

PRE-SOCRATICS AND SOPHISTS

Unit Structure :

- 1.0 Objective
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Natural Philosophers (Thales, Anaximander And Anaxtmenes)
- 1.3 The problem of change (Parmenides and Heraclitus)
- 1.4 Pluralists (Democritus)
- 1.5 Sophists (Protagoras)
- 1.6 The Sophist Epistemology
- 1.7 The Sophist Theory Of Morality
- 1.8 Summary
- 1.9 Unit and questions

1.0 OBJECTIVE

After going through the unit, you will be able to know :

- The beginning of philosophy in the ancient times (Greek Philosophy)
- Natural Philosophers
- Problem of Change
- To understand the pre Socratic Philosophy with its emphasis on Man as the central theme.
- To know about Sophists Epistemology and Ethics.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Western Philosophical begins with the speculations of the Greeks. The ancient Greek philosophical traditional broke away from a mythological approach to explaining the world, and it intialated an approach based on reason and evidence. Freed from religious bias, the Greek thinkers supported science and are called as the foundersn of Philosophy and science in the west. In the early Greek thought science means an independent and free enquiry into natural events, systematically and methodically without being burdened with religious requirement. The early Greek thinkers tried to give rational explanation of natural phenomena. It is also interesting to note that these early thinkers tried to

grapple with the whole reality with their limited resources. Initially concerned with explaining the entire cosmos, the Presocratic philosophers strived to identify its single underlying principle.

The sophists were concerned about man himself. Their questions were not related about the object or content of knowledge but about knowledge itself. The Sophists asked questions about the origin, nature and the kind of certainty which human knowledge can yield. If looked closely, we find that this kind of question is not about knowing any object but about knowing itself.

The following chapter will give us a brief idea about sophist's Epistemology and Ethics.

1.2 NATURAL PHILOSOPHERS (THALES, ANAXIMANDER AND ANAXIMENES)

The Western philosophical tradition began in ancient Greece in the 6th century BCE. The first philosophers are called "Presocratics" with designates that they came before Socrates. The Pre-Socratics from either the eastern or western regions of the Greek world. The Pre-Socratic's most distinguishing feature is emphasis on questions of physics; indeed, Aristotle refers to them as "Investigators of Nature". Their scientific interests included mathematics, astronomy, and biology.

As the first philosophers, thought, they emphasized the rational unity of things, and rejected mythological explanations of the world. Only fragments of the original writings of the Presocratics survive, in some cases merely a single sentence. The knowledge we have of them derives from accounts of early philosophers, such as Aristotle's *Physics* and *Metaphysics*, *The Opinions of the Physicists* by Aristotle's pupil Theophrastus, and Simplicius, a Neoplatonist who compiled existing quotes.

The first group of Presocratic philosophers were from Ionia. The Ionian philosophers sought the single principle of things, and the mode of their origin and disappearance.

1.2.1 Thales of Miletus (c.624 BC – c.546 BC):

Thales was a pre-socratic Greek philosopher from Miletus in Asia Minor. And one of the Seven Sages of Greece. Many most notably Aristotle, regard him as the first philosopher in the tradition. According to Bertrand Russell, "Western philosophy begins with Thales." Thales attempted to explain natural phenomena without reference to mythology and was tremendously influential in this respect.

Almost all of the Pre-Socratic philosophers follow him in attempting to provide an explanation of ultimate substance, change and the existence of the world without reference to mythology. Those philosophers were also an essential idea for the scientific revolution. He was also the first to define general principles and set forth hypotheses, and as a result has been

dubbed the “first man of science,” as he gave a naturalistic explanation of the cosmos and supported it with reasons.

Water as the First Principle:

Thales most famous philosophical position was his cosmological thesis, which comes down to use through a passage from Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. The chief aim of Thales was to account for the fundamental stuff of which the universe is made. Hence according to him the universe is fundamentally water, because water admits of being vaporous, liquid and solid.

When water heated it assumes the form of vapour; when chilled it becomes solid and when it is allowed in its natural course then it is a flowing stream. Hence water succeeds in explaining all the possible states of being solid, liquid and vaporous. For this reason water can be said to be fundamental stuff of the universe. Even the earth, according to Thales, is a disc floating on water.

Aristotle the biologist conjectured that Thales chose water to be the ultimate stuff, for food is always wet and this liquid food nourishes the body, even the generating seeds are wet.

The most important thing about Thales is that he gave birth to scientific way of thinking. It is said that he predicted the eclipse which took place in 585 B.C. According to Russell Thales discovered how to calculate the distance of a ship at sea with the help of observations taken at two points to calculate the height of a tree or pyramid from the length of its shadow.

However, he regarded magnet as something living for it attracts things towards itself. Again Thales is said to have said that all things are full of gods. Hence Windelband holds that the philosophy of Thales and of other Milesians to be *hylozoistic* (those who think matter is alive).

The philosophy and science of Thales may appear to us to be very crude, but he laid down the foundation of scientific worldview in the sense that his speculation was wholly naturalistic. It was neither anthropomorphic nor theocentric.

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Check your progress :

- 1) Who are the Presocratic philosophers ?
- 2) What did the First Philosophers emphasise upon and rejected at ?
- 3) The first group of Presocratic philosophers were from
- 4) How did Thales attempt to explain natural phenomena ?

- 5) According to Thales, the universe is fundamentally water, because water admits of being....., liquid and

1.2.2 Anaximander (611-547 BCE) :

Anaximander also belonged to Miletus. He was a man of daring venture of thought. Anaximander was the first writer on philosophy. He was a cosmologist like Thales. However for him the primary substance was 'boundless something' – a formless, infinite and eternal mass not yet parted into particular kinds of matter. In positing 'boundless mass' as the fundamental stuff of which the world is constituted, he indirectly lays down an important principle, namely, a formless general principle can account for the particulars, but not vice-versa.

For example, formless earth mass can be converted into particularised things like pitchers, bricks, tiles, etc. But the earthen pitchers cannot be directly shaped into tiles or goblets. In order to give rise to tiles or bricks, the earthen pitcher has to be reduced again to the formless mass of earth, this distinction of formless matters and particulars will be like found again the theory of Aristotle known as the doctrine of matter and form.

Anaximander appears to have stated that the world is governed by the opposites like hot and cold, wet and dry it is by the working of the opposites that the world goes on. In this context it can be said that the earth, air, water and fire cannot be the ultimate stuff of the universe, for they have opposite characters. For example, fire burns and water dampens. If any one of them be allowed to work unfettered then the world would become either dry or watery and the world as such would cease to be.

According to Anaximander the world has evolved in due course. At one time there was water everywhere. There were only watery creatures. By drying up of water, land appeared and, creatures of the sea were left on the dry hand. Those creatures from the sea which could adapt themselves to the dry hand alone have survived. One can easily see the germ of the organic evolution in the speculative adventure of Anaximander. Anaximander held that the earth is cylindrical in shape and moves freely in the space is once again a foreshadow of the theory of gravitation.

Anaximander calls his infinite boundless matter 'God'. This is the first philosophical concept of God. This God, no doubt, is matter. But it is not mythological or anthropomorphic. Clearly it maintains monism. Besides, the doctrine of creation of the universe by god has been completely ignored. The 'boundless reality' is not the Creator-God.

1.2.3 Anaximenes (588-524 BCE) :

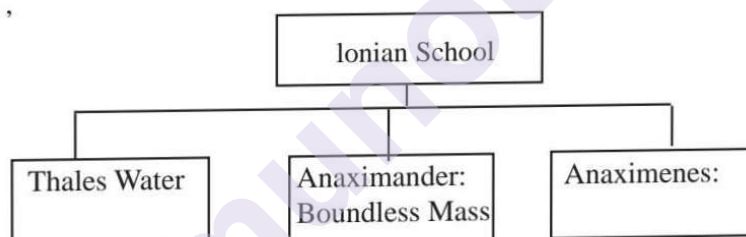
Like Thales and Anaximander, Anaximenes belonged to Miletus. Like Thales, Anaximenes regards 'air' as the primary stuff of the universe. Why air, and not water? It is only a matter of conjecture. Most probably Anaximenes paid more attention to the living than to any other things. Here breath, i.e., air is the predominant thing. Therefore for Anaximenes

air is the predominant thing. Therefore for Anaximenes air is the fundamental stuff of which the world is composed.

Anaximenes chose air as the first substance because of its mobility, change ability and inner vitality. As a matter of fact air was considered to be the breath of the universe. Hence this breathing universe was considered to be a living organism for this reason Anaximenes is really a hylozoist. Hyle is the living matter.

For Anaximenes, this primary air is regulated by the opposed principles of condensation and rarefaction. Condensation simply means compression of the air in a narrow space and rarefaction means expansion of the air in the greater space. By rarefaction air assumes the form of fire, and, by successive condensation it gives rise to water, earth and stone.

Anaximenes accounts for all the important elements and states of material things through his fundamental stuff of air. Further, the world is not annoy vaporous, liquid and solid, but is also sound, colour rough smooth etc. how to explain this world of quality ? the principles of condensation and the rarefaction admit of quantitative differences. Hence, here is involved the principle that quantity can explain the quality. Later on Pythagoras laid down his famous statement 'what exists, exists is number'. In the modern times no scientific explanation is considered reliable unless it is put into quantitative formulae. Hence, the thinking of Anaximenes is a step forward towards the scientific worldview.



Check your progress :

- 1) Anaximander was the first writer on
- 2) A formless general principle can account for the
- 3) What is the view Anaximander with regard to earth ?
- 4) Who gave the first philosophical concept of God.
- 5) For Anaximenes what is the fundamental stuff of which the world is composed ?
- 6) Why did Anaximenes chose air ?

1.3 THE PROBLEM OF CHANGE (PERMENIDES AND HERACLITUS)

1.3.1 Heraclitus :

Heraclitus of Ephesus was a contemporary of Parmenides. But their philosophies were opposed. According to Parmenides reality is one, eternal and unchangeable being. For Heraclitus, reality is change, flux, and Becoming.

The main teaching of Heraclitus is that everything is in constant flux. River and mountains and all seemingly permanent things are in constant flux. All is flow and becoming. No one can step into the same river twice, for when a man enters into a river, then he meets one stream of water and the next moment the first stream passes away, yielding to a newer stream of water. One can easily see that no man can ever remain the same for even two moments. Man keeps on changing from moment to moment. The doctrine of flux will remind the teaching of Lord Buddha relating to momentariness.

Heraclitus : From fire all things originate, and return to it again by a never-resting process of development. All things, therefore, are in a perpetual flux.

Constitutes reality. Yet, there is an abiding order in the ever-changing fire. All things come from fire and return to fire. There is the downward way and also the upward way. According to the downward way, through condensation fire changes into water and earth. And according to the upward way, through rarefaction, water and earth give way to fire. This order of succession produces the illusion of permanence. He also extended the teaching seeming opposites in fact are manifestations of a common substrate to good and evil itself.

