UNIT 4 NEO-SCHOLASTICISM AND FEMINISM

Contents

4.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit will feature the following topics:

- To introduce the students to the need of neo-scholastic philosophy;
- To acquaint them with some key notions of neo-schoalsticism; and
- To provide them with some elementary ideas of feminism.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Scholasticism is the system of theology and philosophy taught in medieval European universities, based on Aristotelian logic and the writings of the early Church Fathers and having a strong emphasis on tradition and dogma. This philosophy (or theology) which originated in the 9th century, was a medieval Christian school of philosophy and theology whose high point coincided with the rise of universities during the 12th and 13th centuries. The name was derived from the fact that those involved were the "Schoolmen" who taught at cathedral schools and universities. These philosophers sought to organize and systematize every aspect of Christian belief.

Saint Bonaventure (1221 –1274) Bonaventure, Saint Thomas Aquinas, (1225 –1274), John Duns Scotus (c. 1265 –1308) and William of Ockham (c. 1287-1347), were the great philosophers of High Scholasticism.

Neo-Scholasticism is the development of the Scholasticism of the Middle Ages during the latter half of the nineteenth century. It is not merely the resuscitation of a philosophy long since defunct, but rather a restatement in our own day of the philosophia perennis which, elaborated by the Greeks and brought to perfection by the great medieval teachers, has never ceased to exist even in modern times. It has some times been called neo-Thomism partly because St. Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century gave to Scholasticism among the Latins its final form, partly because the idea has gained ground that only Thomism can infuse vitality into twentieth century scholasticism. But Thomism is too narrow a term; the system itself is too large and comprehensive to be expressed by the name of any single exponent. This unit will deal with the elements which neo-Scholasticism and the main features of it (De Wulf 1911).

4.2 TRADITIONAL ELEMENTS

Neo-Scholasticism seeks to restore the fundamental organic doctrines embodied in the Scholasticism of the thirteenth century. It claims that philosophy does not vary with each passing phase of history; that the truth of seven hundred years ago is still true today, and that if the great medieval thinkers - Aquinas, Bonaventure, and Duns Scotus - succeeded in constructing a sound philosophical system on the data supplied by the Greeks, especially by Aristotle, it must be possible, in our own day, to gather from the speculation of the Middle Ages the soul of truth which it contains. Following De Wulf (1911) these essential conceptions may be summarized as follows:

1) God, pure actuality and absolute perfection, is substantially distinct from every finite thing: he alone can create and preserve all beings other than Himself. His infinite knowledge includes all that has been, is, or shall be, and likewise all that is possible.

2) As to our knowledge of the material world: whatever exists is itself, an incommunicable, individual substance. To the core of self-sustaining reality, in the oak-tree for instance, other realities (accidents) are added - size, form, roughness, and so on. All oak-trees are alike, indeed are identical in respect of certain constituent elements. Considering this likeness and even identity, our human intelligence groups them into one species and again, in view of their common characteristics, it ranges various species under one genus. Such is the Aristotelean solution of the problem of universals. Each substance is in its nature fixed and determined; and nothing is farther from the spirit of Scholasticism than a theory of evolution which would regard even the essences of things as products of change. But this static world requires as its complement a moderate dynamism, and this is supplied by the central concepts of act and potency. Whatsoever changes is, just for that reason, limited. The oak-tree passes through a process of growth, of becoming: whatever is actually in it now was potentially in it from the beginning. Its vital functions go on unceasingly (accidental change); but the tree itself will die, and out of its decayed trunk other substances will come forth (substantial change). The theory of matter and form is simply an interpretation of the substantial changes which bodies undergo. The union of matter and form constitutes the essence of concrete being, and this essence is endowed with existence. Throughout all change and becoming there runs a rhythm of finality; the activities of the countless substances

of the universe converge towards an end which is known to God; finality, in a word, involves optimism.

