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# UNIT 4 NOTIONAL CLARIFICATIONS

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## 4.1 OBJECTIVES

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In this Unit we explain the common terms in philosophy which a student of philosophy often comes across. These are terms frequently used and developed by philosophers of the West and India over centuries. We will also give the etymological meaning of them wherever required.

- By the end of this Unit you should be able to:
- understand the meaning of common terms in philosophy;
- comprehend them as building blocks in understanding philosophy;
- describe them in your words; and
- explain the terms showing their interconnectedness.

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## 4.2 INTRODUCTION

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A student of philosophy will frequently come across many technical concepts, obscure terms and unknown names, which can be quite puzzling. This unit contains a collection of basic philosophical concepts frequently used with simple explanations. Many terms in Philosophy may seem strange to a student because of their foreign origin, either Greek or Latin, which were the languages of philosophy for many centuries. In addition, when a need was felt for a new word or an expression, it was usually met by drawing on Greek or Latin. Hence if a student is familiar with the seemingly strange terms in philosophy, it can make the study of philosophy easier and the comprehension of many philosophical issues less problematic.

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## 4.3 TERMS

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### ABSOLUTE

The term Absolute stands for the ultimate reality or principle which is perfect, complete, independent, unlimited and all-embracing. The Absolute whether it is God or another cosmic force is generally seen as the source of all things, an infinite, wholly unrestricted and entirely independent of creation. It necessarily exists and depends on nothing else. In Christian and Judaic traditions the Absolute stands for

God, the supreme spiritual power and the only independent being. In Hinduism the Absolute is called Brahman, the eternal abstract principle of cosmic existence, oneness and unity which is the ultimate goal of Hindu devotions. In Buddhism the Absolute is identified with Nirvana the ultimate goal of all Buddhist pursuits.

### ABSTRACTION

Abstraction is the process of culling the universal from the particular. It is an activity of the human intellect. Generally abstraction is considered to have three stages: first, sense experience, second, formation of phantasm or image of the thing experienced, and third, formation of idea, a process by which the intellect retains only the universal element and rejects everything particular or specific. Thus the idea or concept is the final product of the process of abstraction.

### AGNOSTICISM

Agnosticism signifies a position of suspended belief. According to it human beings do not have sufficient evidence to warrant either the affirmation or the denial of a proposition. It is a theory according to which things within a specified realm are unknowable. Thus for instance, some philosophers hold the view that the ultimate reality is unknowable, which is metaphysical agnosticism. Agnosticism in religion is the view that it is impossible for us to know whether or not God exists.

### A PRIORI and A POSTERIORI

The concepts *a priori* and *a posteriori* stand for two kinds of knowledge according to the way the human mind apprehends. *A priori* implies knowledge without recourse to experience or knowledge *prior* to and independent of observation or experiment. *A posteriori* stands for knowledge that comes only *after* direct experience. Thus *a posteriori* is a knowledge that can be formulated only after observation or experiment. Traditionally the truths of metaphysics, mathematics, geometry and logic and certain ethical principles have been considered as *a priori*.

### CAUSE

A cause is anything that has an influence on the 'to be' or existence of another. A cause is something that which produces an effect and the former is necessary for the occurrence of the latter. Aristotle (384-322 BC) divided cause into four types: *material* cause, the matter or stuff out of which something is made; *efficient* cause, the agent or the action that brings about a change; *formal* cause, the design or pattern that determines its form; and *final* cause, the purpose for which an action is done or a change is brought about or a thing is produced.

### DECONSTRUCTION

Deconstruction is an interpretative method that examines a text in the context of the linguistic, social and cultural structures within which the text was formulated. It tries to show that the text is incoherent because its key terms can be understood only in relation to their suppressed opposites. The process of deconstruction exposes inconsistencies and contradictions in a given text. This leads to the conclusion that there is no such thing as a single meaning in a text, nor can it claim to express any absolute truth. To the deconstructionist language, meaning and truth are elusive, equivocal and relative. In so far as a text outlasts its author, and the particular context in which it was created, its meanings transcend those that may have been originally

intended. In this sense the reader brings as much to the text as its author. In philosophy deconstruction is primarily identified with the French Philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930-2004).

