

During this period, scholars began to pay attention to a few disciplines, to the exclusion of others.

In the era of high specialization in the twentieth century, scholars went further in limiting the area of attention. This resulted in limiting one's attention to one or two aspects of their subject matter, bracketing other aspects. The consequence of this kind of specialization was the increasing absence of interaction among various branches of knowledge, resulting in the fragmentation of knowledge and our picture of reality.

One way of remedying this fragmentation, perhaps, is to resurrect, insofar as possible, something of the spirit of the classical period of learning. It may no more be possible in our times to formulate, as Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas did during their times, a "theory of everything" by synthesizing all branches of knowing. Specialization might be the only option for our times, when an individual finds himself/herself unable to keep abreast of the explosion of knowledge. But while specializing in one field, we can at least be familiar with some other fields. An astrophysicist, for example, can seek familiarity with the insights of psychology, sociology, philosophy and so on, and a literature student can seek to be acquainted with anatomy, computer science, medicine, etc. This will make our knowledge broad-based and our picture of reality more integral and total.

It is with this view in mind that this handbook on philosophy is written. It is intended to introduce philosophy—its concerns, presuppositions, methods, discoveries and scope—to the undergraduate and graduate students of other disciplines. It is also helpful for students of philosophy as an introductory text that would launch them into the relentless search for wisdom. It has special relevance to the students of divinity who would profit greatly by the concepts and clarity of thinking that philosophy provides, but do not have the resources to attend a full course in philosophy.

Written for beginners who are going to specialize in other fields, this handbook has to be necessarily short and lucid. Therefore, a detailed account of philosophy is beyond the scope of this handbook. It is hoped that once the students become familiar with philosophy, their love for wisdom will take them to new heights of probing.

## CHAPTER 1

### Some Relevant Questions Related to Philosophy

#### a) Why Study Philosophy?

The term 'philosophy' creates in the minds of many people an impression of something abstruse and incomprehensible; of something meant not for ordinary people, but for a select group of people, who spend a large amount of time reading and reflecting, rather than living in the present. This idea is graphically expressed in the description of a philosopher as someone who searches for a black cat in a dark room on a new-moon night. The image many people carry in their minds of the philosopher is of someone who is out of touch with reality.

Indeed, philosophy deals with abstract realities and raises questions that go beyond observable facts. For example, it asks questions such as: Why is there something rather than nothing? This implies that philosophical reading can be difficult and to be understood, philosophical ideas require concentration.

Moreover, philosophy raises many questions and causes doubts where some persons would rather not doubt; for example, it raises questions about the truth of many religious beliefs, including our belief in the existence of God. It is easy to see that raising such fundamental questions disrupts religious and social practices. To make things worse, philosophy provides fewer answers than the questions it raises, and often the answers it provides are mired in controversies. This implies that we have to look for good reasons for doggedly pursuing the study of philosophy.

The first reason for studying philosophy is intellectual curiosity. Philosophy addresses those questions that have always puzzled reflective persons. For example, it asks such questions as: "Is our commonsense knowledge dependable?" "Why should one act justly?" and "Are our religious convictions true?" These questions

## 2 An Invitation to Philosophy

have immediate relevance to our life, and they are something we care about. The answers we give to them are important because they affect the way we live. It is true that we are often not sure about the answers to them. We can, however, do the best job possible. Doing one's personal best, brings a sense of accomplishment and some degree of intellectual satisfaction. In this sense, philosophy is the pursuit of a worthy goal, a pursuit that brings a sense of satisfaction because of the glimpse of truth it mediates.

A second reason to do philosophy is to enhance our intellectual autonomy (independence). Philosophy trains us in critical thinking and this makes us experts in reasoning; and by being good in reasoning, we liberate ourselves in two ways. First, critical thinking enables us to deliberate on things for ourselves and find our own answers rather than rely on other persons. Second, when we learn to think logically and impartially about heartfelt questions, we liberate ourselves from our natural tendency to believe things simply because we want them to be true. Thus, critical thinking in general and philosophy in particular liberates us from dependence on others and from the slavery of our own emotions, inclinations and prejudices.

Thirdly, philosophy offers us a chance to explore fundamental questions and to see exactly what thinkers in different periods have had to say about them. This survey can help us when we want to formulate our own answers. Answering them is important because these questions are central to life and the answers we give free us from being limited by the unquestioned assumptions of those around us. The answers we give help us organize our social as well as personal life.

The study of philosophy also clarifies our thought processes and helps us to make right decisions about life. The clearer one thinks, the more accurate one's way of examining and making decisions about life. Whereas persons untrained in critical thinking are governed by their passions and prejudices, training in critical thinking enables one to distance oneself from the issues and weigh their pros and cons and arrive at enlightened choices.

Again, philosophy enables us to critically examine and evaluate various views and distinguish sense from nonsense, the beautiful

from the ugly, the noble from the ignoble. For example, the Greek philosopher Heraclitus, considering the way in which things in the world are always changing, concluded that fundamental reality is change. He claimed that a person could not step into the same river twice, since the water, of which it was made up, was constantly flowing. Was Heraclitus right in his assumption? Does the fact that a thing undergoes some change mean that it altogether ceases to be and another thing replaces it every moment? When does a thing cease to be and get replaced by another and when does it change? Is a school the same if its buildings are replaced, its staff move on to other schools, and its pupils leave year after year to be replaced by others? Am I the same, even though most of the cells in my body are changing? It seems that behind these changes, there is something permanent on account of which we talk of what is taking place as change rather than replacement. Thus philosophy helps us to examine and expose views that are false.

Another good reason to study philosophy is that it gives us a means for integrating our ideas. We can start from any question and find ourselves drawn towards many others. Start from the self, for example, and we find that matters of religion, mind, knowledge, and right living are drawn into our thinking. By using the skills of philosophy, we can hope to develop an integrated view of the world.

Philosophy also prepares the ground for physical sciences by creating what the philosopher of science Thomas Kuhn calls a paradigm. A paradigm is not a scientific theory, but a set of presuppositions which serve a general conceptual framework within which scientists carry out their investigations. For example, Newton worked under a mechanistic paradigm that viewed the world as governed by unchanging natural laws and the world-process as taking place in absolute time and absolute space. Einstein replaced this paradigm with a relativist paradigm which viewed the world-process as taking place in a relative space and relative time. Philosophy examines these paradigms, and if found wanting, proposes new ones within which scientists can carry out their normal scientific activity.