3) Man, a compound of body (matter) and of soul (form), puts forth activities of a higher order - knowledge and volition. Through his senses he perceives concrete objects, e.g. this oak; through his intellect he knows the abstract and universal (the oak). All our intellectual activity rests on sensory function; but through the active intellect (*intellectus agens*) an abstract representation of the sensible object is provided for the *intellectus possibilis*. Hence the characteristic of the idea, its non-materiality, and on this is based the principal argument for the spirituality and immortality of the soul. Here, too, is the foundation of logic and of the theory of knowledge, the justification of our judgments and syllogisms. Upon knowledge follows the appetitive process, sensory or intellectual according to the sort of knowledge. The will) in certain conditions is free, and thanks to this liberty man is the master of his destiny. Like all other beings, we have an end to attain and we are morally obliged, though not compelled, to attain it. Natural happiness would result from the full development of our powers of knowing and loving. We should find and possess God in this world since the corporeal world is the proper object of our intelligence. But above nature is the order of grace and our supernatural happiness will consist in the direct intuition of God, the beatific vision. Here philosophy ends and theology begins.

4.3 ADAPTATION TO MODERN NEEDS

The neo-Scholastic programme includes, in the next place, the adaptation of medieval principles and doctrines to our present intellectual needs. Complete immobility is no less incompatible with progress than out-and-out relativism. To make Scholasticism rigid and stationary would be fatal to it. The doctrines revived by the new movement are like an inherited fortune; to refuse it would be folly, but to manage it without regard to actual conditions would be worse. With Dr. Ehrhard one may say: “Aquinas should be our beacon, not our boundary”. We have now to pass in review the various factors in the situation and to see in what respect the new Scholasticism differs from the old and how far it adapts itself to our age.

Elimination of False or Useless Notions

Neo-Scholasticism rejects the theories of physics, celestial and terrestrial, which the Middle Ages grafted on the principles, otherwise sound enough, of cosmology and metaphysics; e.g. the perfection and superiority of astral substance, the “incorruptibility” of the heavenly bodies, their external connexion with “motor spirits”, the influence of the stars on the generation of earthly beings, the four “simple” bodies, etc. It further rejects those philosophical theories which are disproved by the results of investigation; e.g. the diffusion of sensible “species” throughout a medium and their introduction into the organs of sense. Even the Scholastic ideas that have been retained are not all of equal importance; criticism and personal conviction may retrench or modify them considerably, without injury to fundamental principles.

Study of the History of Philosophy

The medieval scholars cultivated the history of philosophy solely with a view to its utility, i.e. as a means of gathering the deposit of truth contained in the

writings of the ancients and, especially, for the purpose of refuting error and thus emphasizing the value of their own doctrine. Modern students, on the contrary, regard every human fact and achievement as in itself significant, and accordingly they treat the history of philosophy in a spirit that is more disinterested. With this new attitude, neo-Scholasticism is in full sympathy; it does its share in the work of historical reconstruction by employing critical methods; it does not attempt to condense the opinions of others into a syllogism and refute them with a phrase, nor does it commend the practice of putting whole systems into a paragraph or two in order to annihilate them with epithet or invective. Neo-Scholasticism, however, does not confine its interest to ancient and medieval philosophy; its chief concern is with present-day systems. It takes issue with them and offsets their theories of the world by a synthesis of its own. It is only by keeping in touch with actual living thought that it can claim a place in the twentieth century and command the attention of its opponents. And it has everything to gain from a discussion in which it encounters Positivism, Kantianism, and other forms or tendencies of modern speculation.