1.3.2 Parmenides :

Parmenides was the founder of the School of Elea. Parmenides had a large influence on Plato, who not only named a dialogue, Parmenides, after him, but always spoke of him with veneration.

The single known work of Parmenides is a poem. On Nature, which has survived only in fragmentary form. His own philosophy has been presented in 'the way to truth'.

Xenophanes had declared 'All is one'. This was the starting point of Parmenides. How could he establish this truth ? He like the rest of the people found that the world of sensible things is always becoming. Things come into the world and the next moment they perish. They are as much as they are not. What can we say about this flux ? Heraclitus declared that flux alone is real.

To Parmenides it appeared impossible. For him, real is eternal, unchangeable and indestructible. For him it appeared self contradictory to hold that a thing which is passing away to be real. What is the point involved in saying that the real is permanent and unchangeable ?

For Parmenides, One alone is real, and manyness and changes are unreal. This distinction is a matter of intuition and at most a postulate of his philosophy. But in real life changes and plurality of things are palpable. What can we say about them ? for Parmenides plurality and changes are given by the senses. At most they can be called ‘mere appearances’. But what is the reason for regarding them as ‘appearances’. Quite obviously they are and yet they cease to be.

If the world of senses is illusory, then how do we know the One ? Of course, through thought. Hence, Parmenides makes a distinction between the appearance and reality, sense and thought. He gives predominance to thought.

The above interpretation of Parmenides as the identity of thought and being is essentially the tenet of Idealism. These ideas strongly influenced the whole of Western philosophy, perhaps most notably through their effect on plato.

Parmenides holds that reality is one, eternal and indestructible. Parmenides explains how reality (coined as “what – is) is one, Change is impossible, and existence is timeless, uniform, Necessary and unchanging. He explains the world of appearances, in which one’s sensory faculties lead to conception which are false and deceitful.

Check your progress :

- 1) What is reality according to Heraclitus ?
- 2) No one can step into the same river.....
- 3) what is the nature of reality according to Parmenides ?

1.4 PLURALISTS DEMOCRITUS

Leucippus and Democritus are widely regarded as the first atomists in the Greek tradition. Little is known about Leucippus, while the ideas of his student Democritus – who is said to have taken over and systematized his teacher’s theory – are known from a large number of reports. These ancient atomists theorized that the two fundamental and oppositely characterized constituents of the natural world indivisible bodiesatoms- and void. The latter is described simply as nothing, or the negation of body. Atoms are by their nature intrinsically unchangeable; they can only

move about in the void and combine into different clusters. Since the atoms are separated by void, they cannot fuse, but must rather bounce off one another when they collide. Because all macroscopic objects are in fact combinations of atoms, everything in the macroscopic world is subject to change, as their constituent atoms shift or move away. Thus, while the atoms themselves persist through all time, everything in the world of our experience is transitory and subject to dissolution.

According to Aristotle's presentation (*On generation and Corruption* I 8), the motivation for the first postulation of indivisible bodies is to answer a metaphysical puzzle about the possibility of change and multiplicity. Parmenides had argued that any differentiation or change in Being implies that 'what is not either is or comes to be. Although there are problems in interpreting Parmenides precise meaning, he was understood to have raised a problem about how change can be possible without something coming from nothing. Several Presocratics formulated, in response, philosophical system in which change is not considered to require something coming into being from complete nonexistence, but rather the arrangement of preexisting elements into new combinations. The atomists held that, like Being, as conceived by Parmenides, the atoms are unchangeable and contain no internal differentiation of a sort that would allow for division. But there are many beings, not just one, which are separated from another by nothing, i.e. by void.

By positing indivisible bodies, the atomists were also thought to be answering Zeno's paradoxes about the impossibility of motion. Zeno had argued that, if magnitudes can be divided to infinity, it would be impossible for motion to occur. The problem seems to be that a body moving would have to traverse an infinite number of spaces in a finite time. By supposing that the atoms form the lowest limit to division, the atomists escape from this dilemma : a total space traversed has only a finite number of parts. As it is unclear whether the earliest atomists understood the atoms to be physically or theoretically indivisible, they may not have made the distinction.

The changes in the world of macroscopic objects are caused by rearrangements of the atomic clusters. Atoms can differ in size, shape, order and position (the way they are turned) ; they move about in the void, and – depending on their shape – some can temporarily bond with one another by means of tiny hooks and barbs on their surfaces. Thus the shape of individual atoms affects the macroscopic texture of clusters of atoms, which may be fluid and yielding or firm and resistant, depending on the amount of void space between and the coalescence of the atomic shapes. The texture of surfaces and the relative density and fragility of different materials are also accounted for by the same means.

The atomists accounted for perception by means of films of atoms sloughed off from their surfaces by external objects, and entering and impacting the sense organs. They tried to account for all sensible effects by means of contact, and regarded all sense perceptions as caused by the properties of the atoms making up the films acting on the atoms of

animals' sense organs. Perceptions of color are caused by the 'turning' or position of the atoms; tastes are caused by the texture of atoms on the tongue, e.g., bitter tastes by the tearing caused by sharp atoms; feeling of heat are ascribed to friction. Democritus was taken by Aristotle to have considered thought to be a material process involving the local rearrangement of bodies, just as much as is perception.

A famous quotation from Democritus distinguishes between perceived properties like colors and tastes, which exist only 'by convention,' in contrast to the reality, which is atoms and void. However, he apparently recognized an epistemological problem for an empiricist philosophy that nonetheless regards the objects of sense as unreal. In another famous quotation, the senses accuse the mind of overthrowing them, although mind is dependent on the sense. The accusation is that, by developing an atomist theory that undermines the basis for confidence in sense perception, thought has in effect undercut its own foundation on knowledge gained through the senses. Democritus sometimes seems to doubt or deny the possibility of knowledge.

The early atomists try to account for the formation of the natural world by means of their simple ontology of atoms and void alone. Leucippus held that there are an infinite number of atoms moving for all time in an infinite void and that these can form into cosmic systems or kosmoi by means of a whirling motion which randomly establishes itself in a large enough cluster of atoms. It is controversial whether atoms are thought to have weight as an intrinsic property, causing them all to fall in some given direction, or whether weight is simply a tendency for atoms (which otherwise move in any and every direction, except when struck) to move towards the centre of a system, created by the whirling of the cosmic vortices. When a vortex is formed, it creates a membrane of atoms at its outer edge, and the outer band of atoms catches fire, forming a sun and stars. These kosmoi are impermanent and are not accounted for by purpose or design. The earth is described as a flat cylindrical drum at the center of our cosmos.

Species are not regarded as permanent abstract forms, but as the result of chance combinations of atoms. Living things are regarded as having a psyche or principle of life; this is identified with fiery atoms. Organisms are thought to be reproduced by means of seed: Democritus seems to have held that both parents produce seeds composed of fragments from each organ of their body. Whichever of the parts drawn from the relevant organ of the parents predominates in the new mixture determines which characteristics are inherited by the offspring. Democritus is reported to have given an account of the origin of human beings from the earth. He is also said to be the founder of a kind of cultural anthropology, since his account of the origin of the cosmos includes an account of the origin of human institutions, including language and social and political organization.

A large group of reports about Democritus's views concern ethical maxims: some scholars have tried to regard these as systematic or dependent

on atomist physics, while others doubt the closeness of the connection. Because several maxims stress the value of ‘cheerfulness,’ Democritus is sometimes portrayed as ‘the laughing philosopher.’

1.5 SOPHIST

The practice of charging money for education and Providing wisdom only to those who could pay led to the condemnations made by Socrates, through Plato in his dialogues, as well as Xenophone’s Memorabilia.

The Greek word sophist (sophistis) derives from the word sophin, and sophos, meaning “wisdom” or “wise” since the time of Homer and was originally used to describe expertise in a particular knowledge or craft. Gradually, however the word also came to denote general wisdom and especially wisdom about human affairs (for example, in politics, ethics, or household management).

In ancient Greece, sophists were a category of philosopher-teachers who travelled around Greek cities and specialized in using the techniques of philosophy and rhetoric for the purpose of teaching *arête*-excellence, or virtue predominantly to young gentlemen and nobility. These were useful skills in Athens, where being persuasive could lead to political power and economic wealth. Although there were numerous differences among Sophist teachings, a prominent element in their philosophy was skepticism. Sophists taught their beliefs for a considerable price. Overall, Sophists identified as either agnostic or atheistic.

Sophists became popular following the development of thought and society in Athens, Greece in the fifth century B.C. They offered practical education with teaching that included speculation of the nature of the universe as well as the art of life and politics. They believed that law was an agreement between people and that justice is nonexistent. Among the Sophists, Protagoras, Gorgias, Prodicus, Hippias, Thrasymachus, Lycophron, Callicles, Antiphon, and Cratylus are the most well-known.

Most Sophists claimed to teach *arête* excellence in the management of one’s own affairs and especially in the administration of the affairs of the city. Up to the fifth century B.C. it was the common belief that *arête* was inborn and that aristocratic birth alone qualified a person for politics, but Protagoras taught that *arête* is the result of training and not innate. The Sophists claimed to be able to help their students better themselves through the acquisition of certain practical skills, especially rhetoric (the art of persuasion). Advancement in politics was almost entirely dependent upon rhetorical skills. The Athenian democracy with its assembly (*ekklesia*), in which any citizen could speak on domestic and foreign affairs, and the council of five hundred (*boule*), on which every Athenian citizen got a chance to serve, required an ability to speak persuasively. The Sophists filled this need for rhetorical training and by their teaching proved that education could make an individual a more effective citizen and improve his status in Athenian society.

1) Who were the Sophists ?

1.6 THE SOPHIST EPISTEMOLOGY

1.6.1 Protagoras :

Protagoras of Abdera (c. 490-420 B.C.E.) was the most prominent member of the sophistic movement and Plato reports he was the first to charge fees using that title.

From a philosophical perspective, Protagoras is most famous for his relativistic account of truth-in particular the claim that ‘man is the measure of all things’ –and his agnosticism concerning the Gods.

Protagoras was one of the most well-known and successful teachers. He taught his students the necessary skills and knowledge for a successful life, particularly in politics, rather than philosophy. He trained his pupils to argue from both points of view because he believed that truth could not be limited to just one side of the argument. Therefore, he taught his students to praise and blame the same things and to strengthen the weaker argument so that it might appear the stronger.

These techniques are based on the belief that truth is relative to the individual. Arguments on both sides of a question are equally true because those debating a question can only truly know those things which exist in their own mind and therefore cannot make a definitely true statement about objective realities the mind (phenomenalism). Truth is what it appears to be to the individual. Protagoras wrote about a variety of subjects and some fragments of his work survived. He is the author of the famous saying, “man is the measure of all things, of the things that are, that they are and things that are not, that they not”, ‘Which is the opening sentence of a work called Truth.

However, the question which arises is what is meant by knowledge ?