## DEDUCTION and INDUCTION

Deduction is a process of gaining knowledge independently of experience through pure logical reasoning. A valid deductive inference is one in which the conclusion is a necessary consequence of the premises so that the conclusion cannot be false, if all the premises are true. Deductive reasoning begins with a universal or general truth and leads to knowledge of a particular instance of it. The classical form of deductive reasoning is the syllogism in which a necessary conclusion is derived from two accepted premises: e.g All men are mortal, Ram is a man, and therefore, Ram is mortal.

Induction is a process of arriving at knowledge through experience. It relies on observation and experimentation. Induction begins with the particular and moves to the universal, a generalization that accounts for other examples of the same category or class. For instance, if a number of ravens have been observed, all of which are black, and if no raven has been encountered that is not black, the inferences to the conclusion that the next observed raven will be black or to the general conclusion that all ravens are black, are inductive inferences.

## DUALISM

Dualism is a theory which has at its basis two radically distinct concepts or principles. Dualism implies polarity and conflict and does not admit syncretism. The clash of good and evil in religious belief provides the paradigm for most dualistic philosophical systems. In *religious* field, dualism is the belief in two opposing principles of divine beings, one good and one evil. In *metaphysics* it is the view that there are two kinds of reality: finite and infinite, matter and spirit, relative and absolute. In *philosophy of mind*, psychophysical dualism which holds the view that human beings are made up of two radically distinct constituents: body constituted by matter like other natural objects, and an immaterial mind or soul.

## EMPIRICISM

Empiricism is a philosophical position that all knowledge is based on experience or from the direct observation of phenomena through sense perception and from introspection. Empiricism thus contrasts with rationalism which identifies reason as the source of knowledge. For “hard” empiricism all ideas arise *only* from experience. “Softer” empiricism states that while not all ideas are causally connected to sense perception, anything we can call knowledge must be *justified* through the test of experience.

## ETHICS

Ethics is the study of moral principles and behaviour and of the nature of good, and is one of the classical fields of philosophical inquiry. It is also called moral philosophy. Ethics as a discipline can be divided into normative ethics and meta-ethics.

*Normative ethics* is the rational inquiry into or a theory of the standards of right and wrong, good and bad in respect of character and conduct, which ought to be accepted by a class of individuals. Normative ethics prescribes how people ought to think and

behave and its main aim is to formulate valid norms of conduct and of evaluation of character. *Applied ethics* is the study of what general norms and standards are to be applied in actual problem-situations. Much of what is called moral philosophy is normative or applied ethics.

*Meta-ethics* (analytical ethics) is a kind of philosophical inquiry into ethical concepts, propositions and belief systems. It analyses concepts of right and wrong, good and bad in respect of character and conduct and related concepts. It also includes *moral epistemology*: the manner in which ethical truths can be known, and *moral ontology*: whether there is a moral reality corresponding to our moral beliefs, etc. The questions of whether and in what sense morality is subjective or objective, relative or absolute, also fall under meta-ethics.

## EXISTENTIALISM

Existentialism is an approach in philosophy that concentrates on the concrete, existential situation of human beings. Existentialism as a philosophical movement is usually traced back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855). The existentialists differ widely from one another: Kierkegaard was Christian, Frederich Nietzsche (1844-1900) was an atheist, Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) was a Marxist and Martin Heidegger (1889-1976).

As a philosophical position existentialism holds that in an absurd universe without intrinsic meaning or purpose people have unlimited freedom of choice and must take absolute responsibility for their actions. In this predicament the individual either chooses an authentic life or gives into despair. Freedom of the will, individual and personal responsibility, authentic existence, personal choice and commitment, subjective truth, subjective morality, feeling of being 'out there in a crowd', absurdity of life, fear, dread, anxiety, nihilism, individual aspiration rather than follow the standards and norms set by others, confidence in the significance of being human, etc. some of the important themes of the existentialists.