Dialogue with the Sciences

The need of a philosophy based on science is recognized to-day by every school. Neo-Scholasticism simply follows the example of the Aristotelean and medieval philosophy in taking the data of research as the groundwork of its speculation. That there are profound differences between the Middle Ages and modern times from the scientific point of view, is obvious. One has only to consider the multiplication of the sciences in special lines, the autonomy which science as a whole has acquired, and the clear demarcation established between popular views of nature and their scientific interpretation. But it is equally plain that neo-Scholasticism must follow up each avenue of investigation, since it undertakes, as Aristotle and Aquinas did, to provide a synthetic explanation of phenomena by referring them to their ultimate causes and determining their place in the universal order of things; and this undertaking, if the synthesis is to be deep and comprehensive, presupposes a knowledge of the details furnished by each science. It is not possible to explain the world of phenomena while neglecting the phenomena that make up the world. “All that exists, as contemplated by the human mind, forms one large system or complex fact. . . . Like a short-sighted reader, its eye pores closely, and travels slowly, over the awful volume which lies open for its inspection. . . . These various partial views or abstractions . . . are called sciences . . . they proceed on the principle of a division of labour. . . . And further the comprehension of the bearings of one science on another, and the use of each to each, and the location of them all, with one another, this belongs, I conceive, to a sort of science distinct from all of them, and in some sense, a science of sciences, which is my own conception of what is meant by philosophy.” There is, of course, the pedagogical problem; how shall philosophy maintain its control over the ever-widening field of the various sciences? In reply, we may cite the words of Cardinal Mercier, a prominent leader in the neo-Scholastic movement: “As a matter of fact”, he declares, “the difficulty is a serious one, and one may say in general terms, that it is not going to be solved by any one man. As the domain of fact and observation grows larger and larger, individual effort becomes less competent to survey and master it all: hence the necessity of co-operative effort to supply what is lacking in the work of isolated investigators; hence too the need of union between the synthetic mind and the analytic, in order to secure, by daily contact and joint action, the harmonious development of philosophy and science.

Innovations in Doctrinal Matters

Once it turned its attention to modern fashions of thought, neo-Scholasticism found itself face to face with problems of which medieval philosophy had not the slightest suspicion or at any rate did not furnish a solution. It had to bear the brunt of conflict between its own principles and those of the systems in vogue, especially of Positivism and Criticism. And it had to take up, from its own point of view, the questions which are favourite topics of discussion in the schools of our time. How far then, one may ask, has neo-Scholasticism been affected by modern thought? As to metaphysics: in the Middle Ages its claim to validity met with no challenge, whereas, in the twentieth century, its very possibility is at stake and, to defend it against the concerted attack of Hume and Kant and Comte, the true significance of such concepts as being, substance, absolute, cause, potency, and act must be explained and upheld. It is further needful to show that, in a very real sense, God is not unknowable; to rebut the charges preferred by modern philosophers against the traditional proofs of God's existence; to deal with the materials furnished by ethnography and the history of religions; and to study the various forms which monism or pantheism nowadays assume. Cosmology can well afford to insist on the traditional theory of matter and form, provided it pay due attention to the findings of physics, chemistry, crystallography, and mineralogy, and meet the objections of atomism and dynamism, theories which, in the opinion of scientific authority, are less satisfactory as explanations of natural phenomena than the hylomorphism of the Scholastics.

Neo-Scholasticism proceeds by analysis and introspection it states the problem in the terms which, since Kant's day, are the only admissible terms, but as against the Kantian criticism it finds the solution in a rational dogmatism. Its aesthetics holds a middle course between the extreme subjectivism of many modern thinkers who would reduce the beautiful to a mere impression, and the no less extreme objectivism which the Greeks of old maintained. It is equally at home in the field of experimental psychology which investigates the correlation between conscious phenomena and their physiological accompaniments. The laws and principles which the modern science of education has drawn from experience find their adequate explanation in neo-Scholastic doctrine; thus, the intuitive method, so largely accepted at present as an essential element in education, is based on the Scholastic theory that nothing enters the intellect save through the avenue of sense.

As regards the relations between philosophy and religion, there are important changes to note. For the medieval mind in the Western world, philosophy and theology were identical until about the twelfth century. In the thirteenth the line of demarcation was clearly drawn, but philosophy was still treated as the preliminary training for theology. This is no longer the case; neo-Scholasticism assigns to philosophy a value of its own as a rational explanation of the world, on a par in this respect with Positivism and other systems; and it welcomes all who are bent on honest research, whether their aim be purely philosophical or apologetic. Parallel with these modifications are those which affect the pedagogical phase of the movement. The methods of teaching philosophy in the thirteenth century were too closely dependent on the culture of that age; hence they have been replaced by modern procedures, curricula, and means of propagation. It would be ill-advised to wrap neo-Scholastic doctrine in medieval jargons. In this connexion, the use of living languages as a means of

exposition has obvious advantages and finds favour with many of those who are best qualified to judge.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) How does Neo-Scholasticism adapt to modern needs?