Not only physical sciences but all fields of learning are obliged to philosophy for its contributions. Philosophy comes to the aid of

other disciplines by helping each one to define terms, clarify concepts and meanings, criticize defective methods, and propose new and adequate methods. Philosophy also justifies each branch of learning, determines each discipline's scope, and subject matter, and thus creates a suitable intellectual environment for the progress of each discipline. More than the fact that philosophy is the oldest discipline, it may be because of these contributions that philosophy is sometimes referred to as the mother of all sciences.

Thus by studying philosophy, we come to see that it is possible to think rigorously and fairly about questions that non-philosophers typically believe cannot be seriously investigated—questions that go beyond empirical verification—and find reasonable answers. The study of philosophy, further, equips the students to undertake such investigations.

In short, philosophy makes a person think—think about the basic foundations of human life, which include our outlook, beliefs and knowledge. It makes us investigate the reasons for what one accepts and what one does; it makes us inquire into the importance of one's ideas and ideals, to see whether they are well founded.

#### b. "Worth the Hemlock?"

It is true that philosophy plays an important role in our life, and without philosophy, we cannot organize our life. Even when the positive contribution of the philosopher in shaping lives by moulding societies and cultures is acknowledged, philosophy can appear forbidding and frustrating. Sometimes it appears dry, incomprehensible and far removed from the concerns of life. Sometimes it takes the role of a handmaid, clarifying the terms used by other disciplines without appearing to offer anything of substance to the sum of human knowledge. Sometimes it brings the philosopher into conflict with the rest of society. From time to time, one may be tempted to ask: "Is it worth it?" "Why not settle for established thoughts and values?" "Why make life difficult by constant analysis?"

The answer to these questions comes from Socrates. One of the most unforgettable moments in the history of Western philosophy was the death of Socrates in 399 BC. The event is recorded by Plato in *Crito*. Socrates was charged with impiety and

corruption of the young, and condemned to die by drinking a cup of hemlock, a poison made out of a plant. Socrates was advised by friends to stop questioning and escape from Athens. But for Socrates to stop the questioning of accepted concepts was unthinkable. According to him, reason and the freedom to live in accordance with it were more important than social status and a long life. For Socrates, to live an unexamined life was not worth it. Therefore he chose to continue questioning and accept death rather than escape from Athens. Socrates's insistence on the freedom to reason was the source of inspiration for Plato, who expounded in *The Republic*, the doctrine that institutions of State should be based on reason, and rulers should be philosophers, willing and able to apply reason with disinterested objectivity. Following his teacher Socrates, Plato held that the attempt to found one's life on reason and live a life in accordance with it, is worth the hemlock.

#### c. Is Philosophy Avoidable?

There was a time when philosophy was conceived as the sum total of all knowledge. Now the situation is different; in the modern age many areas of inquiry have asserted their independence and separate identity. Not only that, positivist science has declared itself the sole custodian of knowledge, dismissing theology and philosophy as outdated ways of thinking. This view is particularly emphatic in the writings of the French positivist philosopher, Auguste Comte (1798-1857), who is generally regarded as the founder of sociology. According to him adoption of the scientific attitude was the key to an intellectual, moral, and political reorganization of the social order.

According to his theory of three stages of intellectual growth, human knowledge passes through "three different theoretical states: the theological or fictitious state; the metaphysical or abstract state; and, lastly, the scientific or positive state." In his view, at the theological stage, events are immaturely explained by appealing to the will of the gods or of God. At the metaphysical or philosophical stage phenomena are explained by appealing to abstract philosophical categories. The final evolutionary stage is the age of science. It involves relinquishing all quest for absolute explanations. Attention is focused solely on how phenomena are

related, with the aim of arriving at generalizations, subject to observational verification. Comte claimed that with his work the two earlier stages were transcended, leaving the empirical sciences as the only adequate source of knowledge.

There are other people who dismiss philosophy as being remote from normal interests and beyond the comprehension of ordinary people. But the elimination of philosophy is difficult to achieve, because, in reality nearly all of us do act as philosophers sometime or other in our lives. We ask questions about life and reality and hold some philosophical views, whether we are aware of them or not. Everyone who asks questions such as "Where did the world come from?" "Is there God?" "What is the nature of the human mind?" or "How does the mind come to know things that are outside?" and attempts some sort of an answer acts as a philosopher. Similarly, everyone who believes that physical objects exist, that the human mind is a spiritual substance, that there is a difference between right and wrong, that we should treat people different from horses, that there is or is no God, or that human beings are often responsible for their actions, holds a philosophical belief. In expressing his view that science is the only valid custodian of knowledge Comte himself was acting like a philosopher. This is true of those people also who want to dismiss philosophy because they think that it is remote from normal human interests.

Because we cannot live without holding beliefs such as the above, there is no such thing as avoiding philosophical questions. The only issue is whether we address the questions consciously or whether we assume uncritically that our pre-existing answers to the questions are correct.

The contribution of science to the progress of knowledge and human life is undeniable. To that extent science has an important role to play. But the knowledge that science brings is fragmented; it is unable to give us wisdom. Here wisdom implies a total vision of reality, a proper understanding of the use of scientific knowledge to the benefit of mankind. To that extent science may prove deficient. Wisdom cannot dawn in us unless the results of different sciences are synthesized and a synthetic understanding of the whole universe is developed. Thus philosophy cannot be rejected as

useless or outdated if we want to turn scientific knowledge into wisdom. In this sense, philosophical inquiry is not unwarranted.

Philosophy refers to a way of living and thinking as much as our views about reality. In this sense everyone has a philosophy. Our way of thinking, our attitudes, beliefs and opinions constitute our philosophy. Our happiness, peace of mind and style of living depend upon our way of thinking or the philosophy of our life. In a general sense, when we speak of someone's philosophy, we simply mean the sum of that person's beliefs which guide his/her thinking and actions. Different people have different kinds of philosophies. In the words of Fichte, the nineteenth century German idealist, "The kind of philosophy a man adopts depends on the kind of man he is."

Questions that philosophy raises, as we saw above, are very general and abstract. This has led some people to think that philosophy is 'dry' and academic, and is meant for a select group that has both the time and aptitude for it, not for ordinary mortals. But this is not so. We cannot wish away philosophy from our lives. Once we come to understand what philosophy is all about, and the questions it raises, we are likely to find it relevant and exciting.

#### **d. How is Philosophy Possible?**

We saw above the types of questions philosophy raises and the types of answers it gives. These questions and their answers do not fall within the scope of science which deals only with what is observable and measurable. Philosophy is sometimes called metaphysics, which means beyond physics. This name suggests that philosophy begins where science ends. Therefore, it is only fair to ask how philosophy can even hope to succeed where scientific methods fail.

