1. Define certitude. Explain various kinds of certitudes possible.

Definition of certitude [plural certitudes]

1 : the state of being or feeling certain

2 : certainty of act or event

3 : something that is certain : certainty [From Merriam Webster Dictionary]

Certitude is defined as the firm assent of mind to the truth, based on evidence. In simple terms it is “the conviction that such and such is (is not) the case.” Certitude is complete assurance. The achievement of certitude involves the search for truth, with the aim of understanding (knowing) and recognizing the truth.

It is quite the same as ‘Certainty’. ‘Certainty’ means the state of being certain, but certitude, means the state of feeling absolutely convinced. Certitude is a feeling while certainty involves inherent factuality. In Latin, “certus” means pledge, or surety which is the root word of both certainty and Certitude.

If certitude is based on evidence, there are different kinds of knowledge and expected certitudes on the basis of different kinds of knowledge, and consequently the different kinds of evidences. Due to recognised valid reason, “certitude” is a state of mind, and gives firm assent to a judgement without fear of the possibility of error.

In Indian Philosophy, Samkhya recognizes true cognition, as certain, called asamdigdha.

The possible kinds of Certitudes

On the basis of kinds of evidences available in different cases, there are different kinds of certitudes possible, which are pointed out by various scholars.

1. Logical Certitude :

We all possess analytical judgements, which guides our acts of thinking. Our Evidence of truth is obtained by analysing of the terms and definitions used, as in Logic and mathematics. As per Aristotle, the logic is the science which guides our acts of thinking so that our reasoning may proceed in good order, without difficulty and without error.

Certitude based on such kind of evidence, admitting of no possible or conceivable exception, can be called absolute. Eg, it is absolutely certain, that if M follows N, and N follows P, then M is following P.

This is the formal field of knowledge.

1. Ontological Certitude :

The Laws of mind, are based on the laws of being itself, which is the ontological realm. The self-evidence is not merely logical but ontological. “I think, therefore I am”, and ‘the self”, is something we know that exists with certitude. The evidence of this truth is generally obtained through sensory experience. Ultimately, it could be made certain through insight discoveries.

In Indian philosophy, Ontology is mentioned as Tattva Mimamsa.

This is the Informal field of knowledge.

1. Physical Certitude:

The evidence of truth could be experienced by sense-perception or the verification or falsification by laboratory conducted experiments of hypothesis formed. This certitude characterizes assent to concrete applications of physical laws.

Kant was impressed by the success of the physical sciences and decided that only scientific truth and certitude were reliable. All physical explanations end in empirical facts.

1. Moral Certitude:

“Certitude” in the field of ethics is the study of behaviour. In includes the general norms and principles which help in the judgement of right and wrong. It is the Confident assent concerning human conduct based on people's normal and predictable responses to certain needs, abilities, and motivations.

Awareness about nuclear warfare, capital punishment, abortion, birth control, etc. are debated. The judgement based on ones Ethics on the immediate data, is self-evident. It could be extended to the psychological makeup, social relationships and history.

1. Religious Certitude:

The religious beliefs are inherited from parents, society, educators, etc. Religious beliefs are mostly based on respective scriptures(“written testimony”). These could be considered reasonable, but, at any rate, it could only be “moral certitude”. This often brings a sense of superiority over others.

A self-satisfied certainty arises only by grasping the ready-made answers handed down by others. Only upon critical reflection, the true answers are realised. To reach an evolved understanding, one has to have experienced some doubts about his religion, have faced them without fear and have grown as a direct result of that courage.

2. Discuss how various schools of Indian thought approach the method of perception.