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2) Does Neo-Scholasticism take science seriously?

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4.4 PROMINENT NEO-SCHOLASTICS

Jacques Maritain

Jacques Maritain (1882–1973), French philosopher and political thinker, was one of the principal exponents of Thomism in the twentieth century and an influential interpreter of the thought of St Thomas Aquinas. Raised as a Protestant, he converted to Catholicism in 1906. An author of more than 60 books, he helped to revive St. Thomas Aquinas for modern times and is a prominent drafter of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Pope Paul VI presented his "Message to Men of Thought and of Science" at the close of Vatican II to Maritain, his long-time friend and mentor. Maritain's interest and works spanned many aspects of philosophy, including aesthetics, political theory, the philosophy of science, metaphysics, education, liturgy and ecclesiology.

Joseph Maréchal (1878 - 1944) was a Belgian Jesuit priest, philosopher and psychologist at the Higher Institute of Philosophy of the University of Leuven who founded a school of thought called Transcendental Thomism, which attempted to merge the theological and philosophical thought of St. Thomas Aquinas with that of Immanuel Kant. Maréchal joined the Jesuits in 1895 and after a doctorate in Biology in Leuven (1905) he specialized first in Experimental Psychology, spending some time in Munich with Wilhelm Wundt (1911). Till the end of his life Maréchal would say that his real interest was rather in Psychology than Philosophy. Prompted by the call of Pope Leo XIII to revitalize Thomist theology, he started studying in depth the works of St Thomas Aquinas in order to understand the inner coherence of his system, along with the works of other scholastic thinkers, modern philosophers and scientists of the day. From this (and in particular from influences from Kant's transcendental idealism) emerged a new and more dynamic Thomism, recapturing the union of 'act and

power' of the original thinker. The development of his thought can be grasped in the five 'cahiers' (see bibliography) in which after exposing the weaknesses of traditional Thomism he evaluated Kant's Philosophy (3d cahier) with whose help he proposes a modernized Thomism in the 4th and 5th cahier. The work of Maréchal had a great influence on such contemporary theologians and philosophers as Gaston Isaye, Joseph de Finance, Karl Rahner, Bernard Lonergan and J.B. Lodz. He proceeded in the same way in his study of the psychology of the mystics. Till his death (11 December 1944) he taught Philosophy and Experimental Psychology at the Jesuit house of Studies in Leuven.

Karl Rahner, (1904 —1984) was a German Jesuit and theologian who, alongside Bernard Lonergan and Hans Urs von Balthasar, is considered one of the most influential Roman Catholic theologians of the 20th century. His theology influenced the Second Vatican Council and was ground-breaking for the development of what is generally seen as the modern understanding of Catholicism.

Bernard J.F. Lonergan, (1904 –1984) was a Canadian Jesuit Priest. He was a philosopher-theologian in the Thomist tradition and an economist from Buckingham, Quebec. He is the author of Insight: A Study of Human Understanding (1957) and Method in Theology (1972), which established what he called the Generalized Empirical Method (GEM).

Emerich Coreth (1919 - 2006) was an Austrian Jesuit deeply making Scholastic thought relevant through his metaphysics. Following insights from Kant and Heidegger, he tried to present a philosophy (especially metaphysics and anthropology) that is consistent with the Christian vision.

4.5 FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY: INRODUCTION

Feminist philosophy emerged in the US in the 1970s following only a decade behind the rise of the US women's movement in the 1960s. Although Simone de Beauvoir published her now highly influential The Second Sex in 1953, it would take at least a decade for women in the US to begin to organize around the injustices Beauvoir identified, and even longer for feminist philosophers in the US to turn to her work for inspiration.

Although feminist philosophies are common in US, it is important to stress that it is still evolving, especially in India. Feminist philosophies have histories that date back historically at least to the early modern period, and have different genealogies in different geographical regions. Understanding the emergence of feminist philosophy in the U.S. requires an overview of at least two contexts — the political context of what came to be called the "second wave of the woman's movement" and the nature of philosophy in U.S. academies.

