DIRECTORATE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL

MASTER OF ARTS -PHILOSOPHY

SEMESTER –I

WESTERN EPISTOMOLOGY

SOFT-CORE-103

BLOCK-2

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ENLIGHTENMENT TO PERFECTION

FOREWORD

The Self Learning Material (SLM) is written with the aim of providing simple and organized study content to all the learners. The SLMs are prepared on the framework of being mutually cohesive, internally consistent and structured as per the university's syllabi. It is a humble attempt to give glimpses of the various approaches and dimensions to the topic of study and to kindle the learner's interest to the subject

We have tried to put together information from various sources into this book that has been written in an engaging style with interesting and relevant examples. It introduces you to the insights of subject concepts and theories and presents them in a way that is easy to understand and comprehend.

We always believe in continuous improvement and would periodically update the content in the very interest of the learners. It may be added that despite enormous efforts and coordination, there is every possibility for some omission or inadequacy in few areas or topics, which would definitely be rectified in future.

We hope you enjoy learning from this book and the experience truly enrich your learning and help you to advance in your career and future endeavors.

WESTERN EPISTOMOLOGY

BLOCK 1

Unit 1: Scepticism and the possibility of knowledge

Unit 2: Nature and definition of knowledge; belief and knowledge

Unit 3: History of Western Epistomology

Unit 4: Gettier problem and responses

Unit 5: Gettier'S Principals

Unit 6: Justification of knowledge-claim and epistemic decision

Unit 7: Foundationalism and Coherentism

BLOCK 2

BLOCK 2 : WESTERN EPISTOMOLOGY

Introduction to the Block

Unit 8 deals with acquaint students with the Indian approach to perception as a common-sense and fundamental mode of knowing, upon which all other modes of knowing have to rely for their verification.

Unit 9 deals with the Problem of memory; knowledge of the past and its implications. Memory is the faculty of the brain by which data or information is encoded, stored, and retrieved when needed.

Unit 10 deals with the contributions of Jürgen Habermas, a second generation critical theorist and one of the most distinguished contemporary social and political philosophers.

Unit 11 deals with introduce the theories of truth, the core concept in the theory of knowledge. The words 'truth' and 'true' are much used, misused and misunderstood word. Though the concept appears to be simple, when we go deep into it we will feel its mysterious nature

Unit 12 deals with the synthetic perspective on epistemology today it also deals with the crucial issues in the definition of epistemology is the distinction between knowledge and knowledge of knowledge.

Unit 13 deals with Five distinctions like Mental and nonmental conceptions of knowledge and describe Five distinctions like Mental and nonmental conceptions of knowledge; Occasional and dispositional knowledge; A priori and a posteriori knowledge; Necessary and contingent propositions; Analytic and synthetic propositions.

Unit 14 deals with the methods adopted by classical as well as modern thinkers in the last three units, we have also become aware that the foundationalist method of the moderns is highly problematic. And a purely coherentist method is not satisfactory either

UNIT 8: THEORIES OF PERCEPTION

STRUCTURE

8.0   OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the present unit is to acquaint students with the Indian approach to perception as a common-sense and fundamental mode of knowing, upon which all other modes of knowing have to rely for their verification. Imparting clarity to the Indian approach is necessary as other concepts and realities accepted in different systems of Indian Philosophy (hereafter IP) are determined by the basic epistemological standpoints. The unit will focus upon the following objectives in this context:

• To orient students to Indian approach of dealing with human cognition, esp. perception.

• To acquaint them briefly about historical development of the idea of perception within various systems

• To introduce different categories (realities) based on the idea of perception

• Also to introduce the distinction of perception from other sources of human cognition and from erroneous perception too.

8.1   INTRODUCTION

Perception (pratyaksa) is regarded in Indian philosophy as a means of right knowledge - the generating process of cognition (pramana), and also as a type of right knowledge - the resultant cognition (prama). As a pramana, being primary and fundamental to all sources of knowledge, it is enumerated first in order in all systems of IP and taken as an independent means of knowledge as the knowledge produced by it is about the objects directly presented to senses and thereby require no inference or testimony for further verification of it. Its meaning is rather wider than sense-perception alone. Those systems of IP which recognize other means of right knowledge besides perception subscribe that perception underlies all other means of knowledge. Depending on the nature of the object of knowledge, some of them can be known through any of the means of knowledge whilst some are to be known through a particular means only. Systems of IP have divergent opinion on this issue. Belief in knowing a particular object through a particular means and thereby producing a particular cognition, i.e., prama is called pramana-vyavastha. And, advocacy of the view that an object can be known through any means depending upon the nature of object or the way of applying the means is called pramana-samplava. Though, all knowledge does not arise from perception, yet it is the ultimate ground of all knowledge. In other words, all other sources of knowledge presuppose perception. If a doubt is raised over the validity of cognition obtained from other sources, viz. inference, analogy, testimony or language etc., it can only be resolved on the basis of possibility of perceptual verification. So, perception is a principle of verification too.

The process of perception begins with an object in the real world, termed the distal stimulus or distal object. By means of light, sound or another physical process, the object stimulates the body's sensory organs. These sensory organs transform the input energy into neural activity—a process called transduction. This raw pattern of neural activity is called the

proximal stimulus. These neural signals are transmitted to the brain and processed. The resulting mental re-creation of the distal stimulus is the percept.

An example would be a shoe. The shoe itself is the distal stimulus. When light from the shoe enters a person's eye and stimulates the retina, that stimulation is the proximal stimulus. The image of the shoe reconstructed by the brain of the person is the percept. Another example would be a telephone ringing. The ringing of the telephone is the distal stimulus. The sound stimulating a person's auditory receptors is the proximal stimulus, and the brain's interpretation of this as the ringing of a telephone is the percept. The different kinds of sensation such as warmth, sound, and taste are called sensory modalities.

Psychologist Jerome Bruner has developed a model of perception. According to him, people go through the following process to form opinions:

When we encounter an unfamiliar target, we are open to different informational cues and want to learn more about the target.
In the second step, we try to collect more information about the target. Gradually, we encounter some familiar cues which help us categorize the target.
At this stage, the cues become less open and selective. We try to search for more cues that confirm the categorization of the target. We also actively ignore and even distort cues that violate our initial perceptions. Our perception becomes more selective and we finally paint a consistent picture of the target.
According to Alan Saks and Gary Johns, there are three components to perception.

The Perceiver, the person who becomes aware about something and comes to a final understanding. There are 3 factors that can influence his or her perceptions: experience, motivational state and finally emotional state. In different motivational or emotional states, the perceiver will

react to or perceive something in different ways. Also in different situations he or she might employ a "perceptual defence" where they tend to "see what they want to see".

The Target. This is the person who is being perceived or judged. "Ambiguity or lack of information about a target leads to a greater need for interpretation and addition."

The Situation also greatly influences perceptions because different situations may call for additional information about the target.

Stimuli are not necessarily translated into a percept and rarely does a single stimulus translate into a percept. An ambiguous stimulus may be translated into multiple percepts, experienced randomly, one at a time, in what is called multistable perception. And the same stimuli, or absence of them, may result in different percepts depending on subject's culture and previous experiences. Ambiguous figures demonstrate that a single stimulus can result in more than one percept; for example the Rubin vase which can be interpreted either as a vase or as two faces. The percept can bind sensations from multiple senses into a whole. A picture of a talking person on a television screen, for example, is bound to the sound of speech from speakers to form a percept of a talking person. "Percept" is also a term used by Leibniz, Bergson, Deleuze, and Guattari to define perception independent from perceivers.

