life time. Even as a young thinker he had an unrest desire like Socrates to know the nature of man and the universe. This particular interest was furthermore boost up when he started to take interest in philosophy. Descartes is considered as the father of analytical geometry. His contribution to the science of algebra is immense. As a mathematician he used the 'mathematical method' even for philosophizing. He was interested to prove philosophical truths in the same way we try to prove the mathematical theorems. We

use reason when we work with figures and Descartes too used reasons in this epistemological method because reason can give us certainty in knowledge. Sense-experience cannot give us such certainty in knowledge. Descartes has some similarity with Plato because even according to the latter mathematics and numerical ratio gives us more certainty in knowledge than the evidences of our senses. Reading of the above information will make you to know the background of this rationalist thinker for advocating innate ideas.

2.5 Descartes on Philosophical Method

Descartes is said to be a great methodologist of his time and its impact is seen even today. He is put in the line of two great traditionalists of ancient Greek thinking namely, Socrates and Plato. Furthermore he is a pioneer of a great methodologist of modern western philosophy that is Kant. He aims at establishing a body of certain and self evident truths which will be accepted by all having the common faculty of common sense and reason. He argued against scholastic philosophy for failing in giving us solid foundation to philosophy. Only mere dependence on scholasticism has laid to error and doubtful conclusions both in sciences and philosophy. So for Descartes, it is a challenge to ‘build the edifice of knowledge anew from its foundations’.

As we can find in our above discussion that Descartes is a staunch believer in the certainty and possibility of mathematics and geometry. Interestingly enough, he is influenced by the method of mathematics and not much with the subject of mathematics. As such he calls his enquiry as ‘Universal mathematics’. He made a clear attempt of the application of ‘Universal mathematics’ in solving philosophical truths. To quote him “Such a science should contain the primary rudiments of human reason, and its province ought to extend to the eliciting of true result in every subject.” Thus he postulates free enquiry in solving philosophical problems and this aspect of free enquiry is the essence of modern era. Reason here plays the vital role in assessing the truth of knowledge. Descartes totally discards submission to any authority. Reason is the only criterion to determine the certainty, necessity and universality of knowledge.

According to Descartes every mathematical problem starts with certain axioms or with certain principles. These axioms or principles are always self-evident. These self-evident principles are accepted by all of us. These axioms are the starting-point of all mathematical problems and so all conclusions follow from them. Conclusions when follow a correct procedure cannot be incorrect because the axioms are self-evident. Thus Descartes holds that we start with simple propositions. These simple propositions are self-evident. From these simple and self-evident propositions we proceed to complex propositions. Here the method that is followed is synthetic and deductive.

The same method is followed by Descartes in philosophy. We must start from first principles. These first principles are absolutely certain, clear and self-evident. In this process we move on to unknown truths which are equally certain. Here Descartes follow the method of deduction. This particular method is not present

in scholasticism. No influence from any authority or prejudice should guide us in coming to any philosophical conclusion. It is we who have to search the conclusion for ourselves.

Accordingly Descartes provides us with 36 rules. Out of these 36 rules, 31 are mentioned in the *Regulae*. Finally we can see that Descartes mentions four basic broad rules for his guidance in order to arrive at certain, universal and self-evident philosophical conclusions. These are as follows:

- 'Never to accept any thing as true unless I clearly know it as such.'
- 'Divide up each of the difficulties, under examination into as many parts as possible'.
- 'Commence with the simplest objects and ascend, step by step to the more complex'.
- 'In every case make the enumeration so complete that I might be assured that nothing was omitted'.

Descartes deliberately takes recourse to the method of doubt in his search for single and certain truth. We must spontaneously apply doubt to every elements of our experience. When this doubt is extended to its highest limit then we are moved to beyond doubt anything. This revelation of 'something' is of the nature of indubitable and is clearly perceived. Descartes here speaks that let us doubt every thing which is possible to be doubted, and to discover by ourselves, the indubitable intuition. So we find that Descartes is observing that;

- 'Sense-testimony can be doubted'
- 'Even the truths of science can be doubted.'
- 'That I doubt cannot be doubted'.

In this respect he opines that even the truth of science can be doubted. It is because there are many people who make mistakes in reasoning and thereby conclude erroneous conclusions. More-over we do not know whether any truth of knowledge, for e.g. $2+2 = 4$ is being intended for us. There may be some mischievous evil demons that make us to believe in erroneous knowledge. We can stop to this un-ending process only when we cannot doubt the existence of a doubter. Hence to doubt or to think is to conceive of a thinker. Therefore it follows that: 'I think therefore I exist' (*Cogito ergo sum*). '*Cogito ergo sum*' is the only certain and self-evident truth and the edifice or the fountain head of all philosophical problems.

Here we have to say that Descartes method of doubt is logical in nature. It is never psychological in nature. We must not be confused with psychological doubt. We can bring out certain distinctions in this regard. They are as follows:

- Descartes's doubt is a spontaneous feeling of human experience. On the other hand psychological doubt is the direct experience felt by us about the earlier experience.
- Descartes's doubt has the logical status and deliberate in nature because it depends on the willing faculty of an individual. On the other hand psychological doubt is independent of the will of the individual.
- Descartes's doubt is concerned with ultimate things. On the other hand psychological doubt is concerned with particular things of our daily business.
- Descartes's doubt must not be confused with the doubt that we find in skepticism because skepticism propounds denial of any kind of knowledge. But we must remember that Descartes proposes to doubt everything only as a starting point of philosophizing.

Thus we may say that, Descartes's method is Deductive-Inductive, Analytic-Synthetic in nature. It is synthetic or deductive in nature because from that one single self-evident, clear and distinct axiom, i.e., 'Cogito ergo sum', follow all other elements of his philosophy. Again it is analytic or inductive in nature because it is based on the discovery of a certain truth.

