
UNIT 4 MAJOR THINKERS OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

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4.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit provides the brief view of important philosophical ideas of major thinkers of western thought who enriched the philosophical enterprises. In the history of western philosophy, we may find many philosophers with diverse philosophical streams. But this is confined to a selectively few thinkers as a representative of the prominent philosophical movements. This unit introduces the importance of each philosopher and their contribution to philosophy.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

We have understood that the discipline of philosophy has engaged in a critical evaluation of our beliefs and clarifications of concepts. Historically, it is evident that the idea of philosophy has been changing from time to time with changing social context. As William Levi holds that philosophy is nothing but a social expression. The history of philosophy is constituted by its interrelation between the ideas, agents and social context. To view philosophic achievement as the cognitive correlate of certain cultural 'life style' means to ask questions such as: What sort of society was the author writing for and trying to persuade? What were the conventions of communication and literary forms of discourse current at that time? What was the author's class affiliation, his place in the social hierarchy of his age? What were his moral commitments, the structure of his ideals? It is argued that our intellectual history must focus not upon the abstract ideas but upon the individual philosophers who have created the ideas in response to the challenge of their time and its range of historical problems. However, we may find different styles and methods of philosophy in the intellectual history of western philosophy. We may also notice the continuity of philosophical methods and approaches to certain problems, but also find new philosophical positions and altogether new orientation to the problems.

4.2 GREEK THINKERS

Heraclitus

Heraclitus was a philosopher belongs to pre-Socratic period and active around 500 BCE. He is best known for his doctrines that things are constantly changing (universal flux), that opposites coincide (unity of opposites), and that fire is the basic material of the world. His theory of flux is viewed against the theory of permanence. This theory has influenced even many modern philosophers. According to Heraclitus, every thing flows and nothing stays. A radical thesis of total universal flux, that nothing whatever, neither a substance nor any of its attributes, stays stable long enough to be mentioned correctly by name, or to be said to 'be' rather than to 'flow' or 'become'. He can affirm that everything flows in radical change where no material substance remains, and yet there is a coherence and unity to the changing world. For Anaximenes everything is a form of air, varying only in its density. For Heraclitus it does not matter if air 'dies' completely and fire is born from its ashes. We can still retain a sense that the world has a continuing identity, like the identity of a river whose constant flow of new water is what makes it a river. Heraclitus most fundamental departure from previous philosophy lies in his emphasis on human affairs. While he continues on many of the physical and cosmological theories of his predecessors, he shifts his focus from the cosmic to the human realm. It is viewed that Heraclitus is material monist who believes that all things are modifications of fire.

Plato

Plato is the well-known Greek Philosopher and student of Socrates. Socrates considered that unexamined life is not worth living and argues that virtue is knowledge. Plato has influenced by Socrates in pursuit of knowledge against sophists. He influenced the western philosophy than any philosopher. Plato's interests were broad, including the study of knowledge, mathematics, ultimate reality, ethics, and politics. He thought that ultimate reality of things was given by their 'forms.' For Plato, the real world is unchanging, eternal, and beyond our senses. We can understand reality through intellectual study. The aim of philosophy is to get away from the world of sense and desire to the higher realm of existence of the Forms. The form of an object is its essence, and is what makes it what it is. Examples of forms include beauty, justice, numbers, and shapes. We can know about ultimate reality (the world of forms) through the use of our intellect. Our senses do not tell us much about ultimate reality. For Plato, mathematics is the paradigm of knowledge, since it is done through intellectual reasoning independent of the apparent world around us, and tells us eternal unchanging truths. In *The Republic* Plato says that the soul has three parts, corresponding to reason, emotion, and desire. He also thinks that the soul (or at least part of it) is immortal, and can be reincarnated. Plato thinks that only those who understand the nature of goodness are fit to rule in society. Most people do not understand goodness. The rulers should try to maximize the happiness of society, by imposing strict censorship of ideas and of artistic expression. He saw no connection between happiness and individual liberty. He wants to show that there is absolute truth, and absolute right and wrong, and that human beings are not the measure of all things.