### Check your progress I

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) What does the term "absolute" mean?

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2) Explain the difference between deduction and induction

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## FREEDOM

Freedom is a complex concept referring to the ability of a person for self-determination and personal autonomy and self-direction. Freedom is often considered in terms of

free will, the individual's capacity to choose his or her own destiny rather than follow the dictates of determinism. Sometimes a distinction is made between negative freedom and positive freedom. The former means independence of determination by alien causes or absence of coercion or constraint ("freedom from"); the latter is the same as self-determination or autonomy or being one's own master or being in-charge of the fulfilment of one's aspirations and the ability and resources to pursue one's dreams and ambitions ("freedom to"). In both senses it revolves around the question of what controls us, our individual will or an external force.

## HERMENEUTICS

Hermeneutics is the science of interpretation or the formal study of methods of interpretation. There has been reflection on the art of interpreting texts since ancient times but the word 'hermeneutics' was first used by J.C. Dannhauer in the mid-seventeenth century. He noted that texts for which a theory of interpretation was needed fell into three classes: Holy Scriptures, legal texts and literature of classical antiquity.

## HUMANISM

Humanism is a philosophical outlook that emphasizes the intrinsic value, dignity, autonomy and rationality of human beings. It is based on a belief in man's capacity for self-cultivation and self-improvement and in the progress of humankind. It holds the view that *human beings are at the centre of everything* and argues that individual beings are the fundamental source of all value and have the ability to understand or even control the natural world through a careful application of their rational faculties. Modern humanism is generally non-religious if not anti-religious, seeing intelligence, creativity and morality as human-inspired rather than God-given. Today philosophers speak of various type of humanism, such as, atheistic humanism, theistic humanism, Marxian humanism, Buddhist humanism, Christian humanism, etc.

## IDEALISM

Idealism is the philosophical position that ideas, not objects are the basis of reality. According to idealism the *ultimate reality is mind* and the external physical world is a mind-dependent construct. Idealism is therefore the opposite of realism and materialism. Idealism takes three general forms: that all reality is a product of the mind, that we can have knowledge only of the contents of our minds, and that the material universe is imperfect reflection of an ideal realm beyond the senses. The word 'idealism' was first used by Leibniz (1646-1716) for Plato's ontology to contrast it with Epicurus's materialism.

## MATERIALISM

Materialism is a doctrine that matter and *only matter exists*. In contrast to dualism, which makes a basic distinction between mind and matter, and idealism which sees reality as fundamentally mental or spiritual, the materialist view asserts that mind is reducible to an aspect of matter. Thus materialism is a theory which gives importance to the primacy of material over the spiritual, a belief that only physical things really exist. Materialism immediately implies a denial of the existence of minds, spirits, divine beings, etc. in so far as these are taken to be non-material.

## NATURAL LAW

Natural law is the ideal law, innate, universal and unchanging against which actual human law (positive law) is measured. Natural law is said to have its basis in "nature"

in the natural order, in the human nature *common to all people* or in some other pervasive principle such as God. According to natural law theory, any positive law that contradicts the natural law is invalid. The classical natural law is teleological and can be traced back to Aristotle. Human conventions, laws and actions are right if they accord with the purpose of nature; if they do not, they are wrong. Early Christianity interpreted natural law as an expression of God's will and Thomas Aquinas, going further conceived it as the *part of the eternal law* that is accessible to a human reason and therefore a proper foundation for positive law.

## NIHILISM

Nihilism is a philosophical position that there are no standards, that knowledge is impossible or at least worthless, that all action, all thought, all ethical and metaphysical conjecture is baseless and empty. It is often associated with extreme pessimism and radical scepticism. A true nihilist will believe in nothing and have no loyalties and no purpose other than, perhaps an impulse to destroy. The term nihilism has been applied to various negative theses or attitudes. Among the views labelled as nihilistic are those who deny the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, the freedom of the will, the authority of reason, the possibility of knowledge, the objectivity of morals, or the ultimate happy ending of human history. Nihilism was first prominently associated with a Russian intellectual and revolutionary movement of the 1860s and was popularised by Ivan Turgenev in his 1882 novel *Fathers and Sons*. These nihilists held that nothing in the established order commanded automatic respect and nothing should be taken on faith. In western European philosophy nihilism was closely associated with the pessimism of Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) and Frederick Nietzsche. Nihilism has had a powerful effect on the 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy, literature and radical politics especially in Europe.