8.2 DEFINITIONS OF PERCEPTION

Nyaya View

Perception in Gautama's Nyaya Sutra (hereafter NS) (1.1.4) is defined as the knowledge which arises from the contact (sannikarsa) of a sense with its object, being determinate, unnamable, and non-erratic. It is an awareness which is (i) produced from the connection between the sense organ and object; (ii) not produced by words; (iii) not deviating from its object, i.e., it is always true; and (iv) is of the nature of certainty. These four marks define perceptual awareness. Thus when I perceive a table,

first of all there is a connection between my eyes and the table. The resulting awareness is not produced by words. This awareness is true. It is of the nature of certainty. When I see a table I am sure of my awareness being true. Senses include mind as it gets conjoined with senses or sense-organs. Perception (as prama) must be distinguished from indeterminate knowledge, viz. a doubtful perception cannot be a prama. Further, the knowledge obtained from perception is something to which a name is assigned. Thus a name is an external element to perceptual knowledge, it is a linguistic aid. Nonerratic means being without any scope of error in perception which is determined by the adequacy of internal as well as external conditions of perception like awareness, health of senseorgans, presence of sufficient light etc. The conjunctions of soul with mind and of mind with senses and of senses with sense object produce knowledge, i.e., sensory perception. That is why; Nyaya philosophy holds that knowledge is a mark of soul. There are definite causes of perception enumerated in Nyaya philosophy which are: direction (dik), space (desha), time (kala) and ether (akasha). The contact of sense with its object is a special cause of perception. The objects of five senses are also fixed and produce five kinds of special knowledge: 1. Visual Perception (colour); 2 Auditory Perception (sound); 3 Olfactory Perception (smell); 4 Gustatory Perception (taste) and 5 Tactual Perception (touch). There are some debates pertaining to the above view of perception like, about the impossibility of such perception which is based on contact as contact is not possible in all three times. It is not possible to perceive an object in past or future and also in present simultaneously with the object of sense, e.g. in case of perception of colour, it is difficult to decide if colour precedes perception or, perception precedes colour. If perception occurred anteriorly it could not have arisen from the contact of a sense with its object. If perception occurred anteriorly or preceded the object, one must give up one's definition of perception, viz. perception arises from the contact of a sense with its object. If perception is supposed to occur posteriorly, then one cannot say that the objects of sense are established by perception. Simultaneity of perceiving two sensory qualities cannot be offered as solution to this problem as two acts of perception cannot take place at a

time, viz. there is an order of succession in our cognition. If we offer that a means of knowledge is also established by another means of knowledge, it would tend to infinite regress.

The Nyaya response to the above debate is rather logical and indirect. If a means of knowledge is impossible then denial of it would also be impossible. If denial is based on a means of knowledge, the validity of the means have to be acknowledged. When we deny a thing on the ground of its not being perceived, we acknowledge by implication that perception is a means of right knowledge. The further debate is on the very epistemological status of perception as in an act of perception we perceive only a part of an object and the object is inferred on the basis of it. This implies that perception is a type of inference or it is reducible to inference. The Nyaya response is that perception is not inference for even the objectors admit that at least a part of the object is actually perceived. Hence perception as a means of knowledge is not altogether denied; on the contrary it is accepted as different from inference.

The Nyaya view on perception becomes clearer when Naiyayikas engage themselves in debate with Buddhist view on the same. Buddhist like Dignaga defines perception as the unerring cognition of a given sensum or sense-data in complete isolation from all ideata or conceptual manipulations. In his view, perceptual knowledge should be free from reflection or any intellectual modulation including name or genus. Such a perception cannot be expressed in language and is cognized by itself. Uddyotakara (a 7th century Naiyayika, author of subcommentary on NS – Nyaya-vartika) argues against the above mentioned view that the very purpose of perception is defeated if it is not expressed by a name and warrants meaninglessness of the cognition. The Nyaya view is based on their epistemological conviction that if there is a piece of cognition (be it of any type), it must be verbalized (excepting for nirvikalpaka or indeterminate perception). And, our cognition of an object assumes a generic form, and that is why, it is capable of being grasped by our mind.

Responding to the reproaches against the possibility of contact (sannikarsa) in case of cognition of inner feelings like pleasure, pain etc., Uddyotakara emphasizes manas (mind) as an organ of cognition. Manas has equal reach to all kinds of objects of perception, internal and external as well, unlike other senses which have specific objects in terms of perceptibility. However, manas is mentioned in NS (1.1.15) as an organ of cognition. In Nyaya view, it is quite possible that an object of perception to a particular sense be perceived by another sense due to its different qualities, e.g. earth can be touched and be seen as well. While enumerating such qualities of the object of perception, Uddyotakara criticizes Buddhist view that admits only the aggregates of qualities as object of perception and a particular quality can be perceived by a particular sense competent of perceiving it. Uddyotakara argues that if colour or other qualities appear in the shape of a jar then they produce perception of the jar. This perception is not merely the aggregates of qualities, but such qualities require a substance as their locus or, substratum. The term avyapadeshya, i.e., non-erroneous (or non-erratic) is used in the definition of perception to exclude doubt and error from the range of true sense perception. Indeterminate or determinate perception which makes wrong reference is erroneous. As a piece of determinate perception is not associated with the words denoting objects, so error and doubt owe their existence to the function of our sense organ but are not word-interpenetrated. Replying to Buddhist objections to Nyaya view on perception, Jayanta Bhatta (a 9th century Naiyayika, author of Nyaya-manjari) mentions that expressivity in words of a perceptible object does not warrant the invalidity of a determinate perception. Or, a determinate perception cannot be invalid simply because it grasps an object which has been sensed by its antecedent indeterminate perception. The object of determinate perception is qualified by an action, an attribute, a substance, a designation and a universal. Naiyayikas also refute the definition of perception presented by Samkhya School. Ishvara Krishna (author of Samkhya karika) defines perception as a clear and distinct image of its corresponding object. In view of Naiyàyikas, this definition is too wide as it is equally applicable to inference too.

Vachaspati, a 10th century scholar who wrote on Nyaya besides writing on other systems of IP and the author of Nyaya-vartika-tatparya-tika, talks about complete causal chain of the perceptual process. In the chain first takes place the perception of the object, then the determinate perception as a particular object, then awakening of the memory impression of the properties of the object of same class experienced before, then consideration that this object belong to the same class. Buddhist theory of perception goes against such interpretation as cause and effect cannot be simultaneous and the object perceived cannot cause the perception of itself. The ground for Buddhist theory is their principle of momentary-ness which is not acceptable to Naiyayikas. They maintain realism and argue that common sense perception goes against the Buddhist theory. Vachaspati also adds that addition of names or words does not affect the nature of determinate perception; it is rather an accidental factor which may follow a determinate perception.