The answer is that philosophers construct theories to go beyond the observable. In fact, science, too, does this at those times when scientists deal with very abstract questions that are far removed from observation. For example, paleontologists debate over what led to the extinction of dinosaurs. Astrophysicists debate whether the universe will continue to expand indefinitely or whether it will begin to contract after a period of expansion. This is an indication that theory-construction in philosophy is similar to theory-



capacity to swim will come to the fore when he/she is actually in water. In the beginning gulping of some water and awkward movements are to be expected, but these setbacks can be resolved by further training. So perhaps the best way of introducing philosophy is by presenting the issues that philosophers have dealt with, along with some of the answers they proposed, and then reflecting on what one did.

This approach has two advantages. First, philosophical questions, as we shall notice soon, are fascinating in themselves and can elicit and sustain people's interest. Second, it has the advantages of experience-based learning. After getting a first-hand experience of doing philosophy following the philosophers of the past, when we ask questions such as: "What do philosophers do?" "What is philosophy?" "What is the scope of philosophy?" and "What is the method of philosophy?" we will be deliberating on something that we are already familiar with. The familiarity with philosophy places us in a better position to answer such questions. To answer them, we will have to merely analyze what we already did.

The awareness of what philosophers in the past did and how they went about their task can thus pave the way for understanding what philosophers do and for describing what philosophy is. Thus we will not only come to gain some experience of doing philosophy, but also have an idea of what philosophy is.

Philosophy is in part a way of dealing with questions of a particular kind. It raises and attempts to answer questions about various realities and experiences. Philosophical questions are not ordinary questions, but questions that go beyond observable facts. Some of those questions and their representative answers are presented here to familiarize you with the types of questions that philosophers ask and the way they go about answering them.

## CHAPTER 2

### Some Important Problems in Philosophy

We shall begin our discussion of the problems in philosophy with questions in metaphysics, because in the West, the earliest questions discussed were metaphysical in nature. Metaphysics is the branch of philosophy concerned with the nature of ultimate reality. It deals chiefly with two concerns: the question of how many fundamentally distinct sorts of entities compose the universe, and with describing the most general traits of reality.

#### a. Problems in Metaphysics

##### i. *The Fundamental Substance*

Western philosophy is generally considered to have begun in ancient Greece as a speculation about the underlying substance of the physical world. The first philosopher of historical record was Thales of the city of Miletus, on the Ionian coast of Asia Minor. His investigations led him to the conclusion that all natural phenomena are different forms of one fundamental substance. This assumption led him to ask the question: What is the *arche* or the fundamental substance from which everything in the world evolves? Thales believed it to be water, because he thought evaporation and condensation to be universal processes.

Other philosophers disagreed with Thales's answer, but considered the question he raised as worthy of serious consideration. Anaximander, a disciple of Thales, realized that no observable substance could be found in all things. He therefore maintained that the first principle from which all things evolve is an intangible, invisible, infinite substance. He called this substance *apeiron*, which means 'the boundless.' This substance, he claimed, is eternal and indestructible. Out of its ceaseless motion the more familiar substances, such as warmth, cold, earth, air and fire continuously evolve. They, in turn, generate the various objects and organisms that make up the world.



possibly the greatest thinker of Western tradition, was a great synthesizer of knowledge, who surveyed and systematized nearly all the extant branches of knowledge including biology, psychology and physics, in addition to formal logic and zoology.

Regardless of their aims or their occupations, philosophers have, by and large, shared a common conviction that thoughtful examination of our presuppositions and views, and our evidence for them, are important and worthwhile.

We come across many people who hold various views which they take for granted. For example, most people think that there is God, that good actions will bring rewards after death, if not in this life, and that what we see with our eyes is true. When someone invites them to examine these views, some of them will feel uneasy. For them these views are not to be examined, but to be accepted as true, because, on the one hand, they cannot be shown to be true, and on the other hand, most people accept them. They are willing to accept these views because some prominent people like the sages have taught them and most people accept them.

The philosopher, however, does not accept a view just because some prominent people have taught it, or because most people believe it to be true. He/she wants to ascertain its truth independent of such authorities. The philosopher is unwilling to accept anything on human authority. He/she only accepts the authority of experience and reason. He/she is not satisfied with *any* answers. He/she wants answers that appear to him/her as most reasonable and plausible. Some people might be willing enough to live 'the unexamined life,' guided by unexamined views inherited from previous generations and by hastily formed opinions. But the philosopher wants to find answers that look most plausible after the most thoughtful consideration. The fact that some answers have been accepted by almost everybody in a given society is not a good reason for the philosopher to accept them.

Once a philosophy teacher asked his students whether they believed what they saw with their own eyes. The students immediately answered in the affirmative. The teacher asked again: "How can you be sure that what you saw is true?" "It is a matter of common sense," pat came the answer. Most people, like these

## CHAPTER 3

### What Philosophy Is

Having familiarized ourselves with what philosophers do and how they go about their task, it is time for us to analyze their activity in order to have a clear understanding of the nature, scope, concerns and methods of philosophy. We shall start with describing what philosophers do, because that is easier to accomplish than starting with a definition of philosophy, since there is no agreement among philosophers on what philosophy is, or about its scope, methods or functions.

#### a. Who Are Philosophers?

When we think about philosophers, the immediate picture that comes to our mind is of someone who spends a lot of time thinking about things beyond our immediate concerns. Going beyond this popular conception, when we seriously ask who philosophers are, the answer could be something like: "Philosophers are critical thinkers who use their intellectual resources to reach the most plausible, tentative answers to philosophical questions." By so answering these questions, philosophers aim to clarify meanings and construct a picture of the world that is most likely to be true.

The occupations of philosophers have been as varied as their aims and methods. Some have been teachers, often university professors, offering courses in philosophy, as in the case of Ludwig Wittgenstein at Cambridge University. Others have been leaders of religious movements, like George Berkeley, who was the Bishop of Cloyne in Ireland. Many philosophers have had ordinary occupations, like Baruch Spinoza, who was a lens-grinder. John Locke was a medical doctor; John Stuart Mill was an economist, writer for magazines, and for a short time a member of Parliament; David Hume was a historian. A good many of the most prominent philosophers have been scientists or mathematicians like Rene Descartes and Bertrand Russell. The British philosopher Alfred North Whitehead was a mathematician and physicist. Aristotle,

students are willing to accept the views that seem right to common sense, but not the philosopher. The philosopher is aware that common sense can fail us. For example, before Copernicus, Ptolemy taught the commonsense view that the sun and the planets revolved around a fixed earth. Copernicus proved this commonsense view wrong and showed that it is the earth that revolves around the sun. Because of the possibility of commonsense views going wrong, the philosopher approaches them cautiously. He insists upon strong evidence that will guarantee the truth of the answers before he adopts them as his own.