## NOMINALISM

Nominalism is the view that the *universals are not real entities* either in the world or in the mind but *names* which refer to groups or classes of individual things. In other words, it is the belief that *only particular things exist*. The reality of the world can therefore be understood only in terms of particulars, that is, the individual beings that inhabit it. In the debates of the Middle Ages the nominalist position was often attacked as heretical. Nominalism was an influential current in the empiricist thought of the scientific revolution of the 17<sup>th</sup> century which valued *hard facts* and not abstract concepts. This form of nominalism survives in much of modern analytic philosophy, which argues that the foundation of reality is to be found in the *actual physical objects* we encounter, not in any overarching relations among them.

## NOUMENA and PHENOMENA

In the philosophy of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) the *noumena* (sig. *noumenon*) is contrasted with *phenomena* (sig. *phenomenon*), which is the object of empirical knowledge. For Kant a noumenon is an object of awareness not produced by sensory experience. According to him we have no faculty of non-sensory intuition. Hence we can have no noumenal knowledge as such. Kant also contrasted the *thing-in-itself* with the phenomenon and identified it with the noumenon. A phenomenon is a thing (a quality, a relation, a state of affairs, an event, etc) *as it appears to us* or as it is perceived. This contrast gives rise to one of the fundamental problems in philosophy whether or how far we can have knowledge of the *way things really are* (things-in-themselves) or the noumena. In Kant's philosophy awareness of a

phenomenon is based on sense experience, which involves sensory intuition. In contrast we can have no direct awareness of a noumenon since we have no intellectual intuition analogous to the sensory.

## OBJECTIVISM and SUBJECTIVISM

Objectivism and subjectivism are two epistemological positions in philosophy. They are two opposing approaches to the question of how individuals interact with the external world. Objectivism holds that the *world's inherent qualities determine the observer's experience* and can be accurately perceived. Subjectivism maintains that *one's own perspective* bring more to experience than is inherent in the world and colours one's judgement. The opposition between objectivism and subjectivism is also an *ethical* problem. Is something good because of an inherent quality of goodness or because it is conventionally considered good? This question raises the problems of determining the standards of goodness.

## PANTHEISM and PANENTHEISM

Pantheism (literally 'God is all') holds that *God and nature are identical*, while panentheism ('all in God') means that *God contains the world but is greater than it*. Both these views imply that God is essentially immanent in the world and is opposed to the Judeo-Christian theological tradition which maintains that the creator is separate from creation (transcendentalism). While both pantheism and panentheism have been primarily intellectual interest in Western culture, they are fundamental to animistic and other beliefs founded on the worship of nature and hold central position in many Eastern religions. The best example of Western pantheism is in the philosophy of Benedict Spinoza (1632-1677) for whom God and creation are identical, nature being a limited modification of God's presence. George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel 1770-1831 presents a good instance of panentheism holding that the Absolute contains not only the world as it is but also its contradictions, and history is a gradual elimination of those contradictions in a progression to ultimate unity with the Absolute.

## PHENOMENOLOGY

Phenomenology is a name of a highly influential school of philosophy founded by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) and developed in original ways by others. The term refers to the description or study of things as they appear without engaging in any value judgement. Husserl proposed what he called the "phenomenological reduction" which required the *bracketing* or "putting aside" all conventional assumptions, including the question of the very existence of an object or impression, in order to examine life experience from a fresh, unbiased perspective. In this connection Husserl also used the Greek term *epochè* or "cessation" implying suspension of judgement. For phenomenologists *intentionality* of consciousness is central. It is a fact that our consciousness is always of something. The mind does not create reality but interacts with it. Intentionality also sees the relation between subject and object as fundamental.

