
UNIT 2 DIVISIONS OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

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2.0 OBJECTIVES

The unit introduces the major divisions of philosophy in Western tradition. The divisions are based on the historical and geographical background of the philosophers.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Philosophy is not merely a subject it is an 'activity.' Consequently one does not study philosophy one does it. People tend to consider philosophy as some extremely complex intellectual activity. Philosophy is a search, a search for wisdom of life. In this search philosophers at various stages have asked different question at different times and expounded new horizons of answers day after day for their problems. In the course of time this process of their thinking turned into a method and latter into school, system or thought. Therefore here in this unit "Divisions of Western Philosophy" we would describe the development of the western thought from the Pre- Socratic to the Contemporary continental philosophies with a special reference to major schools. This would enable the student not only to know the mere history of western philosophy but how thought or thinking pattern is evolving to a newer problems and newer solutions.

2.2 PRE-SOCRATIC PERIOD

Ancient Greece was the cradle of western civilization. Its earliest known thinkers around the year 500 B.C are called the Pre- Socratic philosophers. The contributions of this period could be well studied through the major schools of this time.

The Milesian/Ionian School

The Milesian school of thought was founded in the 6th century BC. The ideas associated with it are exemplified by three philosophers from the Ionian town of Miletus, on the Aegean coast of Anatolia: Thales, Anaximander and Anaximenes. Not satisfied with the mythological explanations offered by the prevalent Greek polytheistic religion they were the first to use the skills of human thought to solve certain problems that arose from the physical nature of the cosmos. Their problem was of the substance or the problem of the one and the many. To understand this multiplicity they agreed that there should be some sort of fundamental underlying unity. So they started with the basic question about “the essence of things” From where does everything come? From what is everything created? How do we explain the plurality of things found in nature?

Thales c. [624-550 BCE]: said water is original stuff [possible observation: nourishment, heat, seed, contain moisture], out of water everything comes but Thales does not indicate how.

Anaximander c. [611-547 BCE]: the essence or principle of things is the infinite a mixture, intermediate between observable elements, from which things arise by separation; moisture leads to living things. He speculated and argued that *apeiron* “the Boundless,” the infinite substance as the origin of everything that exist.

Anaximenes [588-524 BCE]: First principle is definite: air; it is infinite. From air all things arise by rarefaction and condensation a scientific observation thus the Milesians represent advance from qualitative-subjective to quantitative scientific explanation of modes of emergence of being from a primary substance

Pythagorean School

Pythagoreans’ main problem was the harmony, order, unity and proportion in the world. The world is a harmonious order, a cosmos. The Pythagorean account actually begins with Anaximander’s teaching that the ultimate substance of things is “the boundless,” or what Anaximander called the “*apeiron*.” The Pythagorean account holds that it is only through the notion of the “limit” that the “boundless” takes form.

The main characteristic of Pythagorean School was its ascetic and religious character. Philosophy was for salvation, it is a way of life not so much knowledge of cause of ultimate things. The school was influenced by Orphicism, which had a common way of life and believed in transmigration of soul. According to the tradition, Pythagoreanism developed at some point was seen as two separate schools of thought, the *mathematikoi* (“learners”) and the *akousmatikoi* (“listeners”). The *mathematikoi* were supposed to have extended and developed the more mathematical and scientific work begun by Pythagoras, while the *akousmatikoi* focused on the more religious and ritualistic aspects of his teachings. The *akousmatikoi* claimed that the *mathematikoi* were not genuinely Pythagorean, but the *mathematikoi*, on the other hand, allowed that the *akousmatikoi* were Pythagorean, but felt that their own group was more representative of Pythagoras.

The Ephesian School

The Ephesian School of philosophy of the 5th Century B.C. essentially refers to the ideas of just one man, Heraclitus who did not have any direct disciples or successors that we are aware of. He is a native of Ephesus in the Greek colony of Ionia. Along with his fellow Ionians of the Milesian School, he looked for a solution to the problem of change, but his view was that the world witnesses constant change, rather than no change at all. *Panta Rei* which means “everything is in a state of flux”, nothing is permanent. “One cannot step into the same river twice.” Reality is becoming rather than being. Unity exists in tension of opposites. Reality is at the same time one and many, opposites are composites. Thus makes apparently a logically incoherent claim that opposite things are identical, so that everything is, and is not, at the same time. This he exemplified by the idea that, although the waters in it are always changing, a river stays the same.

The transformation of material from one state into another does not happen by accident, he held, but rather within certain limits and within certain time and according to law or “logos”, according to which all things are one. The difference is essential to unity. He considered that the basis of the entire universe is an ever-living fire (although this is used more as a symbol of change and process, rather than actual fire), so that the world itself consists of a law-like interchange of elements, symbolized by fire. This is the best symbol to express the constant changing one- in-many.