Aristotle

Aristotle's views were formed largely in reaction to those of the Pre-Socratics, Socrates and Plato. He is far more of a scientist than his predecessors, and compared to Plato's otherworldliness, Aristotle views are down to earth. Aristotle does not use the same kind of appealing images and allegories that makes some of Plato's work so inspiring. Aristotle's method was normally to summarize the views of other thinkers first, and then consider them carefully before explaining his own thoughts. Aristotle's ideas in ethics and politics have been especially important and influential. He is famous for his view in Nichomachean Ethics that 'moral virtue is a mean'. He argued that happiness from fulfilling one's capacities. He notoriously thought (and his view would have been standard in his own time) that different groups of people have characteristic capacities. In politics, he argued that the state should come ahead of family or individuals. For Aristotle, the aim of philosophy and science is to understand this world. This world of physical objects and biological organisms such as octopuses, snails and eels is good enough, and is not to be despised. For Aristotle, science is the main paradigm of knowledge, and is done through an investigation of the world around us combined with rigorous thinking about it. The senses do lead us to knowledge when guided by the intellect. For Aristotle, human beings are rational animals. The soul is not something distinct from the body, but it is instead the "form" of the body, what makes it the particular sort of body that it is. All creatures have souls in the sense that they have the capacity to metabolize. Having a higher level of soul is simply the capacity to move about, to have desires and to fulfill them, to perceive and to contemplate. Aristotle simply takes it for granted that relativism is wrong. It is obvious to him that scientific reality is independent of us, and that an action is not right simply because it seems to us to be so. Aristotle does not think that we can achieve as much certainty in ethics as we can in mathematics, and we should not ask for more certainty than the subject at hand allows. He believes that an ordinary citizen is able to make good decisions and lead a good life. We achieve fulfillment through developing and exercising our human capacities.

4.3 MODERN PHILOSOPHERS

Rene Descartes

Rene Descartes (1596-1650) is a French mathematician, scientist and philosopher. He is known as father of modern western philosophy. He is a prominent figure of seventeenth century continental rationalism. *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641) is the popular work of Descartes. Cogito ego sum is a famous philosophical statement of Descartes.. He intended to introduce into philosophy the rigor and clarity of mathematics. His writings indicate a spirit of tolerance and an ability to see many viewpoints- an open-mindedness which distinguished him from the fanaticism of midlevel spirit. He represents the age of gentlemen. His philosophy viewed and foundationalism and his method of viewing philosophy are known as Cartesian method. To build solid foundations, he would accept only certain truths, such as those found in geometry and arithmetic. They alone, he felt, are free of any taint of relativism and uncertainty. Descartes method is 'to avoid all prejudice and precipitation in judgment, to accept nothing as true which can not be clearly recognized as such' and 'to divide up each problem into as many parts as possible, a point upon which he attacked scholasticism,

which had tried to achieve a generalized view of science.’ Descartes method of doubt has a great historical importance to modern philosophy and is evident in the works of almost all modern thinkers. To doubt was not an end in itself; it was a process of purification, of eliminating various false views. He undertook the methodical doubt of all knowledge about which it is possible to be deceived, including knowledge based on authority, the senses, and reason, in order to arrive at something about which he can be absolutely certain; using this point as a foundation, he then sought to construct new and more secure justifications of his belief in the existence and immortality of the soul, the existence of God, and the reality of an external world. This indubitable point is expressed in the dictum *Cogito ergo sum* (“I think, therefore I am”). His metaphysical dualism distinguished radically between mind, the essence of which is thinking, and matter, the essence of which is extension in three dimensions. Though his metaphysics is rationalistic, his physics and physiology are empiricist and mechanistic. In mathematics, he founded analytic geometry and reformed algebraic notation.

David Hume

David Hume (1711-1776) is the Scottish philosopher was the most important and influential of 18th century British empiricists. His philosophical masterpiece *A Treatise of Human Nature* was published in 1739. He is a skeptic and free thinker in his intellectual outlook. As a skeptic, he defends, from the empiricist premise, the view that the standard claims to knowledge are untenable. As a proponent of natural philosophy of man, he begins from empirical observations about the human mind and concludes that the mind has been wrongly constructed by the metaphysicians. Hume’s naturalism is Newtonian. He constructs a science of the mind while making no unfounded assumptions and relying only on observation. He distinguished among the contents of the mind ‘impressions’ and ‘ideas’. The first corresponded to what we should call sensations and perceptions, the second to what we should call concepts, or ‘meanings’. For Hume, the difference between these two lies in their respective ‘force’ or ‘liveliness’. The impression is received through senses, and is vivid and forceful during the moment of its reception. The idea is what remains thereafter, when liveliness and force have dwindled. However, Hume also describes ideas as ‘copies’, ‘representations’ and ‘images’ of impressions: they are ‘the faint images (of impressions) in thinking and reasoning.’ Hume is known for his casual theory. The idea of cause is one of ‘necessary connection’, according to Hume. His argument points in two directions: first, towards the delimiting of the view that there are necessary connections in reality; secondly, towards an explanation of the fact that we nevertheless have the idea of necessary connection. His contribution to metaphysics is to be found in his systematic attack on the Cartesian idea of an *a priori* science, he also added a new dimension to skepticism of a more traditional form.