Criticism against Descartes's Philosophical Method:

You have come to know about the philosophical method that Descartes has tried to establish in this section. However you will see that critics do not agree with Descartes on his philosophical method on different issues and have vehemently criticized this 'deductive or synthetic- inductive or analytic method. According to Descartes, 'Cogito ergo sum' is the pivot of the philosophical method. But critics opine that such a conclusion is just against modern theories of knowledge. The criticisms leveled against this method are as follows:

- Here lies the fundamental misconception that Descartes's methodology of rationalism which has its starting point from the first self-evident axiom cogito ergo sum is sufficient for all the three branches of science. This one method is accepted for subjects like mathematics, natural science and philosophy. But as a matter of fact this is not possible. Every subject has its own method according to its subject-matter and philosophy as such has its own method. The greatest blunder that made Descartes to take such a step is for taking 'mathematics as a model of his philosophical method'.
- It is mentioned worthy that Descartes's such observation is not satisfactory. He has failed to understand that philosophy deals with certain

non-cognitive propositions associated with self-realization. Critics observe that Cartesian method of 'Universal Mathematics' cannot sufficiently be applied in explaining philosophical problems.

- Deduction and Induction play a vital role in Cartesian mathematical method but critics here critically observe that Descartes has failed to give detail explanation regarding the procedure of deduction which is pre-supposed in his methodology.
- Critics again make an observation of the word 'Intuition' which Descartes has used in his search for 'indubitable intuition'. In intuition an element of mystic feeling is always associated with it. Consequently an element of doubtful reputation is present in our mystical feelings.

2.6 Descartes on Cogito Ergo Sum

Cogito ergo sum is the ultimate result of the Cartesian philosophy and the starting point of speculative philosophy. Cogito ergo sum, is what Descartes is searching for because this proposition provides a criterion or test of truth. This is the fundamental criterion because it is the starting of all metaphysical questions. 'Cogito ergo sum' of Descartes is 'absolutely certain, true, clearly and distinctly perceived' because he concludes that 'as a general rule that all things which are like it, clearly and distinctly perceived, are true'. It is the true basis of all knowledge. It is the first and most certain of all knowledge. Again it is not a syllogism but a self-evident, immediate cognition, a pure intuition. Cogito ergo sum is therefore an intuition and not an inference. It is the ultimate guarantee of any truth which is 'lumen in nature', i.e. the natural light of clear intuition. Moreover it leads to the criterion of clearness and distinctness. Here we can refer to the observation of Prof. N k Smith. He points out that Descartes has failed to give us any logical criterion of clearness and distinctness. But he acknowledges that the philosopher has explained meaning of the dictum in reference to mathematical propositions and follow from the 'light of reason alone'. An analysis shows that 'Cogito ergo sum' has the following points to be highlighted:—

- Though Descartes tries to establish this self-evident axiom 'Cogito ergo sum' i.e., 'I think therefore I exist', as a fact of simple knowledge, yet in its literal and primary meaning the word 'therefore' suggests it to be an inference. It is only in its secondary sense the word 'therefore' means a relation of necessary connection. We should remember that Descartes uses it in its secondary meaning.
- As an indubitable first principle 'Cogito' (self) is clear and distinct. We can say here that 'I think therefore I exist' must not be understood that thinking merely gives guarantee to self-existence. It is something more than that. Its importance lies in the fact that, 'it is my existence which carries with it the existence of myself'. It is the functioning of

the conscious which give certainty to the existence of the self and nothing else.

- In 'Cogito ergo sum' we can find the inseparability of thought and thing. It is only through our consciousness we understand 'myself' as something existing. It can well justified that cogito ergo sum is the first principle both from the psychological and logical standpoint. It is because 'my' being is implied by 'my' being conscious. Hence cogito ergo sum is the indubitable first principle.
- Moreover the use of the word 'therefore' must not mislead us to interpret that 'Cogito ergo sum' involves the process of inherence. There is an uncertainty in the use of the word 'therefore'. Descartes has used it in a necessary connection of relation between 'Cogito and Existence' because in his opinion 'my existence can be followed only from my thinking alone.(res cogitans).
- It is only conscious activity of the mind proves with certainty the existence of the self. As such it will be wrong on our part to say that 'I sing therefore I am'. We have to remember here that singing without being conscious cannot imply the existence of the self. It is to be revealed that only consciousness activity can give guarantee to all our activity like for e.g. laughing, walking, keeping promises etc. etc.
- 'Cogito ergo sum' implies that the self is a spiritual substance. It suggests therefore the substantial nature of the self. According to Descartes the 'Self' is spiritual in nature.
- Clearness and distinctness are the two fundamental conditions of the self-evident first principle 'Cogito ergo sum' Descartes holds the indubitable nature of this axiom. This axiom finally constitutes the criterion of all philosophical truth. Moreover 'Cogito ergo sum' at a point can give reply to the problems of skepticism or agnosticism which can definitely create problems in our process of philosophizing.
- In 'Cogito' we find for the first time the flavor of 'existential proposition'. Existential proposition speaks of about something which really exists. It refers to the existence of the 'Self' as the thinking being or that which can doubt everything except its own existence. Descartes is being created here of raising the sentiment that the self has a quality of consciousness which is self-evident. It serves as a distinguishing mark of mind in relation to material bodies and concludes that mind and body are two independent substances. Descartes is therefore a dualist.

Criticism Against Descartes on Cogito Ergo Sum:

Cogito ergo sum occupies a strategic position in Cartesian philosophy because being the criterion of all philosophical truth. But Descartes is severely criticized because he asserts that the permanent self or ego is known with certainty. Locke too affirms such an opinion of the former. Descartes here is criticized by Hume and Kant. These two philosophers reject the contention of the rationalist thinker, Descartes. According to them, the self cannot be known empirically. So you can come to know several criticisms leveled against 'Cogito ergo sum' as follows:

- Hume advocating scepticism as a theory of knowledge, has criticized the dictum 'Cogito ergo sum' while refuting the spiritual substance as sense-experience cannot give us the knowledge of such spiritual self.
- Kant in his opinion regards that transcendental subject can never be known and therefore Kant rejects the possibility of metaphysics. He holds the view that metaphysics as a science is not possible. According to Kant knowledge in the proper sense is not possible unless the impressions which we receive through the faculty (conditions) of sensibility are systematically arranged with the help of categories.
- Critics are of the opinion that Descartes procedure of establishing metaphysics is bad metaphysics. He proceeds from 'a priorism' to the existence of actual facts. He is influenced with the assumption that there is a permanent substance having an unchanging attribute. The permanent substance is the 'Self' which has its unchanging attribute as thinking. So this is bad metaphysics.
- Critics again observe that defining cannot bring the existence of that thing. We can conclude that from a given idea we deduce another idea from it and never to its actual existence. From the idea of the self we can simply deductively infer to the idea of the self and not to the permanent existence of the self having the essential quality of consciousness.
- According to the critics Descartes has made a wrong use of the verb 'to be'. It is observed that the verb 'to be' can be used properly only in conjunction with the predicate. For e.g. when we write, the correct proposition is 'I am a teacher' and not simply as 'I am'.
- Again, logical transition is not possible from 'I think' to 'I exist'. 'I think can establish that there is a state of thinking consciousness. From 'I think we cannot establish the existence of the self.