As we have mentioned above, ordinary people accept unexamined views either because some learned person taught them, or because they are widely accepted, or because they seem right to common sense. In addition, they think that answers are hard to come by without much effort and they are unwilling to put in the necessary effort. But those people who accept answers without critical examination are selling their 'birthright' to question and find answers for themselves. They are abdicating their responsibility as rational beings in order to avoid being troubled by the problem of finding some justification for what they believe. But philosophers are not happy with someone else's answers or answers that are formulated hastily. They claim that the questions facing us are too important to be answered in a quick and lazy fashion or to be accepted because others have accepted them. A philosopher considers it to be far better to have no answers than unexamined answers or, worse, answers that might be wrong.

To make clearer what the philosopher is seeking and what he does, let us consider briefly an example from the earliest part of the history of philosophy. From the little we know of this era, apparently, the vast majority of the populace was willing to accept a mythological explanation of events. Natural occurrences were explained in terms of the activities of gods or spirits who inhabited the natural world. Epilepsy, for example, was considered to be possession by demons, and thunder was explained as fire thrown by angry gods.

Some thinkers began to suspect such beliefs. They, to the dismay of their contemporaries, challenged the believers in mythology to prove their views or to find a better theory, one that

would satisfy reasonable people. Out of this rejection of traditionally accepted beliefs and the search for more plausible or more defensible theories came the attempts of thoughtful people to explain the natural world in some consistent and rational fashion. And out of their efforts philosophy was born.

In this example we can discern some of the drive that sets the philosophical quest in motion. There are always people who are ready to accept almost any view, because they do not want to do some hard thinking. But there are others who are troubled by what appear to be inconsistencies in views, or are troubled because they do not see why certain views ought to be accepted, or why they are true. These philosophers begin to raise questions and seek solutions that are consistent with what they already know and with their experiences.

For example, Aristotle rejected Plato's theory of innate knowledge (a view that humans are born with their ideas), because Aristotle noticed that a person who had no experience of say, colors, would not understand us when we say that something is green. Aristotle rejected Plato's views because it was not consistent with his experience. Similarly, we reject the commonly held view among uneducated people that chickenpox is a punishment sent by angry goddesses, since it is not consistent with what we know about diseases in general and chickenpox in particular.

When the philosopher finds some views inconsistent with what he/she already knows or with his/her experiences, he/she raises questions about the truth of those views. The questions that the philosophers raised and the answers they gave, form the content of philosophy. And the act of raising questions that go beyond verifiable data, and finding the most plausible, rational and consistent answers, is the act of philosophizing.

In India, a philosopher is traditionally called a *darshanik*, implying someone with insight into the real nature of things. In the Platonic sense, a philosopher or a *darshanik* was a man or woman of wisdom and insight. A wise man is one who has a clear understanding of the distinction between reality and its appearances, between the real and the unreal, between right and wrong, and



between knowledge and opinion. Thus the philosopher is a man of insight, capable of being a guide to humanity.

These comments about what philosophers do, give some idea perhaps, of what philosophy is and what its concerns are. But these ideas are rather vague and need to be presented with more clarity. In attempting a clearer presentation of the answer to the question, "What is philosophy?" we shall begin by taking note of some popular conceptions of it.

#### b. The Meaning of 'Philosophy'

The term "philosophy" is often used popularly to mean a set of basic values and attitudes toward life, nature, and society. This is what we usually mean when we use the phrase 'philosophy of life.' Sometimes we use it to refer to a statement of views and supporting arguments. For example, we speak of the philosophy of Plato and Ramanuja. Going further, some people tend to think of philosophy as some extremely complex intellectual activity, dealing with very abstract themes. To many, philosophy appears to be the most abstruse and abstract of all subjects, far removed from the affairs of ordinary life.

Some think of the philosopher as a recluse who sits pondering over questions of the ultimate significance, but having hardly any relevance to day-to-day life. Names such as, Aristotle, Descartes, Shankara or Vivekananda evoke in the minds of many the picture of people who devoted themselves to the contemplation of the out-of-the-ordinary problems in a most abstract manner and arrived at views or theories that may sound impressive but can hardly be of much practical value.

This negative understanding of what philosophy is and what philosophers do, finds expression in the derogatory remark, that philosophers are those who having blindfolded themselves, seek a black cat in a dark room on a new-moon night. This negative view of philosophy is reinforced by what happened to the Greek philosopher Thales who became famed for his knowledge of astronomy after predicting the eclipse of the sun that occurred on May 28, 585 BC. Thales, while walking down the road, was so absorbed in the stars that he fell into an empty well, which made a bystander deride, "You who see the stars cannot see the well."

In the popular mind a philosopher is one who sees the stars but misses the well, one who is absorbed in out-of-the-world problems and misses issues which concern life.

Side by side, in the popular mind, there is also a positive image of the philosopher. This is that the philosopher is one who gives theoretical support to reformers and iconoclasts who shape societies, cultures and political organizations. The general outlook, values and the ideals that animate the reform movements seem to be the positive contribution of philosophers. When we think of philosophers as theoreticians who inspired sociopolitical transformation the names of such thinkers as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, Thomas Jefferson, John Locke, John Stuart Mill, Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ambedkar and Mahatma Gandhi come to our minds. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, we are told, were the ones who created a point of view that resulted in the formation of the Communist Party; while others, such as Thomas Jefferson, John Locke, and John Stuart Mill, developed the theories that prevail in democratic societies. Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ambedkar and Gandhi are regarded to have provided the blueprint for the construction of modern India.

When we go beyond these popular conceptions and try to find a definition of the term 'philosophy,' we find that there is no definition free from controversy. It might be helpful to begin by taking note of the meaning of the term. The term 'philosophy' is derived from the Greek terms *philo* and *sophia* meaning 'love of wisdom.' According to the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, philosophy is "seeking after wisdom or knowledge, especially that which deals with ultimate reality ...."

The early Greek thinkers used the term 'philosophy' very loosely and it conveyed many things. Pythagoras in 600 BC declared himself a philosopher, implying his love for wisdom. Subsequently, it was used to denote love of thinking, the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, and a rational and critical inquiry into the basic principles of reason.

Plato gave a specific and technical meaning to the term. He defined a philosopher as one whose attention is fixed on reality rather than on appearances. A philosopher is interested in grasping

the essential nature of things. Thus philosophy was defined as a reflective and reasoned attempt to infer the character and content of the universe taken in its totality. We may say that philosophy is, "a resolute and persistent attempt to understand and appreciate the universe as a whole." This understanding of philosophy is very much in resonance with the Indian understanding of philosophy. In India, philosophy is traditionally called *darshana* implying thereby insight into the real nature of things.