Elaborating the NS definition of perception Gangesha (1200 AD, author of Tattva-chintamani) chooses a different way of defining it as 'cognition that does not have a cognition as its chief instrumental cause', viz. perceptual awareness is the result of perception as the causal complex in which not a cognition but a sensory connection with the object cognized is the trigger of 'chief instrumental cause' (karana). He focuses more upon the necessary conditions of perception like memory-impressions. Acknowledging the variable nature of sensory connection, viz. how senses relates themselves to the objects perceived as well as the varying nature of the objects in terms of the ways they are perceptible, he takes ontological turn and includes in his discourse on perception the qualities such as odours and sounds and universals such as colour-ness and soundness as objects with which senses can establish contact. This view is known as Theory of Connection (sannikarsa-vada). Gangesha also discusses the role of nirvikalpaka pratyaksa - indeterminate perception in generating determinate perception. Determinate perception is cognition of an object or entity which is always qualified by qualifiers appearing to consciousness. Here, he contests the Buddhist theory of sakaravada – cognition 'having form of itself', as all information, i.e., qualifications of

object is coming from the object of perception, and so, cognition itself cannot have any form of its own. This theory is known as nirakaravada – cognition 'having no form of itself'. But interestingly, he acknowledges that there is no direct, apperceptive evidence for nirvikalpaka pratyaksa. Rather, since a perceptual cognition appears as qualified by some qualifier, i.e., savikalpaka, we have to posit by force a state of unqualified, i.e., indeterminate perception antecedent to the qualified one. We have to adhere to a natural law that cognition of an object qualified by certain qualities presupposes the preceding cognition of the qualifier. Presaging the possible objection of infinite regression in this context, viz. the cognition of the qualifier would also require a preceding cognition; Gangesha has replied that indeterminate perception blokes such possibility as the qualifier cannot, in principle, be known through another qualifier. It is grasped directly.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

1) What is determinate perception according to Naiyayikas?
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2) How mental perception is different from other sensory perceptions?
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Jain View

Umasvati (1-85 AD Jain writer), in his magnum opus Tattvartha-adhigama-sutra, adapts a different approach to treatment of pramana as he takes the term in two different senses – meaning of valid knowledge

and means of valid knowledge. In the former sense, it is of two kinds namely, paroksa (indirect knowledge, e.g. recollection, recognition, scripture, argumentation and inference) and pratyaksa (direct knowledge). Pratyaksa is acquired by soul without the intervention of external agencies. Knowledge attained by yoga (in transcendental state of consciousness) is a species of direct knowledge as it is acquired by soul directly and not through any medium (esp. of senses). Siddhasena Divakara (a 4th-5th century Jain writer, author of Nyayavatara) classifies perception into practical perception (vyavahariika – acquired by soul through five senses and mind) and transcendental perception (paramarthika – infinite knowledge attained in the state of enlightenment of the soul). According to Jain philosophers, there is a process of practical perception and is described by stages as (i) avagraha, distinguishing the type whether it be, e.g., horse or man, but not discerning the characteristics; (ii) iha, inquiring, e.g., whence came the man and from what country came the horse; (iii) avaya, arriving at a correct identification of the above; and (iv) dharana, recollecting the thing particularized and keeping it in mind. Manikya Nandi (about 800 AD, author of Pariksa-mukha-sutra) also maintains the timehonoured Jain distinction of perception between direct and indirect. Direct perception arises through sense-organs which is called indriya-nibandhana. Deva Suri (11th-12th century Jain writer, author of Pramana-naya-tattvaloka-alamkara) elaborates the process and stages of direct perception (practical), while the transcendental perception is described as a necessary aid to emancipation. The possessor of perfect transcendental knowledge is called arhata, one freed from all obstructions.

Buddhist View

Buddhist approach to perception is rather radical as their principle of momentary-ness designs the nature of it. Amongst the Buddhists, Dignaga (450-520 AD, author of Pramanasamuchchaya) as a leading figure of medieval Indian logic and author of Nyàyabindu, takes the object of cognition as a unique individual (svalaksana) which is

apprehended in perception totally naked, i.e., divide of any charging of idea (kalpana) upon it. Dignaga's point of argument for perception being nameless is that we can perceive a thing without knowing its name.

In the same way, it is not connected with genus. It is the knowledge of individual characteristics – some qualities, or part of a thing; it is a complex knowledge – samvriti-jnana, of the combination of such qualities. Perception is just the immediate knowledge of a given datum, totally free from subjective determinations. Buddhists are more inclined to show the impossibility of expressing a perceptual cognition. If one sees a cow and wants to convey it to some other person, it will not be possible to convey or transfer the exact cognition; it cannot be embodied in judgment. In place, the idea or, colour or, name of the cow can be conveyed. Moreover, the same cow cannot be perceived again as the sameness is based on the memory and the cow which is subject to repeated perception would be a cow of a different moment. However, in case of inference the cognition can be very well expressed and communicated in language. Reviewing the doctrine of perception of Naiyayikas, Dignaga also rejects their belief that mind is a sense-organ. And therefore, pain, pleasure etc. cannot be objects of knowledge in the same fashion. There have been many reactionary critiques from modern Indian philosophers against Buddhist view of perception which are based on the opinion that perception is not merely a sum of sensum and images but also contains large element of meaning as well. It has a definite meaning and refers to a determinate object as that is revealed through sensations. It is only because the Buddhists arbitrarily deny the meaning element in perception that they are forced to exclude the complex cognition of a jar, tree, etc. (samvriti-jnana), from the range of perception. Such critiques are not tenable as they lack proper insight into the crux of Buddhist definition of perception. The meaning element is always a part of intellectual construct or of ideata, and while conceiving perception one must rescue it from intrusion of such constructs. Buddhists are rather perspicacious in defining perception and filtering out other elements accidentally associated with it.

Interestingly, perception in Buddhism (or in IP in general) has a wider connotation than mere sense-perception. It is direct knowledge or intuition, of which sense-perception is a species. There is another intuition; an intelligible one. Ordinary humanity does not possess such intuition; it is enjoyed by arhata, the enlightened one. A moment of this intelligible intuition underlies every perception. It is a reflective faculty which illuminates all the sensations or sense-faculty.

Mimamsa and Vedanta

Like Jain view, Mãmàmsà and Vedanta (esp. Advaita School is in consideration here) define perception in a way different from the customary one of presenting it as dependent on or originated from sense-organs. According to the Prabhakaras (one of the two schools of Mimamsa named after Prabhakara), perception is the direct cognition of an object. It is the intuitive or immediate knowledge that we may have of the subject and object of knowledge and of knowledge itself. In Vedanta, perception as a pramana is treated as a unique cause (karana) of perceptual cognition as a form of valid knowledge, i.e., prama. The sense organs constitute the karana. The perceptual cognition is immediate and timeless – chaitanya or cidrupa, i.e., which is of the nature of consciousness. Such knowledge can be the self itself as only there can be the immediacy of knowledge and will be of the nature of consciousness. Senses are instruments or unique cause of perception.

Due to function of sense-organs mental modification (antah-karanavritti) takes place. Unlike Naiyayikas, Vedantins do not admit mind as a type of sense, so, for them, there are only five type of perception. Interestingly, Vedantins hold that the mind or antahkarana goes out through the senses and establishes contact with a perceptible object and get modified into the form of the object itself. The mental modification is not different from the object. Immediacy of such a perception lies in its being modification of mind itself. It is not immediate in the sense that it is produced by sense-stimulation. If it were so, then it would have over-ranged inference or other types of right cognitions too. And further, it

would be difficult to establish the knowledge of God as direct knowledge as it is not produced by senses, whereas, it is not plausible to admit inference as direct cognition and the knowledge of God as indirect one.