## POSITIVISM

Positivism is a philosophical position which holds that the only genuine knowledge is what can be obtained by using the *methods of science*. It is therefore allied to empiricism and materialism and opposed to metaphysics and theology. According to positive theories of knowledge, all knowledge is *ultimately based on sense experience* and all genuine inquiry is concerned with the description and explanation

of empirical facts. The term positivism was coined in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century by the French socialist Claude-Henry Saint-Simon (1760-1825), and the concept was developed and popularised by his student Auguste Comte (1798-1857).

## POSTMODERNISM

Postmodernism is not a neatly definable concept because it is a minefield of conflicting notions and an amalgam of things both positive and negative. Postmodernity signifies the paradigmatic shift in contemporary life marked by a certain rupture with the dominant patterns of society, culture and intellectual life of modernity, and entry into a new historical space where everything that is considered objective, fundamental, normative, universal and transcendental is subject to radical criticism, leading consequently to a triumph of *subject-centred reason*, metaphysical agnosticism and deconstruction, epistemological and ethical relativism, empiricism, experimentalism, pragmatism and negation of all absolute truths and values. Thus in general the word 'post-modernism' denotes fragmentation and promiscuous trivialisation of values, symbols and images, a widespread *culture of nihilism* and the *tyranny of relativism*.

### Check your progress II

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) What is phenomenology?

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2) Explain the difference between *phenomena* and *noumena*

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## RATIONALISM

Rationalism is a philosophical position which claims that reason is a more dependable path to knowledge than experience or observation. According to rationalism *true knowledge springs from the operations of the faculty of reason*, rather than being based on experiences. In this sense it is the opposite of empiricism. Although the rationalist outlook can be traced back to ancient Greek philosophy and was embodied in the medieval scholastic conviction that reason and faith are compatible, the term is primarily associated with the so-called continental rationalists of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the most important of whom were Descartes (1596-1650), Spinoza and Leibniz. Most rationalists argued that the existence of God can be deduced using the tools of reason, and faith is not a pre-requisite. Strict rationalism, holding that truth can be obtained through reason alone is no longer given much validity. The complementarity of reason and sense experience is reflected in much of the modern thinking, that is, knowledge requires both thought and experience.



## REALISM

Realism is a philosophical view which maintains that we live in a world that exists independently of us and our thoughts. The implication of realism is that *there is an objective world of which we can have objective knowledge*. This position is known as metaphysical realism. A consequence of realism in this sense is that the entities are there to be discovered and that ignorance and error is possible. Epistemological realism is the view that a mind-independent world exists in combination with the view that in perception we mentally grasp qualities and objects that are part of that world.

## RELATIVISM

Relativism is a philosophical doctrine that *no truths or values are absolute* but are related to our own personal, cultural or historical perspective. *Epistemological relativism* is most commonly associated with a dictum of the sophist philosopher Protagoras (c.485-c.415 BC) who said that “man is the measure of all things”, that is, we judge things more by our own individual perceptions and prejudices than by their objective qualities. *Ethical relativism* holds that value judgments arise not from universal principles but from particular situations. This position implies that all moralities are equally good. *Cultural relativism* is the view that customs, values, artistic expressions and beliefs must be understood and judged on their own terms, as products of a particular culture not according to outsiders’ theoretical preconceptions and classifications. This approach is basic to multi-culturalism.

## SKEPTICISM

Scepticism is the view that *nothing can be known with certainty*, that at best there can only be some private probable opinion. It implies that human reason has no capacity to come to any conclusions at all and that all knowledge fall short of certainty. Hence it is better to suspend belief than to rely on the dubitable products of reason. Scepticism takes two main forms: the belief that *no position is certain* (including as is frequently noted, this position), and the view that *truth exists but that certain knowledge of it may be beyond our grasp*. Ancient Greeks sceptics such as Pyrrho of Elis (c.360-c.272 BC), and the Sophists denied the possibility of knowing anything for certain.