Knowledge means that which is true for all and for all the moments of human life. Is Perception knowledge in that sense ? No. But it is nonetheless knowledge of the object as it appears to a percipient at a particular moment and true for him at that moment alone. Is it true for another ? no, for perception of one true to him alone at one particular moment of time, and a thing is what appears to another moment of time. It appears then no two perceptions of the same man are the same, and not two perceptions of two men are quite the same. And yet for all practical purpose perception alone is knowledge. This knowledge is relative to different times.

Hence the famous saying of Protagoras Homo Mensura, i.e. man is the measure of all things. In other words; what appears to me is true for me and what appears to you is true for you. Is there no knowledge which is valid and acceptable to all men universally ? NO. Then the conclusion of

homo mensura not only shows the relativism of knowledge but also its universality as impossibility. This is known as skepticism. In other respects, it also means all statements are true and none are false. Gorgias another Sophist holds that based on this perception, no knowledge is possible, and even if knowledge be available. It cannot be communicated to others.

Few thinkers point out that Protagoras used the term man not as an individual man but universal man, the rational man. It is reason which is one and the same in all and what reason tells us is universal and valid for all. In this sense, man taken as a rational being is certainly the measure of all things. But on close analysis of Protagoras philosophy. We know that he does not uphold the claims of thought or reason in constituting knowledge. For him, knowledge is perception. Against this view, Socrates maintained that knowledge is thought. Hence the Protagoras dithyramb of homo mensura necessarily leads to skepticism and nihilism. Here 'man' really means men for Protagoras.

1.6.2 Gorgias :

Gorgias is another well-known Sophist. Gorgias writings showcase his ability of making ridiculous and unpopular positions appear stronger. Gorgias authored a lost work known as On Nature of the Non-Existent, in this book he laid down three of his tenets, namely,

- 1) There is nothing
- 2) Even if there be anything, it cannot be known.
- 3) Even if there be any knowledge of anything. It cannot be communicated.

In explaining the first tenet Gorgias is said to have borrowed Zeno's arguments leading to falsity of motion and plurality. If there be anything then it can be known only through perception. But perception tells us that things are many and they are in motion. Further, perception is the only knowledge. And perception tells us that everything has come into being from its earlier state. But this arising of things can be either from being or non-being. But quite obviously a world of becoming cannot come from an unchanging being. Again nothing can arise from non-being. Hence, there is nothing in the world.

The second tenet of Gorgias is, 'Even if there is anything, we cannot know it'. It means we do not know what the real object is. What we find here is that the sophists were interested in the refutation of the statements of their opponents. Naturally they concentrated on the logic of proof and contradiction. Naturally any judgement can really be tautology.

The third tenet, 'Even if we could know anything, we cannot communicate our knowledge to anyone else.' Gorgias's attempts to persuade his readers that thought and existence was different. Hence, whatever our knowledge be, it cannot be about things. Hence, what kind of knowledge can be

obtained to be communicated at all ? It further means. 'My perception is mine, and yours is yours'. There is nothing which two persons can perceive alike. Hence each man is shut up in his cocoon like existence from which nothing can go out and into which nothing can enter. Hence, no knowledge can ever be communicated. Here the theory of Gorgia's refuted his practice, for he was teaching and communicating his knowledge to his pupils.

Check your progress :

- 1) What was the prominent element in the philosophy of the Sophists ?
- 2) Protagoras taught that arefe is the result ofand not innate.
- 3) Protagoras is most famous for his relativistic account of truth particular the claim that
- 4) Explain the reasoning of Protagoras to train his students to argue from both points of view ?
- 5) Explain skepticism that follows from the conclusion of homo mensura.
- 6) Mention any two tenets of gorgias.

1.7 THE SOPHIST THEORY OF MORALITY

The Sophists held that morality consists in pleasure. What is pleasant, agreeable and desirable feeling for one is morally right for him, and what is agreeable and desirable for another is morally right for him. Here in morality the individual state becomes the measure of morality. As these states are relative to individuals, so morality differs from persons to persons. Therefore, the sophists were pragmatist and utilitarian in moral philosophy.

What is true individuala is true also for justice, law and goodness of the State. For the sophists, the State law is based on customs and conventions. The law of one State is not the same as the law of other States. Even in the same State the law framed by one ruling party is changed by the next ruling party. Under the circumstances goodness and justice are relative. It is really based on the principle of 'might is right'. The brute majority of the ruling party in the State frames the laws for the weaker ones. Hence justice is the right of the strong. Plato opposed the doctrine of 'might is right' and taught right is might'.

In religion too the sophists were non-committal. Protagoras is supposed to have written a book called 'On the Gods' in which he states : With regard to gods, I cannot feel sure either that they are not or that they are not, now they are like in figure ; for there are many things that hinder sure knowledge, the obscurity of the subject and the shortness of human life.

Thus Protagoras was really skeptical about the existence of God. But he advised the traditional worship of gods, perhaps as a measure of prudence.

Protagoras is said to have been charged for his irreverence because of his skepticism about the existence of gods.

Check Your Progress :

- 1) The Sophists held that morality consists in
- 2) What is Protagoras view with regard to God ?

1.8 SUMMARY

Early Greek thinkers were free thinkers. They tried to explain things according to natural causes like earth, water, fire and air' Thinkers like Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Heraclitus and Parmenides did not take help of supernatural Gods. Hence Greek philosophy is called scientific in spirit.

1.9 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Give a brief analysis of Pre Socratic Philosophy.
- 2) Thales is regarded as the first Philosopher in the Greek tradition, Comment.
- 3) Explain Anaximander's cosmology in detail.
- 4) Why does Anaximenes regard air as the primary stuff of the universe ?
- 5) Explain Parmenides and Heraclitus' view of change in detail.
- 6) Man is the measure of all things', explain it with reference to Protagoras view point.
- 7) Briefly explain the epistemology of Sophists'
- 8) Elicitate Sophists theory of Morality.



SOCRATES AND PLATO

Unit Structure :

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 The Method of Socrates
- 2.3 Characteristics of Socratic Method
- 2.4 The Ethical Theory of Socrates
- 2.5 Refutation of The Sophists Views
- 2.6 Plato's Theory of Knowledge
- 2.7 Plato's Theory Forms
- 2.8 Critical Remarks
- 2.9 Summary
- 2.10 References
- 2.11 Unit End Questions

2.0 OBJECTIVES

- To know about Socrates Philosophy
- To be acquainted with Socrates Method (or Socratic Methody)
- To understand Socrates Ethics
- To know the importance of Plato's philosophy.
- To explore Plato's theory Knowledge
- To understand theory of Forms/ ideas
- To understand Plato's Metaphors

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Socrates (about 469-399 BC) was a, great Greek Philosopher. He completely gave himself to philosophical enquiry and as result of this embraced martyrdom heroically. He did not write a single book on philosophy. Nevertheless he is rightly considered as great thinker of Athen. He accepts their responsibility, this he did by asking questions. Socrates also tried to arouse in youngsters the love of truth and virtue so that they could lead a good life. He is well known as a thinker who inspired Plato to do and do dedicate himself to philosophy.

Plato was born in 429/17 in Athens in an aristocratic family. He was given the best education that an Athenian citizen of that time could get. He was named Aristocles after his grandfather.

His teacher gave him the name “Plato” meaning “broad,” on account of his broad shoulder and robust figure.

Plato was tremendously influenced by the personality, life and teaching of Socrates. He drew unabated inspiration from Socrates and remained a most faithful and devoted disciple of Socrates. Plato wrote abundantly in the form of dialogues. The central figure in these dialogues is Socrates. Plato put his philosophy into the mouth of Socrates.

2.2 THE METHOD OF SOCRATES

One of the greatest contributions of Socrates to philosophy is his philosophical method. Socrates always insisted on making our ideas clear and defining correctly our concepts. Socrates professed ignorance in his discussion and debates.

Nevertheless he defeated those who claimed to know. That is known as Socratic irony.

Socrates also argued that through sincere dialogues the participants can discover truth, make their ideas and their meaning clear. Socrates was not a speculative thinker. His approach was practical. He would go to the marketplace and ask questions regarding moral and political notions used by the speakers in their discussions.

For instance people usually talk about politics but their ideas about politics are not clear. They are vague. They are not well-founded. He will so cross examine that they feel the need to modify their ideas. Socrates would give relevant instances from day affairs and point out the incorrectness of the meaning of the notions or the ideas of the participants. Of course this does not mean that Socrates explicitly formulated his method of philosophical enquiry.

However historians of philosophy state that he put a philosophical method into practice. That is to say that his method of philosophizing can be understood from his intellectual practice or rational discussion and debates. His thinking exemplifies a pattern of his philosophical procedure or method.

2.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCRATIC METHOD

The Socratic philosophical method has the following characteristics. They are :

1) Socratic Method is skeptical

It begins with Socratic profession of ignorance of the truth of the subject matter under discussion. It is an expression of intellectual modesty or humility and honesty on the part of Socrates. This skeptical approach is

not final but provisional and tentative. Acceptance of ignorance of truth is the initial step in one's pursuit of clear and correct knowledge of concepts.

Socrates and Plato

2) it is conversational or dialogical :

Socrates believed that honest participation in a dialogue helped to clarify ideas and discover truths 'Truth can be discussed or unfolded by questions and answer technique.

Participants in the discussion and dialogue can begin with popular conceptions or hurriedly formed ideas.

In other words they can start with common sense beliefs and ideas. They may be borrowed from tradition or from the writings of poets and mythologists or preceding thinkers. When they critically analyze these ideas more correct or adequate conceptions emerge. This method therefore, is known as maieutic method. It is the technique of intellectual midwifery. Just as a midwife (or nurse) helps a pregnant woman in the process of delivery. Likewise Socrates assisted the participants to bring their ideas to birth. He never claimed to impart knowledge to others. His mother was a traditional midwife. Socrates accepted this model and called himself an intellectual midwife who through questioning and cross examination helped others to clarify their ideas and develop adequate conceptions regarding different topics such as justice.

3) Socratic Method is definitional and conceptual :

According to this method, the goal of knowledge is the attainment of correct definitions of social and ethical ideas such as justice, wisdom, courage, etc. Socrates insisted on defining terms and ideas.

4) Socratic Method is inductive or empirical :

Socrates always criticized provisional definition by reference to particular examples or instances. In other words, tentative definitions and concepts were tested by reference to common experience.

5) Socratic Method is deductive too :

It begins with given definition or-concepts, deduces its implications and then tests them. This definitional and deductive aspect of Socratic Method, historians of Philosophy suggests inspired Plato's dialectical method and exerted considerable influence on the development of Aristotelian logic.

Check Your Progress :

- 1) What did Socrates always insist upon ?
- 2) of truth is the initial step in one's pursuit of clear and correct knowledge of concepts.
- 3) Identify the goal of knowledge according to Socrates.

2.4 THE ETHICAL THEORY OF SOCRATES

In relation to Ethics, Socratic laid down three propositions :

- 1) Virtue is knowledge through concepts. So nobody does wrong knowingly. Therefore, vice is ignorance.
- 2) As virtue is knowledge, so virtue can be thought.
- 3) Virtue is one.