The Eleatic School

The school took its name from Elea, a Greek city of lower Italy, the home of its chief exponents, Parmenides and Zeno. Its foundation is often attributed to Xenophanes of Colophon, but, although there is much in his speculations which formed part of the later Eleatic doctrine, it is probably more correct to regard Parmenides as the founder of the school. Parmenides of Elea cast his philosophy against Heraclitus who said, “it is and is not the same and not the same, and all things travel in opposite directions.” The fundamental reality for him is permanence, not change, being and not becoming, one and not many. Plurality and change are illusion. If A is being and B is being, A is the same as B. A cannot become B for both are Being. He held the view of ‘ontological monism.’ Being (*ontos*) is one (*Monos*). It is also called ‘absolutism’ there exists only one absolute independent and unrelated reality and nothing else. Parmenides argued that the first principle of being was One, indivisible, and unchanging. What will bring us to this knowledge is not opinion but reason. The former is the wrong way and relies on sense experience and erroneously takes plurality change as real. But with the way of reason, the right way reveals the truth, namely that reality is one and stable. This is the way that leads the knower behind the false appearances of sense knowledge.

Pluralist School

Empedocles of Agrigento (490-430 BCE) was from the ancient Greek city of Akragas, Agrigento in Latin, modern Agrigento, in Sicily. He appears to have been partly in agreement with the Eleatic School, partly in opposition to it. On the one hand, he maintained the unchangeable nature of substance;

on the other, he supposes a plurality of such substances - i.e. four classical elements, earth, water, air, and fire. Of these the world is built up, by the agency of two ideal motive forces - Love as the cause of union, Strife/Hate as the cause of separation. Anaxagoras of Clazomenae (500-428 BCE) in Asia Minor, also maintained the existence of an ordering principle as well as a material substance, and while regarding the latter as an infinite multitude of imperishable primary elements; he conceived divine reason or Mind (*Nous*) as ordering them. He referred all generation and disappearance to mixture and resolution respectively. To him belongs the credit of first establishing philosophy at Athens.

Atomist School

The first explicitly materialistic system was formed by Leucippus (5th century BCE) and his pupil Democritus of Abdera (460-370 BCE) from Thrace. Their school is a development of the philosophy of Empedocles who said that change was due to various proportions of the 4 elements. But he did not carry out the quantitative explanation of qualitative differences to its logical conclusion. So the atomists say that all things consist of a single kind of matter broken into tiny particles. According to them there are an infinite number of indivisible units which are called atoms (uncuttable α = not to be cut). These are imperceptible since they are too small to be perceived by senses. But Moving eternally through the infinite void, they collide and unite, thus generating objects which differ in accordance with the varieties, in number, size, shape, and arrangement, of the atoms which compose them.

Thus we can distinguish the pluralist and atomists in two ways: 1. Qualitative pluralism: those admitting principles are qualitatively different from one another. (Empedocles and Anaxagoras). 2. Quantitative pluralism: Those admitting the principles are qualitatively different in their shape, position and dimension (Leucippus and Democritus) Atomists

The Sophists

The development of Greek thought led to a spirit of free inquiry in poetry: Aeschylus [525-456 BCE], Sophocles [490-405 BCE], Euripides [480-406 BCE]; history: Thucydides [b. 471 BCE]; medicine: Hippocrates [b. 460 BCE]. The construction of philosophical systems ceases temporarily; the existing schools continue to be taught and some turn attention to natural-scientific investigation the resulting individualism made an invaluable contribution to Greek thought but led, finally, to an exaggerated intellectual and ethical subjectivism. The Sophists who were originally well-regarded came gradually to be a term of reproach partly owing to the radicalism of the later schools: their subjectivism, relativism and nihilism. For Protagoras, all opinions are true [though some "better"]; for Gorgias none are true [there is nothing; even if there were something we could not know it; if we could know it we could not communicate it]. Sophists exaggerated the differences in human judgments and ignored the common elements; laid too much stress on the illusoriness of the senses. Nevertheless, their criticisms of knowledge made necessary a profounder study of the nature of knowledge.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

- 1) Define the concept of Reality in Ephesian and Eleatic school.

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- 2) Distinguish the main differences between the Atomist and Pluralist.

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2.3 THE SOCRATIC AGE

Socratic School: Socrates [469-399 BCE], of Xenophon, the key figure in transforming Greek philosophy into a unified and continuous project is the one still being pursued today by many. The Socratic problem was to meet the challenge of sophistry, which, in undermining knowledge, threatened the foundations of morality and state.” Socratic method: includes the elements: [1] skeptical, [2] conventional, [3] conceptual or definitional, [4] empirical or inductive, [5] deductive a “dialectical” process for improving understanding of a subject, he convinced that truth is in every man’s heart.