4.6 GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF FEMINIST THOUGHT

Feminism is, in fact, a collection of movements aimed at defining, establishing and defending equal political, economic, and social rights and equal opportunities for women. Its concepts overlap with those of women's rights. Much of feminism deals specifically with the problems women face in overcoming social barriers, but some feminists argue that gender equality implies a necessary liberation of

both men and women from traditional cultural roles, and look at the problems men face as well. Feminists—that is, persons practicing feminism—may be persons of either sex (Wikipedia).

Feminist philosophy emerged from these feminist movements and includes general theories and theories about the origins of inequality, and, in some cases, about the social construction of sex and gender, in a variety of disciplines. Feminist activists have campaigned for women's rights—such as in contract, property, and voting—while also promoting women's rights to bodily integrity and autonomy and reproductive rights. They have opposed domestic violence, sexual harassment, and sexual assault. In economics, they have advocated for workplace rights, including equal pay and opportunities for careers and to start businesses.

Today's feminists seek access to education through fair consideration for women for scholarships, inclusion in athletic programs, and equal treatment in the classroom; to economics through equal access for women to jobs and careers, equal pay, and equal consideration for promotions and career enhancement as well as family-friendly and flexible workplaces with less hierarchical management structures; and to politics through a 50% voice for women in decision making at all levels of government and power structures (Harlan 1998).

Feminists also seek a change in control over reproduction through reproductive freedom for all women, including maintaining legal access to abortion and unhindered sex education and access to birth control. They seek control over sexuality through the right of all to define their own sexuality and the freedom to practice it without discrimination, either overt or subtle. They seek an end to violence through ending control over women's mobility and personal freedom, ending domestic violence, sexual harassment, and rape, and limiting the prevalence of pornography which leads to violence against women. They seek a change in control over society through transformation of social institutions which perpetuate inequality of the sexes and values genders differently.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Who is Emerich Coreth?

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2) Give some general characteristics of feminist thought.

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4.7 HISTORICAL DEFINITIONS

The following definitions given by Judith Harlan (1998) give a rough idea of the growth of feminist thought, especially in the United States.

Wave Feminists

The feminists who fought for suffrage in the United States and beyond, beginning with the meeting in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848 and culminating in the right to vote in 1920, are today call the 'first wave'. These were the women who broke through the barriers of their day to speak in public, to demand property rights, and to claim a political voice (Harlan 1998).

Second Wave

Taking up the cause of women's rights in the early to mid-1960s, these feminists founded feminist organizations and raised the consciousness of the women and men of the country, focusing on winning pay equity for women, access to jobs and education, recognition of women's unpaid labor in the home, and a rebalancing of the double workload of family and outside work for women in the paid labor force. The wave began with the founding of women's liberation groups that took New Left political groups such as the Students for a Democratic Society as their models, joined soon after by other groups that sought political change within the system and through political organizations of their own, forming feminist groups and the mass of the second wave. This second wave is usually considered to have begun about 1963 and run until the backlash of the 1980s, when feminism is seen to have stagnated.

Third Wave

The third wave consists of many of the daughters and sons of the second wave, as well as the second wavers themselves. These feminists grew up with many of the advantages that the second wave fought for, and their issues are today's issues - parental leave and day care for the children of working parents, gaining decision-making positions in corporate and governmental high offices, worldwide sustainable development, and a global awareness of feminist causes. The third wave is a global surge, and in the US is multi-cultural and inclusive, supporting women of all heritages as well as the rights of lesbian women and gay men.

Some of these third-wave feminists are issuing a challenge to the older feminists, seeing feminist rhetoric as entrenched in victimization, with an emphasis on the oppression engendered by a patriarchal system. They grew up in a country transformed by second-wave feminist leaders, with established equal employment and education laws, access to birth control and legal abortion, support within police departments for prosecution of rapists, and women holding a vocal presence in politics. Many third wavers see women as fundamentally strong, confident, brave individuals. They seek to establish that image of women within the public consciousness, and they look for greater integration of women into politics, economics, and social forums.

