
UNIT 3 MAJOR ISSUES OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

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3.0 OBJECTIVES

The unit aims at dealing with the common problems, methods and different themes faced in various schools throughout the history of Western Philosophy.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the history of human quest, initially the study of all questions and issues formed only one body of knowledge, called philosophy. Philosophizing is a process carried out at various levels of reality and on different aspects. As the body of philosophical knowledge grew, there appeared disciplines of philosophy dealing with specific objects of study such as nature, human, God, morals, knowledge, aesthetics, etc. The discipline of philosophy is generally divided into different branches: Metaphysics, Epistemology, Ethics, Logic, Anthropology and Aesthetics. The issues arising out of these branches in dealing with the question of reality are spelt out in this unit.

3.2 ISSUES DISCUSSED IN VARIOUS BRANCHES OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

In we take different disciplines in philosophy (metaphysics, epistemology, logic, ethics, aesthetics etc) we can see that these are the different aspects of the same reality. All these disciplines supplement each other to arrive at the ultimate truth regarding God, world and man. Every discipline should ultimately aim at giving meaning to man's life and should help him to lead a successful life. Hence one discipline can be relevant only in relation to another.

Metaphysical Concerns

Metaphysics from its etymological meaning is understood as the study of the nature of things above/after/beyond physics. It is a branch of philosophy, which studies realities beyond physical things. Metaphysics is therefore after physics in so far as it goes beyond the physical nature of things to the being of things.

Metaphysics is the heart and the crowning point of philosophy. Metaphysics may be defined as the study of the ultimate cause and of the first and most universal principles of reality. It studies reality, seeking its ultimate causes in an absolute sense precisely in so far as they are, in so far as they exist, in so far as they are real and offers a comprehensive view of all that exist. Metaphysics includes two sections: a) It shows how every being is similar to every other in so far as it participates in being because it *is* and yet as being, it is this *one being* as distinct from *that other being*. b) Metaphysics also shows how every finite being is not self sufficient or self explanatory. A finite being is not able to give an intelligible account of its own actual existence. Hence it requires a self sufficient First Cause. Since God is the ultimate cause of all things, He is evidently a principal subject matter of metaphysics. Metaphysics is the foundational science which seeks to understand all reality, all beings in terms of the universal properties, laws and ultimate causes of BEING as such. It is the science of being as being; it studies Being which is common to all beings. It investigates Being which underlies, penetrates, transforms and unifies all beings. Metaphysics is the study of being as such. It studies being as being, its properties and its causes. Nothing escapes from the concept of being i.e., something which is. The Greek philosophers began from the nature of things; they studied particular types of beings. But in metaphysics, we study things not just as particular types of beings – moving things, living things – instead, in so far as they are simply being (or being things), in so far as they exist. We are not concerned with *what* they are but *that* they *are*. Metaphysics studies the whole of reality by focusing on the most common aspect of everything; that everything “is”, that it is “real”. The material object of metaphysics is all being, God, angels, substance, accidents, real being, possible being and rational being. Metaphysics is also concerned with such problems as the relation of mind to matter, the nature of change, the meaning of freedom, etc.

Epistemological Issues

Epistemology is a branch of philosophy that deals with the problem of knowledge. It investigates the origin, structure, methods and the validity of knowledge. It answers the question, “How do we know?” This is the philosophy of knowledge concerned with such questions as; is knowledge of anything really possible, is our knowledge certain, how do we get our knowledge? What exactly is knowledge about etc. It is the study of the nature of human knowledge and of how it can be achieved. Human knowledge is a complex process and many activities are involved in it; seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, tasting, inquiring, imagining, understanding, conceiving, reflecting, intuiting, judging etc. It is from all these activities taken together, that we acquire knowledge. In fact, human knowing consists of three main activities namely experiencing, understanding, and judging and all these three constitute the structure of human knowing.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics is the science of character, habits of activity or conduct of human being. It is also known as Moral philosophy as it studies the principles or standards of human conduct. Ethics is the science of morals or that branch of philosophy which is concerned with human character and conduct. An action was considered to be morally good or bad if it was in line with or against the customs and traditions of the particular era or society. Ethics is the science of what man ought to do in order to live as he should, in order to be what he ought to