Here you will find the most critical observation of Gassendi. He observed 'if existence can be deduced from thinking it can also be deduced from walking. He suggested 'ambulo ergo sum', I walk therefore I am. But Descartes refused to accept such argument. According to him, 'Can I say, I walk therefore I am.' Existence of self cannot be deduced from walking. I believe that I am walking, I

might be deduced my activity. Perhaps I am dreaming that I am walking. But I am never deceived concerning my inward belief, only I may be deceived regarding the outward action. The existence of the mind, therefore is the most certain thing according to Descartes.

Stop to Consider:

Major Works of Rene Descartes:

Descartes has many important works to his credit. Among them the 'Discours de la methode' is a series of Philosophical Essays, published in the year 1637. It was written in French. In his 'Discourse on Method' he raised the question of the method the philosopher must use to solve a philosophical problem. In the 'Meditationes de prima philosophia', we see the critical comments of different thinkers like Arnauld, Hobbes, Gassendi and many others together with the author himself. It was published in 1641 and was written in Latin. Again in the year 1644 the author published 'Principia philosophiae'. He wrote this in Latin. 'Les passions de l'ame', was published in 1650 and was written in French. Descartes was a peace loving thinker and always tried to avoid confrontations. In the year 1630 he started to write the book 'La monde ou traite de la lumiere' but delayed in completion and publication too because in 1630 Galileo was condemned by the Inquisition. So this throws light on the lovable nature of this great rationalist thinker. But this book as well as 'Traite de l'homme' appeared in 1644. His letters were published in between 1657-1667. His works were translated by many thinkers. The most interesting theme that we find in this philosopher is that his acceptance of the idealistic or spiritualistic philosophy of his time and adopted them at the sentiment of new science. He tried to reconcile the mechanism of nature with the freedom of God and the human soul. This view of Descartes is finely presented in his opinion as: *Thus philosophy as a whole is like a tree whose roots are metaphysics, whose trunk is physics, and whose branches, which issue from this trunk, are all the other sciences.* We find this observation of Descartes in a letter to the translator of his 'Principles of Philosophy. The edifice of Descartes's philosophy is that we cannot accept anything as being true unless we can clearly and distinctly perceive it. With this instrument of reasoning he aimed at to reach certainty about the nature of life.

Check Your Progress:

- a) Who made the following statement? As an indubitable first principle 'Cogito ergo sum' is clear and distinct.
- b) Write true or false: Descartes' method of doubt is psychological in nature and not logical.
- c) What method Descartes follows in philosophy?
- d) By what name Descartes calls his enquiry?
- e) *Fill in the blank:*
According to Descartes every mathematical problem starts with.....
- f) Write four basic rules Descartes formulates to arrive at universal philosophical conclusion.
- g) Why Descartes takes recourse to the method of doubt in order to give a new foundation to philosophy?

SAQ:

After reading Descartes idea of philosophical method, do you think that he can be called as the father of modern philosophy? Give reasons in support of your answer. (within 80+40 words)

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2.7 Descartes on Proofs of the Existence of God

Descartes advocates that the method of doubt is necessary for the purification of the mind. Again the method of doubt can rescue us from the pressure of authority and also from passive acceptance of the thinking of others. He also concludes that metaphysics, like mathematics must derive its conclusion by deduction from self-evident principle. Mathematical demonstration is the perfect type of knowledge. He starts with the certainty of the self and follows from it deduction of the existence of God. In fact Descartes every problem is centered round his famous dictum ‘Cogito ergo sum’.

According to Descartes, God is the Supreme Being. He is self-caused. Generally three arguments are offered by Descartes to establish the existence of God. They are the argument from the innate idea, causal argument and the ontological argument. Among the three arguments, the ontological argument is of great importance in Descartes’s philosophy. The three ideas are put here:

1. The first proof starts from the idea of God in the mind. It states that the idea of God can be put by God himself who has real existence.
2. The second starts from the real existence of the thinking self. This proof moves to its necessary dependence on a supreme real author.
3. The third is the famous ontological proof. It follows the doctrine that from the essence of God to His existence.

According to him all our ideas are either innate or derived from sense experience. But there is one idea which is of the nature of ‘eternal, omniscient, omnipotent, source of all good and truth, creator of all things and have some perfection which is infinite’ and this is the one innate idea of the absolute Being. The question arises here what can be the cause of such innate idea of the Being’. A finite being cannot be the cause of that innate idea of such Being because the cause must be at least equal to the effect. So God, being an infinitely perfect can be the cause of such an idea, as being the cause equal to the effect. So Descartes concludes that God or the infinite Being is the cause of the innate idea of God because the finite things of this world are not sufficient enough to produce such an innate idea of that Being. ‘The more perfect cannot be a consequence and dependency on the less perfect,

any more than something can come out of nothing'. I cannot be the cause of the idea of God. There remains only thus one possibility. This is that it should be imparted to me 'by nature truly more perfect than my own'. 'As such an idea of God represents to me an idea of infinite perfection, so that power must only be greater than myself but infinitely perfect'.

Thus God exists. He is the most perfect and most truthful Being. We take for granted that all the external objects of nature exist and they must exist. So he deduces the existence of the external objects of nature from the 'veracity of God'. If the external objects fail to exist then God will become deceitful. Therefore the 'Self' exists, 'God' exists and the 'world' too exists. The existence of God and the world are deduced in Descartes' philosophy from the indubitable, certain and distinct innate idea of the self.

Descartes here follows not the ontological proof of the existence of God as propounded by Anselm. The ontological argument had a special appeal for Descartes He also refused to accept Aquinas's proof for the existence of God because such proofs are based upon the very facts which are still subject to his doubt. They are the facts about the external world. Instead, Descartes must prove God's existence solely in terms of his rational awareness of his own existence and internal thoughts. He therefore begins his proof by examining the various ideas that passed through his mind.