Hume was skeptic, but his basic purpose was not destructive, for he wanted to develop a more scientific method in philosophy. His philosophy is a move towards understanding the limits of knowledge against the traditional metaphysics of his own time. His method involved a complete secularization of philosophy. He did away with all references to supernatural sanction and completely undermined unanchored metaphysical concepts. David Hume carried on philosophical war on three fronts. The first was against rationalism, with its doctrine of innate ideas, its faith in ontological reasoning, and its attempt to see the universe as an interconnected whole. He argues that all our ideas are

particular, that universals are merely fictions. He tried to show that we can not have an adequate concept of an abstract idea. If we appeal to words for universality, we are creating dangerous fallacy, for words stand only for particular impressions, and the verbal term itself has no subjective validity. Hume's second attack on religion has its own significance. Theology before Hume's times had been based to a large extent upon universal axioms, such as the law of causality, which was to guarantee man's understanding of God and the universe. In contrast to his predecessors, was historical and psychological. After his time, theology underwent a fundamental change and, instead of appealing to reason, now appeals to man's heart to justify the concept of faith. Hume's third attack was against empiricism. He showed the limitations of the empirical method of philosophy. He destroyed the affirmations of Locke and Berkeley. Locke believed in two substances, one spiritual, one material; he was certain the existence of God could be demonstrated. Berkeley believed in the spiritual substance, while denied the existence of a material substratum; to Berkeley, God was the fundamental principle of philosophy. According to Hume, we can accept neither the material nor the spiritual substance; nor we prove the existence of God. He also rejected the concept of indeterminism. Just as nature contains a definite uniformity, he declared, so man is determined in his behavior. Hume believed that reason is overrated and pointed that all scientific findings based on induction must remain conjectural. Induction cannot offer you the certainty that logic can. He dealt with the issue of causation. He claimed that beliefs on causation are based on observation and induction, but there is no logical certainty. He also claimed that it is not possible to prove moral beliefs – in inductive logic you can't have a valid belief-conclusion that emerges from some fact-premises. He had doubts about the existence of the Self, because of its undetectability. He had conservative personal beliefs, saying that humans could be happy by respecting social traditions. Hume brought to conclusion the empirical tradition of British philosophy. He demanded a reorientation in philosophy, a reorientation which was climaxed by Kant's critique of pure reason. With Hume, the problem of causality has been fundamental in modern philosophical thinking.

Immanuel Kant

Kant is eighteenth century enlightenment philosopher. Kant is the critical mediator between dogmatism and skepticism. Kant revolutionized the philosophy. For Kant the function of philosophy was the critical appraisal of capacities of human reason. In pursuing this new critical function, Kant achieved what he called his Copernican revolution in philosophy. Kant's philosophy consists of an analysis of the powers of human reason, by which he meant 'a critical inquiry into the faculty of reason with reference to all the knowledge which it may strive to attain independently of all experience'. The way of critical philosophy is, therefore, to ask the questions 'what and how much can understanding and reason know, apart from all experience? Critical philosophy for Kant was therefore not the negation of metaphysics but rather a preparation for it. If metaphysics has to do with knowledge that is developed by reason alone, that is, prior to experience, or a priori, the critical question is how is such a priori knowledge possible. Kant affirmed that we possess a faculty that is capable of giving us knowledge without an appeal to experience. Kant solved the problem of synthetic a priori judgment by substituting a new hypothesis concerning the relation between the mind and its objects. It is the objects that conform to the operations of the mind, and not the other way around.

Kant's principal contribution is to show that the choice between empiricism and rationalism is unreal, that each philosophy is equally mistaken, and that the only conceivable metaphysics that could commend itself to a reasonable being must be both empiricist and rationalist at once. His works, *The Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) dealt in a systematic way with the entire field of epistemology and metaphysics, *The Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) concerned with ethics, and *The Critique of Judgment* (1790) concerned largely with aesthetics, and *The Foundation of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785) is about morality. Kant attempted a systematic critique of human thought and reason. Kant proposes the theory of synthetic *a priori* knowledge. According to him, scientific knowledge is *aposteriori*: it arises from, and is based in, actual experience. Science, therefore, deals not with necessary truths but with matters of contingent fact. However, it rests upon certain universal axioms and principles, which, because their truth is presupposed at the start of any empirical enquiry, cannot themselves be empirically proved. These axioms are therefore, *a priori*, and while some of them are 'analytic', others are 'synthetic, saying something substantial about the empirical world. Moreover, these synthetic *a priori* truths, since they can not be established empirically, are justifiable, if at all, through reflection, and reflection will confer on them the only kind of truth that is within its gift: necessary truth. They must be true in any conceivable world. The synthetic *a priori* truths form a proper subject of metaphysics for Kant.