The above approach to definition of perception is in advantageous position in the sense that it leaves no scope for raising the question how mental image corresponds to the object, of which it is taken to be the image. Because, the object is not cognized through sensation, rather the mind itself reached the object through senses and fetches all possible data belonging to it. Though, chaitanya is one, it appears different due to its varying qualifications. In the case of perceptual cognition - 'this is a pot', perception is on the part of 'pot'. The chaitanya, i.e., consciousness gets concealed by the form or modification of mind due to its occupying the form of pot. It is further clarified that both, pot and the knowledge of the pot are pratyaksa, i.e., perceptual, which are called object-perception (visayagata-pratyaksa) and knowledge-perception (jnanagata-pratyaksa), respectively. The intentional cause of object-perception is its nondifference from the knower or pramata. This view is clearly opposed to the Naiyàyikas view of object-perception through senses or indriya.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

1) Why do Buddhists not admit the involvement of intellectual elements in perception?

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2) How, according to Vedantins, is absence cognized?

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8.3 REALITIES AND PERCEPTIBILITY: ORDINARY AND EXTRAORDINARY PERCEPTION

Naiyayikas have classified perception primarily between laukika and alaukika, i.e., ordinary and extraordinary. Basis of this distinction lies in the way the senses establish their contact with the objects. Ordinary perception takes place when the objects are present to senses. It is of two types – external, which are of five types; and internal, i.e., mental. In case of extraordinary perception, the objects are not present to senses but get apprehended by senses through some unusual media. According to the kinds of perception we find in IP the perceptibility of different categories of reality by corresponding modes of perception. Naiyayikas bring all reality under seven categories, viz. substance (dravya), quality (guna), action (karma), universal (samanya), particularity (vishesa), relation of inherence (samavaya), and non-existence (abhàva). There are nine substances; viz. earth, water, fire, air, akasha, time, space, soul and mind. Substances like earth, water, fire, air are perceptible. However, their atoms, akasha, time and space etc. are not perceptible. Soul is the object of internal perception. It is, thus, clear that a substance must have a limited dimension to be perceptible; it should neither be infinite like space, soul etc., nor be infinitesimal like atom (paramanu and the combination of two paramanu, i.e., dvayanuka) etc. Similarly, certain qualities can be perceived by certain senses only, e.g. visual sight and touch can grasp extension, but other senses cannot grasp things as extended in space. Further, perceptible objects, which have extension in space, are objects with parts (savayava), viz. being objects with parts, they are perceptible. As a corollary, it is quite possible for an object to be perceived partially as in case of perception of a house or a tree. Substances have their attributes too. Attributes (guna, like colour, taste, number, magnitude, remoteness, nearness etc.) exist in them. Attribute is a static property of substance, viz. there is no possibility of attribute of attribute. Not all attributes are perceptible, e.g. velocity (vega),

disposition (bhavana). Merits and demerits (dharma and adharma) are also supersensible attributes. These are supersensible attributes of soul. Some of the attributes can be perceived by only a certain sense, whilst some may be perceived by more than one sense, e.g. colour can be perceived by eyes only and number, magnitude etc. can be perceived by both sight and touch. Differentia (prithaktva), according to Naiyayikas, is a positive character of things, due to which a thing is cognized different from other, e.g. a horse is different from a cow. These are different from each other not because they mutually exclude each other, but due to their respective distinctive characters. So far Naiyayikas are concerned, differentia is perceived in perceptible things. But, for Vedantins, differentia is a case of mutual non-existence, and therefore, is cognized by non-perception (anupalabdhi). However, modern Naiyayikas also do not treat difference as a separate quality, but reduce it to mutual non-existence. Unlike attributes, action is a dynamic character of things. It is transitive property which affects the position of things. Motion of a perceptible thing can be perceived by sight and touch. In case of perception of motion, the conjoined-inherence (samyukta-samavaya) type of contact between sense and object is operative, viz. the sense first come in contact with the thing in which the motion inheres and then the motion is cognized. In case of universals (samanya), for Naiyayikas, perceptibility depends on the nature of object, viz. all universals associated with perceptible objects are also perceptible by senses and universals subsisting in supersensible (atindriya) objects are imperceptible. For Vedantins, as the universals are constituted by the common attributes of individuals, they can be perceived along with the perception of individuals. The perception of the different kinds of universals is mediated by different kinds of sense-contact. Opposite to universals; particularity (vishesa) is the ultimate ground of individuality of a thing or its difference from other. It subsists in eternal substances. It is innumerable. Being supersensible, they cannot be perceived. Inherence (samavaya) is an eternal relation between two facts. In such case, one inheres in the other. For Naiyayikas, it is an object of perception. It is perceived by senses of sight and touch. For perception of it, the contact is established by way of vishesyata, e.g., in case of perception 'the cloth

inheres in the threads.' However, according to Vaishesikas, inherence cannot be perceived, it is cognized through inference. Non-existence or abhava is also a category of reality in IP. It refers to non-existent facts, which are as real as any other fact. On the matter of its way of apprehension, there are different opinions in IP. For Bhatta Mimamsakas (one of the two schools of Mimamsa named after Kumarila Bhatta) and Vedantins, it is known by non-perception, as sense-contact is necessary for perception. Vaishesikas and Prabhakaras believe that non-existence is equivalent to the existence of locus, e.g. ground etc. In case of perception of a negative fact its locus is perceived where the hypothetical object is absent. Besides the above mentioned kinds of perception, Naiyayikas also talk about internal or mental perception, of which pain, pleasure etc. are objects. In IP, a great deal of discussion has taken place about the modes of ordinary perception. Or, it is another way of classifying perception, according to which perception is of three types: indeterminate (nirvikalpaka), determinate (savikalpaka) and recognition (pratyabhijna). However, the third one is also treated as a verity of determinate perception. Determinate perception is what can be identified with and assigned to name, genus etc. The case is not so with indeterminate perception. Indeterminate perception is greatly celebrated in Advaita Vedanta School in which it is deemed to be the knowledge of pure being. Recognition or pratyabhijna is perception of an object which has been seen before. According to Naiyayikas, pratyabhijna is the conscious reference to a past and a present cognition to the same object. Howsoever; Buddhists interpret recognition as a compound of perception and memory. The extraordinary perception is also classified further into three types: samanya-laksana, jnanalaksana and yogaja. The first one is the perception of the class-property or of the whole class of some object at the occasion of perceiving any particular object of the class. As in case of perception of a jar, we also perceive the class-property of the jar, viz. jar-ness in it. The extraordinary element in it is that the jar-ness is not directly in contact with the sense, yet it is not inferred but perceived. From the point of view of logic, it is also taken as an inductive element. The second type of extraordinary perception, i.e., jnana-laksana is a perception of some property or attribute of an object perceived

previously and now present before us as a subject matter of perception of some other property by some other sense. As on seeing a rose flower there takes place the knowledge of its fragrance too. There is a great debate in IP on issues whether such kind of knowledge is an inferential knowledge. Yogaja perception is rather intuitive and encompasses the possibility of knowing any object in any fragment of space and time lying even beyond senses. It is enjoyed by those who attain spiritual perfection. Such a perception is explained on the basis of the nature of consciousness, i.e., the unlimited span of it. The limitations of our consciousness are due, not to anything in the nature of consciousness itself, but to the psychological conditions under which it has to work in us. Such considerations suggest that it is possible for human consciousness to have an instantaneous knowledge of all things; provided it can get over its organic limitations and natural distractions. The important thing is that IP in general has been able to agree upon the immediacy of it and thereby admitting it as a perception and not a species if inference.