We will now look in detail the ethical theory of Socrates. For Socrates the key to a virtuous life was knowledge of the GOOD. If one knew the Good one would choose it. The question was, what is the Good ? What is Best ? Virtue would depend on knowledge.

Socrates believed that no one does wrong voluntarily. Evil is the result of ignorance. If people knew what was the right thing to do they would do it. We always choose what we think is the best or good for us. So, if someone chooses to do what we think is wrong, then that person made a mistake and must be educated to see the error. They mistake evil for the GOOD. Given options humans will choose the options that appears to be good for them. When they choose what other people call evil it is because they do not agree. They will continue to do the evil acts unless and until they no longer think of them as good. Socrates theory does NOT claim that people who do wrong do not know that the act is wrong.

Further, Socrates held that all virtue is one. Virtue is GOOD. Truth is GOOD. Beauty is GOOD. Knowledge is GOOD. The true, good and beautiful are all GOOD and united in the GOOD as ONE.

The ethical theory of Socrates not only influenced Greco Roman moral theory, but even in the modern time has influenced modern theories of utilitarianism and hedonism.

Check Your Progress :

- 1) For Socrates the key to a virtuous life was knowledge of the
- 2) State the three propositions of the ethical theory of Socrates.
- 3) Why did Socrates held that all virtue is one ?

2.5 REFUTATION OF THE SOPHISTS VIEWS

It is difficult to separate Plato's epistemology from his ontology. Plato assumed that we can have knowledge that is objective and universally valid. He was primarily interested in the question 'what is the true object of knowledge'

To explain what knowledge is Plato discusses what knowledge or truth is not. Protagoras the Sophist advocated that "Knowledge is perception".

Plato refutes the Sophists views that “Knowledge is perception” and Knowledge is opinion”.

Socrates and Plato

2.5.1 Knowledge is perception :

According to Protagoras, man is the measures of things. Truth is relative. What I perceive or feel is true for me, what you feel or perceive is true for you. And there is no other criterion of knowledge. Knowledge and sensation are identical. Real Knowledge is impossible. Plato criticizes this theory on the following grounds.

- 1) If perception is knowledge, animals too perceive. Therefore animals also must be regarded as the measures of all things.
- 2) For Protagoras, what appears to each individual true for that individual. If So, supposing Protagoras theory appears false to me, does it really because false ? Will protagoras admit that his theory is false ?
- 3) This theory becomes false in its application to our judgements of future events. The frequent mistakes which man makes about future show this.
- 4) Are all perceptions equally true ? Perception yields contradictory impressions. The same object appears large when it is near and it appears small when it is far. In different lights the same object appears to be of different colours. The piece of paper looks of different shapes from different angles. If perception is knowledge, which one of such perceptions is true ?
- 5) For Protagoras all perceptions are equally true. So a child's perceptions must be just as much correct as those of his teacher. His teacher therefore can teach him nothing. So this doctrine renders all teaching, all discussions, proof or disproof impossible.
- 6) If all perceptions are true, why do we commit mistakes at all ? Things appear to us to be such-and-such. But later on, we realize that we have been wrong in thinking so. How to explain error ?
- 7) This theory destroys the objectivity of truth and renders the distinction between truth and falsehood wholly meaningless. To say that whatever I perceive is true for me is simply gives a new name to my perception but does not add value to it.
- 8) Meaningful perception is never the work of a single sense. Different sensations given by different senses must be combined, organized : compared, contrasted, etc, this is the activity of mind and not of the sense themselves. Therefore does not consist of sense-impressions only; it also involves the functioning of the mind or reason.

2.5.2 “Knowledge is Opinion” :

The Sophists hold that on every subject more than one opinion possible. So “Knowledge is Opinion”. For Plato, the relativity of knowledge was unacceptable. His aim was to prove such view as false on the following grounds –

- 1) Opinion may be right or wrong. Wrong opinions is clearly not knowledge. Even right opinion is knowledge. We often feel intuitively or instinctively that something is true though, we cannot give any definite grounds for our belief. The belief may be correct but it is not knowledge. The man who has right opinion knows that a thing is so
- 2) An opinion is always shaky and uncertain. It can always be easily shaken and knocked down by sophistry and persuasion. Even right opinion can be shaken by the art rhetoric. Therefore even opinion is unstable and uncertain. Opinion is always probable and knowledge is always firm, certain and confident.
- 3) Knowledge is not a mere instinctive belief. Knowledge must be full of complete understanding and rational. It must be grounded on reason and not on faith.

Check Your Progress :

Which theories did Plato refute ?

2.6 PLATO’S THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

If knowledge is neither perception nor opinion, then what is it ? Plato’s constructive answer to this question is given such Dialogues as Phaedo, Republic and Sophist. For Plato, knowledge is knowledge of concepts. It is not liable to mutation according to the subjective impressions of any individual.

Knowledge of concepts or ideas or Forms gives us the objective truth. Knowledge of Forms or ideas is founded on reasons and not sense impressions.

Plato's constructive answer to the questions, "What is Knowledge?" is given in such dialogues as the Phaedo, Republic and the Sophist. Plato's views can be summarized as follows.

2.6.1 "Knowledge is Awareness of Eternal Ideas." :

According to Plato, Knowledge is neither sense perception nor true opinion nor true opinion with explanation. Through sense experience we become aware of the constantly changing sensible objects. These changing objects are simply passing shadows. Truth lies beyond the passing shadows and it can be grasped only by Reasons'.

Truth is eternal, unchanging and universal. To know one must pass from the particular to universal. True knowledge is a awareness of the universal

concepts (ideas or Forms). Socrates always sought clear definitions of concepts. Socrates hold that through concepts alone Truth can be known. The objects of our experience are constabtly changing and the Universals or the idas are stable and unchanging. Concepts constitute true knowledge. Universal ideas alone are real. knowledge is awareness of the universal and eternal Ideas.

2.6.2 Knowledge is Recollection or Reminiscence":

According to Plato, we do not derive concepts from particular sensations. Rather particular sensations help us to become aware of concepts or Ideas. The soul is already familiar with the Ideas. Learning is simply remembering what we already know. Knowledge is nothing but recollection of previously known truths and realities.

Plato advocates immortality of the soul. As the Ideas are independent of sensible objects, the soul is also independent of the physical body. According to Plato, our soul was dwelling in the eternal world of Ideas. So the soul knew these Ideas at first hand. When the soul enters into human body, it loses its original knowledge. In the course of experience and reflection, the soul regains the same knowledge. Knowing is essentially philosophical reawakening.

For Plato, all knowledge is recollection of what was experienced by the soul in its disembodied state before birth. Knowledge must be present in the mind at birth. It must be recollected from a previous existence, It takes great efforts to bring the half lost Ideas back to mind. The process of being reminded is education.

2.6.3 "The Simile of the Line": Levels of Knowledge":

←	knowledge	Reasons →	Philosophy (Dialectic)
		→	
		Discursive Thought →	Sciences
		→	
	opinion	Common Sense →	Belief
		Imagination	Conjecture

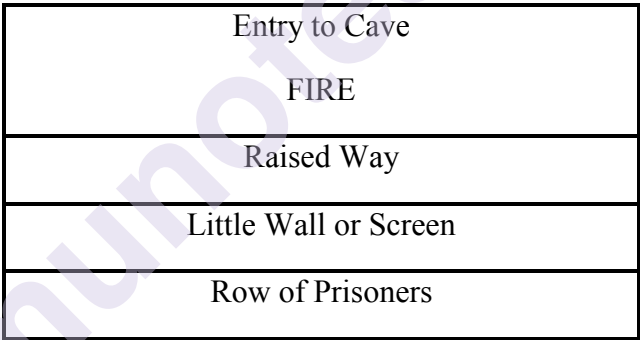
In Republic, Plato explains the development of human mind from ignorance to knowledge. The entire range of human knowledge is expressed by a vertical line. This line is divided into two main segments of "Knowledge" and "Opinion". The segment of "Knowledge" is further divided into 'Reasons' and 'Opinion'. (1) The segment of 'Reason' acquires Philosophical Knowledge and Discursive Thought produces various sciences. (2)The segment of 'Opinion' is sibdivided into Common Sense and imagination. Common Sense clings to various beliefs and imagination makes use of mere conjectures.

The ascent of the soul from the lower segment of the 'Line of Knowledge' to the higher segment is progress' It is not an automatic progress. It require mental effort and intellectual discipline. The soul is moved by the impules of 'Eros' or Love'. This is the famous concept of Platonic Love.

Before birth as human body the soul dwelt disembodied in the pure contemplation of the world of Ideas. Sinking down in the world of senses, it forgets the Ideas. Man at first perceives and loves beautiful objects. It leads to appreciate beauty and culture in mind. Then man beings to love wisdom. Wisdom or Reason enables him to look upon the "wide ocean of intellectual beauty, full of lovely and majestic forms". This development ends in the complete rational cognition of the world of Ideas.

2.6.4 "The Allegory of the Cave":

Plato has given the most famous "Allegory of the cave" in Republic. The Allegory of Cave describes the ascent of the soul from the region of - Darkness (Conjectures and Imaginations) to the region of Light (Dialectic and Truth). The man who reaches the region of Light can guide the state affairs and deserves to be the 'Philosopher King'. In the analogy of Cave, Plato shows the ascent of the mind from illusion to truth and pure philosophy. Plato also shows the difficulties in the progress of soul towards Truth.



There is an underground Cave which has an opening towards Light or Fire. Human beings live in this Cave. They cannot freely move as their necks and legs are chained like prisoners from their childhood. They can only face the inside wall of the cave. They have never seen the light of the Sun. The Sun, the Fire, the Light is behind them. Between the Fire and prisoners there is a raised path. Along the raised path variuos carriers containaing statues and figures pass. The chained prisoners cannot see the carriers but only the shadows of these objects on the wall they face. The prisoners behold only shadows of Reality and echoes of Truth. If any of the prisoners is suddenly releases and happens to see the Realities, he would be blinded by the glare of the Light. If he comes out of the Cave, he will see the world of Sun illuminated objects. When the enlightened man returns to Cave, he will fumble and falter in the darkness of the Cave. He would appear 'ridiculous' in the eyes of inside prisoners. If this man tries to enlighten the inside prisoners, these prisoners would become irritated and would even put the 'Enlightened to death.

1. What is knowledge accordingly to plato ?
2. what are the levels of knowledge for plato ?
3. State the importance of the Allegory of the Cave.

2.7 PLATO'S THEORY FORMS

The concepts of Socrates become metaphysical substances or realities for Plato. Plato believed that the concept cannot be mere abstract idea in the mind, but it must have a reality of its own, Plato's ideas/ Forms indicate objective reality.