Kant believed that neither the empiricists nor the rationalists could provide coherent theory of knowledge. The empiricists elevate experience over understanding, deprive themselves of the concepts with which experience might be described. The rationalist emphasizes understanding at the expense of experience, deprive themselves of the very subject matter of knowledge. Knowledge is achieved through a synthesis of concept and experience, and Kant called this synthesis 'transcendental', meaning that it could never be observed as a process, but must always be presupposed as a result. Synthetic *a priori* knowledge is possible because we can establish that experience, if it is to be this synthesis, must conform to the 'categories' of the understanding. These categories are basic forms of thought or *a priori* concepts, under which all merely empirical concepts are subsumed. Kant agreed with empiricists that the senses are necessary to knowledge of reality, but denied that they are sufficient. The intellect has an essential part to play: not as an alternative and superior mode of access to reality, the task of reason as the rationalists conceived it, but *in conjunction with* the senses as a source of organizing principles which order and arrange the initially chaotic 'manifold sensation' yielded by the senses into a world of persisting substances, casually related to one another.

Kant disagreed with Hume in that knowledge of the world cannot come from observation only. He claimed that humans 'see' causation in the world because they are constituted that way. He was the first to show that neither Empiricists nor Rationalists had got it quite right. He believed that mental structures precede experience. Without them no experience would make sense - he was kind of sophisticated Idealist. He claimed that our every experience must also be encountered through the 'forms of intuition' of space and time. Therefore, to some extent, our experience of the world is our own creation. What we experience is the 'phenomenal' world, which may not be the same as the '*noumenal*' world - only God can see it, as He is unrestricted by Time and Space and the limitations of the human mind. So science and religion are not in conflict, as they deal with different worlds. In a famous phrase Kant described

himself as limiting knowledge to make room for faith. Even if theoretical reason is powerless to prove the existence of god and the freedom and immortality of human soul, these attractive beliefs can still be reinstated, if less securely, as presuppositions of our experience of moral obligation.

Hegel

Hegel (170-1831) is a German Philosopher influenced the western thought remarkably through his philosophical method and a philosophy of absolute idealism. Hegel gave more coherent formulation to Absolute idealism. He authored *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), *Philosophy of Right* (1821), *Science of Logic* (1812-1816), *Encyclopedia of philosophic sciences* (1817). It is Hegel's ambition to establish a complete synthesis of philosophical thinking. Aristotle had attempted such a synthesis in Greek civilization, and Aquinas in the summa theological had tried to unify medieval knowledge. Hegel wanted to do the same for 19th century science and philosophy. The synthesis of Hegel was dominated by his insistence that laws of thought correspond with the laws of reality. Logic to Hegel, not only had a formal validity; it had primarily a metaphysical significance. Until Hegel came to the scene, philosophers thought that Aristotle had discovered *logic* and that was that. Hegel claimed that there is another logic, i.e. Dialectical logic. Knowledge has an evolutionary history that is made up of concepts, not isolated facts. History is always a struggle between different dynamic groups, which claim to be an accurate description of reality. But any concept or thesis will give birth to its opposite antithesis and a struggle between them will occur, until a higher, more truthful synthesis is eventually achieved. This process will go on for long, until finally the 'absolute idea' or 'absolute consciousness' is reached. Hegel was an Idealist like Kant, and agreed with him that we don't experience the world directly through the senses, but always in a way that involves mediation by our consciousness. He also claimed that reality is constituted by the mind and is its creation. There is no '*noumenal*' world. Human consciousness itself is never fixed but continually changing and developing new categories and ideas. These determine how we experience the world therefore knowledge is contextually dependent. Knowledge is a dynamic cultural and historical process, not a timeless product waiting to be discovered 'out there'. But he did believe that this process must culminate in a final stage in which human beings will reach the 'actual knowledge of what is'. He looked upon the world as an organic process. For Hegel, what is truly real is absolute. He described the absolute as a dynamic process, as an organism having parts but nevertheless unified into a complex system. The absolute is therefore not some entity separate from the world but is the world when viewed in a specific way. Hegel believed that the inner essence of absolute could be reached by human reason because the absolute is disclosed in nature as well in the working of the human mind. What connects these three, the absolute, nature and man's mind, is Thought itself.