Descartes argued that I have an innate idea of God. This idea is characterized by clearness and distinctness just as my idea of myself. Clearness and distinctness constitute the criterion of truth. Therefore, my idea of God cannot be a faulty idea. God therefore must exist.

Secondly, Descartes stated that God is the most real Being. From this it is followed that 'the more cannot come from the less'. Again while considering the formula and its application it can be noted here that firstly the 'more or less' mean respectively 'of greater value and lesser value'. Again secondly the argument states in terms of 'efficient cause'. So it is not valuable from the logical ground but from the ground of necessity. Thirdly the term 'the idea of God' is being an ideal because of its superior nature in relation to the self, which is of inferior nature. Therefore the argument 'the more cannot come from the less' is an unchallengeable reality. Here the idea of reality necessarily implies its existence. Therefore God must exist.

So we can say here that according to Descartes the thought of God is dependent on His Being. He follows the causal proof of the existence of God. This causal proof starts with the idea of a perfect being as existing in our mind. He accepts such an idea so that we can necessarily infer the existence of that being as the cause of the idea. We can thus conclude that the causal proof of the existence of God is based on two principles. They are as follows:

1. An individual is consciously aware of its finite nature and
2. The awareness of an infinitely perfect being is the cause of the consciousness of 'God'.

The argument differs from the ontological proof of the existence in two respects. Descartes has not made the starting point of discussion from (a) 'the concept of God as a formal essence' but God as actually existing perfect Being in our mind and (b) not as a formal implication from 'the essence of God to its existence' but he proceeds 'by a causal inference from the idea of God to God himself'. So he affirms to the causal proof of the existence of God in addition to the cosmological proof of the existence of God. But the essence of Descartes argument follows from the very idea of the perfect being to its existence. The e.g., can be cited here that just the knowledge, 'the three angles of a triangle is equal to two right angles' necessarily follows from the very idea of a triangle, as a figure which is bounded by three straight lines.

Descartes believes like Socrates and Plato that there is a connection between reason and being. The more self-evident a thing is to our reason, the more certainly we can consider its existence. So when our reason recognizes something clearly and distinctly like mathematical properties, we can necessarily claim its existence. Thus Descartes claims 'God's guarantee' that 'whatever we perceive with our reason also corresponds to reality'. As such, God being infinitely perfect cannot deceive us.

Criticism against Descartes Proof of the Existence of God:

After going through this section you have come to know the views of Descartes's on the existence of God. But the observations supported by Descartes are not free from criticism. The arguments of the critics are as follows:—

- Descartes seems to be not clear in using the term God. His God represents partly the Absolute of metaphysics. On this metaphysical Absolute, everything depends. On the other hand Descartes' God represent partly the personal creative Being of Christian theology. Critics are of the opinion that the creator God of Christian theology is not sufficient enough to support rationalism.
- Kant is the first thorough going critics of the ontological argument. The most notable point of his criticism is that existence is not a predicate. He is of the opinion that 'Being' is obviously not a real predicate, that is, it is not a concept of something which could be added to the concept of a thing. It is merely the position of a thing or of certain determinations as existing in themselves. Existence is more a matter of grammar and logic than of metaphysics.
- Kant again criticizes the ontological argument of Descartes, stating that we can never prove existence from thought or idea. If the idea of God proves his existence, then the idea of hundred dollars in my pocket would prove their existence in it. But this is absurd because from the idea of God we can infer the idea of His existence, but not His actual existence.

Existence of the External World:

In addition to the idea of God we have an experience of many ideas which constitute the external world of material bodies. Experience of two distinct elements is part of our realization of the world around us: the conscious and the material substances. Physical objects do not have consciousness-desire-will-knowledge-motive or motion while all these characteristics characterize the living bodies. Obviously there are two distinct creations in the world. They are therefore mind and body. Descartes thinks that external bodies are independent of our thinking mind and so exist independently of our existence. He calls such an independent thing as a substance. To define substance we can say: 'nothing else than a thing which so exists that it needs no other thing in order to exist'. In the real and absolute sense only one such substance exists and this being is God.

Here we find Descartes affirming two other relative substances namely, mind and body. These two relative substances are independent of each other but both are dependent on God. While resorting to his universal skepticism Descartes even questioned the verifiability of physical existence. He pointed out that physical objects generally present themselves with the greatest possible certainty to our sense experience and that it is absurd to imagine that there are no tables- no chairs -no mountains or no trees. But on closer observation it is revealed that these objects can also be perceived from different points of view. Even the same individual perceives an object differently assuming different positions in relation to it. Moreover Descartes observed that these objects are present with equal clarity even in our sleeping state as well. It is only when we wake up we realize that what we have been considering real so far are all false perceptions. Our consciousness responds with the same clarity to our waking as to our sleeping. Thus in his discussion about the external world Descartes held that it is possible to doubt all sense experience and consider them illusory like dream experience. But further Descartes on the basis of his consideration that God is the ultimate substance held that the benevolence of God cannot keep us in illusion and therefore it is in holding with the benevolence of God that the existence of external world should be accepted.

Further in his discussion about the two forms of substances: namely mind and matter Descartes mentioned that there are fundamental differences amongst mind and body and they can be known only through their attributes. Attribute is the essential property of a substance and necessarily inheres in the substance. The attribute is the most necessary quality of the substance. So without attribute a substance cannot exist.

Again attribute manifests itself in different modifications. The modification of the attribute is known as the mode. We can think of both substance and attribute without the mode but we cannot think of modifications without substance and attribute. So the substance can never change its attributes but the substance can change its modes. For e.g. any material body must have always extension, but having different figure. Here Descartes points out that the attribute of mind is consciousness while the attribute of body is extension.

According to Descartes, there are two kinds of qualities. They are as primary qualities and the other as secondary qualities. Primary qualities always belong to the material bodies only. We can perceive clearly primary qualities. Primary qualities because of their clearness can be put into mathematical forms. E.g. of primary qualities are 'extension, figure, motion, rest, duration, and number'. On the other hand those qualities which are not distinct are secondary qualities. Secondary qualities are present in the mind of the perceiver. E.g. of secondary qualities are 'heat, cold, colour, sound, taste, etc., etc.'