According to Aristotle, Plato's theory of Forms has three sources namely Heraclitus, Parmenides and Socrates. Heraclitus declared that "Everything Changes". Plato applied this to the world of senses and declared the visible world as appearances. Parmenides taught that "Reality is unchanging and eternal". Plato said that the 'Ideas' must be real, unchanging and eternal universals. Socrates taught that knowledge comes through concepts. Plato said that 'Ideas' or 'Concepts' to point to Reality.

Plato's theory of Forms/ Ideas maintains two distinct levels of Reality. First level is that of visible world of sense experiences and second higher level is that of Forms/Ideas which are real, eternal and unchanging. According to Plato we can identify beauty in various objects of experience because we have the conception of Beauty in abstract. We can identify the beautiful objects as beautiful because these objects participate in the more general Form of Beauty. The theory of Ideas represents Plato's attempt to cultivate human capacity for abstract thought. The objects of our experience do change grow old, decay and lose their beauty. But the Form of Beauty is invisible, unchanging, eternal and imperishable. The characteristics of Forms/Ideas are as follows --

1. 'Forms/Ideas are realities or substances. They have independent existence. Ideas are the First Principles of universe. They are the essences of all worldly objects
2. Forms/Ideas are not purely mental things. They do not reside in any Mind. Ideas are substances independent of any Mind. They have 'objective reality' of their own.
3. Ideas are 'universal', An idea is not the idea of any particular thing. For example, the idea of horse is not the idea of this or that particular horse. It is the general concept of all horses. It is the universal horse
4. Form/idea is annuity. It is the 'One' among 'Many'. The idea of man is one although individual men are many.
5. Forms/Ideas are the cause or ground of sense objects. They are absolute realities by which individual thing must be explained.

6. Forms/Ideas are eternal, unchangeable and imperishable. Beautiful objects arise and pass away. But the idea of Beauty neither begins nor ends. It is eternal. The beautiful objects are only fleeting copies of the eternal idea of Beauty. Even all men were destroyed; the idea of 'man' remains untouched by the birth, death, old age, decay or death of individual men.
7. Forms/Ideas are both transcendental and immanent. The Ideas are immanent in many sense objects. They are transcendental as they have a reality of their own apart from the objects of senses.
8. Forms/Ideas are beyond space and time. They reside in the distinct world of their own. Plato separates the world of Ideas from the world of sense objects. The sense objects are poor in perfect 'copies', shadows' or 'imitations' of Ideas. They derive their existence and nature from the Forms/ Ideas.
9. Forms/Ideas are apprehended through reason and not through sense organs. Finding the common element in the manifold objects is the work of reason. The knowledge of Forms/Ideas is apprehended by rational cognition and laborious thought.
10. Each Idea embodies perfection of its own kind. Its perfection is the same as its reality. The Idea of man is that of a perfect man and all individuals derive their Being from the Idea of perfect man.
11. There are many kinds of Ideas. Plato at first concerned moral aesthetic universals. There are Forms/Ideas of all things, qualities, relations, values, etc. There are Forms of man, dog, house, tables, chairs, colours, sounds sizes, etc. There are Ideas of truth, goodness, beauty, etc.
12. All Forms/Ideas constitute a single organic system. There is a hierarchy of Ideas. Just as one Idea presides over several individual objects, similarly the Idea of Good presides over all other Ideas. The Idea of Good is the source of all other Forms/Ideas. It is the organic unity governed by a universal purpose. Reality is rational and meaningful.
13. The Forms/Ideas are perfect and changeless. The sense objects are ever changing. Plato believes that imperfection is due to 'Matter'. Ideas and 'Matter' are not reducible to one another. According to Plato, the demiurge (God) like an artist, fashions sense objects after the pattern of Ideas. Plato's God is not a creator of Ideas or of Matter. Demiurge is only a world designer.

Check your progress:

1. State the characteristics of Plato's Forms and the world of sense objects.
2. Explain the relation between the world of Forms and the world of sense objects.

2.8 CRITICAL REMARKS

1. Plato was the first person in the history of the world to produce a great all embracing system of philosophy. He was the original thinker. He took the thoughts of his preceeeders as foundations below ground upon which he built the palace of philosophy.
2. Plato was the founder of Idealism. He has greatly influenced the western philosophy and reason. Plato completely separates and opposes the visible world of experience and the world of Ideas.
3. Aristotle was dissatisfied with Plato's theory of Forms. He severely criticized the theory of Ideas. According to Aristotle, Plato's abstract Forms/Ideas cannot explain the concrete facts of experience. Plato's changeless and motionless Forms/Ideas cannot explain the motion and change of wordly things.
4. Plato's Forms/Ideas do not explain the world that we experience. Plato says, wordly things are the 'copies' or 'imitations' of Forms/Ideas. However the questions 'Why these copies exist at all ?' or 'How do these imitations arise?' remain unanswered
5. According to Plato, Ideas are the essence of things. Yet Plato separates the Ideas from things and places these ideas is a transcendent world of their'own. Aristotle argues that the essence of a thing must be in the thing itself ahdn not outside ot it. Complete separation of the world of Ideas from the world of things is logically unjustifiable.
6. Plato uses poetic metaphors instead of logical arguments to explain his views. He says that sense objects are mere 'copies' or 'imitations' of Ideas. The Allegory of the Cave is also a poetic metaphor.

2.9 SUMMARY

The most important thing about Socrates is that he gave a new turn to Greek thought. Through his portrayal in Plato's dialogues. Socrates has become renowned for contribution to the field of ethics, and it is this Platonic Socrates who lends his name to the concepts of Socratic irony and the Socratic Method. According to Plato Socrates also made important and lasting contributions to the fields of epistemology and logic, and their influence of his ideas and approach remains a strong foundation for much western philosophy that followed.

Plato was the first person in the history of the world to produce a great all embracing system of philosophy. Plato was tremendously influenced by the personality, life and teaching of Socrates. Plato put his philosophy into the mouth of Socrates.

Plato was primarily interested in the question 'what is the true object of recollection or reminiscence. There are two levels of knowledge namely opinion and knowledge. Opinion is divided into common sense imagination. Knowledge is divided into reasons and discursive thought.

Plato uses. The Allegory of the Cave to explain the development of the human mind from ignorance to knowledge.

Plato's theory of Forms/Ideas maintains two distinct levels of Reality namely visible world of sense experiences and the transcendental world of Forms/ Ideas. The world of sense experience beyond the world of sense experience. For Plato, the Forms/Ideas are the ultimate reality. The theory of Ideas represents Plato's attempt to cultivate human capacity for abstract thought.

2.10 REFERENCES

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2. "A History of Philosophy" Volume1, Greece & Rome by FREDERICK COPLESTON. SJ.

2.11 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Explain Socrates Method in detail.
- 2) State the characteristics of Socrates Method.
- 3) Write in brief the ethical theory of Socrates.
1. How does Plato refute the 'sophists' views on Knowledge ?
2. Explain Plato's theory of Knowledge.
3. Elaborate Plato's theory of Forms/Ideas.
4. Write notes:
 - The Simile of Line
 - The Allegory Cave
- 4) "Knowledge is recollection"



ARISTOTLE AND POST-ARISTOTLE

1. Aristotle's theory of Causation (reference to the notion of teleology), Form and Matter; actuality and potentiality

Unit structure :

3.0 Objectives

3.1 Introduction

3.2 Theory Of Causation (Reference To The Notion Of Teleology)

3.3 Form And Matter

3.4 Actuality And Potentiality

3.5 Stoicism (Epictetu)

3.6 Skepticism (Sextus Empiricus)

3.7 Summary

3.8 References

3.9 Unit End Questions

3.0 OBJECTIVES

- To introduce the learners to Aristotle's Philosophy of four cause, form and matter and actuality and potentiality.
- To understand Aristotle's perspective of being and becoming as it is implied in his notion of teleology and causation.
- To understand the importance of Aristotle's metaphysics as it applies to his ethics of eudaemon life.
- To Understand the unique philosophy of Stoics
- To understand Epictetus' significant Stoic teachings
- To understand the importance of skepticism in Philosophy
- To understand the approach of Pyrrhonian skepticism
- To understand Sextus Empiricus' skepticism as not doubting possibility of knowledge but suspending judgements or beliefs.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E) was one of the greatest philosophers of the Classical period in Ancient Greece. He was a student of Plato. He was highly influenced by Plato's thought. However Aristotle's philosophy was slightly different from Plato's. He is famous for refuting Plato's theory of forms. In contrast to Plato being a poet and an ethico-religious thinker Aristotle was a scientist and a logician. He has covered a wide range of disciplines including metaphysics, logic, aesthetics, poetry, psychology, linguistics etc. Aristotle's works include Organon (logic), the physics, De Aximo, Eudemian, Ethics, Nichomechaen Ethics etc. He is known as the father of western logic and was the first to develop a formal system for reasoning. Aristotle was the founder of a school based in Athens, Greece called Lyceum.

Aristotle calls metaphysics as 'first philosophy'. The starting point of his metaphysics is the rejection of Plato's theory of forms. According to Plato, material objects are changeable and not real in themselves. However they correspond to an eternal, and immutable Form by a common name, and this Form can only be perceived by the intellect. Aristotle, as a scientist and empiricist preferred to focus on the reality of the material world. The relationship between form and matter is a central problem for Aristotle which he arrives at through the conception of four causes. Contending that the universe has a telos (purpose) and each thing aims to realise its final purpose, he introduces a teleological explanation of this mechanical and material world.

Stoicism was a philosophical movement of the Hellenistic period. It derives its name from the word stoa poikilê meaning porch in the Agora at Athens where the members of the school met and conducted lectures. It was founded by Zeno of Citium in Athens in the early 3rd century BC. No complete work of any of the first three heads of the Stoic school: the 'founder,' Zeno (344–262 BCE), Cleanthes (d. 232 BCE) or Chrysippus (d. ca. 206 BCE) are found. The only complete works by Stoic philosophers -Seneca (4 BCE–65 CE), Epictetus (c. 55–135) and the Emperor Marcus Aurelius (121–180) remain and these works are mainly focused on ethics.

Skepticism is a topic of interest of epistemology in Philosophy. It is the attitude of questioning or doubting instances of knowledge which are considered as mere belief. Philosophical skepticism either denies that knowledge or rational belief is possible or at least claims that we can know nothing with certainty about all things or only about non-empirical things like god or soul.

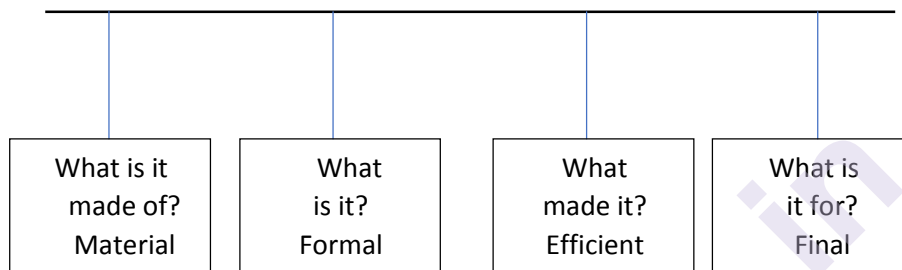
3.2 THEORY OF CAUSATION (REFERENCE TO THE NOTION OF TELEOLOGY)

'Change' is the inevitable reality and even the nature of the world. Some changes are natural while some are due to human actions. During the

process of change, things take a new form. Thus the question of change raises many philosophical issues.