This method of Socratics has two aspects: Ironical- it is a process to help clear notions. He approaches as if seeking knowledge, confesses his utter ignorance and asks questions. Maieutic (midwifery) – drawing truth out of mind or art of delivering truth. This method helps to clear the mind of the inquirer of all over-hasty, inadequate and mistaken notions and prejudices. Thus philosophy is centred on truth and being. Every human being is pregnant with the truth and the teacher is nothing more than a helpful midwife. Man knows thyself and you will be virtuous. Knowledge is the highest good. Knowledge is virtue and ignorance is a vice. Self knowledge is the foundation of all true and certain knowledge. Self knowledge means the knowledge of powers hidden in the mind, pointing towards the existence of an innate knowledge. Knowledge is formed in the mind by the capacity of intellect which elaborates the findings of the senses.

Plato’s Academy: The groundwork of Plato’s scheme is the threefold division of philosophy into dialectic, ethics, and physics; its central point is the theory of forms. This theory is a combination of the Eleatic doctrine of the One with Heraclitus’s theory of a perpetual flux and with the Socratic method of concepts. These forms are eternal, changeless and incorporeal which can be known only through thought. The things which we see around are only shadows or poor copies of the things that exist in the ideal world. The highest form is that of the Good, which is the ultimate basis of the rest, and the first cause of being and knowledge. Apprehensions derived from the impression of sense can never give us the knowledge of true being — i.e. of the forms. It can only be obtained by the soul’s activity within itself, apart from the troubles and disturbances of sense; that is to say, by the exercise of reason. Dialectic, as the instrument

in this process, leading us to knowledge of the ideas, and finally of the highest idea of the Good, is the first of sciences (*scientia scientiarum*).

The school founded by Plato, called the Academy (from the name of the grove of the Attic hero Academus where he used to deliver his lectures). Plato's Academy is often said to have been a school for would-be politicians in the ancient world, and to have had many illustrious alumni. In at least Plato's time, the school did not have any particular doctrine to teach; rather, Plato posed problems to be studied and solved by the others. There is evidence of lectures given, most notably Plato's lecture "On the Good" but probably the use of dialectic was more common. The academy was divided into three periods of the Old, Middle, and New Academy. The chief personages in the first of these were Speusippus (son of Plato's sister), who succeeded him as the head of the school (till 339 BCE), and Xenocrates of Chalcedon (till 314 BCE). Both of them sought to fuse Pythagorean speculations on number with Plato's theory of ideas. The two other Academies were still further removed from the specific doctrines of Plato, and advocated skepticism.

Aristotle's Peripatetic School

While Plato had sought to elucidate and explain things from the supra-sensual standpoint of the forms, his pupil preferred to start from the facts given us by experience. Philosophy to him meant science, and its aim was the recognition of the purpose in all things. Hence he establishes the ultimate grounds of things inductively — that is to say, by a posteriori conclusions from a number of facts to a universal. Matter is the basis of all that exists; it comprises the potentiality of everything, but of itself is not actually anything. A determinate thing only comes into being when the potentiality in matter is converted into actuality. This is effected by form, inherent in the unified object and the completion of the potentiality latent in the matter. For reason alone can attain to truth either in cognition or action. The end of human activity, or the highest good, is happiness, or perfect and reasonable activity in a perfect life. To this, however, external goods are more or less necessary conditions.

The followers of Aristotle, known as Peripatetics (Theophrastus, Strato of Lampascus, Lyco of Troas, Aristo of Ceos, Critolaus Diodorus of Tyre,). The school originally derived its name Peripatos from the *peripatoi* ("colonnades") of the Lyceum gymnasium in Athens where the members met. A similar Greek word *peripatetikos* refers to the act of walking, and as an adjective, "peripatetic" is often used to mean itinerant, wandering, meandering, or walking about. The Peripatetic School tended to make philosophy the exclusive property of the learned class, thereby depriving it of its power to benefit a wider circle. This soon produced a negative reaction, and philosophers returned to the practical standpoint of Socratic ethics. The speculations of the learned were only admitted in philosophy where serviceable for ethics. The chief consideration was how to popularize doctrines, and to provide the individual, in a time of general confusion and dissolution, with a fixed moral basis for practical life.

2.4 EPICUREANS, STOICS AND NEO-PLATONISM

Epicurus of Samos and later of Athens was the founder of the Epicurean school. The powerful thought of Epicurus was hedonistic, following sensual pleasure. He hated all kinds of metaphysical speculation. Philosophy must concentrate

more on the problem of man and the practical meaning. It must take special effort for the suffering of human being. He developed an unsparingly materialistic metaphysics, empiricist epistemology and hedonistic ethics. He taught that the basic constituents of the world are atoms and explained all natural phenomena in atomic terms. He taught that scepticism was untenable and that we could gain knowledge of the world relying upon the senses. Mental pleasures are greater than pleasures of the body, mental pains worse than physical pains therefore a life of prudence and wisdom is good and this has a naturalistic basis in the caprice of the world.

