

- 2) Yes, we can see that in Kant's philosophy is inspired from both Empiricistic & Rationalistic traditions of epistemology. On one hand he was inspired by Wolffian traditions of rationalism, works of Leibniz and on other hand, the empiricistic thoughts of Locke & David Hume.

Rationalism lays its groundwork on 2 main thesis named : The Intuition/Deduction thesis and The Innate Knowledge thesis. The former states that with set of pre conditions (or) intuitions & logic we can deduce and get more knowledgeable. The second one states that every individual is gifted with certain knowledge by nature. This is the origin of initial intuitions. Kant agrees with the first one but opposes the second. He says that there is no knowledge that is native to mind and the intuition for logic comes from the senses. By saying so he adds his empiricistic view points.

Empiricism states that knowledge can only be acquired through senses. It says that objects cause passive perceivers to have sensations (Locke) or Impressions (Hume). Kant partially agreed on it and said that humans are not passive perceivers but active in knowing the world. He goes on and says that the categories of space and time were imposed on experiences by human mind in order to make sense of it. He calls it "Copernican Revolution", just as Copernicus rejected that sun revolves around earth, Kant too rejected the ideas of pure rationalism & empiricism and achieved a synthesis of them. Kant accepts metaphysics (god and other abstract concepts which cannot be taken from experience / senses) as an area of knowledge unlike major empiricists (like Hume).

His statements in Critique of Pure Reason are "Thoughts without contents are empty, perceptions without conceptions are blind", "Understanding can perceive nothing, the senses can think nothing, knowledge arises only from their united action". In these statements we can directly see that he brought together 2 opposing epistemological traditions to explain his notion on how the mind acquires knowledge.

### I) View points of some early Greek thinkers:

Thales, the first philosopher, asserted that water is component of all living things. Following him two other Milesians Anaximander who stated that universe is continuous process of combining and separating and Anaximenes who considered air as central element and it undergoes the process of condensation & rarefaction to form all matter. Later we can see - Pythagoras: his famous theorem and his belief in transmission of souls, Parmenides: his metaphysical inquiry into nature of being or reality, Democritus: his theory of atomos - the indivisible constitute of matter. We can see that most of philosophers in pre-Socratic period tried to answer the questions pertaining to the nature / origin of matter / energy. Very few of them put forth their views on abstract elements.

### View points of Socrates, Plato & Aristotle

Socrates' philosophy was focused primarily on morality. Most of his discussions had to do with the topics of Justice, Courage, Temperance and Wisdom. His famous philosophy "Recognition of one's own ignorance is a part of wisdom", can be seen as an instance of quantifying knowledge by saying its infinite.

Plato's work is presented in the form of philosophical dialogues. We can find answers to many questions concerning politics and justice in his philosophy. He saw that any political regime without aid of philosophy is fundamentally corrupt. He also developed the notion of "eidos" (form) and "idea" (ideas) to explain metaphysical concepts. He put forward a hierarchical ladder of thought, belief, reason and imagination to explain epistemology.

Aristotle is apart from being a great philosopher also a great writer. He presented his work in treatises of ethics, politics, nature physics & metaphysics. His Nicomachean Ethics on best human life and happiness brought the notion of virtues. He classified virtues into 2 types - character and intellectual. This argument goes on to say that the so called good/ethical actions are relative and depends on situation and one's knowledge / intellect.

His physics study stood as most influential until Newton.

In conclusion the pre-socratic philosophers gave proto-scientific explanations of nature and material world. The three later philosophers introduced a departure by focusing their inquiry on ethical, epistemological, political and metaphysical elements.

The Plato's dialogues and Aristotle's treatises show that later thinkers also pioneered in representing their philosophy.

One other major deviation is that former philosophers has the method of observation and contemplation whereas the later ones, starting with sophists used argumentative and rhetorical skills.

Most of former thinkers are relativists unlike later ones.

## Aspects of Western Philosophy - Endsem 3

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- 3) Nietzsche philosophy had a great influence on existentialists especially atheistic existentialists. Below are few of his concepts which inspired philosophers in later years -

Nietzsche believed that major obstacle to human development is the modern rational, moral and religious approaches to human reality. He quoted "progress is merely a modern idea that is a false idea". He considered ancient Greece to have high culture than that of 19th century western world. He says life itself is "will to power" and disregards all rational ethical traditions. His will to power philosophy urges people to act rather just to react (proactive). He criticizes religion (mainly Christianity) that it is trying to replace will with obedience; natural freedom with submission and creativity with loyalty. He further introduces the notion of master morality & herd morality. The former strives to dominate and against submission where as latter expects obedience and submission. Herd morality works on good & evil dichotomy, a rational generalisation which is against the very idea of existentialism. He develops the notion of moral nihilism which denies truth as universal and considers it as an entity related to individual perspective. He also uses the phrase "death of god" to describe modern situation where people has lost faith in god.