Thus Descartes concludes after this analysis that there exists only one independent substance and this is God. 'God alone exists in Himself and through Himself and does not involve the existence of anything else'.

Descartes on Relation of Mind and Body:

Descartes is a typical dualist. He holds that mind and body are two independent substances. Descartes' dualistic conclusion has led to many other theories concerning the relation between mind and body. The different theories are like: occasionalism, parallelism of Spinoza, pre-established harmony of Leibniz and also subjective idealism of Berkeley. Most interestingly it can be said that even in contemporary period, the problem has failed to be solved by different philosophers.

In his philosophy of dualism, Descartes propounds that consciousness and extension, mind and body are independent of one another. Human body is like a mere machine. The 'heat of the heart' moves the machine. Death occurs when there is destruction in some parts of the body machine. It is God who adds soul because of a special creation. *(We can refer here that such theological idea developed in Descartes' philosophy because of his educational influence received at La Fleche, which was some scholastic in nature. He was exposed to the several works of medieval Christian thinkers like: Duns Scotus, William of Ockham and Thomas Aquinas. These thinkers behold the theological and philosophical stand-point of Aristotle. But we do not know how intensely Descartes was absorbed in scholastic thinking.)*

Soul and body are diagrammatically opposed to each other, so there is no real relation between them. While formulating the relation between mind and body, Descartes well- knits between interactionism and parallelism. Bodily activities are explained in term of reflexes. Bodily activities to some extent are influenced by the mind and the mind to some extent is influenced by the body. Descartes cites the e.g. that sensing, imagining and remembering are as mental acts but the objects referred to cannot be mental.

It is the notion of animal spirit and pineal gland, can explain the relation of interaction between mind and body. Descartes advocates that the animal spirit is run through the pineal gland. The soul exerts its influence over the body through the animal spirit and therefore through the pineal gland. Again the animal spirit makes the

muscles active. The animal spirit is the messenger to our soul of all the activities created by the external objects on our sense-organs. Consequently there arise mental experiences. This is the doctrine of interactionism.

We find here that such relationship between mind and body is explained by Descartes by the analogy of a horse and a horse rider. The horse rider simply sits on the back of the horse and carries no relation with the running horse. Similarly our mind because of its attribute of consciousness awakens the activity of the body but has no relation with the physical energy.

Thus it is often felt that Descartes has at times accepted the causal theory of interaction. He has never denied the 'inter-connection of the soul with the various parts of the body though he has clearly maintained that the soul has its fixed existence in the pineal gland of the brain'. Thus we see that in Descartes' philosophy the pineal gland controls all the action and reaction of the mind and the body. Sensations arise when information are carried through the sense-organs to the pineal gland. At last the mind moves the different parts of the body through the sensations and ultimately helps in the activity of the muscles.

Criticism against Descartes's Relation of Mind and Body:

- The concept of mind basically depicting the inter-action between the mind and the body at the pineal gland is viewed as dogma of 'the ghost in the machine' Ryle claims that traditional Cartesian dualism treats the mind as an entity encased in the body. In Cartesian dualism, mental activities have equal footing on the bodily activities. Ryle calls such a misconception as the dogma of the 'ghost in the machine'. He explained it with the help of an example of a watch. When a watch works it does not take the help of another watch to give accurate time. Similarly he found that according to Descartes the body can do its own work without the help of other minds. This seemed to be absurd argument as noted by Ryle. According to him instead of treating mind and body as separate it would be wise to treat them as one.
- According to Descartes what occurs within ourselves are essentially non-spatial and private. Bodily occurrences and different states however exist in space. They are public and observable. Consequently while we can know with certainty what is going on in our own mind, the minds of others are inaccessible to us. We can only make problematic inferences from another persons observed behaviour to states of his mind which by analogy we suppose them to have. This view of Descartes is called by Ryle "The Official Doctrine". It is this view which has Ryle regarded to be the dogma of the 'ghost in the machine'.
- Critics again opine that the explanation put forward by Descartes on the relation of mind and body is artificial and superfluous. The analogy of the horse and the rider in relation of the mind and body is bad analogy because

of not being appropriate. Descartes has failed to understand that both the rider and the horse are conscious being and essential of the same nature. But the mind and the body have nothing common in themselves. Of-course he holds that though mind and body are not directly related with each other because of their opposite nature yet the mind taking the help of the pineal gland can create influence over the body and vice versa.

- Ryle also explained the mistake in Descartes dualism as the Category Mistake. It is the mistake of representing the facts of mental life as if they belong to one logical category while in fact they belong to another logical category. One of the most famous examples given by Ryle in illustration of the Category Mistake is that of a foreigner visiting the University of Oxford for the first time. He is shown the various laboratories, libraries, class rooms etc. But he may still ask- "Where is the University?" His mistake consists in regarding the University as another entity or member of the class to which the other colleges, laboratories or libraries belong. But actually the University is the way in which all these are organized and not an additional entity. Thus the foreigner committed the Category Mistake as he considered the University to be belonging to one logical category while in fact it belonged to another logical category. Descartes committed the similar mistake as he considered the mind to be an additional entity over and above the dispositions, behaviour etc. But according to Ryle the mind is just the way in which these dispositions and behaviours are organized and not an additional entity or a ghost in a machine.

From the above criticisms it is clear that the theory of dualism cannot provide a satisfactory explanation of the universe. It is part of man's nature that he searches for unity in diversity and dualism in a unity and that he can never be controlled without pursuing these goals.

Descartes has been called a typical dualist and that he was a metaphysician, psychologist and physicist. Descartes concluded that mind and body are two independent substances. This led to many subsequent theories concerning the relation between the two –like Occasionalism and Parallelism of Spinoza and Pre-established harmony of Leibniz and Subjective Idealism of Berkeley. The difficulty of mind and body dualism arose from an artificial division of a concrete reality. We never experience ourselves a mind and body but always as embodied mind or spiritualized body. This led Descartes to define mind as that which is not extended and body as that which is not conscious. But if we define mind and body in such a way that they cannot be bridged then there can be no real relation to them. In other respect the dualism of Descartes led to Materialism. His insistence on human body as a complex automation led to the materialistic tendency onwards explaining every thing in terms of matter.

Thus it can be concluded that Descartes dualism does not give a satisfying argument in the sphere of philosophy.