For Aristotle the process of change involves movement, generation, decay, growth etc. There is some explanation to the question of 'why' change takes place. Thus in the analysis of change or movement, Aristotle offers his theory of four causes. Aristotle's term 'aitia' is translated as cause which does not have everyday English language usage. In philosophical scholarly traditions it is understood as 'explanation'. According to Aristotle, "we do not have knowledge of a thing until we have grasped its why, that is to say, its cause".

The following are the four questions that correspond to the four causes:



According to Aristotle, anything whether it is a natural object or a man-made object or living or non-living thing can be explained with the help of these four causes.

- (1) **The material cause** - The material cause is the matter that composes the changing object, It is the physical aspect that can be sensed and is known. For example- the bronze of the bronze statue; the wood of the wooden table.
- (2) **The formal cause** – The formal cause is the form or pattern of the thing. It also means archetype, definition, essence, shape, structure of the things. It is the determining idea or cause that first appears in the mind. For example- the blueprint of the building or statue.
- (3) **The efficient cause** - The efficient cause is what sets the object in motion. It is the source or principle of change. The efficient cause is what triggers the creation of becoming of that thing. For example- father of the child, sculptor, etc.
- (4) **The final cause** - The final cause explains the purpose of the thing's existence, the end or goal of that object. It is the ultimate purpose for our being.

Notion of Teleology

Rational human conduct is generally explained with reference to ends or goals pursued or about to be pursued. On similar basis, humans understand the behaviour of other things in nature, either as themselves pursuing their ends or goals or as designed to pursue some purpose. This purpose, goal or end is termed as telos and the most interesting account of

telos was that given by Aristotle. According to Aristotle a complete explanation of anything must consider its final cause along with its efficient, material, and formal causes.

With the explanation of the final cause Aristotle arrives at the concept of telos. The notion of teleology was prominent among Aristotle's predecessors. However he rejected their view that extrinsic causes such as God is the primary cause for natural things. For Aristotle, nature itself is the internal principle of change.

Teleology is the study of the ends or purposes that things have. Aristotle believed that the best explanation to understand why things are the way they are one must understand what purpose they were designed to serve.

Aristotle's emphasis on teleology implies that there is a reason for the existence of everything in the universe. He does not just see purpose in anatomical make-up or biology, but also how human life is organized and directed toward a final end. Thus Aristotle's conception of nature is not simply mechanical but teleological. According to him, nature demonstrates functionality in a more general sense than is illustrated by humans. Aristotle observed that a telos does not necessarily and always involve plans, motives, intention or intelligence.

According to Aristotle, once a final cause which constitutes the telos is determined, the material, efficient and formal causes are understood.

Check your progress :

Elucidate upon the theory of four causes given by Aristotle.

Explain the theory of causation with special reference to the notion of teleology

3.3 FORM AND MATTER

Aristotle begins his discussion on form and matter by first explaining the status of each cause. According to him, the formal and the final cause are the same. Formal cause means what a thing is in its essence. The final cause is what the thing becomes, after the essence (form) of the thing has been realized. Further he states, that the efficient cause means that which brings the movement or change in the things by means of the energy put into it. But why is the marble cut and molded in a skillful manner? Because the end i.e. sculpture had to be realized. Thus the final cause is what guides the efficient cause. Hence, we can say that it is the final cause which is the real explanation behind the efficient cause.

Thus it can be said that final cause is the real cause of becoming and movement in the world. If the final cause is the reason for the form and movement in the object then final cause in fact is the formal and the efficient cause. According to Aristotle thus all the three causes- efficient, formal and final are really one and he calls them together- the Form of the thing. The material cause cannot be reduced to any kind of causes. Thus in

Aristotle's philosophy there are only two things namely the Form and Matter which explains the becoming and the development in the world of things.

Aristotle and
Post-Aristotle

Every individual substance is a combination of matter and form. The form is that which brings the universal element in the objects of the similar kind. Matter brings particularity and uniqueness to each substance. Unlike Plato, Aristotle believed that matter and form are inseparable aspects of individual thing. The form and matter coexists within individual things. The form or being or essence of the object is unchangeable whereas the matter brings about change or is the principle of becoming. Matter takes different forms, and every new form already exists within the things. Thus form and matter are eternal principles of things. Thus to explain the process of being and becoming in the world, we must consider the Matter as that which changes but persists and the unchangeable Form which together are responsible for the developing world around us.

Check your progress :

Discuss in detail the Aristotelian theory of form and matter

3.4 ACTUALITY AND POTENTIALITY

Aristotle introduces the distinction between matter and form which applies to every individual substance. The form of a substance is its essence that enables it to function as a whole whereas the principle of matter is the stuff or the material the thing is composed of. This distinction is connected to another Aristotelian distinction between potentiality (dunamis) and actuality (entelecheia). On the basis of teleological explanation of this world, Aristotle believes everything in this world strives to achieve its purpose or end. The self-contained ends/purposes brought about by the form of that substance, Aristotle calls, entelechy.

According to Aristotle dunamis or potentiality is not simply a thing's power to produce a change but its capacity to be in a more wholesome state. Take for example, marble, which can be carved into a sculpture. According to Aristotle, the marble has a potential to become a sculpture; the marble is potentially a sculpture.

Thus the matter (marble), in Aristotle's terminology is linked with potentiality; the final product or the form (sculpture) is linked with actuality. Thus potentiality and actuality are the different stages of development in individual substance. The potential stage which is the first stage lies hidden within the things and during the process of change the potential is actualised.

However the stages of potentiality and actuality are relative categories. A thing could be the actuality of one thing but that same thing could become the potentiality of another thing. For example, an adult male is an actuality of a young boy but a mere potentiality of fatherhood.

Just as Aristotle gives form priority over matter, similarly he gives actuality (aspect of form) priority over potentiality (aspect of matter).

Check your progress :

Discuss in detail the Aristotelian distinction between actuality and potentiality.

3.5 STOICISM (EPICTETUS)

- **The philosophy of stoics :**

Stoicism considers philosophy not as a particular discipline of knowledge, but chiefly as a way of life. According to it, philosophy is a practice of the skill which is concerned with what is beneficial to life. Its major focus is eudaemonic virtue ethics. According to Stoicism the practice of virtues is sufficient to achieve eudaemonia.

The Stoics held that errors in judgement take place due to attachment to external things like health, wealth, and pleasure and lead to certain destructive emotions. Stoicism taught that people should develop self-control and maintain a will (prohairesis) that is "in accordance with nature" in order to overcome these destructive emotions.

- **Stoicism of Epictetus (c. 50 – c. 135 ad)**

Epictetus was a Greek Stoic philosopher born into slavery at Hierapolis Phrygia (present-day Pamukkale, in western Turkey). His teachings were written down and published as *Discourses* and *Enchiridion* by his pupil Arrian. Epictetus studied under Musonius Rufus, a Roman senator and Stoic philosopher.

Epictetus's philosophy is centred around the ideas of integrity, self-management and personal freedom. He advocates two central ideas- 1) volition and 2) correct use of impressions.

The following are the key ideas of Epictetus's Stoicism:

1. **Philosophy and the art of living:** According to Epictetus, moral philosophy has practical purpose of guiding people to lead a better life. At the same time he believes that our sufferings come from our own errors in judgements and mistaken beliefs about what is truly good and this affects our characters and capacity to flourish and be happy. So to be happy and flourish in life is completely dependent on us. He argues that philosophy does not promise anything external for man. Each person's own life is the subject matter of the art of living.
2. **Virtues-the only Good:** According to Epictetus the only good is the virtues (arête) which means excellence. Stoics believe that pleasure, wealth, status do not lead to a happy life. According to them, the eudaemon ('happy') life is achieved only through virtuous activities. According to Epictetus, in order to progress towards excellence one must understand the true nature of one's being and maintain one's moral character in the right condition.
3. **Living in harmony with nature:** This teaching concerns with focussing on two things- attention to our own actions and attention to the world which prompts those actions and where our actions have

impact. Accepting one's fate as what God has determined, is for Epictetus the meaning of living in harmony with nature.

Aristotle and
Post-Aristotle

4. **Making Progress:** In order to make progress, it is important that while one is enjoying life one must remain away from indulgence and learn to take blame for one's failures. This is necessary for achieving excellence and eudaemon life.
5. **Authority over ourselves:** For eudaemonic life, it is necessary to maintain our volition and moral character in the right condition. For that we must first understand what is in our control and power. No one else but our own self can control and maintain our moral character. Other external things or situations are not in our power. But we have authority over our capacities to judge what is good and evil, to adapt ourselves to any situations, power over our minds, our opinions, intentions, what we value etc. We must develop the capacity to be indifferent to evil or unpreferred things that can weaken our moral character.
6. **Proper use of Impressions or perceptions:** When we perceive something, it forms an impression and we become aware of it. Proper use of impression implies how we move from perceiving to forming judgement about it. For a eudaemonic life it is necessary that we form correct judgements. Therefore proper use of impressions plays an important role for eudaemonia.
7. **The three stoic disciplines:** The three stoic disciplines also called as topoi (fields of study) are practical exercises for eudaemonia. It includes:
 - i. **The Discipline of Desire:** This practical exercise concerns with what should be truly desirable for a stoic student. According to it, the only desirable thing should be virtues and virtuous activities.
 - ii. **The Discipline of Action:** This practical exercise concerns with our impulses and motivations to act and not actions per se. It concerns with what we as rational beingsought to do in order to attain excellence. The consequences of our actions are not in our power but to act is.
 - iii. **The Discipline of Assent:** Assent means to agree, or to go along with. Assenting to something means forming judgements about things and committing to those judgements. This practical exercise is also important for eudaemon life.
8. **God:** According to Epictetus the term 'God' 'the gods', and 'Zeus' can be used interchangeably. God is portrayed as the 'captain' of the ship of life, as 'the Giver' of things in life to whom we owe everything back. According to Epictetus, a Stoic student would not blame God or the universe or find faults with them if they understand themselves and the God in the right way. This is because the world is designed in such manner that each one has in its possession everything according to one's worth. For Epictetus the order and harmony in the world is maintained by this intelligent designer-the God.

9. **Life:** Epictetus gives various metaphors for life - Life as a festival which we must enjoy and be prepared for anything that comes our way, life as a game that concerns with how we play and not the game itself, life as a play- which suggests that we must accept our role in this world and play our characters sincerely, life as weaving which tells that we must make the best possible thing with what resources we have, life and military service where we all should aim to serve god.