Kant had argued that metaphysics is impossible, that it is impossible for human mind to achieve theoretical knowledge about all of reality. Hegel, on the other hand, set forth the general proposition that what is rational is real and what is real is rational, and from this concluded that everything that is, is knowable.. He came with a new approach of metaphysics, which provided a new basis for thinking about the very structure of reality and about its manifestations in morality, law, religion, art, history, and above all thought itself. Hegel's philosophy is based on a belief in unity. The universe, he felt, is to be interpreted in monistic

terms and is the manifestation of the Absolute. Universe, in short, represents a coherent whole. It is an expression of the organic theory of truth. The famous Hegel's dictum, *the real is rational, and the rational is real*. Reason, in Hegel, has more than epistemological function; it governs all aspects of life and is the key to reality. Fundamental to Hegel's system is the concept of the Absolute, which marks a basic change in modern philosophy. The Absolute is not the thing-in-itself; it is not a transcendent force, nor is it a subjective ego. The Absolute is the world process itself, which can be characterized not by a static condition but by activity. The Absolute represents a process which realizes itself in higher and higher levels and reaches a complete expression in the Hegelian philosophy. Hegel's Absolute is not a principle of negation; on the contrary, it represents the highest and most complete affirmation. In stressing the importance of the mental structure of reality, Hegel differed completely from Marx, who regarded matter as the fundamental principle of being, while Hegel accepted the rational Idea as the primary principle of reality. Dialectical idealism in Hegel is a rational process, concerned with the evolution of the human mind. Marx remarked, later on, that Hegel made philosophy abstruse and that materialism brought it down to earth and made it truly concrete and functional. (357)

Hegel's substantive metaphysics is essentially religious in character. Hegel's philosophy has its culmination in man's knowledge of the absolute. In the process of dialectic, knowledge of the absolute is the synthesis of subjective spirit and objective spirit. Hegel was to the 19th Century, perhaps, what Logical Positivism was to the 20th. Not only were there strong Hegelian movements in Germany but in England and America too. Of course, Hegel is also famous for the reactions that his thinking spawned; one of the most famous of these was that of Karl Marx who reputedly "turned Hegel's system upside down."

John Dewey

John Dewey (1859-1952) is an American philosopher and educationalist and representing the philosophy of pragmatism. Pragmatism has emerged at the end of 19th century as the most original contribution of American thought to the enterprise of philosophy. Dewey has influenced by other pragmatic thinkers of America such as Peirce and William James. He is an outstanding exponent of philosophical naturalism. It has expressed in differently through its thinkers. Peirce was initially interested in logic and science, William James write about psychology and religion, and Dewey absorbed with the problems of ethics and social thought, which he expressed especially through his philosophy of education. He had profound influence, not only on philosophers, but on students of education, aesthetics and political theory. His book *School and Society* (1899) is an influential book reflects his views on education. His book *Freedom and Culture* (1939) reflects his lifelong dedication to ideas about education, culture, democracy, and freedom. Aside from being inspired by various interpretations of scientific method, Pragmatism was also inspired by the failure of metaphysics (or essentialism) in Western philosophy. Neither the meaning nor the truth of our ideas, even our most fundamental ideas, is believed to descend to us from some untouchable authority or fountainhead. Ideas have meaning insofar as they have application; they have truth insofar as their application is successful. Our physical and social relationships are the testing grounds. In Dewey's Pragmatic analysis, the idea of freedom can only mean something that we experience in our physical and social relations. Democracy is meaningful only by application

in our world of experience. As the Pragmatist position holds that, *democracy doesn't happen because we state it, declare it, or found it. Democracy happens because we make it happen each day in the way we live.* The importance of Dewey's work lies in his criticism of the traditional notion of 'truth', which is embodied in the theory that he calls 'instrumentalism'. Truth, as conceived by most professional philosophers, is static and final, perfect and eternal; in religious terminology, it may be identified with God's thought, and with those thoughts which, as rational beings, we share with God. For Dewey, all reality is temporal, and process, though evolutionary, is not, as for Hegel, the unfolding of an eternal idea. Dewey's interests are biological rather than mathematical, and he conceives thought as an evolutionary process. Dewey does not aim at judgments that shall be absolutely 'true', or condemn their contradictories as absolutely 'false'. In his opinion there is a process called 'inquiry', which is one form of mutual adjustment between organism and its environment. Dewey makes an *inquiry* the essence of logic, not truth or knowledge. He defines inquiry as follows: *inquiry is the controlled or directed transformation of an indeterminate situation into one that is so determinate in its constituent distinctions and relations as to convert the elements of the original situation into a unified whole.* He further adds that 'inquiry is concerned with objective transformation of objective subject-matter.'