Liberal (Equality) Feminism

Liberal feminists are individualists who stress the importance of freedom, especially the freedom to choose. They see more similarities between women and men than differences and envision a community of equitable opportunity

for both sexes. They also see most stereotypically masculine or feminine traits as culturally imposed. They view choice as an absolute right, and they seek control over the body and social circumstance. They strive to avoid the imprint of gender codes and the gender socialization of children, looking instead for an authentic, unengineered, and individual approach to life. Some of today's liberal feminists describe themselves as equality feminists and see a link between themselves and first-wave or early second-wave feminists.

Cultural (Difference) Feminism

Emerging in the 1970s and becoming a strong voice by the 1980s, cultural feminism attempts to revalue the feminine aspects that have been devalued by society. It celebrates all things female, whether these derive from social, class, or biological circumstances of women's lives. Difference feminists see many gender traits as biological, or at least deeply structured cultural, traits. They celebrate the differences between women and men, seeing feminine qualities as a source of personal strength and pride and providing affirmation that women occupy the moral high ground. Instead of political change, cultural feminism focuses on cultural transformation, stressing the role of the nonrational, intuitive, collective side of life. This thread of reasoning can be traced through feminists history to first-wave debates within feminist circles.

Those debates centered on the need for women's input in government as guiding, moral voices - the conscience of the nation.(First-wave difference feminists also argued for protective labor legislation for women).

Radical Feminism

Also stressing the differences between females and males, radical feminism values women and likens males to a separate species. Whether the difference is biological or gendered by society is not at issue; the results of male difference and dominance are. According to the radical feminist ideology, the violence of the heterosexual male has led to the patriarchal and hierarchical cultures of today. Further, the male as oppressed and victimized the female through pornography, violence, and the militarization of the world.

Marxist and Socialist Feminism

Feminists who agree with the tenets of Marxist and socialist feminism believe women are seen as a sex class, gendered by society into a secondary position through a systemic sex gender system that dictates social roles, purposes, and norms. These feminists believe that women are exploited as both a sex and a class, and that women are consigned to reproduction and their natures tethered. Men take the roles of goods production and potentially reach freedom. To change this situation, Marxist and socialist feminists seek an end to gendered socialization, and alliance of oppressed groups, and a beginning of a sharing of the wealth.

Ecofeminism

Growing from the idea of women's values as separate from men's and also closer to nature, Ecofeminism revalues and defines feminine traits. Women are seen as in tune with nature and seeking to work in conjunction with it; men have a hierarchical relationship to nature and seek to control it. This view poses the idea that men's control of nature up to now has created a crisis, and ecocide, in much of the world. Ecofeminists look for life- affirming and nonviolent solutions

to world problems. Ecofeminists see feminine values as virtues needed by the world's patriarchy to survive and evolve. Ecofeminists may also subscribe to liberal, radical, or Marxist/socialist thought, but focus on ecology, both of nature and human systems.

Black Feminism

Though African American feminists may not have been included in early mainstream second-wave feminism, they have always been a vocal presence in feminist criticism and ideology. Racism, they have said, is a problem that lives alongside sexism. And so is classism (the hierarchy created by a caste-like economic and social class system).They have demanded that feminists consider the problems of racism and classism along with sexism; further, they have explained the interlacing interconnections from racism to sexism to classism. Sexism cannot truly be understood without understanding its racist undertones; by the same token, racism embodies sexism.

They have refuted the stereotypes of black women as matriarchs and superwomen and have spearheaded movements to gain economic and political clout for women of color. African American women support numerous feminist and women's issues organizations, some of them chiefly for women of color. They are also part of the general feministmovement and leadership, both in the United Stated and globally.

Male Feminists

Men have been allies, mentors, and supporters of feminism from the beginning of the women's movements. They may consider themselves to be Ecofeminists, cultural feminists, liberal feminists, and so on. Usually, their goal is to see beyond the accepted stereotypes of males that they have grown up with, to create nonsexist relationships, to join in the battle to end violence against women, and to develop partnerships with women instead of hierarchies.

4.8 SOME FEMINIST PHILOSOPHERS

Simone de Beauvoir

Simone-Ernestine-Lucie-Marie Bertrand de Beauvoir, often shortened to Simone de Beauvoir (1908 -1986), was a French existentialist philosopher, public intellectual, and social theorist. She wrote novels, essays, biographies, an autobiography in several volumes, and monographs on philosophy, politics, and social issues. She is now best known for her metaphysical novels, including She Came to Stay and The Mandarins, and for her 1949 treatise The Second Sex, a detailed analysis of women's oppression and a foundational tract of contemporary feminism. She is also noted for her lifelong polyamorous relationship with Jean-Paul Sartre.