Stoics: The founder of the stoic school was Zeno. This school based itself on the moral ideas of the Cynics, Stoicism laid great emphasis on goodness and peace of mind gained from living a life of virtue in accordance with nature. It proved very successful, and flourished as the dominant philosophy from the Hellenistic period through to the Roman era. The stoics were materialists. They believed in determinism contrary to epicureans. Thus Epicureans and Stoics were concerned primarily with ethics however the ethics needed metaphysics and cosmology and theory of knowledge and truth in terms of sense experience they were pioneers of the empirical tradition in epistemology.

Neo-Platonism

The closing period of Greek philosophy is marked in the third century CE, by the establishment of Neo-Platonism in Rome. Its founder was Plotinus of Lycopolis in Egypt (205-270) and its emphasis is a scientific philosophy of religion, in which the doctrine of Plato is fused with the most important elements in the Aristotelian and Stoic systems and with Eastern speculations. At the summit of existences stands the One or the Good, as the source of all things. It emanates from itself, as if from the reflection of its own being, reason, wherein is contained the infinite store of ideas. Soul, the copy of the reason, is emanated by and contained in it, as reason is in the One, and, by informing matter in itself non-existence, constitutes bodies whose existence is contained in soul. Nature, therefore, is a whole, endowed with life and soul. Soul, being chained to matter, longs to escape from the bondage of the body and return to its original source. To attain this union with the Good, or God, is the true function of humans, to whom the external world should be absolutely indifferent.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

- 1) Define the philosophical method of Peripatetic school.

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- 2) Define Epicurean Ethics.

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2.5 MEDIEVAL SCHOLASTICISM

Scholasticism

Scholasticism is a medieval school of philosophy or perhaps more accurately, a method of learning taught by the academics of medieval universities and cathedrals in the period from the 12th to 16th Century. It combined Logic, Metaphysics and semantics into one discipline. The term “scholastic” is derived from the Latin word “*scholasticus*” and the Greek “*scholastikos*” meaning literally “devoting one’s leisure to learning” or “scholar” and the Greek “*scholeion*” meaning “school”. The term “schoolmen” is also commonly used to describe scholastics. Scholasticism is best known for its application in medieval Christian theology, especially in attempts to reconcile the philosophy of the ancient classical philosophers (particularly Aristotle) with Christian theology. However, in the High Scholastic period of the 14th Century, it moved beyond theology and had its applications in many other fields of study including Epistemology, Philosophy of Science, Philosophy of nature, Psychology and even economic theory. Essentially, Scholasticism is a tool and method for learning which places emphasis on dialectical reasoning i.e. the exchange of argument or thesis, and counter argument or antithesis, in pursuit of a conclusion or synthesis, directed at answering questions or resolving contradictions.

Characteristics of Scholasticism

1. An acceptance of the prevailing Catholic orthodoxy.
2. Within this orthodoxy, an acceptance of Aristotle as a greater thinker than Plato.
3. The recognition that Aristotle and Plato disagreed about the notion of universals, and that this was a vital question to resolve.
4. Giving prominence to dialectical thinking and syllogistic reasoning.
5. An acceptance of the distinction between “natural” and “revealed” theology.
6. A tendency to dispute everything at great length and in minute detail, often involving word-play.

Scholastic Method

The method is to thoroughly and critically read a book by a renowned scholar or author, reference any other related documents and commentaries on it, and note down any disagreements and points of contention. The two sides of an argument would be made whole through philological analysis (the examination of words for multiple meanings or ambiguities), and through logical analysis (using the rules of formal logic to show that contradictions did not exist but were merely subjective to the reader). These would then be combined into “*questionae*” and then into “*summae*” (complete summaries of all questions, such as St. Thomas Aquinas’ famous “*Summa Theologica*”, which claimed to represent the sum total of Christian theology at the time). The two methods of teaching are the “*lectio*” -the simple reading of a text by a teacher, who would expound on certain words and ideas, but no questions were permitted and the “*disputatio*” where either the question to be disputed was announced beforehand, or students proposed a question to the teacher without prior preparation, and the teacher would respond, citing authoritative texts such as the Bible to prove his position, and the students would rebut the response, and the argument would go back and forth, with someone taking notes to summarize the argument.

St. Anselm of Canterbury is sometimes misleadingly referred to as the “Father of Scholasticism”, although his approach was not really in keeping with the Scholastic method. Probably a better example of Early Scholasticism is the work of Peter Abelard and Peter Lombard, particularly the latter’s “Sentences”, a collection of opinions on the Church Fathers and other authorities. The Franciscan and Dominican orders of the 13th Century saw some of the most intense scholastic theologizing of High Scholasticism, producing such theologians and philosophers as Albertus Magnus, St. Thomas Aquinas, Alexander of Hales and St. Bonaventure. Late Scholasticism (14th Century onwards) became more complex and subtle in its distinctions and arguments, including the Nominalists or Voluntarists theologies of men like William of Ockham. Also notable during the Late Scholasticism period are John Duns Scotus, Meister Eckhart, Marsilius of Padua, John Wycliffe, Julian of Norwich, Catherine of Siena and Thomas a Kempis

Check Your Progress III

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What is Scholasticism?