Dewey's chief quarrel with earlier philosophy was that it had confused the true nature and function of knowledge. As empiricists had assumed that thinking refers to fixed things in nature, that for each idea there is a corresponding something in reality. He called this as spectator theory of knowledge. Thus to see something is to have an idea of it. The rationalists argue that the object of thought exists in reality. In either case, the mind was viewed as an instrument for considering what is fixed and certain in nature. Nature is one thing and the mind another, and knowing is the relatively simple activity of looking, as a spectator does, at what is there. Dewey considered this view of knowledge, admittedly more intricate than his oversimplification, as too static, for one thing, and too mechanical for another. Influenced by Darwin, Dewey maintains that man can best be understood in relation to his environment. If both man and his environment are dynamic, it is clear that a simple spectator-type theory of knowledge will not work. The mind, or more specifically *intelligence*, is for Dewey not a fixed substance, and knowledge is not a set of static concepts. *Intelligence* is the power man possesses to cope with his environment. Thinking is not an individual act carried on in private, in isolation from practical problems. Dewey's theory of instrumentalism was governed by the presuppositions of science. Like science, education should recognize the intimate connection between action and thought, between experiment and reflection. Dewey believed that apart from 'pooled and cooperative experience' there is no knowledge, wisdom, or guides for collective action.

Karl Marx

Karl Marx (1818-1883) is a revolutionary thinker and influenced the struggles of the oppressed of the world. His philosophy coherently formulates the modern materialism. *The Contributions to Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right (1844) Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts (1844) German Ideology, Communist Manifesto (1848) and Capital (1867)* are some of the important writings of Marx. Marx claims his philosophy as scientific, naturalistic and realistic. He opposed to all utopian ideals. He is equally critical about religious

philosophies, anarchism, idealism and positivism. The influence of the enlightenment is evident in Marx's view of religion. As an atheist he opposed the arguments that are in support of existence of God. According to Marx, the world is not governed by the divine spirit and was not created out of nothing. The only reality is matter and motion; therefore there is no Beyond, and the heaven and hell are merely products of human imagination. In the realm of philosophy, Marx is critical about all forms of idealism. In Marx's view, the idealists regard nature as a symbol of the divine and speak about teleology, are prescientific and merely guided by superstition. Idealism becomes the opiate of the educated, for it substitutes a subjective notion for objective truth. He has also keep distance with positivism, although he appreciated its scientific foundation. He attacked positivism on the ground that it ends in scientific skepticism, underestimates the influence of society, and reduces knowledge to a mere convenient set of descriptions. While positivism is interested in describing the laws of nature, he said, dialectical materialism is concerned with changing and reinterpreting the process of nature.

Marx developed his philosophy on Dialectical Materialism. Dialectic is a theory of all reality and it depends on contradictions being every where. For Marx, dialectic is a key to understand human history. Marx pointed out that man makes religion, religion does not make man. Consequently, religion is a social product and can not be treated as an individual phenomenon. Marx believed that the function of philosophy is to criticize society. He considers that let social institutions be studied instead of the ideals of supernaturalism, and let politics replace theology. Marx viewed philosophy in persuasion of change. As he says, *the philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways ; the point is to change it.* Marx is critical about doing philosophy in idealistic and religious way. According to Marx, '*consciousness doesn't determine life, but life determines consciousness.*' The dialectical materialism emphasizes on the importance of change and accuses idealism for static view of life. It considers substance is material and in a constant state of change. Marx's basic thought in his philosophy of history is that in every epoch the prevailing system of production is fundamental. For Marx, the mode of production of material life conditions the social, political, intellectual life process in general. Marx explained everything from a view of economic determinism. The economic structure as base and the politics, culture, law, religion and ideology as viewed as superstructure. Marx believed that at certain stage of their development, material forces of society came into conflict with the existing relations of production. Then begins social revolution. Marx considers men are makers of history. According to him, the history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggles. His philosophy aims at bringing classless society through revolution.

4.4 CONTEMPORARY THINKERS

Jean-Paul Sartre

He was a French existentialist philosopher. *Psychology of the Imagination* (1972), *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions* (1971) *The Transcendence of the Ego: An Existentialist Theory of Consciousness* (1957) *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* (1958) *Existentialism and Humanism* (1973) are some of the philosophical writings of Sartre. *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* (1943) is a

philosophical treatise of Sartre. Its main purpose was to assert the individual's existence as prior to the individual's essence. Being and Nothingness *was to vindicate the fundamental freedom of the human being, against determinists of all stripes*. Sartre sketches his own theory of consciousness, being and phenomena through criticism of both earlier phenomenologists (most notably Husserl and Heidegger) as well as idealists, rationalists and empiricists. According to him one of the major achievements of modern philosophy has been to free us of the kinds of dualism that set the existent up as having a "hidden" nature as with Kant's *noumenon*; Phenomenology has removed "the illusion of worlds behind the scene." Based on an examination of the nature of phenomena, he describes the nature of two types of being, being-in-itself and being-for-itself. While being-in-itself is something that can only be approximated by human being, being-for-itself is the being of consciousness.