8.4 EXPLAINING ILLUSORY OR ERRONEOUS PERCEPTION

There has been great debate over interpretation of illusory or erroneous perception. The question is not simply about the problem of interpretation of it, but is about the very authenticity of perceptual cognition itself. If an illusion is also cognized through perception then how can perception at all be relied upon? The responses to the problem have been divergent in different schools of IP, which helped evolve theories called khyati-vada for interpretation of the same. Some of Indian thinkers interpret illusion as non-apprehension of the object as in case of illusion of snake in a rope, the difference is not apprehended. Since all knowledge is valid knowledge, it would be self-contradiction to designate a piece on knowledge as invalid knowledge. This theory of Prabhakara Mimamsa is called a-khyati-vada. For Naiyayikas, in such a case of illusion the snake is cognized through a mode of extra-ordinary perception. Maintaining their realism, perhaps they cannot deny the apparent cognition; in place, they would call it cognizing otherwise –

anyatha-khyati. For some of Buddhist idealists, illusory perception is a case of mental projection – atma-khyati. Vedantins treat such cognition as inexplicable – anirvacaniya, as the object of it is neither real, nor unreal. Since it is perceived, it cannot be unreal and as is subverted by a following cognition, it cannot be real too. In this context, we find a tendency of defending all cognition as real amongst realists, whilst for idealist; such a perception is taken as an argument refuting realism or substantiating the illusoriness of the world. The effort of Indian thinkers has been directed towards defining of perception in such a way that it may well range the cases of illusory perception distinguishing them from right cognition at the same time.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

1) What is extraordinary perception?

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2) What is recognition?

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8.5 LET US SUM UP

Perception is a source of cognition as well a type to true cognition. The essential character of perception is the contact between senses and the object of perception. Internal contents of human cognition like pain, pleasure etc. are cognized through mind and is called mental perception. Due to non-establishment of contact between sense and object, some of Indian thinkers posit a new faculty of cognition for apprehension of

absence. Fundamentally, perception is of two types, indeterminate and determinate. The former is a precognition to the latter one. The latter is assigned name etc. or can be expressed through language. Some of Indian thinkers hold that perception is pure sense-data and is devoid of intellectual constructs. Perception is also classified between ordinary and extraordinary type. The extraordinary one is a super-sensing of qualities on the basis of foreknowledge of the objects or that of universals. The capability of yogaja perception is available to the enlightened people only. Our knowledge about categories of reality is very much compatible with the nature of perception or other cognitions. However, on the issues of perceptibility of certain categories, there are ongoing debates too.

8.6 KEY WORDS

Prama: A true cognition

Pramana: Source of a true cognition Sannikarsa: Contact between senses and their object, which is of six kinds: 1. Conjunction, e.g. contact between eyes and a jar; 2. Conjoined-inherence, e.g. in perception of colour of jar contact takes place between eyes and jar in which colour is inherent; 3. Conjoined-inherent-inherence, e.g. in perceiving the colour-ness, the generic nature of colour; 4. Inherence, e.g. the relation between sound and ear-cavity in perception of sound; 5. Inherent-inherence, e.g. in perception of the generic nature of sound, viz. soundness; 6. Qualification or Particularity, e.g. in case of perception of non-existence of an object we grasp the same on the basis of particularization of the part of space where the intended object hypothetically exists. However, those systems of Indian Philosophy which prescribe an independent source of cognition or means of knowledge, viz. non-apprehension (anupalabdhi) for apprehension of non-existence, do not admit this kind of contact or sannikarsa. Karana: Instrument or, instrumental cause of cognition Nirvikalpaka Pratyaksa: Indeterminate perception

Savikalpaka Pratyaksa: Determinate perception

Pratyabhijna: Recognition

Sakaravada: Cognition 'having form of itself'

Nirakaravada: Cognition 'having no form of itself.

Anupalabdhi: Absence (of an object with which sense-contact is not possible)

8.7 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1) What is determinate perception according to Naiyayikas?
2) How mental perception is different from other sensory perceptions?
3) Why do Buddhists not admit the involvement of intellectual elements in perception?
4) How, according to Vedantins, is absence cognized?
5) What is extraordinary perception?
6) What is recognition?

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8.9   ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress 1

1) Determinate perception is such a perception which is cognized with the name, form and genus of an object and can be expressed through language. It involves meaning element too.

2) In mental perception, the object of perception is not available in external world, therefore having no possibility of establishing sense contact. The objects of mental perception like pain, pleasure etc. are internally apprehended by mind.

Answers to Check Your Progress 2

1) Buddhists approach to perception is purely psychological and segregates the intellectual elements from perceptual element of human cognition. Keeping in view the approach, perception has to be confined to the sense-data alone. Meaning element, for them, is an intellectual construct.

2) Since, there is no possibility of having sense-contact with an absent object; Vedantins posit a new faculty of knowing called anupalabdhi or non-apprehension. It has to be identified as an independent source of cognition because absence cannot be known through any other sources of cognition like inference etc.

Answers to Check Your Progress 3

1) The extraordinary one is a super-sensing of qualities on the basis of foreknowledge of the objects or that of universals. The ordinary type of sense-contact with objects does not take place in this perception. It is of three types: samanya-laksana, jnana-laksana and yogaja.

2) Recognition is perception of an object which has been seen before. According to Naiyayikas, it is a conscious reference to a past and a present cognition to the same object. Howsoever; Buddhists do not treat it as an independent cognition and interpret it as a compound of perception and memory.

UNIT 9: PROBLEM OF MEMORY; KNOWLEDGE OF THE PAST

STRUCTURE

9.0 OBJECTIVES

After this unit we can able to understand:

- To know about the Skepticism and Memory Knowledge

- To discuss the Possible Answers to Skepticism about Memory Knowledge
- To know Priori Argument for the Reliability of Memory?
- To appeal to the Specious Present
- To know about Direct Realism and Indirect Realism: A Hypothetico-Deductive Account of the Justification of Beliefs about the Past
- To know about the choice between Direct Realism and Indirect Realism.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

Memory is the faculty of the brain by which data or information is encoded, stored, and retrieved when needed. It is the retention of information over time for the purpose of influencing future action. If past events could not be remembered, it would be impossible for language, relationships, or personal identity to develop. Memory loss is usually described as forgetfulness or amnesia.

Memory is often understood as an informational processing system with explicit and implicit functioning that is made up of a sensory processor, short-term (or working) memory, and long-term memory. This can be related to the neuron. The sensory processor allows information from the outside world to be sensed in the form of chemical and physical stimuli and attended to various levels of focus and intent. Working memory serves as an encoding and retrieval processor. Information in the form of stimuli is encoded in accordance with explicit or implicit functions by the working memory processor. The working memory also retrieves information from previously stored material. Finally, the function of long-term memory is to store data through various categorical models or systems.