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2) Define the Scholastic Method.

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2.6 MODERN SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

Renaissance Humanism

The modern philosophy began with the Renaissance 1500 A.D, a land mark in European history pointing to the end of Christian Medievalism “ and the beginning of a process that led to contemporary secularism. Renaissance means ‘renewal,’ or ‘rebirth’. Thus this awakening to a new mentality characterized by the following traits: 1. A revival of Greek Humanism, in opposition to Christian religiosity. Humanism refers to a system or mode of thought or action in which human interests, values, and dignity predominate. It’s philosophy is a variety of ethical theory and practice that emphasizes reason, scientific inquiry, and human fulfillment in the natural world and often rejects the importance of belief in God. 2. The rise of modern science with the end of the Ptolemaic theory and the Copernican revolution and religion (Galileo) raises the questions free thinking and the autonomous status for secular knowledge in regard to church authority. 3. The religious revolution of Luther who substituted the individual conscience for the church as a guide to biblical interpretation.

Thus it sets the Spirit of modern philosophy “as an awakening of the reflective spirit, a quickening of criticism, a revolt against authority and tradition, a protest against absolutism and collectivism, and a demand for freedom in thought, feeling

and action. While medieval found its guide and inspiration in the Christian religion, modern turned its attention to the nature of the new science and its method which are Rational and empirical. Thus modern philosophies are either Rationalism and or Empiricism.

Rationalism

Rationalism derives from the Latin word “*Ratio*” meaning “Reason”. Rationalism holds that genuine knowledge cannot come from sense perception or experience but must have its foundation in thought or reason. It makes reason instead of revelation and authority as the standard of knowledge. To employ reason is to use our individual intellectual abilities to seek evidence for and against potential beliefs. To fail to employ reason is to form beliefs on the basis of such non-rational processes as blind faith, guessing or unthinking obedience to institutional authority. Rationalism gives emphasis on the a priori reason which means knowledge obtained prior to experience. It is universal, necessary and self evident. Hence this theory holds that certain ideas like ideas of causality, infinity and perfect being of God are inborn and highly indubitable.

Rationalism is also commonly called as Continental Rationalism, the term ‘continental rationalism’ would traditionally refer to a 17th century philosophical movement begun by Descartes. After Descartes several scientists and philosophers continued his teachings throughout continental Europe and accordingly were titled as Cartesians. A handful of philosophers influenced by Descartes were more original in developing their own views and they are Benedict Spinoza, Nicholas Malebranche and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz..

Rational Method: Continental rationalists maintained that we could deduce truths with absolute certainty from our innate ideas, much the way theorems in geometry are deduced from axioms. Mathematical demonstration was seen as the perfect type of demonstrating truth and accordingly mathematical proof became the model for all other kinds of demonstration. For them Mathematics provides a model of clarity, certainty and orderly deduction. The personal elements the subjective factors such as feelings and emotions are eliminated and body of presuppositions the truth of which is assured and built up. Although the empiricist used the same deductive reasoning but they put a greater emphasis on the inductive method following the British country man Francis Bacon. Thus rational method is basically predicting and explaining behavior based on mathematical reasoning and logic.

Empiricism

Etymologically the name comes from the Greek word ‘*Empeiria*’, which corresponds to the Latin ‘*experientia*’ which in turn takes the English meaning ‘experience’. Empiricism is a system of thought which believes that there are no inborn truths and all knowledge springs from sense perception or experience and there is no absolutely certain knowledge without experiential verification of the perceived data. Reason can yield only probable knowledge. Empiricism thus holds that our world of experience is the object of philosophy and all knowledge is ultimately based on experience. Experience so understood has a variety of modes – sensory, aesthetic, moral, religious and so on but empiricist concentrate on sense experience. It goes to an extent of affirming that there is no other knowledge except that which comes from experience. The famous empiricists were John Locke, George Berkeley and David Hume.

Characteristics of Empiricism: 1. According to empiricism human mind at birth is “tabula rasa” or a clean slate. The mind is being compared to a blank writing tablet, white paper and void of all characters. The mind is only potential or inactive before receiving ideas from the senses. 2. Sense experience as source of knowledge. Sensation and reflection the outer and the inner sense experience is the only windows through which the dark chamber of mind comes to be filled with light. 3. Empiricism does not deal with universals. It holds that universal propositions can satisfactorily be explained by particulars. 4. Empiricism denies intuition which enables us to grasp general truths about reality independently of experience as a result it accepts only inductive method which is a process of reasoning from a part to a whole, from particulars to generals, individuals to universals.