The basis of Sartre's existentialism can be found in *The Transcendence of the Ego* in which he says that the thing-in-itself is infinite and overflowing. Sartre refers to any direct consciousness of the thing-in-itself as a "pre-reflective consciousness." Any attempt to describe, understand, historicize etc. the thing-in-itself, Sartre calls "reflective consciousness." There is no way for the reflective consciousness to subsume the pre-reflective, and so reflection is fated to a form of anxiety, i.e. the human condition. The reflective consciousness in all its forms, (scientific, artistic or otherwise) can only limit the thing-in-itself by virtue of its attempt to understand or describe it. It follows, therefore, that any attempt at self-knowledge (self-consciousness—a reflective consciousness of an overflowing infinite) is a construct that fails no matter how often it is attempted. Consciousness is consciousness of itself insofar as it is consciousness of a transcendent object.

The philosophical career of Jean Paul Sartre primarily focuses upon the construction of a philosophy of existence known as existentialism. Sartre's early works are characterized by a development of classic phenomenology, but his reflection diverges from Husserl's on methodology, the conception of the self, and an interest in ethics. These points of divergence are the cornerstones of Sartre's existential phenomenology, whose purpose is to understand human existence rather than the world as such. Adopting and adapting the methods of phenomenology, Sartre sets out to develop an ontological account of what it is to be human. The main features of this ontology are the groundlessness and radical freedom which characterize the human condition. These are contrasted with the unproblematic being of the world of things. Sartre's substantial literary output adds dramatic expression to the always unstable co-existence of facts and freedom in an indifferent world. Sartre's ontology is explained in his philosophical work, *Being and Nothingness*, where he defines two types of reality which lie beyond our conscious experience: the being of the object of consciousness and that of consciousness itself. The object of consciousness exists as 'in-itself,' that is, in an independent and non-relational way. However, consciousness is always consciousness 'of something,' so it is defined in relation to something else, and it is not possible to grasp it within a conscious experience: it exists as 'for-itself.' An essential feature of consciousness is its negative power, by which we can experience 'nothingness.' This power is also at work within the self, where it creates an intrinsic lack of self-identity. So the unity of the self is understood as a task for-itself rather than as a given.

Sartre maintained that the concepts of authenticity and individuality have to be earned but not learned. We need to experience death consciousness so as to

wake up ourselves as to what is really important; the authentic in our lives which is life experience, not knowledge. *Bad faith* is a philosophical concept used by existentialist philosopher Jean Paul Sartre to describe the phenomenon wherein one denies one's freedom to choose, instead choosing to behave without authenticity. It is closely related to the concepts of self deception and resentment.

Ludwig Wittgenstein

Wittgenstein represents the analytical philosophy. The central task of the analytical philosophy is to clarify the meaning of language. In his work *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus* (1919), Wittgenstein said the object of philosophy is the logical clarification of thoughts. *Philosophical Investigations* (1953) of Wittgenstein explains that language has 'many' functions besides simply 'picturing' the reality. Language always function in a context and therefore has as many purposes as there are contexts. by recognizing the diversity of the functions of language, Wittgenstein inevitably altered the task of philosophy. Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language. He considers the aim of philosophy was to show the fly the way out of the fly- bottle. He believed that philosophical puzzlement can be removed by a careful description of language as we ordinarily use it. As he put it, the result of philosophy is not a number of philosophical propositions, but to make propositions clear. In *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein argues that from the point of view of logical atomism, propositions could be stated significantly only if they could correspond to an atomic fact or be truth functions of propositions that did. Only atomic or molecular propositions could be stated significantly. He convinced that philosophy must reject the metaphysical elements in logical atomism. The right method of philosophy would be to say nothing except what can be said, i.e. the propositions of science.

Wittgenstein first adopted Russell's atomism, which insists that sentences must be broken down to reveal their logical complexities. He tried to show that meaning derives from atomic logical sentences which form an accurate picture of what he called the 'atomic facts' of the world. 'The limits of my language are the limits of the world': there are limits to the sorts of meaningful thoughts we can have with language. Metaphysical problems only arise because philosophers are trying to 'say what cannot be said.' He later abandoned his first atomist quest to solve the 'problem of meaning' and begun to question all traditional philosophical quests for generality or 'essences'. He claimed that the great 20th century search for the 'meaning of meaning' is futile because it was founded on the misconception that 'meaning' is something 'separate' from language. Language is a series of different kinds of 'games' with many different purposes and goals. Meaning is the result of socially agreed conventions and cannot possibly be established outside of language. Meaning is in the use – it is not to be found anywhere else. He adopted a therapeutic view of philosophical discourse, which he claimed was in a situation of sickness, where language is on holiday, so that one language game becomes confused with another. His later philosophy of mind is also anti-Cartesian. Thought is linguistic. Language is a social product and therefore cannot be 'private'. This means that any phenomenological quest for certainty is misconceived. Descartes claimed that first person experiences are more immediate and certain than other kinds. But to talk or write about mental experiences means using a public language with socially agreed rules that lay down both meanings and references – there can be no such thing as a 'private language' to think with.