Julia Kristeva (1941) is a Bulgarian-French philosopher, literary critic, psychoanalyst, sociologist, feminist, and, most recently, novelist, who has lived in France since the mid-1960s. She is now a Professor at the University Paris Diderot. Kristeva became influential in international critical analysis, cultural theory and feminism after publishing her first book Semeiotikè in 1969. Her immense body of work includes books and essays which address intertextuality, the

semiotic, and abjection, in the fields of linguistics, literary theory and criticism, psychoanalysis, biography and autobiography, political and cultural analysis, art and art history. Together with Roland Barthes, Todorov, Goldmann, Gérard Genette, Lévi-Strauss, Lacan, Greimas, and Althusser, she stands as one of the foremost structuralists, in that time when structuralism took a major place in humanities. Her works also have an important place in post-structuralist thought.

Mary Daly (1928 – 2010) was an American radical feminist philosopher, academic, and theologian. Daly, who described herself as a "radical lesbian feminist", taught at Boston College, a Jesuit-run institution, for 33 years.

4.9 NEED FOR INDIAN FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY

While Western feminists and Western theoretical models of feminism have done a commendable job of deconstructing several age-old binaries that have characterised dominant philosophical and political thinking on gender, what is remarkable is the continued existence of the dichotomy of the West and 'the Rest' in their discourse. Books on feminist theories, even if they claim to give 'multicultural' or 'global' perspectives on women's studies, are still dominated by Western classifications.

In such books, feminist perspectives from Asia or India, if included at all, are usually relegated to one chapter. The implication is that there is uniformity or even agreement on what feminism means in these very diverse cultures of Europe and India . They bring together different geographies and histories until difference is lost and one world feminism' becomes interchangeable with another. Maitrayee Chaudhuri's collection Feminism in India challenges this reduction of local feminisms.

Tracing the history of the concept of feminism from colonial times to contemporary India, Chaudhuri explores the infinite variety of Indian feminisms and their characteristics. Chaudhuri tries to give a broad picture of feminist thought in India and its development. Some of the 'Challenges to Feminism' in India described in this book are the politics of the Hindu Right, the Hindutva movement and globalisation,

Another distinguished Indian feminist writer, novelist, and author of several short story anthologies, Sarojini Sahoo, through her blog, "Sense & Sensuality," explores why sexuality plays a major role in our understanding of Eastern feminism. To the question, "Is feminism in India different from feminism in the West?" she answers: "At one time in India - in the ancient Vedic period - there were equal rights between men and women and even feminist law makers like Gargi and Maitreyi . But the later Vedic period polarized the sexes. Males oppressed females and treated them as 'other' or similar to a lower caste." She holds that patriarchy is just one of the hierarchies which keep females down, oppressed by the traditional system.

Madhu Kishwar is a fearless and provocative thinker, unafraid to ride against the wave. She holds that "Feminism is inviting such disdain and backlash in India because it lacks both fighting power and integrity. In the west at least, women fought bitter battles. Here, men led the way. The Gandhis, the Phules. I'm not ashamed to acknowledge that." (Tehelka series on public intellectuals,) Thus India badly needs an Indian feminist philosophy, which is in the making.

Check Your Progress III

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What is radical feminism?

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2) Who was Simone de Beauvoir?

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4.10 LET US SUM UP

We have studied in this unit some of the elementary notions of neo-scholasticism and feminism.

4.11 KEY WORDS

Beatific vision : In Christian theology, the beatific vision (Latin: visio beatifica) is the eternal and direct visual perception of God

Hylomorphism : The metaphysical view according to which every natural body consists of two intrinsic principles, one potential, namely, primary matter, and one actual, namely, substantial form.

Ecofeminism : It is a social and political movement which points to the existence of considerable common ground between environmentalism and feminism, with some currents linking deep ecology and feminism

4.12 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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