be, in order to attain his supreme value, in order to realize in his nature what presents itself as the justification of his existence, that towards which and for which he exists. Ethics is a science in its own right, distinct from all others. Ethics commands that all men, at all times, under all conditions ought to act as men that are faithful to and in conformity with their rational nature. It studies how human acts are directed towards man's ultimate purpose or end. It not only treats of human activity but it aims at directing it. It does not stop at the contemplation of truth, but applies that learning to human acts, providing the necessary knowledge so that man may act in a morally upright way. Ethics studies human acts from a moral perspective, in so far as they are morally good or bad.

Logical Questions

Logic is the systematic study of the general structures of sound reasoning and valid arguments. It is the study of the methods and principles used to distinguish good (correct) from the bad (incorrect) reasoning. Logic provides us with criteria to correct reasoning with which we can test arguments for their correctness. Logic examines how the mind functions in reaching valid arguments and what are the criteria for validity of these arguments. Logic is either deductive or inductive because one can argue from the universal to the particular (deduction) or from the particular to the universal. (induction). Deduction is pure reasoning while induction has recourse to experience and observation. A deductive argument involves the claim that the premises provide conclusive grounds for its conclusion. An inductive argument is an argument, which claims only that the premises provide some evidences for the conclusion.

Anthropological Expressions

The human person became the centre and the focal point of philosophy in modern and contemporary period. We live in an anthropocentric world, where human person is considered as the centre and summit and measure of everything. Anthropology is a reflection on man as he is; his origin, nature, meaning of life and destiny. It studies man and all his actions, what makes him human, his fundamental nature, his essential properties and potentialities in order to arrive at profound convictions about man. Anthropology deals with those vital and significant questions that touch our own very existence – Who am I? Why am I in this world? Where am I going? etc. Man asks questions about his proper nature.

Aesthetical Glimpses

Aesthetics deals with beauty or the beautiful, especially in art and with taste and standards of value in judging art. Aesthetics studies work of art, the process of producing and experiencing art and certain aspects of nature. Philosophers of art inquire into the nature and function of art and the nature of art experience. They also deal with the questions of whether such qualities are objectively present in the things or whether they exist only in the mind of the perceiver.

Religious Studies

Philosophy of religion is a philosophical thinking or reflection on religion by applying the philosophical method. It takes up basic problems relating to our belief in God. It also speculates about the origin, nature and function of religion. The task of Philosophy of Religion is to explain as best as it can, in its own

language and to the rational and intellectual parts of man the beliefs, truths, the experience and the laws of religion. The aim of Philosophy of Religion is to render an important service to religion, analyzing and refining religious beliefs by separating the essential from the accidental elements of faith. It articulates the true idea of God, man and the universe. It liberates religion from religiosity, which is an excessive adherence to the external practices of religion. It makes intelligible the religious faith and enables man to lead a life of selfless love, truthfulness, justice, tolerance and forgiveness.

Scientific Notions

Philosophy of nature is that branch of philosophy that studies the nature of the external world, of material reality. The problem of philosophy of nature is this: To what degree, if any, do physical objects match our sensation? One major area of concern for philosophy of nature is the way we come to have knowledge of the structures of the world. This concern is addressed by philosophy of science, which is a reflection on the methods we employ to come to know physical reality. It analyses the methods of science and assesses its limitations and strengths.

3.3 METHODS USED IN WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

In ancient Greek the pre-socratic philosophers had been relatively isolated in their speculations. The speculative method of the ancient Greek continued to move toward conceptual thought, critical analysis, reflection, and dialectic. Dialectic method of Socrates and Plato was essentially a method of discussion and debate in which the participants progressed from one point to another, each one disputing the point of the other until they could reach an undisputable point. It consisted in reasoning through rigorous dialogue as a method of intellectual investigation intended to expose false beliefs and elicit truth. The strategy was to take up a sequence of questions with whomever one was in discussion, relentlessly analyzing one by one the implications of the answers in such a way as to bring out the flaws and inconsistencies inherent in a given belief or statement. Attempts to define the essence of something were rejected one after another as being either too wide or too narrow. Dialectic takes a different turn in Hegel. Hegelian dialectic is not merely epistemological, but ontological too. The method of dialectic involves thesis-antithesis-synthesis in which thesis, antithesis and synthesis are only different ‘moments’ in the movement of thought resulting in both continuity and difference.