Philosophy is basically an attitude and an activity of the human mind. To have a guiding attitude towards life is to have a philosophy, since the principles which people consciously or unconsciously adopt determine their thinking and acting. The impulse to philosophize comes from the desire to outline for oneself and for others, a worldview. The aim of such an attempt is to make our lives coherent and purposive.

The meaning of philosophy can be further clarified by specifying its subject matter and method. Describing the task and characteristics of philosophy can shed further light on its nature.

### c. The Subject Matter of Philosophy

As our brief survey of the major philosophical problems has shown, philosophers have discussed a great variety of questions. So, it becomes difficult to spell out exactly what its subject matter consists of. It is very difficult to provide a general description which includes all the questions dealt with by philosophers. However, we can roughly indicate the leading questions with which philosophers have been concerned.

To begin with, it seems that the most important and interesting problem with which philosophers were concerned related to the nature of the universe. In other words, the primary philosophical issue seems to be the problem of providing a general description of the universe in which we live. In addition, the Greek philosophers were interested in two other problems: What is the place and role of reason in the conduct of life? What is the constitution and structure of knowledge? These questions take us to the different branches of philosophy.

Protagoras, a contemporary of Socrates, said, "Man is the measure of all things," and thus emphasized the importance of

human existence and its problems as the foremost problem of philosophy. Much later, in the same spirit, the English poet Alexander Pope expressed his opinion: "The proper object of philosophical investigations is man, and it is by undertaking the analysis of the human situation that philosophy may be able to bring its age-old nomadic career to an end and come into its own."

Many contemporary writers echo the views of Protagoras and Alexander Pope. Being sensitive to human problems and to the growing uncertainties of life, they react against the excessive stress on abstract speculation which relegates the existing human situation and its problems to a place of secondary importance. Their revolt was manifested in the form of various contemporary schools of philosophy like existentialism, pragmatism and humanism. These schools differ in their points of view. So, they set forth different aims of philosophy. While existentialism lays emphasis on the existential situation of man as the subject matter of philosophical inquiry, pragmatism declares that only those philosophical theories and beliefs should be accepted that are beneficial to the human condition. Humanism, once again, declares that humans and their problems should be the only object of philosophical inquiry. The common characteristic in these contemporary schools is that they reject any subject matter of philosophy which has no relation to life, either directly or indirectly.

Whether it is the nature of the universe we are immediately interested in, or our mind and its knowledge, or the human situation, philosophy in general is concerned with reality—any reality about which we can and do ask questions. The questions we ask about reality are as important, if not more, to philosophy than the answers we give.

Not all questions, however, are philosophical. Philosophical questions are of a specific kind. For example, if we ask, "What is the temperature today?" or "What is the chemical composition of sugar?" we are asking questions about facts. Facts can be verified by experiments and observation. Such questions about facts do not fall within the scope of philosophy.

Again, if we ask questions such as, "Why do unsupported bodies fall to the ground?" or "Why does water boil at a temperature

less than 100 degrees centigrade on the mountain top?" we are asking for explanations of the observed phenomena in terms of scientific laws. Such questions are scientific questions. They too do not fall within the scope of philosophy. That is to say that philosophical questions are different from factual and scientific questions.

One important difference between factual and scientific questions, on the one hand, and philosophical questions on the other, is that the former is verifiable, whereas the latter is not; the former is answered by the help of experiments and observation, whereas the latter is answered by immediate mental perception and reasoning. "What is the percentage of calcium in human body?" is a factual question and it is to be answered by a chemical analysis of the body. In contrast, questions such as, "Why is there something rather nothing?" "Why should I act morally when morality brings me pain and failure?" "How can we know whether something is true?" are not questions for science. It is obvious that experimental sciences cannot answer these questions. They cannot be answered by observing anything in the world. Their answers are "verified" by an inner perception. For example, when someone answers the question "How can we know whether something is true?" by saying, "when reality corresponds to our statements about it, the statement is true," we have to see it in the mind that it is so. Philosophy, in short, is a way of dealing with questions that cannot be answered by resorting to experiments and observation.

Philosophical questions have three major characteristics. First, philosophical questions have answers, but their answers always remain in dispute. This means that philosophical questions are not nonsense questions such as, "How does love taste?" They are sensible questions and they have answers. But since these answers are speculative, they cannot be conclusively verified or demonstrated. This opens the door for many plausible answers depending on the basic assumptions and presuppositions of various philosophers.

Secondly, philosophical questions cannot be settled by science, or religious faith. This condition means that philosophical questions cannot be settled by performing experiments, collecting data, finding out what the scriptures say about them, or by conducting

a survey of what most persons believe. Science does not settle philosophical questions because philosophical questions are beyond its scope. Science is confined to what is observable and measurable, whereas philosophy is interested in things and issues beyond the observable. Philosophy begins where science ends. For example, the question "Does science provide genuine knowledge?" or the question, "What is justice?" is not a question for scientists. How to make a bomb is a question for science, but where and when to drop it, is a question beyond the scope of science. Likewise, religious beliefs cannot settle philosophical questions, for philosophy depends on hard evidence to support one's position.

Finally, philosophical questions are of perennial intellectual interest to human beings. They are questions of such importance that they have always interested thoughtful human beings and will continue to be of interest in the future. Such questions together with their answers constitute the content of philosophy.

#### d. The Task of Philosophy

Generally we do not acquire our major beliefs through reasoning. They come to us by way of authority or suggestion from our parents, teachers and others trusted by us. Social environment and groups of people, whose views are simply accepted as the current ways of looking at things, may also contribute to the formation of beliefs. But beliefs so acquired become prejudices unless they be put to severe examination. And this is one function of philosophy. It undertakes a critical examination of the grounds on which beliefs are held. A large part of the business of philosophy is to inquire into what reason can do and what it cannot do. As human beings, endowed with reason, we cannot refrain from thinking about the universe we live in, the principles that govern the world and our mind that know it, and the destiny of our lives. The right use of reason brings us nearer to the truth.

Socrates, at his trial in 399 BC, maintained that the reason he philosophized was that "the unexamined life was not worth living." He found that nearly all of his contemporaries spent their lives pursuing various goals such as fame, riches and pleasure, without ever asking themselves whether these were really important. Unless they raised such a question, and seriously sought its answer, they

would never be able to know if they were doing the right thing. Their entire lives might be wasted pursuing useless or even dangerous goals. Socrates, therefore, wanted philosophy to examine our views to discover their foundations, or to see if they are justified.