3.6 SKEPTICISM (SEXTUS EMPIRICUS)

- **Pyrrhonism: Philosophy :**

Pyrrhonism is a form of philosophical skepticism that emerged in the ancient Greek and Roman world. It was founded by Pyrrho in the fourth century BCE. The knowledge about this school survives in the works of Sextus Empiricus who wrote in the late second and early third century CE. Just like Stoicism, the main aim of this school was eudaemonia. For the purpose of eudaemonia, Pyrrhonism advises suspension of judgement about all non-evident matters. With suspension of judgement comes attainment of a state of equanimity or ataraxia which is the way to achieve eudaemonia.

- **Sextus Empiricus: Skepticism :**

Sextus Empiricus was a second or third century CE Pyrrhonian skeptic. His book *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* is the fullest account available on Pyrrhonian skepticism. Pyrrhonian skepticism not just questions the philosophical, scientific and theoretical matters but also involves having no beliefs at all.

In Greek, *skeptesthai* means to investigate. According to the Pyrrhonian skeptic, the dogmatic philosophers believe they have made a discovery when they investigate into something. On the other hand academic skeptics believe that nothing can ever be known. However a Pyrrhonian skeptic always carries on their quest for truth. This is how, according to Sextus, skeptics get their name. Since Pyrrhonian skeptics are always in search of answers, it means there are no fixed set of beliefs of this school. Thus this means that to be a skeptic is to not ascribe oneself to a fixed set of beliefs. Then what is meant by Skepticism? According to Sextus, Skepticism is an ability or skill and a kind of philosophy not known by its contents or doctrines per se but by their attitude to philosophical problems.

According to Sextus a skeptic is someone who has the skill to find for any given argument an equally opposing yet convincing and valid argument. But how does one come to acquire such an ability or skill? According to Sextus, one acquires the skill of questioning both sides of an argument or raising arguments for both sides of an issue, when one is seeking equanimity or tranquility. Sextus believes that the complexities of the world confuse us and bring us trouble. For instance Sextus offers the example of tattooing- in some cultures it is seen as a taboo whereas in Egyptian and Sumerian cultures it is considered as an acceptable practice. Such practices confuse us to think whether something is good or bad. Due to such confusing situations, one starts investigating into things.

Sextus believes that a person investigating answers comes to have single-mindedness which helps him to scrutinise all sides of an issue. Single-mindedness enables one to develop skeptical skill which is an ability to consider both sides of a question with equal convincing power. So if we are investigating into truth persistently, we seek tranquillity in matters of opinion. So, skeptics who were trying to resolve the confusion between what is thought of about a thing and how it appears to us, they were unable to find the answers. This in turn led to their suspension of judgement. Suspension of judgement about matters did not bring more trouble but only tranquillity. Given their skeptical skill, the seekers of truth did not find answers as such but definitely reached the equanimity of mind by suspending judgements about matters of opinion.

Sextus explains this unexpected attainment of tranquillity on suspension of judgement with the help of an example. Apelles a painter was painting a horse and wanted to show lather on the mouth of the horse. Despite multiple attempts he was unsuccessful and finally gave up, took the sponge on which he was cleaning the brush and threw it at the painting. The sponge, on being thrown, accidentally created the representation of the lather on the mouth of the horse just as Apelles had wanted. This demonstrates that the struggle of Apelles pacified when he in fact stopped struggling and allowed things to be.

3.7 SUMMARY

Aristotle's metaphysics was a study of the nature of things and ourselves. By bringing metaphysics to the world of sense experience he attempts to show that every existence is not without purpose. His metaphysics examines the various concepts like what it is to be a substance, cause or explanation for being, the purpose of becoming. The life of every existing thing has a telos and the aim of each such thing is to actualise that telos which is in the potential form. Realising one's complete form is a necessary condition for a eudaemon life. This is the point where his metaphysics further meets with his ethics.

The life of Epictetus as a Stoic teacher can be regarded as a personal quest for philosophic enlightenment. He devoted his life to enlightening others. The chief concerns of his stoicism was kinship with God, emotional adaptiveness, self-development through virtues, detachment from the material distractions of worldly life. He made sure to inculcate these teachings into his students by guiding them to correct their perceptions, judgments and aiming for a eudaemon life.

Check your progress :

Discuss in detail the Stoic teachings of Epictetus

Sextus raised great concern for the certainty of all types of knowledge. According to him, no claim must be trusted before judging it. The ones who claim to have found the truth have only found the criterion of truth. No discovered claim should be judged as true or false. This does not mean he does not believe in the possibility of knowledge like the academic skeptics. He only insists on giving up the belief whether anything is knowable or not.

Sextus argues that curiosity, encourages one to engage in the investigation of things expecting to find tranquillity when they discover the answers. However in the process one ends up not discovering the expected answers but rather suspending judgment about the matter at hand, and yet unexpectedly tranquillity follows. Suspending judgements is not difficult according to Sextus as one can always live as it is without having any fixed beliefs.

Check your progress :

Give a detailed account of Sextus Empiricus' Skepticism.

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3.9 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) Discuss in detail the distinction between actuality and potentiality with reference to form and matter.
- 2) What are key ideas in Epictetus's Stoicism?
- 3) Discuss Pyrrhonian skepticism with reference to Sextus Empiricus.



MEDIEVAL PHILOSOPHY

1. Peter Abelard (Relationship between reason and faith)

Unit Structure :

- 4.0 Objective
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Peter Abelard (Relation Between Reason And Faith)
- 4.3 Characteristics Of The Schools Of Mu'tazilites And Asharites
- 4.4 Characteristics Of Mu'tazilite School
- 4.5 Characteristics Of Ash'arites' School
- 4.6 Moses Maimonides (Philosophy And Theology)
- 4.7 Summary
- 4.8 References
- 4.9 Unit End Questions

4.0 OBJECTIVE

To understand the significant contribution of Peter Abelard to Jewish Philosophy. To understand Abelard's reconciliation of reason and faith.

- To understand the significant changes in Islamic world due to the distinct philosophical approaches of Mu'tazila and Ash'ari schools.
- To understand the distinct characteristics of Mu'tazilites' school
- To understand the distinct characteristics of Ash'arites' school
- To understand Maimonides unique contribution to Jewish ethics and thought.
- To understand Maimonides views on *God via negative* or Negative Theology.
- To understand Maimonides views on the therapeutic nature of philosophy.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The Medieval Philosophy is known by its name specifically for it emerged roughly around the time from the fall of the western Roman empire in the

5th century until after the renaissance in the 13th and the 14th century. It was chiefly known of rediscovering the ancient Greek and Roman cultures which developed during the classical period and focussed on theological problems of the relation between reason and faith, existence of God, purpose of theology and metaphysics etc.

Peter Abelard (c.1079 – 21 April 1142) was one of the greatest French Catholic philosophers, logician and theologian. The two of his masterworks include *Logica 'ingredientibus'* and *Dialectica*. He is also known as the father of nominalism – the view that only particulars exist and only words (nomen) are universal. He argued that God can be known through logic as well as through emotions. He was probably the first to use the term theology in its modern sense when he argued for the relation of reason to faith.

Moses Ben Maimon (1138–1204) also known as Maimonides or Rambam was a medieval Jewish philosopher and Torah scholar. His writings on Jewish law and ethics received great acclaim. He worked as a rabbi, physician and philosopher in Egypt and Morocco. He wrote a fourteen volume book on Jewish law, which was a codification of Halacha called the *Mishneh Torah* which held significant authority among the Jewish community. His book 'the Guide of the Perplexed' is a work of Jewish theology, thought and practice. He was influenced by Aristotle, Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina, and his contemporary Ibn Rushd. He was known as a prominent philosopher in both the Jewish and the Islamic world.

4.2 PETER ABELARD (RELATION BETWEEN REASON AND FAITH)

In matters of religion, Peter Abelard was of the view that reason is the foundation for faith. However his position on faith and the extent of the place of reason in matters of faith suggests that he was not just a man of reason but also a man of faith.

According to Abelard, reason has a role to play in matters of faith but its role is only a limited one. However there exists two sects of thinkers in theology- firstly, the anti-dialecticians and secondly, the pseudo-dialecticians. The anti-dialecticians refute the synthesis of reason and faith and believe that reason cannot have any place in matters of faith. On the other hand pseudo-dialecticians favour the synthesis of reason and faith and believe that reason is the only means to understand matters of faith. According to the pseudo-dialecticians, we must accept only that which is given by or supported by reason. The fact that Abelard believed reason has a role to play in matters of faith brought him in conflict with the anti-dialecticians. Whereas the pseudo-dialecticians attacked him for giving only a limited role to reason in matters of faith.

According to anti-dialecticians, the meaning of any statement of faith is basically very simple. So there is nothing more to grasp besides the simple meaning and hence reason is not needed to understand that. They were semantic realists about the plain meaning of statements of faith. Abelard, in

favour of dialectical method to understand statements of faith, believed that there is never just a simple meaning to be grasped. Every statement of faith has to be verified with various references to clarify the meaning of it in the context in which they are used. On verification it could be observed that same words or sentences have different meanings in different contexts. Thus to analyse the meaning in various contexts, reason is required in matters of faith.

On the other hand, the pseudo-dialecticians believed that reason cannot have just a limited role in matters of faith. In fact for them reason is the only means to grasp the meaning of statements of faith. Abelard attacks them for holding that everything can be only explained by reason. Acknowledging that human reason has its own limits and capacity, some meanings or truths lie outside that limit. Nevertheless, even if statements of faith have reality beyond human reason, Abelard strongly believed it cannot be beyond faith. He explains this using his understanding of the theory of identity to highlight the dynamics of the Holy Trinity. The three entities – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are the same as one another as they are the same thing – the God. At the same time, they are also not the same as there are three different entities and also by definition what it is to be a father cannot be what it is to be the son or similarly the holy spirit. However, even if they are numerically three they are not numerically different from God who is one, otherwise there would be three gods and not one God. Moreover the qualities that differently apply to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit also do not together apply to the God.

Abelard contends that beyond this reasoning, one cannot think. Reason only validates the analysis to the extent it can go, beyond that everything rests on the foundation of faith.

4.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOLS OF MU'TAZILITES AND ASHARITES

Mu'tazila was an Islamic group that flourished in the cities of Basra and Baghdad, both now in Iraq, during the 8th to the 10th centuries CE. The name means to 'withdraw' or 'separate oneself from' and is marked by the school's founder Wā'il ibn' A'ā's withdrawal from the teachings of Hasan al-Basra over a theological disagreement. The Mu'tazila were called theological rationalists who believe that understanding religion is possible through reason. They believed that reason, independent of all revelations is of no use for religious understanding. For them, reason must accompany scriptures in order to determine right and wrong or good and evil.

Ash'ari is among the leading theological schools of Sunni Islam and derives its name from its founder Abu al-Hasan al-Ash'ari, an Islamic scholar and Sunni Muslim reformer of the 10th century. It was founded on orthodox dogmatic guidelines based on scriptural authority and semi-rationalism. Asharite school opposed the teachings of its rival Mutazilite school.