Views on how existentialists opposed the traditional philosophy -

Very often quoted slogan in existentialism is that "existence precedes essence". Over centuries the traditional philosophy solely concerned with essence. Hegelian Idealism is one of the popular works in western philosophy. In it he emphasises on becoming as passage from being and not being and absolutism which is absorption of existence into essence.

This is against the very core of existentialism. Existential philosophers stress on problems encountered by individual human beings in their life rather than common generalisation or as a member in a crowd. It is not a philosophical school like rationalism & empiricism.

The ideas of existentialism were popularised through arts, literature as well where as most of traditional ones are philosophized with reason alone. Existentialism considers man as an existent subject and not just a thinking subject. There is major focus on concreteness and reality as against the abstractness and possibility in other philosophies. Notions like "death of god", "will to power", "stages of Camel, lion, child" by Nietzsche are turning points to existentialism opposing other rational philosophies.

4) Hegel's dialectics refers to the dialectical methods that relies on contradiction processes between opposing sides. This notion is seen in plato's work as a back and forth argument between his characters. Hegel's version is an improvement on it. In Hegel's dialectic the opposing sides are not only people it depends on the subject matter he discusses. He argues that plato's dialectics cannot go beyond arbitrariness and generate approx truths. He used this method to get conclusions in some of his best works like "Phenomenology of Spirit", "Science of Logic", "Philosophy of Right" etc.

He briefly describes his dialectical method in part I of his "Encyclopaedia of philosophical Sciences". In it he describes that this process consists of 3 moments:- thesis, antithesis and synthesis. Thesis involves proposing initial predicates/statements. Antithesis negates/contradicts the first. In synthesis a new concept arises which is more sophisticated than the previous. Synthesis in general cancels the conflict and preserves the truth part of the thesis.

Marxist dialectic is a form of Hegelian dialectic whose core foundation revolves around "dialectical materialism". Dialectical Materialism is defined as a way of understanding reality (thoughts, emotions, material world all combined), it is combination of dialectics & materialism. This materialist dialectic is the theoretical foundation of Marxism.

In his work "Afterword" he clearly says "My dialectic method not only different from Hegelian but it is direct opposite". Marx believed that we can make changes in the world by making changes in the material conditions which determine the course of human life. So unlike Hegel's dialectic which operates only on ideas, Marx's dialectic is materialist, It considers both ideas and concerned people as a part of the world. His method particularly concern production which involves social conditions, behavior, interactions etc that has the ability to change the system/world.

5) Noumena refers to object or events that exists independent of perception/sense, whereas phenomenon on other hand refer to objects of senses. Kant's philosophy puts certain limits to reason and separate these two notions. He says that forms of thought are separated from what they are forms of, simply, there is a gap between mind and world. Hegel in his "Phenomenology of Spirit" brings up a notion that fills the gap between these two ideas.

Hegel points out that categories of thinking not merely subjective ideas but are substantial forms that can grow on their own content. He doesn't believe idea of pure concepts. He emphasizes on idea of being that are known through real deduction. He brings together the totality of knowledge with the concept of "Absolute Spirit" or "the Geist" which is rational combination of all aspects of reality. He says that absolute is constantly in succession or perpetual generation and this succession is absolute itself i.e. the absolute is active. He asserts that the rational is nothing but deeper understanding of physical & organic nature of society. By saying so he includes both rational concepts and concrete world in absolute. One major problem he faces is of Kantian antinomies i.e. for example his absolute contains both being and non-being which contradicts each other. This contradiction is resolved by him using the notion of becoming or the continuous process of encounter and synthesis of contradictions.

Summing Up his concepts brings together the thought & matter of thought, the subject and the object thereby filling the gap between noumena and phenomena. He goes on to say that different fields like psychology, history, art, philosophy etc are nothing but manifestations of self-consciousness of Geist. His famous proclamation - "Real is rational and the rational is real" also supports the above mentioned point.