The primary task of the philosopher, following Socrates' contention, is to bring to light what our implicit beliefs are, what assumptions we make about our world, ourselves and our values. Rather than merely possessing an unorganized mass of opinions, the philosopher feels that these must be inspected, scrutinized, and organized into a meaningful and coherent system of views.

The main function of philosophy, for Plotinus, was to prepare individuals for the experience of ecstasy in which they become one with, God, or the One, who is beyond rational understanding and is the source of all reality. The highest goal of life is to purify oneself from dependence on bodily comforts and, through philosophical meditation, to prepare oneself for an ecstatic reunion with the One.

In the *Samkhya* view, philosophy is a tool for *moksha* or liberation. According to *Samkhya*, life in this world is full of suffering. Liberation or *moksha* means freedom from pain without any possibility of returning to this state. Since ignorance is the cause of suffering, liberation consists in obtaining knowledge. The *jnana marga* (the path of knowledge, or the Upanishadic meditation on the godhead), brings to the awareness of the *jiva* its real nature, *Purusa* or *Atman*. Realizing its true nature in philosophical contemplation, the *jiva* ceases to be influenced by the sufferings of the ego. In this way, philosophical contemplation of the godhead is a tool for achieving liberation.

In discussing the aim of philosophy, it is quite relevant to quote the great British philosopher Bertrand Russell:

I think philosophy has two uses. One of them is to keep alive speculations about things that are not yet amenable to scientific knowledge... There are a great many things of immense interest about which science, at present at any rate, knows little and I don't want people's imaginations limited and enclosed within what can be now known. I think I enlarge your imaginative view of the world in the hypothetical realm and it is one of the uses of philosophy. Another use is to show that there are things which

we thought we knew, though, in fact, we don't. Philosophy is to keep us thinking about things that we may come to know, and to keep us modestly aware of how much that seems like knowledge is not knowledge.

During the twentieth century, some philosophers called Linguistic Analysts insisted that the sole task of philosophy was clarifying the meaning of words. All philosophy was said to be about language, and it was claimed that once the linguistics of our discourse was sorted out, all philosophical problems would be solved.

Today the Analyst view is giving way to a broader perspective. Philosophy is indeed about language, and it is essential to understand the nature of the language we use. But it is also important to explore the basic ideas and concepts expressed by language, and to unravel those features of the world that give rise to those ideas and concepts. The main task of philosophy thus turns out to be investigating the meaning of language and also the underlying features of reality which includes the external world and human subjectivity. This investigation gives rise to questions such as: "What do we know?" (theory of knowledge or epistemology), "What exists?" (metaphysics), and "What is moral?" (ethics). This task of philosophy is sometimes called 'Worldview Construction.'

Philosophy as Worldview Construction tries above all to build the most-likely-to-be-true picture of persons and the cosmos. This function distinguishes it from the sciences which concentrate on a particular aspect of Nature. The discoveries of science have affected our daily conduct, beliefs and attitudes. Life has become mechanical and only materialistic values are being pursued, neglecting moral values. The tremendous progress of science has unfortunately led to the loss of spiritual significance. We are uncertain about the ultimate purpose of human life, about values and goals. There is only one way of escaping from this confusion. It is to direct our mind to the contemplation of the life situation as a whole. What we have lost is the integral perspective. Our whole life is divided into fragments and there seems to be no overall purpose. It is the task of philosophy to develop an integral view of life and restore its spiritual significance. This is done by constructing credible worldviews.

Humanism declares that the only purpose of philosophical inquiry is to help humans in evolving a better life situation, in solving day-to-day problems which result in conflict and wars. For humanism, a philosophy that does not accomplish this is a waste of time. Many contemporary writers echo this view. Being sensitive to human problems, they react against the excessive stress on abstract speculation which ignores the existing human situation and its problems. Their revolt has resulted in the development of various contemporary schools of philosophy like existentialism and pragmatism. These schools differ in their points of view, but agree that the task of philosophical inquiry is to help humans in solving the problems of life.

According to the British philosopher, Herbert Spencer, science is partially unified knowledge while philosophy is completely unified knowledge. Philosophy is defined as the effort to comprehend the universe as a whole, not a special department of it. To know only a part is to have an incomplete and distorted view of things.

Other philosophers examine the meaning of individual words, so that as we take apart a statement, we are able to see all the implications it has. Some others have tried a more analytic and deductive approach, discarding accepted ideas, and then trying to start from scratch and give an account of what can be known for certain. There are also philosophers who consider it their task to devise artificial languages with which to reveal the logic of our ordinary language.

Philosophy also seeks to find out what our fundamental ideas mean, what standards should be employed in arriving at sound judgments, what beliefs we ought to adhere to, and the like. Political philosophy, for example, asks questions about justice and equality, about how a state should be organized, and about what is meant by ideas such as democracy. It examines the terms that are found in everyday political debate, and probes a little deeper into their meaning than what an average politician does. It also inquires into what exactly the purpose of the whole political enterprise is. By reflecting upon such questions, philosophy hopes to achieve a significant comprehension of various realities and of reality itself.

Other tasks that many philosophers consider to be of importance include, among others, the investigation of religious language, physical and social sciences, law, political obligation, relation to environment, art, language, mathematics, applied moral problems, and social issues such as race and gender.

Philosophers will admit all these tasks as important to philosophy, but differ in the importance they assign to these tasks. Differences in emphasis depend in part on personal preferences and on the fact that not all philosophers agree on what the philosophical enterprise consists of.

#### e. The Method of Philosophy

There is no agreement among philosophers about their task. Different philosophers engage in different tasks. Linguistic philosophy concentrates on the meaning, structure and validation of the language used. Existential philosophy examines the place of that question within an overall understanding of life and its meaning. Metaphysics looks at the overall structures of existence and the way the question is related to them. Structuralism tries to expose the context of the problem and the linguistic, political, and social structures through which the problem is encountered. Thus there seems to be nothing common in the way philosophers conceive their task. What is common to all of them is method. Philosophers as a class are committed to critical examination of the reality they consider important.

Differences are also found in the way philosophers present the results of their investigation. Different philosophers resort to different ways. Many write down their reflections in the form of books and articles, while others present them in the form of lectures and seminars. Plato favored the dialogue form. So his *Dialogues* introduce a range of characters, each of whom presents and argues for a particular viewpoint.