4.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF MU'TAZILITE SCHOOL

The Mu'tazilites' school was influenced by Ancient Greek Philosophy and was developed around three important principles: the creation of Quran, divine justice and human freewill. The Mu'tazilites believe that the Quran was created in time and is not co-eternal with God even

if it is the eternal will of God. It also centres on the concepts of divine justice and divine unity and worked to resolve the problem of evil. According to the Mu'tazilites since God is believed to be just and wise, he cannot bring about anything that is irrational or act unjustly. Therefore, evil must be human errors resulting from divinely bestowed free will.

According to Mu'tazilites, good and evil are rational concepts which cannot be determined by simply reading or interpreting scriptures. They can only be understood by the means of reason because knowledge of anything is only derived from reason. Even the injunctions of God are believed to be accessible by reason. Thus reason and revelation must go hand in hand for right knowledge of good, evil and just and to know what is religiously obligatory.

The five chief principles that form the crux of this school include monotheism, justice and unity, the inevitability of the threats and promises of God, the intermediary state of sinner i.e. Muslims who commit sins and die without repentance are neither believers nor non-believers, but in an intermediate position and lastly the commands of right and the wrong.

In matters of freewill, Mu'tazilites believe that humans have been divinely bestowed with freewill and so evil results from human freedom of action and is not created by the good God. Morals are either good or bad and it can be determined only by reason. Even if the Quran teaches that God directs the lives of human beings, it does not mean that there is predestination. According to Mu'tazilites, God brings suffering or joy to test the extent of human faith and to see what course of action one chooses in those times. For Mu'tazilite, such passages from Quran only refer to divine justice and how God will carry out justice on the day of judgement. Therefore the concept of divine justice, punishment and reward is only reasonable if it is given to beings who have free-will.

Discuss in detail the characteristics of Mu'tazilites' school.

4.5 CHARACTERISTICS OF ASH'ARITES' SCHOOL

The main characteristic of Ash'arites' school is founded on orthodox dogmatic commandments derived from the authority of the scripture. According to Ash'arites the comprehension of the

unique characteristics of God are beyond human reason. According to them, the God possesses all the qualities and names mentioned in the Quran but they are distinct from God's essence.

According to this school, moral values like good, bad, right and wrong are not simply objective realities. As mentioned in the Quran, good, right and just is that which is commanded by an omnipotent and benevolent God whereas bad, wrong or unjust is that which God forbids. Unlike Mu'tazila who believe that God being just cannot do something unjust, Ash'arites believe that God being all powerful, does have the capability to command or do something that may seem to human mind as unjust. For they believe that what seems unjust to human beings is simply human error. They believe that Quran and Mohammed always validate intellectual enquiry, so the older interpretations of Quran and the Hadith should be consistently developed and re-interpreted.

Ash'arites strongly believe that God being all knowing and forgiving forgives the sins of those in hell rewards the faithful. They believe in the uncreatedness of the Quran in essence; however, it is created when it takes on a written form. Knowledge of God is possible through the study of the Quran and the Hadith of Mohammed alongside the holy names and attributes of God. The main attributes of God include permanence, without beginning or end, absolute, independent and oneness. According to them in order to be a true Muslim one must believe in the five pillars of Islam- Shahada (Faith), Salah (prayer), Zakat (charity), Sawm (fasting), Hajj (pilgrimage). Besides this one must also believe in all the prophets of Islam and in angels.

Ash'arites insist that human free will is only in matters of thought and intention and not in action. Even if all possible human actions known to man are created by God, still the responsibility of those actions and their consequences lie with the one who acquires the act.

4.6 MOSES MAIMONIDES (PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY)

- **Views On Theology :**

According to Maimonides, what philosophers refer to as the Necessary being is no different from the God of Abraham. He envisions God as having qualities or attributes which are quite different from the man-made descriptions of God. On account of this uniqueness, the Torah commands that one must not just love and revere God but also fear him. For Maimonides, the Torah is based on this view that, in order to love God one must contemplate God's works and appreciate the order and harmony in the creation. Recognising the greatness in his creation, one may come to the realisation that how insignificant one is in God's comparison and

inevitably come to fear him. Maimonides philosophical approach was quite identical to the principle of scholasticism. He relied on the Aristotelian science to find basis for understanding the teachings of the Talmud. According to this view, there can be no discrepancies between the truths revealed by God and the scientific and philosophical findings of man.

His theological views do not begin with the definition of God, but rather with the description of the created world. Rather than show that God's essence implies existence he shows that the world's orderly existence implies the existence of the God. The limited, finite nature of the world point to an unlimited and infinite being. Thus Maimonides derives the existence of an omnipotent and omniscient God from the workings of the universe. At the same time, Maimonides insists that even if this provides a sufficient ground to show that God is, it does not show what God is. This is because the descriptions we use to understand God are derived from human language which has a limited scope and thus cannot grasp the complete essence of God. Thus God cannot be put into any one man-made category or concept. Does that mean all descriptions of God are meaningless and untrue? Maimonides insists that in order to correctly describe God in his true essence one must speak in negations. For example 'God is powerful' must be said as 'God is not lacking in power'. It means God is neither powerful in the human sense of the term nor is he powerless, rather he does not lack in power. Such negative sentences do not limit the description of God's power into limited human boundaries. Such negations imply that God is neither this nor that but other than this. Human expressions fail us and do not always grasp the essence of the things. This reveals that God is beyond human understandings. This view of Maimonides is called negative theology.

- **Views On Philosophy :**

Maimonides insists on attainment of highest perfection which is intellectual and suggests ways to achieve it. This can be achieved by means of proper behaviour, whether for the individual or the community. On a political level, the state must not just protect life and property but also educate its citizens in religious matters. On a personal level, highest perfection can be achieved by controlling the passions through morality and take interest in science and philosophy.

Like Plato and Aristotle, Maimonides too believes that like the body, the soul can be diseased or healthy. Sick souls must seek wise rulers just as sick bodies need physicians. He believes that the Jewish law is exactly based on understanding of the soul and seeking its perfection. Like Aristotle, he insists upon the attainment of the golden mean. Like Aristotle, Maimonides develops his views around the virtues of character that become a part of individual's personality through observation and practice. Thus a wise ruler will always recommend virtuous actions and forbid wrong habits to cure the sick soul. For Maimonides, attaining the mean between extremes is like imitating God because the works of God are perfect without the possibility of excess or deficiency.

Even the Jewish law does not command extreme celibacy or starvation to achieve perfection. This is because the qualities that are really necessary are good judgment, kindness, and compassion. For the purpose of moderate disposition, Jewish law speaks of charity, honouring parents, sexual abstinence, avoid hatred or revenge.

However, Maimonides also recognises the need to sometimes choose extremes for therapeutic reasons. According to Maimonides, a practitioner of means and whose character traits are balanced is called wise (hakham), however a person who chooses extremes when circumstances demand is known as pious (hasid). So piety is an excellent trait in the real sense as it calls for transcending the mean. In the analysis of anger, Aristotle believes a person who gets angry at the right time and at the right person is praiseworthy because he practices the mean. To bear insults is as wrong as being too violent is. So right amount of anger is a virtue. For Maimonides, anger is an extremely bad trait so avoiding such traits to its extreme is a virtue. Extremes in matters of certain emotions will not affect the mental health.

For Maimonides, the highest goal is not simply practical wisdom as suggested by Aristotle but humility and shame in the presence of God. Since God is beyond emotions, our goal should be to rise above the emotions. Ideally, a person should act in a completely dispassionate way and choose and act according to the need of the circumstances without being affected by emotions. So not just choosing extremes but also sometimes rising above it is the main crux of Maimonides's practical philosophy. The ability of judgement of such persons will not be affected but only that they will not come from any particular character trait.

Like Plato, Maimonides believes that philosophy has therapeutic effects. Maimonides argues that people usually put efforts into something imaginary and temporary things. Giving example of Job, Maimonides says that Job realised that the things he once valued are unimportant. According to Maimonides, philosophy teaches us to be detached from material gains and focus on the intellectual and moral perfection. Moral perfection is not just a necessary condition for intellectual perfection but after intellectual perfection is achieved, that is after one realises that earthly goods are impermanent, his behaviour will undergo a transformation. Such a person will spend as much time as possible in a state of awe and reverence. In such a state even the distinction between moral and intellectual perfection disappears.

In sum, Maimonides believes in the therapeutic potential of philosophy. It has the ability to cure sick souls of their mistaken approaches about the material world, errors in judgement and takes the individual towards the goal of intellectual perfection through moral perfection.

4.7 SUMMARY

Ash'ari and Mu'tazila schools of Islam developed their own unique ways of thinking about theological problems. The main difference between these schools centre on the discussion of human freedom of action. Ash'arites strictly refute Mu'tazilites views on freewill. According to them, human beings may or may not have some freedom of action but they definitely only have total freedom of thought. Freedom and justice are the realms of God only. So human beings have no power to create any action.

Secondly, according to Mu'tazilites, God rewards the faithful with heaven and punishes the sinner with hell. God cannot do anything that is unjust. However, according to Ash'arites, this is doubting God's knowledge and capability. Ash'arites, unlike Mu'tazilites, believe that God's actions or commands are beyond human understanding. Human reason cannot understand divine justice. So sometimes God being all powerful and all-knowing may do or command something that may seem unjust to us but it is simply an error in our understanding. God also may forgive the sins of those in hell. Ultimately, they believe that whatever God does is just and fair.

Discuss in detail the characteristics of Ash'arites' school.

Elaborate upon the distinct features of Mu'tazilite and Ash'arite school

Maimonides through his theological has greatly influenced many Scholastic philosophers, particularly Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus. He was a popularly known as a Jewish Scholastic. His main aim throughout his works in Jewish theology and philosophy was to reconcile Aristotelian philosophy and science with the teachings of the Torah. He remains one of the most read Jewish thinkers among modern scholars. His therapeutic approach to philosophy and negative theology provide renewed approach to these areas in Jewish community. His work Mishneh Torah remains one of the most logical, precise and an authoritative codification of Jewish law and ethics.

Peter Abelard was a man of faith as well as man of reason. Even if he was known for championing reason in matters of faith, he recognised the limits of reason and accepted the realm of faith as larger than what reason can grasp. He insisted on the moderate use of reason in matters of enquiry into religious issues. He is rightly described as the logician of the middleages and the boldest theologian who pushed theology and philosophy beyond their limits. He was known for his wit, genius and argumentative ability. By showing the relation between reason and faith, he became the first to use the term theology in the modern sense.

Check your progress :

Discuss the relation between reason and faith as brought out by Peter Abelard

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4.9 UNIT END QUESTIONS

- 1) How does Peter Abelard explain the role of reason in matters of faith?
- 2) Distinguish between the characteristics of Mu'tazila and Ash'ari schools with special reference to human freewill
- 3) Discuss the therapeutic nature of Philosophy as brought out by Maimonides
- 4) Explain the negative theology of Maimonides