## SCHOLASTICISM

Scholasticism is the name given to Roman Catholic philosophy and theology which determined Western thinking for many centuries. The Scholastics or Schoolmen from which the movement takes its name, were scholars in the early European universities. Scholasticism is a *manner of thinking* and perhaps more important a *method of teaching* which dominated Christian learning from the 11th to the 15th century A.D. Its central figure is Thomas Aquinas (c.1225-1274). Much of the teaching was done via the formal method of *scholastica disputatio*, a rigorous form of the dialectic in which a question was put forth, negated on the strength of the canonical evidence, then followed by a positive statement that was also backed by scriptural and dogmatic evidence. This method became the foundation of university education and eventually in revised form of virtually all schooling up to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## SOLIPSISM

In metaphysics solipsism is the view that *nothing exists except one's own self* and the contents of its consciousness. In epistemology it is the view that nothing can be known except one's own self and the contents of its consciousness. In other words, the individual human mind has no grounds for believing in anything other than itself.

## SUBSTANCE

In philosophy substance is the *basic, underlying essence of a thing that gives it existence*. It is a fundamental concept in metaphysics. From the Latin *substare*, “to stand under”, substance is the *substratum of reality*. It is the independent, irreducible basis of something which remains unchanged despite any outward changes. Substance can be both physical (material) and spiritual (mental). It has no qualities or properties itself but it is that in which qualities and properties inhere. Substance is contrasted with accident, the external form and appearance of a thing. The idea of substance was a consistent theme in philosophy from the ancient Greeks to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Substance is the first of Aristotle's categories.

## TRANSCENDENT

The general meaning of the word ‘transcendent’ is ‘going beyond’ or ‘being beyond’. It is used in many contexts. The term is employed particularly and frequently in the sense of being *beyond the limits of any possible experience* and *beyond the limits of the world of experience*. For instance, God is said to be transcendent in relation to the created world. The question whether there is anything transcendent beyond the world of experience is answered in the negative by materialists and empiricists. But an argument for the opposite view is that the material world, nature, the world of experience, the world open to scientific inquiry, cannot be ultimately self-sufficient or self-explanatory, but must in its totality, be assumed to stand in some relation of dependency which, accordingly must be transcendent.

## TRUTH

The question of truth, what it is and how we can recognise it, is among the oldest and most controversial themes in philosophy. Most philosophical definitions of truth have been based on the notion of “correct description”, although there is wide disagreement over what constitutes “correct”. Three major theories of truth have been proposed. The generally accepted approach is the *correspondence theory* which was defined by Thomas Aquinas as “the correlation of thought and object”, that is, our idea of something is true if it corresponds to the actuality of things. The *coherence theory* states that something can be said to be true if it is consistent with the other elements in a coherent conceptual system. Thus a proposition is true if it is coherent with every other proposition which is part of a comprehensive system. According to the *pragmatic theory of truth*, truth is something that is judged by its practical consequences; an idea is true if its implementation achieves an intended satisfactory result or if it works or if accepting it brings success. The generally accepted theory of truth is the correspondence theory of truth.

## UTILITARIANISM

Utilitarianism is a moral theory according to which an action is right if and only if it conforms to the *principle of utility*. An action conforms to the principle of utility if and only if its performance will be more productive of pleasure or happiness or

more preventive of pain or unhappiness, than any alternative. Utilitarianism is generally expressed as “the greatest good for the greatest number”. Thus according to utilitarians the morally superior action is the one that would result in the greatest pleasure or happiness and least pain for those to whom it would apply. The term was coined in 1871 by Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and is primarily associated with him and with James Mill (1645-1707).

## VOLUNTARISM

Voluntarism is a theory in which *will* is the central concept. It is the view that God or the ultimate reality is to be conceived as some form of will. This theory is contrasted with intellectualism which gives primacy to God’s reason. If we maintain that moral or physical laws issue from God, we also need to answer the question whether they issue from *God’s will* or God’s reason. In medieval philosophy voluntarism was championed by John Duns Scotus (1266-1308) and William of Ockham (1280-1349) and intellectualism found support in Averroes (1126-1198), Thomas Aquinas and Meister Eckhart (1260-1328).