No matter how the philosophers present their views, their method consists in critical thinking. Critical thinkers criticize the beliefs of everyone, including themselves. Critical thinking includes: (1) careful attention to the meaning of words and statements and to the consistency of ideas; (2) listing possible approaches to the issue in question; and (3) a comprehensive



consideration of all the reasons we can think of, for and against possible answers in order to find the most likely-to-be answer out of all candidates; (4) being modest in one's claims, admitting the difficulties of each view before others point them out.

Besides these, critical thinkers approach problems with a critical temperament. This includes: (1) the desire to understand the issues as clearly as possible; (2) the desire to evaluate all positions fairly, without giving preferential treatment to one's pre-existing beliefs; (3) a willingness to follow complex lines of reasoning; (4) a willingness to be led by the strength of evidence; and (5) a willingness to suspend judgment whenever we discover that we have no better evidence for accepting one view instead of another.

#### f. The Characteristics of Philosophy

Of the many characteristics of philosophy, four are of special importance. They are listed below:

1. *In philosophy there is no progression in ideas as in science, though we have new ways of looking at perennial questions.* If we study the natural sciences, we are generally able to trace a progression of ideas and a gradual expansion of knowledge. The steady progress of science is sometimes broken by a 'paradigm shift' which introduces a new way of looking at things and conducting experiments. But such shifts are exceptions rather than the rule. By contrast, in reading philosophy we will find that, although we can trace out the progression of ideas, some of the questions explored by the ancient Greeks are still very much debated today. Philosophy does not put away its questions, because someone has already answered them. It always looks for new ways of looking at old questions, new ways of expressing old ideas, and new views about the purpose and function of philosophy itself.

2. *Philosophy is concerned with second order language.* Some examples will help us to understand what second order language is:

First order: 'A caused B.'

Second order: 'What does it mean to say that A caused B?'

First order: 'It is not right to do this'

Second order: 'What does it mean to say something is 'right'?

First order: 'God does not exist.'

Second order: 'How may religious assertions be verified?'

Second order language clarifies first order language, and brings to light the thought that lies behind that language. Philosophy is mainly concerned with second order language. It may not be able to tell you if something is right or wrong, but it will clarify the grounds upon which you can take a decision.

3. *No agreements in philosophy.* Philosophy is not monolithic. It accommodates various views, none of which are well established and unquestioned. Among philosophers there is no agreement either on the topics on which to philosophize, or the way to go about it, or the conclusions reached. A.J. Ayer, one of the philosophers of the Logical Positivist School of philosophy, while commenting on the writings of various philosophers, said that some of the views of the philosopher Heidegger seemed to him to be 'sheer rubbish.' [Interview with Miriam Gross; the Observer 24 February 1980 p.35]. After reading Heidegger's work one may feel inclined to agree with Ayer, or may feel that Heidegger is describing something of importance. The essential thing to realize at this stage is, that not all philosophers agree either on the topics on which to philosophize, or the way to go about it, or the conclusions reached.

4. *It is impossible to decide which philosophical theory is true.* A cursory glance at various philosophical theories would bring to our attention that every one of them has been criticized and defended by first-rate philosophers, making it impossible to decide which one is true. The most that philosophers can reasonably hope to do is to show that relative to the competing theories, their theories are more likely to be true. Philosophers, in fact, admit their fallibility. For example, the Greek philosopher Socrates said that, although he was ignorant, at least he realized that he was ignorant.

#### g. Science, Religion and Philosophy

It is quite useful to discuss science, religion and philosophy under one heading in order to bring out their similarities and differences. This will help us to know how philosophy is different from them, while being related to them.

Science pertains to the knowledge of the physical world. A scientist relies on observation and confirms knowledge through

experiments. Science relies on verification before accepting truths about facts. It proceeds assuming certain basic principles. A scientist, for example, believes that everything has a cause, and nothing happens without a cause. The scientific outlook is based on two things — confidence in the capability of human intellect to know things and a general belief that everything in the world can be explained.

Scientific investigation has a long history of struggle against human ignorance, superstition and skepticism. When Copernicus said, "The earth moves round the sun," everyone was amazed and scientists were viewed with suspicion. Today, when it is reported that man has landed on the moon, no one looks with wonder. This difference in human reaction is the result of a long struggle that science had to wage against a disbelieving world. Scientific research has altered our understanding of nature and freed us from superstitious beliefs about nature.

On the negative side, science has alienated humans from nature. This is because scientific knowledge is extremely specialized and narrow. It divides nature into minute units like molecules and atoms. This fragmentation of nature leads to our alienation from it, since this is not the way we perceive nature in our everyday existence.

Coming to religion, it is generally identified with beliefs and rituals, with practices of one kind or another, with taboos, inhibitions and restraints of various kinds. Mostly, religion implies belief in God. Religion proclaims that behind all these phenomena, the world of nature and man, there is a supreme reality. Some call it God; others refer to it by other names. Perhaps fear plays an important role in religion, but a more predominant emotion in religion is wonder and awe. These are more characteristic of religion than fear. Religion also means worship in one way or another, and in such acts of worship the pious man humbles himself and surrenders to the God of his belief. Worship is supposed to lead people to communion with God. Religion is said to lead to God-consciousness and some people have claimed to have experienced God.

Religion is identified with feeling, emotion, sentiment, cult, ritual and faith. Religion begins with simple beliefs and rites but ends with the sublimest realization. In between simple piety and

sublime realization, there are so many things with which religion is related. In its true sense, religion is essentially a concern about the inner life. S. Radhakrishnan gives a broad meaning to religion. For him, religion stands for all those ideals and purposes, influences and institutions which shape the character of man, both as an individual and as a member of society. It is the law of right living. It is not correct belief but righteous living. "True religion," as Radhakrishnan says, "must express itself in love and aim at the unity of mankind." According to him, the task of religion is "to lighten the load of humanity." Religion involves not only a strong faith in the existence of God and in the divinity of man, but also a profound dissatisfaction with the existing state of things and a preparation for a new life.

Philosophy is a logical discipline and a philosopher relies on critical and systematic thinking. Philosophers exercise their rational faculty for the discovery of truth. Using both analysis and synthesis as its methods, philosophy aims to develop a comprehensive view of reality, of life and the world. Its ultimate aim is to give insights into the nature and purpose of reality and make human life happier and better.

Philosophers act as a guide to both scientists and men of religion so that these in turn contribute to the enrichment of human life. Philosophers have always been gifted men who looked at things in a detached manner. When Plato said, "Until philosophers are kings or kings and princes have the power and the spirit of philosophy, human society will not cease from evil and sufferings," he stressed the importance of philosophy. Philosophy is not opposed to any branch of knowledge, much less to science and religion. It refers to a way of thinking, an attitude to life. Hence, no aspect of human experience is without philosophy. It touches every branch of learning, evaluates them and brings to our notice their strengths and errors. Philosophy is a science of sciences; it is the mother of all sciences, since all sciences originated in philosophical speculation. It deals with the fundamentals of life and, hence, is intimately related to all areas of human interest.