SAQ:

How far Descartes' idea of mind-body dualism is justifiable?(In 80 words)

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Check Your Progress:

1. Mention two reasons why Descartes concludes that God exists.
2. How Descartes has explained primary qualities and secondary qualities?
3. Write three criticisms put forward by the critics against Descartes' dualism.
4. *Fill in the blanks:*
 - a) According to Descartes and are independent of one another.
 - b) Substance has no existence without

2.9 Summing Up

After going through this unit, you must have attained a position to discuss all the major ideas as advocated by Rene Descartes. You are in a position to know that one reason Descartes is called the Father of Modern Philosophy is that he set the agenda for those philosophers and theologians who came after him. European philosophy is influenced by Descartes and his ideas. But you will be interested to find out that inspite of Descartes' contribution to modern philosophy with his one of the most important ideas of rationalism he has been attacked, revived and condemned for over more than three centuries. It is commented by many writers that Descartes is the *philosopher philosophers love to hate*. After reading this unit you will be able to comprehend that Descartes was "present at the creation" of the new science with all those thinkers like Copernicus, John Kepler, Galileo, Issac Beeckman, Marin Mersenne, Robert Boyle, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, and Issac Newton for his contribution to the mechanization of the world picture. You have all learnt that his greatest contribution was in the development of analytical geometry and also in contributing immensely in science and philosophy. As mentioned in this unit that Descartes was greatly influenced by scientific concerns

of the 'New Science' and the threats to that science which was posed by skepticism. You have come to know that Descartes begins to attack on skepticism in his two best known philosophical treatises. They are: 1 The Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting One's Reason and Seeking the Truth in the Science (1637) better known as the Discourse and 2 Meditations on First Philosophy in which the existence of God and the distinction between the human soul and the body are demonstrated (1641) usually referred as the Meditations.

2.10 References/Suggested Readings

1. Bracken M. Harry 2007 Descartes; Oneworld 2007, Oxford.
2. Gibson A Boyce 1932, First Ed. The Philosophy Of Descartes; Methuen & Co. Ltd, London
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Unit 3

Philosophical Scepticism of Hume

Contents:

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Objectives
- 3.3 Hume's Sensationism and Scepticism
- 3.4 Idea of Cause
- 3.5 The reality of the external world
- 3.6 Hume's arguments against the mathematicising attempts of Philosophers.
- 3.7 Summing Up
- 3.8 References/Suggested Readings

3.1 Introduction

David Hume was born in Edinburgh, Scotland. He was destined by his family for a career in law, but he was interested from very early in literature and in philosophy and general learning.

British Empiricism was started by Locke and continued by Berkeley, attains its climax in the more radical theory of Hume. Like his immediate predecessors. Hume accepted the principle that all our knowing originates in sense experience and he carries this principle the assertion that no idea or set of ideas for which there is no sense impression has any validity. While Berkeley, he rejects Locke's notion of a material substance and abstract ideas, but due to his emphasis on the empirical principle he further disputes Berkeley's belief in a spiritual substance. With the rejection of spiritual substance he goes to the rejection of any demonstration of the existence of God. Hume says that God, the self and the external world is unknowable. But the most devastating aspect of Hume's scepticism was his denial of any demonstrable or necessary character to the law of causality.

In Hume's account of the origin of ideas two basic points may be noted.

(1) The manner in which he accounts for the origin of our ideas and the distinction he draws between impressions (perception) and ideas. (copies of impression).

(2) That all ideas must be derived from an impression in order to justify their validity. In developing his account of causal relation. Hume emphasizes the division of knowledge into relations of ideas and matters of fact. Mathematics exemplifies the former, our knowledge of causal relation the latter and it becomes Hume's great concern to determine the validity of such knowledge, causal relations for Hume are discoverable only by experience.

Hume may be regarded to be a critic rather than a sceptic. He was a sceptic in relation to the belief in the possibility of reason to solve all problems but then he was not a total sceptic for he allowed the possibility of knowledge. On the basis of custom and imagination. He had introduced into his speculation.

3.2 Objectives

After going through this unit, you will be able to :—

- *understand* Scepticism of Hume
- *his view* on the Ideas of Cause
- *his belief* in the External World

3.3 Humes Sensationism and Scepticism

Hume differs from Berkeley and Lock in the use of the term perception. Lock holds that the mind has some active powers, and that it has the powers of perception, relation, discernments, composition and abstraction.

Discernment is the power of distinguishing things from one another. Abstraction is the power of forming general ideas. According to Locke the first materials of knowledge are derived from experience and reflection. Sensations precede reflection, and that the child reflects upon the materials supplied by external perception.

Sensation is external perception and reflection is internal perception. Sensation is the source of our knowledge of external objects. Reflection is the source of our knowledge of the internal states of mind.

Hume's Sensationism is the Logical Outcome of Locke's Empiricism:

For Locke, there is not a single idea in the mind, which is not derived from sensation or reflection. The child gets his first ideas from sensation than at advanced age he reflects upon them. He can not think before his mind is stocked with sensations. Sensations are the materials on which the mind thinks.

Thought depends on sensations. The mind is passive in receiving sensations. But it is active in comparing them with one another, combining them in to complex ideas, and forming ideas.

Hume differs from Berkeley and Locke in the use of the term perception. Impressions are separate and are neither mental or are they conducted by something extra mental, according to Hume all impressions are distinct and separate with no logical connection between them. Impressions are neither related amongst themselves nor are they connected with the objects or mind. But knowledge is a unified whole and a connected system.

Laws of Associations Connect the Discrete Impressions and Ideas:

All our simple ideas first derived from simple impressions and the ideas correspond them. Impressions and ideas which constitute the matter of knowledge are connected with one another by the laws of association. This law of association is the all pervasive principle which binds the separate ideas in every sphere imagination and science. The law of similarity, the law of contiguity in space and time and the law of causality connect the discrete impressions and ideas with one another. The like ideas suggest one another; a picture suggests the object it represents owing to the law of similarity. An inkpot suggests a pen, owing to the law of contiguity in space.

A forked lightning suggests a thunder owing to the law of contiguity in time. A fire suggests burning owing to the law of causation. The laws of association are purely subjective. Discrete impressions and ideas are automatically combined with one another according to these laws. They do not require any innate ideas or a priori forms of reason to connect them with one another.