Edmund Husserl

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) is known as father of phenomenology and his views are influenced Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre. The significant element in Husserl's phenomenology is the act of detachment, of standing back from the realm of experienced existence in order to understand it. The philosophy and crisis of European man is the major philosophical work of Husserl. As he explained the crisis consists of philosophy's departure from its true goal, which is to provide the best possible answers to man's human and human concerns, to deal rigorously with man's quest for the highest values, and in short, to develop the unique broad range capacities of human reason. He described the 'crisis' as the 'seeming collapse of reason' and he set his life time objective as 'saving human reason.' his ultimate objective is to save human reason by developing philosophy into a rigorous science. Husserl believed that natural sciences have over the years developed a faulty attitude in western man regarding what the world is like and how best to know it. He tries to build philosophy and its method that based on to judge only by the evidence without any presuppositions and pre conceived notions. Descartes employed systematic doubt; Husserl simply withheld any judgment about his experience, seeking instead to describe his experience as fully as possible in terms of the evidence of experience itself. Experience obviously revolve around the self, the ego, and for Husserl as well as for Descartes, the source of all knowledge is the ego. Husserl sees the ego simply as the matrix of experience. He puts his emphasis more on experience instead of logic. His concern is to discover and describe the given in experience as it is presented in its pure form and found as the immediate data of consciousness. He believed that more accurate description of experience is expressed *ego cogito cogitatum*. For Husserl, we understand the elements of our experience, phenomena, best by discovering the active role of consciousness in intending and creating phenomena. For Husserl the human experience is not simply the fact of consciousness but rather that consciousness is always consciousness of something. He believed that the essence of consciousness is intentionality indeed for Husserl, intentionality is the structure of consciousness itself and is also the fundamental category of being. The presence of intentionality is disclosed through the process Husserl calls phenomenological *epoche*. In order to prepare the way for the rigorous foundations of his philosophy, Husserl again and again urged epoch, the bracketing of all presuppositions and especially the presuppositions of the natural sciences. Husserl further argues that the life world is the source from which the sciences must abstract their objects.

Michel Foucault

Michel Foucault (1926–1984) has had wide influence not only in philosophy but also in a wide range of humanistic and social scientific disciplines *The Archeology of Knowledge, Discipline and Punish, Madness and Civilization, History of Sexuality, Order of Things, Birth of Clinic* are prominent writings of Foucault. He introduced concepts such as 'discursive regime'. or re-invoked those of older philosophers like 'episteme' and 'genealogy' in order to explain the relationship among meaning, power, and social behavior within social orders. A central terms in Foucault's work—he was particularly interested in knowledge of human beings and power that acts on human beings. His works reveals that how 'truths' have changed over centuries from age to age and from culture to culture. Truth is relative and subjective. Power and knowledge are intrinsically

related. In every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures, whose role is “to avert its powers and its dangers, to cope with chance events, to evade its ponderous, awesome materiality.” Discourse is controlled in order to have its transformative potential checked, in order to limit the occurrence of the unexpected, and to limit the substance of discourse as an event in itself. Discourse is controlled externally through the rules of exclusion, which include prohibition, a form of power that circulates in the social field and can attach to strategies of domination as well as those of resistance the ‘discursive field’ - the relationship between language, social institutions, subjectivity and power. His aim is to bring into view the marginalised and submerged discourses. His philosophical method provides a novel way in understanding the social reality by exposing the politics of hegemony, exclusion, and violence of dominant discourses. This provides the space for recognising the social experience of the marginalised and articulating the politics of identity.

4.5 LET US SUM UP

It is clear that philosophical ideas mirror its time. The philosophers from Pre-Socratic to contemporary time, we may find diverse philosophical approaches in understanding the social reality. The problems and priorities of philosophers were changed over the period of time. The philosophical ideas and approaches are ranging from materialism to idealism, religious to scientific, naturalism to supernaturalism, subjectivism to utilitarianism. The philosophers of each age have pre occupied with certain questions. For Plato it is, *How can aristocracy be restored?* For medieval philosophers, *How can the roman church prevail?* For the Cartesian philosophy, *How can science be progressive and certain?* In this unit we took up only certain representative thinkers from different periods in the history of western philosophy. In the following blocks we would deal elaborately on different thinkers of whom some we dealt here and many we skipped for want of space.

4.6 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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