Towards the end of the patristic period, St. Augustine tried to answer the problem of certainty with his method of retortion. He held that the skeptics are mistaken in assuming that certainty of knowledge is impossible and that human can achieve only “probable knowledge,” i.e., ideas whose validity is highly probable. The scholastic method of Thomas Aquinas further supported the Augustinian view of certainty. Thomas was certain of concepts having their foundation in sense perception. He accepted Abelard’s view of the relationship between universals and particulars, including the Aristotelian thesis that Plato’s universals can be found only in particular things which thus become actualities detectable in sense experience. For Aquinas too, the universal nature, the essence, of a thing exists immanently in the object itself as part of the real world, but this universal characteristic (this substantial form of an object) is also an idea or concept separated from its object when it is abstracted by the human mind.

Descartes was also bothered by the same question of certainty. He became fascinated by the question of whether there was anything we could know for certain. He distinguished between certainty and truth. For him, certainty is a state of mind, whereas truth is a property of statements which usually relates to the way things are out there in the external world. His fundamental first certainty was 'I think, therefore I am' (*Cogito ergo sum*). The empiricist method of philosophy advocated by Locke, Berkley, and Hume held that *all* essential truths about the world were discoverable only by empirical experience. Thus, reason was substituted by empirical experience. It was above all John Locke who set the tone for empiricist method by affirming the foundational principle of empiricism: 'There is nothing in the intellect that was not previously in the senses' (*Nihil est in intellectu quod non antea fuerit in sensu*). All knowledge of the world must rest finally on human's sense experience.

Kant tried to reconcile the claims of science to certain and genuine knowledge of the world with the claim that experience could never give rise to such knowledge. According to Kant, the human mind does not passively receive sense data, but it actively structures them. Human, therefore, knows objective reality to the extent that reality conforms to the fundamental structures of the mind. All human knowledge of the world is channelled through the mind's own categories. The necessity and certainty of scientific knowledge are embedded in the mind's perception and understanding of the world. The mind does not conform to objects; rather, objects conform to the mind. Human can attain certain knowledge of the world, not because one has the power to penetrate to and grasp the world in itself, but because the world is saturated with the principles of one's own mental organization. Hence, human could know things only as they appear, not as they are in themselves.

Analytical method refers to various contemporary methods of analysing the language. Pragmatic method is a philosophical method founded by three American philosophers: Charles Sanders Peirce, William James and John Dewey. The main objective of the phenomenological method is the enlarging and deepening of the range of our immediate experience under the watchword 'to the things themselves.' Its common concern is that of giving the phenomena a fuller and fairer hearing than traditional empiricism has accorded them. Phenomenology stands for a kind of rebellion against the trend in modern science which begins with simplifying abstractions and ends with a minimum vocabulary of scientific concepts.

Deconstructive Method: In a deconstructive reading the text in question is shown to harbour contradictory logics which are standardly ignored. Very often it is a matter of locating certain clearly-marked binary opposition and showing that their order of priority is by no means as stable as the text seeks to maintain. This leaves open the possibility that texts may mean something other and more than is allowed for by any straight-forward appeal to the authorial intention. Transcendental method is a way of reflecting upon and interpreting the previous conditions of the possibility of an act of knowledge. The method aims at discovering and explaining the knowledge which is prior and which makes possible every knowledge of objects. This knowledge is not explicitly available before all other kinds of knowledge. It is a pre-knowledge, a basic knowledge, which is implicit in every kind of empirical knowledge, and it can be made explicit only thorough a reflection upon the previous conditions of the possibility

of empirical knowledge by both transcendental reduction and transcendental deduction.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

- 1) What are the concerns of metaphysics and epistemology?

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- 2) Describe few methods used in Western philosophy.