Sensations are not produced by matter. There is no production. There is no causal force or power which produces an effect, because it is never perceived. A fire burns. The visual sensation of a fire is followed by the tactual sensation of heat. Fire allows burns. The sensation of a fire is invariably followed by the sensation of burning. A cause is an invariable antecedent; and an effect is an invariable consequent. There is no necessary connection between the idea of fire and the idea of burning owing to their constant conjunction in our experience. We always perceived a fire along with burning. An association has been established in the mind between the idea of burning ; so that when we perceive a fire, we expect that it will burn. There is no necessity in the idea of causation. Hence we can not infer that matter is the cause of sensation.

Since we have no impression of matter. So matter is non-existent. The matter is a series of actual and possible sensations. Different objects are groups of extensions. A mango is name of a groups of sensation of extension, size, figure, solidity, taste, smell and touch.

For Hume there is mind, soul, or self. The so called mind is a series of ideas, feeling and volitions. There is no permanent soul. We can never have an experience of the so called soul except the perception of heat and cold, or an idea of pleasure or pain. We always perceives some fleeting ideas. So there is no permanent mind or soul.

There is no God. There is no valid proof for the existence of God. We have no impressions of God. Because we do not perceive him, nor we can perceive his existence.

We wish to believe in God to fulfil our aspirations. So we believe in God. The idea of God is man made. Hume rejects the existence of matter, soul and God. He rejects all metaphysical entities. He rejects universal and necessary truths. He admits only particular and contingent truths which we have in experience. Thus

Hume's philosophy is known as sensationism and scepticism. There is no absolute certainty in knowledge. Probability is the guide in life. Hume's sensationism is the logical outcome of Locke's empiricism.

Criticism:

Hume denies the existence of mind as a permanent and identical entity and its active powers. He regards discrete impressions ideas as the source of our knowledge. But merely atomic impressions and ideas with no inner bond of connection can not account for the unity of knowledge. The laws of associations also can not account for the unity of knowledge. Because the laws of associations are unintelligible without the synthetic activity of the mind.

There are certain universal and necessary element in knowledge. Experience can not give universal and necessary truths except particular truths But mere particular truths can not carry out the purposes of our life. We can not deny the law of uniformity of nature and the law of causality in our activities of life. These laws can not be derived from experience by generalizations.

Experience gives us sensations only. They are meaningless, unless they are interpreted by reason. We can have the knowledge of things by interpreting the meanings of sensations and this can be done by reason only. The acts differentiations, association and assimilation are done by reason which supplies the notions of space, time, substance, causality and the like.

Stop to Consider:

How far Hume is Sceptic?

Hume after a careful analysis of the main categories of thought came to the conclusion that there is no substance, neither matter nor self. We are left with passing impressions only. Hume's philosophy appears to us sceptical. His too much faith in the science of psychology was the main cause of scepticism.

However it may be held that Hume could not be regarded as a sceptic for he allowed the possibility of mathematical knowledge. The algebraic and arithmetical demonstration, according to him, maintains a perfect exactness and certainty. But he does not tell us, how are these ideas of algebra and arithmetic derived? He maintains that the rules of demonstrative sciences are certain and infallible. But due to our frail faculties our application of them is notoriously fallible. So even here knowledge is only probable. All these shows that Hume was a sceptic. But total scepticism is self-contradictory. The doubting of everything leads us to doubt of that theory which doubts everything. Therefore scepticism itself becomes doubtful.

He was a Moderate Sceptic :

Although Hume was to a certain extent, sceptic and as such he became a potent force in the history of thought. But according to the many thinkers of the recent years, he was “moderate sceptic” and not a total sceptic. For them it is not empiricism, but reason which fails to dispel the dark clouds of scepticism. Hume was a moderate in his scepticism for he maintained that reason apart from imagination can not solve our doubts. His display of the sceptical arguments shows that truth lies in the custom or habit of imagination and not reason. Thus it is maintained that Hume was not a total sceptic but then he used scepticism as a powerful weapons of attack against rationalism. Empiricism based on naturalistic psychology is not the cause of scepticism but is a way to escape out of the difficulties in which reason falls.

Reasons for Regarding Hume as a Sceptic:

Hume had a constructive empirical philosophy but due to some reasons he has been interpreted as sceptic.

1. First, Hume makes a full display of the sceptical arguments. Thus critical and negative elements is so widespread through the discussions that one gets the impression that he is merely negative and destructive.
2. Hume makes scepticism the background of his own philosophy. It provides him with a convenient weapon of attack against rationalism.
3. From the rationalistic point of view his philosophy is really sceptical for he maintains that reason is not capable of making our knowledge intelligible.
4. His own constructive philosophy is weak and powerless to deal adequately with the doubts which he himself has raised.

Check Your Progress:

1. What is the basic theme of Hume’s scepticism?
2. How is Hume differs from Locke and Berkeley?
3. What are the laws of associations? and how they connect the impressions and ideas?

3.4 The Idea of Cause

Causation is the most important category for Hume. For him on the basis of the causal principle we bind together the passing impressions into universal laws. On the basis of causation our knowledge of the matters of fact depends. On its strength we pass from the immediate impressions to something not immediately presented to the senses.

In order to show that the idea of cause is true and real, it must be traced to some impressions. The things named as causes are so various that there is no quality by virtue of which a thing may be called a cause.

The object as cause and effect are always contiguous like fire and heat, food and nourishment etc.

The cause is always antecedent to the effect. Thus contiguity and succession are the two relations from which the idea of causation might have been derived. But there is a third and the most important element in causation called the element of necessary connection. It is said that a cause precedes an effect, or the effect is necessarily connected with the cause. But here questions arises as for what reason we pronounce that everything whose has a beginning, should necessarily have a cause? And why do we consider, that particular causes must necessarily have particular effects?

Replying to the first question Hume refutes the proofs of causality given by Hobbes, Clarke and Locke. According to him every demonstration which has been produced for the necessity of cause is fallacious and presupposes instead of proving. For him there is no necessary connection between cause and effect. There is only an inner bond of association between the idea of fire and the idea of burning owing to their constant conjunction in our experience. We always perceived a fire along with burning. An association has been established in the mind between them.