9.2 SOME PRELIMINARY ISSUES AND DISTINCTIONS

9.2.1 Sources of Beliefs about the Past

What are some of the different ways in which one can arrive at beliefs about the past? One very familiar way is via memories of one's own experiences. But one also learns about the past through the present testimony of others. These two sources, however, on their own, can provide one only with beliefs about experiences that presently existing people have had, and events that they have witnessed.

A third source of beliefs about the past that can take one beyond information about the experiences that presently existing people have had, or about events that they have witnessed, consists of traces of the past. Here the idea is that beliefs about present states of affairs can be combined with information concerning scientific laws to enable one to draw conclusions about earlier states of affairs that have given rise to the present states of affairs.

The term "trace" is sometimes used to refer only to relatively complex and intrinsically improbable states of affairs that can best be explained by postulating appropriate past states of affairs. Consider, for example, a footprint on the beach, or fossils, or a photograph. But very simple states of affairs - such as the existence of an electron - can provide one with a good reason, given relevant conservation laws, for concluding that something with certain properties - such as a certain mass and electrical charge - existed at a slightly earlier time.

Fourthly, in addition to memories of one's own experiences, there are also memories that are not about one's own past experiences, and that do not at present rest upon any memories of past experiences. Thus one may remember, for example, that the United States once had a President named "George Washington", but have no memory at all of the experiences involved in one's learning this.

Fifthly, these different sources can be combined in a chain. Thus one may remember someone's telling one that they saw fossils of a certain sort that are evidence of the existence of a certain type of fish: one has a

memory of first person experiences of testimony concerning a trace of the past existence of a certain type of animal.

A final source of beliefs about the past is perception, since given that causal processes are involved in perception, and that causal processes take time, any state of affairs that one perceives must be one that exists at an earlier time - and in the case of perception of astronomical objects, quite possibly at a much earlier time. Typically, of course, it is present-tense beliefs that we as a matter of fact acquire in perception, but once the question of what beliefs are justified is raised, it becomes clear that the basic beliefs here should either be beliefs about the past, or else indexical beliefs that are free of tense - such as the belief that that object is (tenselessly) round and very bright.

We have, then, the following sources of beliefs about the past:

(1) Memories of first-person experiences;

(2) Present testimony;

(3) Present traces of the past, including dramatic traces such as films and books;

(4) Memory beliefs that are not themselves memories of first-person experiences;

(5) Chains of the above, such as memories of first-person experiences of past testimony or of past traces, or present traces of past testimony;

(6) Perception.

9.2.2 Is Memory Primary in the Justification of Beliefs about the Past?

What role does memory play in the justification of our beliefs about the past? First, if we assume for the moment that skepticism is wrong, and we do have knowledge of, or at least justified beliefs about, the past, then it is clear, given the different sources of our beliefs about the past just set out, that it is not true that whenever one has knowledge of some past event, one remembers that event. For, in the first place, there are many past events that one does not oneself remember, but about which one has justified beliefs, because of the testimony of others. In the second place, one has justified beliefs about many events that no one remembers, since one can establish that certain scientific laws obtain, and then use those laws to determine what happened in the past, including both events were observed, but of which no one now has any memory, and events that no one ever observed.

9.2.3 Memory Beliefs and Memory Experiences

Perhaps the first distinction that should be drawn in approaching the question of memory knowledge is that between memory beliefs and memory experiences. A memory experience is the sort of mental state that one is in when one is consciously remembering something. But a person can also be said, at a given time, to remember something without having, at that time, any relevant memory experience, for he or she may have a memory belief that is not being consciously entertained at that time. In short, a memory experience is a conscious, occurrent state, whereas a memory belief is either a theoretical state or a dispositional state. (Some would construe a memory belief as a disposition to have memory experiences, others as a disposition to engage in relevant external behavior - possibly both verbal and nonverbal - and others as a theoretical state that is potentially causally related to possible experiences, or behavior, or both.)

9.2.4 Knowledge, and the Nature of Memory Experiences: Images Versus Thoughts

One question that philosophers have discussed is whether memory experiences are to be equated with (1) the mere having of certain images, or with (2) the mere having of thoughts about the past, or with (3) a state that involves both images and thoughts. Traditionally, many philosophers have held that the presence of images was essential. In part, the appeal was phenomenological, with its being claimed simply that one was introspectively aware of memory images. But the claim also reflected, at times, the view that memory experiences must involve images, on the grounds that the latter were necessary in order to provide a basis for memory knowledge.

This latter view reflected a very common tendency to treat memory knowledge in a fashion paralleling perceptual knowledge. Thus, philosophers who held that perceptual knowledge rested upon knowledge of sense data, or sense experiences, often held that memory knowledge rested upon knowledge of memory images. (This tendency is perhaps most vivid in the case of David Hume, though there it is part of Hume's more general view that both beliefs and concepts are to be identified with images.)

9.2.5 Knowledge, and Memory Thoughts Versus Memory Beliefs

There is, however, a further question that needs to be addressed here - namely, whether there is an epistemological difference between memory thoughts and memory beliefs. If one is attracted to a foundationalism approach to the justification of belief, one is also likely to be attracted to the view that the foundational beliefs are beliefs about objects with which one is directly acquainted, objects that are immediately given. If so, then one is likely to conclude that memory thoughts must be foundational with regard to the justification of beliefs about the past, since thoughts are states of consciousness, and so are immediately given, whereas memory beliefs need not be objects of immediate awareness.

On reflection, however, this view seems deeply problematic. For on any given occasion, one is consciously remembering at most a very few things, and most of the time one has no memory thoughts, or experiences at all. If one held, then, that one's present memory knowledge is based upon one's present memory thoughts, the upshot would be that most of the time one would have no memory knowledge at all, and so no justified beliefs about the past. This would also imply, unless one adopted a direct realist view with regard to perceptual knowledge, that most of he time one has no justified perceptual beliefs. But even in the absence of the latter implication, the fact that most of the time one would have no justified beliefs about the past would on its own be a very unwelcome conclusion.

9.2.6 Memories of Experienced Events versus Memories of Facts

Some philosophers feel that it is epistemologically important to distinguish between one's memories of events that one has personally experienced - or, perhaps more precisely: one's memories of one's own experiences - and one's memories of facts not connected with experiences, or experienced events. (Thus, for example, one may remember that Hume was born in 1711, even though one does not remember Hume's being born.) In particular, it has sometimes been contended that, on the one hand, if one apparently remembers having had a certain experience, then one is justified in believing that one did in fact have that experience, whereas, on the other hand, that if one seems to remember that some proposition, unconnected with one's experience, is true, one is justified in believing the proposition only if one can also recall the evidence that supports the belief in question.

9.2.7 The Origin of our Concept of the Past

There is a final issue that should be briefly mentioned before we go on to consider the basic issue of the justification of our beliefs about the past.

This is the question of the origin - or, more accurately, the analysis - of our concept of the past.

One very natural idea is that the concept of the past can be defined as the concept of what is earlier than the present. (Though this is a rather natural idea, most philosophers who favor a tensed view of the nature of time would reject this suggestion, since they almost invariably hold that the concept of temporal priority must itself be analyzed in terms of tensed concepts, especially those of past, present, and future.) But if the concept of the past is to be analyzed in that way, this immediately leaves one with the question of what account is to be given of the earlier than relation.