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3.4 METAPHYSICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL ISSUES

Substance and Attribute

Substance is the basic, underlying essence of a thing that gives it existence. It is a fundamental concept in metaphysics, meaning the *substratum of reality*. It is the independent, irreducible basis of something which remains unchanged despite any outward changes. It has no qualities or properties itself but it is that in which qualities and properties inhere. Attribute is an ontological concept and refers to the essential characteristics of a substance, without which such a substance cannot exist. For Descartes, the attribute of matter (a substance) is extension, to extend or to occupy a certain place, while the attribute of mind is thinking or an activity of consciousness.

Being

Being is an ontological concept, ambiguously understood since Parmenides. In the one sense, being signifies that which is (*ens*, *Seiendes*). In this sense, being is synonymous with what is real. On the other hand, being is act of being (*esse*, *Sein*). Heidegger opines that in the history of Western philosophy (a history of forgetting being, *Sein*), we have dealt with entities instead of being itself. He calls the dealing with the question about being (not entities) as the fundamental ontology. The most familiar entity is the human-being and Heidegger starts with the understanding of being by the human-being, as it is his/her own being.

Category

Category is the most fundamental characteristics of being. Categories are the most universal, most fundamental predicates of all predicates. Categories constitute the basis and conditions of a substance, namely they describe the ways in which a substance is. Logically and epistemologically categories are conditions and the ways of knowing in which the most fundamental truth is asserted. Aristotle enumerated 10 categories, sometimes 8 categories. Using

category as an epistemological concept, Kant called the concept of understanding category in distinction from the concept of reason (immortality of the soul, freedom and God). The category is the way in which the subject and the predicate is synthesized in a given proposition. There are four groups, quality, quantity, relation, and modality, and each group has three different categories.

Cause and Causality

Cause is an ontological concept. Aristotle used cause as synonymous with the principle. Change comprises locomotion, generation and corruption and all other metamorphosis. Heracleitus was well known for his insight into the reality the nature of which is constant flux. Causality is considered the most fundamental, necessary relationship between two events in the universe, between the one temporally preceding (a cause), the other temporally following the former (effect), both of which seem to happen necessarily. Besides the Ancient Greek search for the principle of the universe, which Aristotle equated with cause, mechanical cause and effect relationship was universalized in the Middle Ages as evidenced in the statement, "*ex nihilo nihil fit.*" (Nothing comes out of nothing). Hume questioned the objectivity of causal relationship. From Descartes to Hume, the central question of metaphysics had been about substance, while by Hume, causality suddenly appeared the central, crucial metaphysical question. According to Hume, causality may exist independent of our consciousness, and yet it can be unknown to us. It is considered sufficiently explained by contiguity of ideas and psychological association). Kant inherited this spiritual situation and the challenge of re-establishing the objectivity of causality as one of his central philosophical tasks.

Essence and Existence

Essence means the inevitable characteristics which make a certain thing (a substance) that thing. Essence is thus considered as universal characteristic or nature of a thing, while existence in its opposition, is considered as an act of being or existing. Existence means the concrete way of being, thus reality of being. In modern sense, it refers to the existence of the human-being. In the human existence, the human-being is determined by the human essence, namely by what the humankind is, but it is discovered by itself as already existing there. By means of this being there (*Da of Dasein*), the human existence is in the (mundane) world and his being is called the being in the world. In human existence, it is contended that its existence precedes its essence. In other words, a person cannot primarily defined by the humanity as such, but rather is determined how that person actually is. This is the basis of the existentialism. Existentialism refers to many philosophical thoughts of Sartre, Heidegger, Jaspers, Marcel, etc. Post World War II made many talk about the meaningless of human existence. Heidegger made the concept of existence (as the human existence) in his fundamental ontology and initiated this movement. Jaspers followed him. JeanPaul Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Gabriel Marcel and Camus, etc. developed each unique philosophy of existence of their own and has been in contrast to logic, philosophy of science, philosophy of language. Existential philosophy centres in its inquiry the concrete human-being in its existence. It contends that each human-being cannot be understood by its essence. Only by means of one's existence, a human-being can become the theme and the object of genuine understanding. The distinction of authentic and unauthentic was introduced in terms of human existence.