Kinds of Empiricism: There are two kinds of empiricism one is a stronger form and other in a weaker. Such distinction has to do with scope – whether the view takes all knowledge to be based on experience or restricts this claim to knowledge of the physical universe, eluding for example mathematical and/or religious knowledge. 1. **Material Empiricism:** The stronger form of empiricism is called material empiricism. It holds that the objectively existing outer world is the source of sense experience. It puts forward that the only things that shall be debatable among philosophers shall be things definable in terms drawn from experience. 2. **Idealist Empiricism:** It is a weaker form which limits experience to the sum total of sensations. Sensation is a kind of physical state occurring as a result of direct influence of the objects on the sense experience. It is also of two types namely External and Internal. External sensation is caused by any one of senses like sense of sight, touch, taste, sound and smell. Internal sensation is caused by reflection or psychical acts of human mind.

Enlightenment

The period of enlightenment refers to the European culture of the 18th century. This is the period in which the human became overconfident in the human reason and rationality. Anything which cannot be understood by rational knowledge was defined as meaningless or superstition. The two fundamental characteristics of the philosophy of enlightenment are: 1. Faith in the European reason and human rationality to reject the tradition and pre-establish institutions and thoughts. 2. Search for the practical useful knowledge as the power to control nature. There are six important features found in the philosophy of enlightenment. They are: 1. Belief in progress. 2. Achievement of anything by a self reliant use of reason. 3. Rejection of traditionalism, obscurantism and authoritarianism. 4. Religious doctrine had to be intelligible and rationally acceptable. 5. An increasing anti-clericalism and resistance to the view that the church should have power independent of secular authorities. 6. Great emphasis on the principles of natural liberty and equality and also religious toleration. This spirit was widely prevalent in Western Europe and thereby gave birth to different names like British, French, German and Italian Enlightenment.

Idealism

The word “idealism” has more than one meaning. The philosophical meaning of idealism here is that the properties we discover in objects depend on the way that those objects appear to us as perceiving subjects, and not something they possess “in themselves,” apart from our experience of them. The very notion

of a “thing in itself” should be understood as an option of a set of functions for an operating mind, such that we consider something that appears without respect to the specific manner in which it appears. The question of what properties a thing might have “independently of the mind” is thus incoherent for Idealism. Idealism offers an explanation of reality or human experience in which ideas are spiritual, non-materialistic elements are central. Just because we cannot measure thought, this does not mean that it does not exist or is not important. For individual people, thought is everything and perception is filtered to the extent that we are hard-pressed to know what is really ‘out there’.

In Idealism, concepts are often viewed as being real. Though the idealist tradition could be traced in the early ancient in the form of Platonism, in the modern period with the subjective of Berkeley etc., but Immanuel Kant influence upon the idealistic tradition is phenomenal. For Immanuel Kant, the human self, or ‘transcendental ego,’ constructs knowledge out of sense impressions, upon which are imposed certain universal concepts that he called categories. (**Transcendental Idealism**) After Kant, Hegel concluded that the finite world is a reflection of the mind, which alone is truly real. (**Absolute Idealism**) Truth is just the coherence between thoughts. He also considered the dilemma that as transient beings, this leads to reality also being transient. This German idealism led to a break through in the entire idealistic tradition and also remained a basis for later contemporary philosophies.

Check Your Progress IV

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What is German idealism?

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2) Define the Two Schools of Modern Thought.

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3) Define Renaissance Humanism.

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2.7 CONTEMPORARY SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

The contemporary western philosophy could be traced from the beginning of the 19th century continued to 20th and 21st century. It deals with the upheavals produced by a series of conflicts within philosophical discourse over the basis of knowledge, with classical certainties overthrown, and new social, economic,

scientific and logical problems. Contemporary philosophy was set for a series of attempts to reform and preserve, and to alter or abolish, older knowledge systems. This was done with the emergence of two main philosophy schools the Analytic school and the Continental school

Analytic School

Analytical school is the dominant philosophical tradition in the 20th century English speaking world. It is characterized by the logical and linguistic turn in philosophy. There are at least two reasons for this linguistic and logical turn in philosophy. First due to enormous success of science and technology these philosophers felt science had taken over much of the territory formerly occupied by philosophy. Second new and more powerful methods of logic had been developed in the 20th century that promised to solve some of the perennial philosophical problems.

The term analysis (*analysis*) refers to the activity of taking something apart. It follows the epistemological principles that the whole can be explained with references to its parts. it is a method of inquiry in which one seeks to assess complex systems of thought by analyzing them into simpler constituent elements. This wide spread method was initiated by philosophers like Russell, Moore, Gottlob Frege and extensively by Wittgenstein. Thus for them the goal of philosophy is clarity and method of philosophy is analysis. Philosophical investigations move from subjective to objective and from psychological to logical realms. We are able to understand them in their essential nature for what they are in themselves not some idea or mental representation of them.