But mere contiguity and succession are not sufficient to establish a necessary connection between cause and effect. It is the relation of the constant connection which produces the mental habits of regarding things necessarily connected. Now on the basis of past experience and on our remembrance of the constant conjunction we make transition to necessary connection.

It seems difficult to accept that imagination plays the trick in producing the idea of necessary. If one experience can not discover the connection between objects, then many repetitions can not produce any. At this stage Hume introduces his theory of beliefs. A belief as distinguished from fancy. It is a lively idea related or associated with a present impression. No constant conjunction can ever produce an impression of a new quality in object but it produces an effect on the mind.

Hume says, whenever we pass from the impression of one to the idea or belief of another, we are not determined by reason but by custom or principle of association. Thus there is no necessity in the form of mental propensity by virtue of which we read causality into objects.

Stop to Consider:

The reduction of causality to the connection by imagination as a convenient device for dealing with things, takes away the last hope of scientific knowledge. If there is no causality, then there is no real connection between things. Naturally Hume’s inquiry ends in the denial of knowledge. Hume is said to be consistent empiricist but we can make here two important observations. First, Hume nowhere tells us how the successive ideas can be contiguous. Besides, if we have no guarantee to believe that things of the future will be like the things of the past, then we can not believe in the mental habit as well. If fire and heat can not be connected but are only conjoined then how can we say that mental habit will always be the same for all men? Mental habit itself becomes a causal principle, a universal law to explain causality.

So for Hume the psychological analysis of causation in terms of imagination is relevant for philosophical analysis, though not a justification of causal relationship.

Check Your Progress:

1. What Hume means by the necessary connection?
2. Is Hume a consistent empiricist?
3. What is the place of Customs and imagination in Hume’s view of causation?

3.5 The Reality of the External World

Hume’s enquiry in to the mind has shown that the passing impressions are the only reality. How then we can know about the existence of a permanent perception? We might have proved this with the help of causation. But this has been shown to be an affair of imagination. For Hume the belief in the external world is not an affair of reason but imagination. The continued, distinct and independent existence of the external world is derived from the constancy and coherence of impressions. The relation of constant conjunction produces the mental habits of regarding things necessarily connected.

For Hume every rational explanation has failed The belief in the continuous existence is generated by imagination, Which ignores the gaps or interruptions and fuses the succession of similar impressions in to one identical and continuous object. But without the necessary connection between cause and effect we have no guarantee to believe that things of the future will be like the things in the past. And we can not believe in the mental habit.

SAQ:

Is it possible to know the external world without a necessary connection?
Discuss. (within 100 words)

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3.6 Hume's Arguments against the Mathematicising Attempts of Philosophers

Hume has presented a very careful analysis of the knowledge situation. Philosophers had taken mathematics to be the paradigm of knowledge and had derived philosophical methodology from their study of mathematics. The discovery of axioms and the process of deducing theorems and other conclusions are said to be intuitively certain and self-evident. Factual propositions are based on experiments and are not obtained by thinking alone. Therefore, factual propositions can not be explained in terms of intellectual intuition. Against the mathematicising attempts of philosophers, Hume says:

1. Propositions of mathematics differ in kind from proposition of fact. Factual propositions can not be confused with mathematical propositions.
2. No amount of observation or experiment can guarantee the truth of future events.
3. Even the certainty of mathematical reasoning can not be ultimately guaranteed because of the reality of the judging power of men.
4. Man is not guided by reason alone. Nature, custom, habits determine human thinking.

Stop to Consider:

Hume's scepticism is based on his rejection of the principle of induction. The principle of induction is applied to causation. According to this principle, if A has been found very often accompanied or followed by B, and no instance is known as that A is not accompanied or followed by B, then it is probable that on the next occasion on which A is observed it will be accompanied or followed by B. If the principle is adequate, a sufficient number of instances must make the probability not far sort of certainty. If this principle of induction or any other from which this certainty can be deduced is true, then the causal inferences which Hume rejects are valid. It is valid, not indeed as giving certainty, but as giving a sufficient probability for practical purposes. If this principle is not true, every attempt to arrive at general scientific laws from particular observation is fallacious. Because the principles of induction are the foundation of scientific investigations and general knowledge. Hume's scepticism is inescapable for an empiricists. The principle of induction can not be obtained from observed uniformities. Because it is necessary to justify any such inference. It must therefore be deduced, from an independent principle which is not based upon experience. To this extent Hume has proved that pure empiricism is not a scientific basis for science but if this one principle is admitted, everything else can proceed in accordance with the theory that all our knowledge is based on experience. It must be granted that this is a serious departure from pure empiricism, and those who are not empiricists may ask why, if one departure is allowed, others to be forbidden. Induction is an independent logical principle, which is incapable of being inferred either from experience or from other logical principle that is why without this principle science is impossible.

SAQ:

Is induction necessary for scientific knowledge? Give your reasons. (within 70 words)

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3.7 Summing Up

Thus, Hume had two aspects, one of philosophical empiricism and another of psychologism. His philosophical empiricism could provide no rational basis for the indubitable knowledge of substance, God, external world and soul. Even causality for Hume can have no rational basis for passing from the given to the future events. But for Hume, man is much more than reason. He has to live, grow and gain stability in life. On the level of philosophy, Hume has advised us to accept probabilities. For living naturally, one has to accept habit, custom and social culture. This is exactly what Pyrrhonism stands for. For natural guidance in one's life. If we emphasize Hume's views with regard to his philosophical empiricism, then the impressions which Hume accepted as the indubitable source of knowledge will lead us to the denial of permanent substance, self and God and he would be regarded as a positivist. If we emphasize his doctrine of naturalism, imagination based on associative inference then he would be regarded as a pragmatist. Hume's philosophy is sceptical with regard to dogmatism and rationalism but not so in relation to scepticism itself.

3.8 References/Suggested Readings

Anders Wedberg : *A History of Philosophy* (Vol.3)
Copleston : *History of Philosophy*
O'Connor : *A Critical History of Western Philosophy*
N.K. Smith : *The Philosophy of David Hume*
A. Flew : *Hume's Philosophy of Belief*
Paton : *Kant's Metaphysic of Experience*
Korner : *Kant*
Bennett : *Kant's Analytic*
Strawson : *The Bounds of Sense*
P. Edwards (Ed.) : *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Relevant Articles)

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