Science and religion operate at different levels. Scientific knowledge is objective but religious knowledge is subjective. Science attends to the reality outside, but religion focuses on the

inner reality, the self. Scientific knowledge is based on sensory perception, whereas religious knowledge originates in inner realization. Science takes reality apart to make it available for observation, but religion aims to unify human experiences. Scientific knowledge is developing and is partial, while religion aims to give us an integral grasp of the totality of reality. Science has given physical power and the amenities of life, but religion gives strength and spiritual fulfillment. In spite of these differences, there is no contradiction between science and religion. They are mutually complementary as both are closely related to human life, having the aim of promoting human interests. There is no doubt that those forms of religion, which emphasized rituals, dogmas and blind faith, are clearly opposed to science which is based on reason, analysis and verification. But dogmas and blind faith are not the essentials of religion. Religion in its correct sense is the perception of inner unity in apparent diversity. It breaks all barriers between humans and aims to promote a sense of oneness of the whole creation. Hence, the conflict between science and some forms of religion is not to be taken as a conflict between science and religion as such.

Philosophy is an application of logic to the problems of existence and the problems associated with God. It is a special attitude. Philosophers are constantly engaged in applying logic for eliminating contradictions in thoughts. They proceed systematically like the scientists, though they do not have access to procedures such as experimentation, observation and verification.

While discussing the relation between science and philosophy, the areas of difference between the two must be made clear. Science belongs to the physical world, philosophy pertains to the subtler aspects of life and human endeavor. Science investigates the natural world in order to discover the laws which govern it. Philosophy contemplates various forms of man's activity and experiences which have inherent values and which contribute to the enrichment of human life. It seeks to analyze and interpret various experiences. Science is chiefly concerned with the analysis of observable facts. Philosophy does not aim to discover new facts about the empirical world, but takes a critical look at what is claimed to be facts by the scientist. Thus, philosophy is concerned with the significance of facts. The business of philosophy is to examine the meanings and

implications of the basic concepts which the scientists use and of the facts they discover. For example, scientists take for granted concepts such as cause, effect, induction, space and time. These are crucial concepts in scientific theories. But scientists have little time for analyzing them. Philosophers, however, consider their analysis important, since they do not want to take anything for granted. In short, while science is content with knowledge of the empirical world, philosophy aims at wisdom because it believes that knowledge without wisdom is often dangerous.

Further, philosophy deals with the whole universe, while science takes a fragmented view of it. From the point of view of approach, science is analytical but philosophy is both analytical and synthetic. Philosophy uses scientific analysis of nature and goes a step further in trying to establish a total view of reality in order to determine the meaning, value and purpose of human existence. In addition to the knowledge of physical objects, philosophy takes into account the moral, aesthetic and religious experiences of mankind to arrive at a comprehensive view of the real. While science reduces everything to certain mathematical formulas, and makes a skeleton out of the rich and complex reality, philosophy enflashes and enlivens empirical reality by adding to it meaning, significance and qualitative interpretation.

Despite these differences in aim, approach, point of view, method and formal object, the intimate relationship between philosophy and science cannot be ignored. If philosophy helps science by clarifying concepts and methods, scientific theories come to the aid of philosophy by presenting new problems and perspectives for investigation. For example, the philosophical questions which the empiricist thinkers raised were not born of the philosophical tradition alone but were prompted by scientific advances. Part of the inspiration behind the empirical philosophy of Locke, Berkeley and Hume came from Newtonian science. Therefore it is difficult to understand their philosophy without taking into account the postulates of Newtonian science. This highlights the relation of interdependence between science and philosophy.

Both science and philosophy are cognitive enterprises seeking to acquire knowledge. Both are the products of human creativity.

Scientific knowledge is certain, exact and organized. It is capable of producing results. It is based on the method of observation, experimentation, analysis, classification and generalization. Philosophy goes beyond the knowledge furnished by science. It seeks a comprehensive understanding of the world, an ultimate explanation of reality. Science analyses facts, philosophy determines their value. Besides this, philosophy tries to interpret the conclusions of sciences along with the data of religious and ethical experiences. In other words, while science seeks to present facts, philosophy aims to rationalize and organize those facts and synthesize them with other facts of human experience to present a unified view of life and reality. In this sense, they are both closely related.

Coming to the relationship between science and religion, we can say that to many, science appears to be opposed to religion because of its distinct aim and method. Science aims to increase our knowledge of nature. Its aim is cognitive and its method, empirical. Scientific knowledge enables us to exploit nature for our purposes. Religion on the other hand, is largely a matter of personal faith and devotional practices based on certain beliefs about ourselves and about supernatural realities. These beliefs include doctrines about the sacred world, man's existential situation, bondage and liberation. The aim of religion is to define human life in reference to the given situation and to guide it to its completion. Thus science and religion seem to tread different paths for reaching different goals.

When we consider the relationship between philosophy and religion, both can be shown to be distinct. While religion relies on personal faith, philosophy relies on critical reflection. Philosophy seeks to develop right understanding of life and the world by radical questioning and critical reflection. It does not take anything for granted, not even its own presuppositions, whereas religion is comfortable with many presuppositions. These differences notwithstanding, religion and philosophy are similar in their concern about the nature of humans and their destiny. Moreover, religion relies on philosophy not only for the terminology required to propound its doctrines, but also for clarifying its concepts and organizing its doctrines. There is a definite philosophy behind every

expression of religion; many of the terms used in religious doctrines are borrowed from philosophy. The medieval Christian theologians acknowledged their indebtedness to philosophy by calling it, to the dismay of philosophers, the handmaid of theology. On the other hand, religion with its doctrines and experiences provide philosophy with material for philosophical synthesis. Philosophy can be religious when it admits God as the foundation of existence and beauty.

Swami Vivekananda brings out well the interrelationship among science, philosophy, and religion, when he writes:

Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divine within, by controlling Nature, external and internal. Do this either by work, worship, or psychic control, or philosophy, by one or more, or all these — and be free. This is the whole religion. Doctrines or dogmas or rituals or books, or temples, or forms are but secondary details.

If we accept this definition of religion, then there is no difficulty in reconciling science, religion and philosophy. Science deals with the nature without and philosophy deals with the nature within us. Religion deals with the manifestation of the sacred and provides practical and conceptual tools to integrate human life to reality as defined by science and philosophy. Thus all the three are intimately related.