### Check your progress III

- Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer  
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) What is Skepticism?

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2) What do you understand by truth?

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## 4.4 LET US SUM UP

We have seen above some of the key philosophical concepts which a student of philosophy will frequently encounter. Hence a student should be very familiar with them and be able to describe them as clearly and precisely as possible. One should also know the distinction between the different schools of thought which many of the terms represent, and develop the ability to judge their relative and demerits.

## 4.5 KEY WORDS

<b>Law</b>	: Law is the statement of what always happens or should happen.
<b>Conduct</b>	: Conduct is deliberate or intentional behaviour.
<b>Intellect</b>	: Intellect is the faculty of understanding.
<b>Will</b>	: Will is the faculty of decision.
<b>Memory</b>	: Memory is the faculty of recollection or remembrance.

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## 4.6 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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## 4.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Check your progress I

- 1) The term Absolute stands for the ultimate reality or principle which is perfect, complete, independent, unlimited and all-embracing. The Absolute whether it is God or another cosmic force is generally seen as the source of all things, an infinite, wholly unrestricted and entirely independent of creation. It necessarily exists and depends on nothing else.
- 2) Deduction is a process of gaining knowledge independently of experience through pure logical reasoning. Deductive reasoning begins with a universal or general truth and leads to knowledge of a particular instance of it. The classical form of deductive reasoning is the syllogism in which a necessary conclusion is derived from two accepted premises: e.g All men are mortal, Ram is a man, and therefore, Ram is mortal. Induction is a process of arriving at knowledge through experience. It relies on observation and experimentation. Induction begins with the particular and moves to the universal, a generalization that accounts for other examples of the same category or class.

### Check your progress II

- 1) Phenomenology is a name of a highly influential school of philosophy founded by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) and developed in original ways by others. The term refers to the description or study of things as they appear without engaging in any value judgement. Husserl proposed what he called the "phenomenological reduction" which required the *bracketing* or "putting aside" all conventional assumptions, including the question of the very existence of an object or impression in order to examine life experience from a fresh, unbiased perspective.

- 2) In the philosophy of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) the *noumena* (sig. *noumenon* = thing in itself) is contrasted with *phenomena* (sig. *phenomenon* = thing as it appears), which is the object of empirical knowledge. For Kant a noumenon is an object of awareness not produced by sensory experience. According to him we have no faculty of non-sensory intuition. Hence we can have no noumenal knowledge as such. A phenomenon is a thing (a quality, a relation, a state of affairs, an event, etc) *as it appears to us* or as it is perceived. This contrast gives rise to one of the fundamental problems in philosophy whether or how far we can have knowledge of the *way things really are* (things-in-themselves) or the noumena.

### Check your progress III

- 1) Scepticism is the view that *nothing can be known with certainty*, that at best there can only be some private probable opinion. It implies that human reason has no capacity to come to any conclusions at all and that all knowledge fall short of certainty. Hence it is better to suspend belief than to rely on the dubitable products of reason. Scepticism takes two main forms: the belief that *no position is certain* (including as is frequently noted, this position), and the view that *truth exists but that certain knowledge of it may be beyond our grasp*.
- 2) Three major theories of truth have been proposed. The generally accepted approach is the *correspondence theory* which was defined by Thomas Aquinas as “the correlation of thought and object”, that is, our idea of something is true if it corresponds to the actuality of things. The *coherence theory* states that something can be said to be true if it is consistent with the other elements in a coherent conceptual system. Thus a proposition is true if it is coherent with every other proposition which is part of a comprehensive system. According to the *pragmatic theory of truth*, truth is something that is judged by its practical consequences; an idea is true if its implementation achieves an intended satisfactory result or if it works or if accepting it bring success. The generally accepted theory of truth is the correspondence theory of truth.