Some philosophers have been tempted to treat temporal relations - such as that of one event's being earlier than another - in a fashion paralleling a treatment of spatial relations - such as the relation of betweenness - that seems very natural. Thus, in the case of spatial relations, it is natural to view the relevant concepts as picking out relations that are immediately given, that are directly observable: one acquires the concept of what it is for one thing to be between two other things by acquaintance with things that stand in that relation - either physical objects, or sense data, or parts of one's visual field, etc. But can one plausibly maintain that temporal relations - such as the earlier than relation - are also immediately given, and thus that the relevant terms are ostensively definable?

I believe that this approach to the concepts of temporal relations is exposed to a serious difficulty. For it is natural to hold that a relation can be experienced at a time only if one also experiences, at that time, the things that stand in that relation. So if one is to have, at some time, an experience of the earlier than relation, one must also experience, at that time, the two events that stand in that relation. But won't this be impossible; given that if the events do stand to one another in the earlier than relation, they cannot exist at the same time? It would seem, then, that the earlier than relation is not one that can be given in immediate experience.

9.3 SKEPTICISM AND MEMORY KNOWLEDGE

The general strategy underlying the skeptic's challenge to knowledge claims is familiar. Applied to the case of beliefs about the past, it runs as follows:

(1) Suppose it is granted that one knows, or is justified in believing, that one now has some beliefs about the past, or that one is having some thoughts about the past, or enjoying some memory images. (The skeptic may not view the first of these as by any means unproblematic, since it, unlike the second and the third, is not a matter of knowledge of a present state of consciousness.) The question then is how such facts about present states of one can possibly serve to justify claims about past states of affairs. How is one ever to bridge the gulf in logical type that exists between statements about the present and statements about the past?

(2) It is clear that no deductive reasoning will ever serve to bridge the gap. For one could be in exactly the same state that one is now in even if the world had only existed for five minutes or even if it had just now popped into existence. (Compare the famous hypothesis that the world was created in 4004 B.C., but with fossils, etc., that make it look as if it has existed for a much longer time.)

(3) No inductive reasoning can bridge the gap. For in order to do so, one would have to establish a generalization, connecting events at different times, that one could then apply to one's present states in order to draw a conclusion about earlier states of affairs related to them. But in order to establish such a generalization, one would have to have information about states of affairs existing at different times, and one doesn't have such information until one has some memory knowledge. Before that, one's evidence consists entirely of information about one's own present state.

(4) The only legitimate methods of reasoning are deductive and inductive.

(5) Hence one has no knowledge of - nor any justified beliefs about - the past.

Most of us believe that we are justified not only in thinking that there was a past, but also in having a large number of very detailed beliefs about it. But how is one to answer the skeptic?

Check Your Progress 1

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

1. What are the Preliminary Issues and Distinctions?

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2. Discuss the Skepticism and Memory Knowledge.

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9.4 POSSIBLE ANSWERS TO SKEPTICISM ABOUT MEMORY KNOWLEDGE

One common way of responding to skeptical challenges to knowledge claims is by advancing some appropriate reductionist claim. Thus, for example, phenomenalism, in viewing physical objects as constructions out of possible sense experiences, provides an account of how one can get from knowledge of sense experiences to knowledge of physical objects. Similarly, logical behaviorism, in holding that mental states are reducible to observable behavior, and behavioral dispositions, provides a possible solution to the difficult problem of knowledge of other minds.

Is a reductionist approach plausible in the case of beliefs about the past? Here such an approach would involve holding that propositions bout the past can be analyzed in terms of propositions about the future. This view has certainly been embraced by some philosophers. In particular, it was accepted by the Polish logician Jan Lukasiewicz and the New Zealand philosopher of time Arthur Prior. But the view that statements about the past are analyzable in terms of statements about the present does not really seem at all implausible in itself. And, in addition, it also has some rather unusual consequences. One of these, which was noted by Lukasiewicz - though he viewed it as a welcome consequence - is that the past is not fixed, at least in an in deterministic world, since in such a world there may be evidence, at one time, for the occurrence of some earlier event, but then no evidence at all at some later time:

Facts whose effects have disappeared altogether, and which even an omniscient mind could not infer from those now occurring, belong to the realm of possibility. One cannot say about them that they took place, but only that they were possible. It is well that it should be so. There are hard moments of suffering and still harder ones of guilt in everyone's life. We should be glad to be able to erase them not only from our memory but also from existence. We may believe that when all the effects of those fateful moments are exhausted, even should that happen only after our death, then their causes too will be effaced from the world of actuality and pass into the realm of possibility. Time calms our cares and brings us forgiveness.

If reductionism is set side, one is left with at least four ways of responding to the skeptic's challenge to our everyday belief that memory often provides us with knowledge, or at least justified beliefs, about the past, which deserve serious consideration:

(1) A view, defended by Norman Malcolm and Sidney Shoemaker, that one can offer an a priori argument to show that memory must be generally reliable;

(2) A view, defended by R. F. Harrod, according to that an appeal to the specious present, conjoined either with inductive generalization, or hypothetico-deductive method, can be used to justify our knowledge claims about the past;

(3) The direct realist view of the justification of memory beliefs;

(4) The view that hypothetico-deductive reasoning on its own can be used to show that our beliefs about the past are justified.

9.5   AN A PRIORI ARGUMENT FOR THE RELIABILITY OF MEMORY?

Traditionally, philosophers have almost always held that if is true that one's memories are reliable, this is only a contingent truth, rather than a necessary one. This view can moreover, be supported as follows. First, it is surely true in any particular case that there is nothing necessary about a given memory's being correct; it is surely conceivable that any apparent memory could be mistaken. But then, secondly, it is natural to suppose that if it is only a contingent matter whether any particular memory belief is correct, the same must be true with regard to any pair of memory beliefs: the falsity of one memory belief is surely compatible with the falsity of the other memory belief. But, then, if this is right, adding more memory beliefs will not, it would seem change things: the fact that all the memory beliefs in some set of n memory beliefs are false will surely not entail that some other memory belief is true. Consequently, while it might be true that memory beliefs are generally, or even always, correct, it is surely also possible that memory beliefs might be generally, or even always, incorrect. It is, therefore, simply an empirical or factual question whether memory beliefs are generally correct or generally incorrect.

1.   Shoemaker's Formulation of the Argument

The claim that it is logically necessary that memories beliefs are generally reliable is, in view of the considerations mentioned above, a surprising one. But an argument in support of it can be offered, along the

lines of one set out by Shoemaker in his article on "Memory" in the Encyclopedia of Philosophy:

2. An Evaluation of the A Priori Argument

The above line of argument is an interesting one, but I believe that it is unsound, primarily for the following reasons:

(1) In translating a strange language into one's own, the demand for agreement in judgments varies radically, depending upon the content of the sentences that one is translating.

(2) Secondly, suppose that when the behavior of the individuals in question turns out to be unsuccessful - as it generally will if their memory beliefs are usually or always false - they utter words that we translate as, "That's strange, I was sure that I buried it here.

(3) For at least a wide range of beliefs, the primary evidence - in a logical sense, not in a practical sense - for what a person believes is provided by his or her nonlinguistic behavior.

(4) Finally, suppose that when asked if they can define the term that we are translating "remember", they utter a sentence that we translate as follows: "To say that A remembers that p is to say that A believes that p, that A's present belief that p is caused by an earlier belief that p, where the earlier belief, in turn, was caused by a perception that p."