Noumena and Phenomena

For Kant, *phenomena* (sig. *phenomenon*) is the object of empirical knowledge and a noumenon is an object of awareness not produced by sensory experience. 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. Phenomenon is only knowable to us, while noumenon is unknown to us. Because the human-being does not possess intellectual intuition, but sensory intuition and formal intuitions which are space and time. The latter is related to senses and yet it is in itself *a priori*, the condition of possibility of sense experience. In the world of thing itself or noumenon, being known to us, this reality is the reality of morality, in which freedom of will is basic.

Truth and Reality

Truth is an epistemological concept; an attribute of knowledge. An information known to consciousness is said true if and only if that information matches “fact.” This relationship of matching between information and “fact” is called the correspondence theory of truth. Truth may not be matching with “fact” individually and mutually independently. On the contrary, true knowledge must be true in relationship to the total system and when truth of knowledge is sought in the coherence of its system as a whole, it is called the coherent theory. 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. Reality is the concept of ontology or metaphysics. It is the characteristic (mode?) of being and signifies or exists. It is in opposite to non-existence or unreal. When we have knowledge of something which is real, then our knowledge is said to be true.

Realism, Nominalism and Solipsism

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 of world exists in combination with the view that in perception we mentally grasp qualities and objects that are part of that world. 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 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.

Idealism and Materialism

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 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. 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.

A priori and *A posteriori*

What is the origin and nature of knowledge, is the issue dealt in these two concepts. *A priori* in Ancient Greek means knowledge obtained from the cause. Later it characterizes the knowledge which is not only independent of experience but also precedes it in such a way that *a priori* knowledge is the condition of the possibility of knowledge in general. By implication, *a priori* also means rational knowledge, which is universally and necessary true. The opposite of *a priori* is *a posteriori*. In the Ancient Greek, *a posteriori* means knowledge obtained from the effect, and not from the cause. Later, it signifies the knowledge originated from experience, therefore, *a posteriori* knowledge must be confirmed its truth by experience and is not universally and necessary true.

Deduction and Induction

Deduction is a logical procedure in which premises necessarily imply its conclusion. This definition validates indirect proof, namely assuming the negation of the conclusion as one of the premises, it derives a contradiction among the premises and demonstrates the validity of the original deductive argument. Induction is empirical generalization; a logical procedure to start with a set of statements about individual matter and its characteristics and to obtain the conclusion which asserts a universal relationship between the individual and that characteristics.

Nihilism, Scepticism and Relativism

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. 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.

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 of Protagoras is that 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.

Objective and Subjective

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.

Empiricism and Rationalism

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. 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. Empiricism 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. 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.

Mind and Body

Mind, spirit and soul are often distinguished particularly by Christian theologians, but traditionally in philosophy they have been used synonymously with each other. It has been often considered a substance in distinction from a material substance.

Will and Freedom

Will is an ethical concept and is distinguished as one of the faculty of consciousness, which deliberate, choose and initiate a certain action. Traditionally, will is considered a part of function of reason. Schopenhauer conceived will as an irrational, non-rational drive, which may be found not only in the human-

being, but in everything and called the primordial will as the world will. Nietzsche follows this conception of will. In order to exercise will as a human faculty of deliberation, choice and initiating an action, freedom of will as well as freedom of action are presupposed. 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. Will is often discussed in conjunction with the freedom of will. 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.

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.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Explain Causality.

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2) How do Nihilism and Scepticism approach reality?

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3.5 LET US SUM UP

The unit was basically an overview of concerns, methods and issues of Western Philosophy. Human beings exist in the world and with the world. They are also capable of asking questions about themselves and the reality, in which and with which they exist. They have been asking the question about the primordial stuff of reality. The basic philosophical question has been "Why there is something rather than nothing?" All questions about reality are also questions about ourselves and the way we interpret our knowledge about reality. All philosophy of every age and place has to return to this primordial or fundamental question. The history of Western Philosophies bears testimony to the fact the questioning capacity and nature of human beings, especially under the basic thrust of Skepticism, Idealism, Rationalism and, positivism. All questions of philosophy, we have seen in the above overview, are also existential questions.

3.6 KEY WORDS

Phenomenon : an object of empirical knowledge; thing-as-it-appears.

Noumenon : an object of awareness not produced by sensory experience;
Thing-in- itself

3.7 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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