Continental School

Continental school of thought, in contemporary usage, refers to a set of traditions of 19th and 20th century philosophy from mainland Europe (France and Germany). This sense of the term originated among English-speaking philosophers in the second half of the 20th century, who used it to refer to a range of thinkers and traditions outside the analytic movement. Continental philosophy includes Phenomenology, Existentialism, Hermeneutics, Structuralism, post-Structuralism etc.

Features of Continental Philosophy: First, continental philosophers generally reject scientism, the view that the natural sciences are the only or most accurate way of understanding phenomena. Continental philosophers often argue that science depends upon a “pre-theoretical substrate of experience”, a form of the Kantian conditions of possible experience, and that scientific methods are inadequate to understand such conditions of intelligibility. Second, continental philosophy usually considers these conditions of possible experience as variable: determined at least partly by factors such as context, space and time, language, culture, or history. Historicism is important while analytic philosophy tends to treat philosophy in terms of discrete problems, capable of being analyzed apart from their historical origins. Third continental philosophy typically suggests that “philosophical argument cannot be divorced from the textual and contextual conditions of its historical emergence”. Fourth continental philosophy is an emphasis on Meta-Philosophy, i.e. the study of the nature, aims, and methods of philosophy. Ultimately, the foregoing distinctive traits derive from a broadly Kantian thesis that the nature of knowledge and experience is bound by conditions that are not directly accessible to empirical inquiry.

Existentialism is a multifaceted philosophical movement of the 20th century characterized by a deep concern for the meaning of individual subjective existence. What mattered for Hegel was the historical development of reason, for Feuerbach Humanity, for Marx the classless society and for the positivism the indefinite progress of science. All these philosophical systems dealt with abstract essences and universal ideas. They over looked what EXISTS in the concrete, the Self, the Human subject. In dealing with the essences, they forgot EXISTENCE. Existentialism reacted against these approaches and looked upon philosophy as a meditation on subjective existence.. Existentialism is a philosophy that places emphasis on individual existence, freedom, and choice. They focused on the condition of human existence, and an individual's emotions, actions, responsibilities, and thoughts, or the meaning or purpose of life.

To arrive at their end the existentialists adopted the Phenomenological method which consists in describing the Phenomenon, that is the reality as it appears and presents itself to inner experience. The phenomenologist wants to go back to reality to avoid pitfalls of inherited traditions and preconceived ideas. To maintain for instance, the man is body and soul is not a description of reality but a projection of ideas. But to hold that man is a being for death is a description. In the same way when Hegel and the Marxists interpreted history in a dialectical way they made use of prejudicial categories but did nothing to describe reality. They were ideologists not phenomenologists.

Themes of Existentialism: (1) Existence precedes essence, in other words, you need existence to have essence. There is no predetermined "true" thing, it has to already exist in order to become what it is. (2) Anxiety and anguish. The fear or dread which is not directed at any specific object, it's just there. Anguish is the dread of the nothingness of human existence, the meaninglessness of it. According to Kierkegaard, anguish is the underlying, all-pervasive, universal condition of man's existence. (3) Absurdity. "Granted I am my own existence, but this existence is absurd." Everybody is here, everybody exists, but there is no reason as to why. We're just here, that's it, no excuses. (4) Nothingness. There is nothing that structures this world's existence, man's existence, or the existence of my computer. There is no essence that these things are drawn from, since existence precedes essence, then that means there is nothing. (5) Death. The theme of death follows along with the theme of nothingness. Death is always there, there is no escaping from it. To think of death, as everybody does sooner or later, causes anxiety. The only sure way to end anxiety once and for all is death.

Phenomenology

Edmund Husserl's phenomenology was an ambitious attempt to lay the foundations for an account of the structure of conscious experience in general. An important part of Husserl's phenomenological project was to show that all conscious acts are directed at or about objective content, a feature that Husserl called intentionality. In his work, the *Logical Investigations* (1901), he launched an extended attack on psychologism and develops the technique of descriptive phenomenology, with the aim of showing how objective judgments are indeed grounded in conscious experience—not, however, in the first-person experience of particular individuals, but in the properties essential to any experiences of the kind in question. He also attempted to identify the essential properties of

any act of meaning. He developed the method further in *Ideas* (1913) as transcendental phenomenology, proposing to ground actual experience, and thus all fields of human knowledge, in the structure of consciousness of an ideal, or transcendental, ego. Later, he attempted to reconcile his transcendental standpoint with an acknowledgement of the intersubjective life-world in which real individual subjects interact. Husserl published only a few works in his lifetime, which treat phenomenology mainly in abstract methodological terms; but he left an enormous quantity of unpublished concrete analyses. The other phenomenologists are Martin Heidegger (formerly Husserl's research assistant), Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Jean-Paul Sartre. Indeed, through the work of Heidegger and Sartre, Husserl's focus on subjective experience influenced aspects of existentialism.

Structuralism and Post-Structuralism

Inaugurated by the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, structuralism sought to clarify systems of signs through analyzing the discourses they both limit and make possible. Saussure conceived of the sign as being delimited by all the other signs in the system, and ideas as being incapable of existence prior to linguistic structure, which articulates thought. This led continental thought away from humanism, and toward what was termed the decentering of man: language is no longer spoken by man to express a true inner self, but language speaks man.

Structuralism sought the province of a hard science, but its positivism soon came under fire by post-structuralism, a wide field of thinkers, some of whom were once themselves Structuralists', but later came to criticize it. Structuralists believed they could analyze systems from an external, objective standing, but the poststructuralists argued that this is incorrect, that one cannot transcend structures and thus analysis is itself determined by what it examines, while the distinction between the 'signifier and signified' was treated as crystalline by Structuralists, poststructuralists asserted that every attempt to grasp the signified results in more signifiers, so meaning is always in a state of being deferred, making an ultimate interpretation impossible. Structuralism came to dominate continental philosophy throughout the 1960s and early '70s, encompassing thinkers as diverse as Claude Lévi-Strauss, Roland Barthes and Jacques Lacan. Post-structuralism came to predominate over the 1970s onwards, including thinkers such as Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida and others.

Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is the theory and practice of interpretation. Traditional hermeneutics, Biblical hermeneutics, refers to the study of the interpretation of written texts, especially texts in the areas of literature, religion and law. Contemporary, or modern, hermeneutics encompasses not only issues involving the written text, but everything in the interpretative process. This includes verbal and nonverbal forms of communication as well as prior aspects that affect communication, such as presuppositions, pre-understandings, the meaning and philosophy of language, and semiotics. Philosophical hermeneutics refers primarily to Hans-George Gadamer's theory of knowledge as developed in *Truth and Method*, and sometimes to Paul Ricoeur. Hermeneutic consistency refers to analysis of texts for coherent explanation. A hermeneutic (singular) refers to one particular method or strand of interpretation. The terms exegesis and hermeneutics are sometimes used interchangeably because exegesis focuses primarily on the written text. Hermeneutics however is a more widely defined discipline of interpretation theory including the entire framework of the interpretive process and, encompassing

all forms of communication and expression; written, verbal, artistic, geo-political, physiological, sociological etc.

Post Modernism

Post modernism is the term that emerged as an area of academic study since 1980's though its beginning could be traced to 1960's. It is hard to define this term because for the following reason. The chronological proximity, its ubiquitous character, plurality of its significance, the uncertainty regarding what is modernity and exactly when its origin can be placed and the confusion in using different terms(postmodernism, post modernity, postmodern etc). But our question here is how can we see it as a philosophical school. As a philosophical school it tries to believe that many, if not all, apparent realities are only social constructs, as they are subject to change inherent to time and place. It emphasizes the role of language, power, relations, and motivations; in particular it attacks the use of sharp classifications such as male versus female, straight versus gay, white versus black, and imperial versus colonial. Rather, it holds realities to be plural and relative, and dependent on who the interested parties are and what their interests consist of. Postmodernism has influenced many cultural fields, including religion, literary criticism, sociology, linguistics, architecture, anthropology, visual arts, and music.

The Characteristics of Postmodernism: 1. No to system building 2. No to totalization and Meta – Narratives and proliferation of Mini- Narratives. 3. Held that meaning is provisional, contingent and there are no final and definitive meanings. 4. Objectivity is put to doubt, i.e., postmodernism, by resisting the monopoly of scientific knowledge as the only form of true knowledge, postmodernism makes room for different forms of knowledge: aesthetic, religious, political, historical and mythical. 5. Ambiguity and Plurality: i.e they believed that contradictions are part and parcel of life and reality. However, in allowing plurality postmodernism did affirm the identity and importance of smaller and hitherto neglected groups in the society.

Check Your Progress V

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What is Post Modernism?

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2) Explain the features of the Continental school.

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3) Define Phenomenology.

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2.8 LET US SUM UP

In short, this unit on the division of western philosophy presents to us philosophy as process of thought evolution, where one thought leading to the other. The emergence of difference schools, their arguments one against the other should not lead one to confusion or contraction but to see the Harmony and unity in the history of western philosophy. We need to understand that philosophy is not a static enterprise but dynamic. The continuity and discontinuity we see in the thought pattern is a major strength to philosophy as a science. Such a progressive study cannot but make itself relevant to all people at all times.

2.9 KEY WORDS

- Maieutic** : (mid wifery) – drawing truth out of mind or art of delivering truth.
- Meta-Philosophy** : the study of the nature, aims, and methods of philosophy.
- Absolute idealism** : the finite world is a reflection of the mind, which alone is truly real.

2.10 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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