Check Your Progress 2

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

1.   What are the possible Answers to Skepticism about Memory Knowledge?

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2. Discuss An A Priori Argument for the Reliability of Memory?

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9.6 AN APPEAL TO THE SPECIOUS PRESENT

A second way in which one might attempt to show that memory beliefs can be justified involves an appeal to the specious present. This approach was advanced by R. F. Harrod, in a book entitled Foundations of Inductive Logic, and as Harrod formulates it, it makes use of hypothetico-deductive method. But it may be helpful to start off by considering a simpler, and less satisfactory argument that also appeals to the idea of the specious present, and that involves only instantial generalization.

1. An Argument that Uses Instantial Generalization

Let us begin by considering, then, the simpler argument. Given the skeptical argument set out earlier, the idea that one can inductively establish generalizations to justify beliefs about the past may well seem, of course, quite out of the question. But, as we shall now see, there is a possible way of challenging that conclusion.

The basic line of thought is as follows:

(1) First, one's experience is not confined to that of an instantaneous state of affairs. For if it were, there would be no perception of motion. One's experience should be thought of, accordingly, as involving a specious present.

What is meant by the specious present? A way of understanding this is by comparing pictures of, say, a fast-moving racing car taken, on the one hand, by a camera with a slow shutter speed with those taken, on the other hand, by a camera with a very fast shutter speed. Pictures of the latter sort may be indistinguishable from pictures taken of a car that is at rest. One will be unable to tell whether the car is at rest, or moving forward, or moving backward. By contrast, if a picture is taken of a fast-moving racing car by a camera with a slow shutter speed, one will be able to tell from the picture, with the sharp image of one end of the car, and blurred image of the other end, that the car is moving, and the direction in which it is moving.

The situation is similar when we look at an object moving sufficiently fast. The image we form is not uniform. Instead, there is a residual image that represents slightly earlier positions of the moving object that we are watching.

(2) Secondly, if one's experience takes the form of a specious present, then one is experiencing, within a single experience, events that take place at slightly different times. One sees, for example, both where a moving object now is, and where it was at a slightly earlier time.

(3) Thirdly, given that a single experience does contain a representation of events that have taken place at slightly different times, such experience can serve to confirm generalizations relating those events that exist at different times.

(4) What generalizations can be confirmed in this way? Here are some possibilities:

(a) Things that are at rest tend to stay at rest;

(b) Things that are moving tend to continue moving;

(c) Things generally do not change their colors quickly;

(d) things generally do not change their shapes quickly.

(4) Then, fourthly, the generalizations thus confirmed can be used to arrive at conclusions concerning earlier moments. So, for example, if one is presently having an experience of a round, green object moving quickly to he right, one can conclude that that object was round and green at a slightly earlier time, and was moving quickly to the right, but located some distance further to the left than it presently is.

How much knowledge of past events can be justified in this way? The answer is that only a very small proportion of one's knowledge claims about the past can be justified via this route, since memories play no role at all in type of argument just set out: one is simply projecting backward from that part of one's sensory experience, or that part of the external world that one is perceptually aware of, making use of those generalizations that can be confirmed by those perceptual experiences that lie within the specious present in question.

2. Possible Objections to Harrod's Approach to the Justification of Memory Beliefs

(1) Does one want one's justification of memory beliefs to presuppose a certain thesis about the nature of sensory experience - namely, that it involves a specious present? One might think that this is harmless, on the ground that the existence of a specious present is an undeniable phenomenological fact. But I want to suggest that there are two things here that are problematic. There first, and the less serious, is this.

(2) The second and much more serious problem arises when one asks what account is to be given of the specious present. Suppose, for example, that the correct description of one's sensory experience were as follows. First, the purely sensory state that one is in at any given time is similar in qualitative nature to what one has when one looks at a picture taken of a moving object by a camera with a slow shutter speed.

(3) A final point about Harrod's account is that, even if it were tenable, it could not be a complete account. The reason is that Harrod's account cannot provide any basis for one's having any justified beliefs about the past at times when one is not having any sensory experiences of the requisite sort. Suppose, for example, that you have your eyes closed in a quiet setting, and that all you are experiencing are a few tactile sensations. Then there would not seem to be the possibility of the dramatic predictions that Harrod was able to appeal to in the case of visual experiences. Or, more radically, suppose that you were in a state of complete sensory deprivation. Wouldn't you still have, in either case, virtually all of the justified beliefs about the past (with the exception of beliefs about the recent past states of one's immediate physical environment) that you now have?

9.7   DIRECT REALISM

Let us now turn to two accounts of the justification of memory beliefs that correspond to two very important strategies that can be employed in responding to the general skeptical argument set out earlier. The one, which will be considered in the next section, involves the attempt to show that one can make use of hypothetico-deductive reasoning, or inference to the best explanation, to establish that memory beliefs are inferentially justified. The other, which we shall begin to consider in this section, involves what is often referred to as a direct realist approach to memory, and here the central claim is, as a first approximation, that memory beliefs are noninferentially justified.

Let us consider, then, a direct realist view of memory. One way of formulating this view is the one just mentioned - that is, as the view that memory beliefs are noninferentially justified. There is, as we shall see shortly, a different and somewhat more modest way of formulating the direct realist view. But let us begin with the version according to which memory beliefs are noninferentially justified.

When it is claimed that some belief is noninferentially justified, one always needs to go on to ask what the basis is - that is, what state of affairs is the ground of one's being thus noninferentially justified in accepting the belief in question. In the case of memory beliefs, there are at least three different answers that might be given:

(1) The basis of A's being noninferentially justified in accepting a certain belief, p, about the past is that A has a corresponding memory image;

(2) The basis of A's being noninferentially justified in accepting a certain belief, p, about the past is that A has the belief that p;

(3) The basis of A's being noninferentially justified in accepting a certain belief, p, about the past is that A has the thought that p.

The second version of direct realism with respect to memory knowledge does not assign any role at all to memory images. The reason may be in part to avoid any temptation to think that one's beliefs about the past are inferentially justified on the basis of beliefs about memory images. But I suspect that the main reason involves a point made earlier - the realization, namely, that if one restricts memory knowledge to cases in which one is having memory experiences, it will turn out that one has very little memory knowledge: if one is not to be driven into a close approximation of skepticism, one must maintain that memory beliefs, in the absence of memory experiences, can provide the basis for justified beliefs about the past.

The third version of direct realism treats the basis states as neither images nor beliefs, but thoughts - where a thought, here, is a certain type of state of consciousness.

The expression "in some degree credible" is not entirely clear. Is Lewis saying that the probability that the belief in question is true must be at least greater than one half, so that the belief is more likely to be true than

to be false? If so, the belief would be no inferentially justified, and we would not have a distinct version of direct realism.

This line of thought generates three additional versions of direct realism, corresponding to the three earlier versions:

(4) If p is some proposition about the past, then the basis of p's having a probability for person A that is higher than its a priori probability is that A has a corresponding memory image;

(5) If p is some proposition about the past, then the basis of p's having a probability for person A that is higher than its a priori probability is that A has the belief that p;

(6) If p is some proposition about the past, then the basis of p's having a probability for person A that is higher than its a priori probability is that A has the thought that p.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

1. Discuss the Appeal to the Specious Present.

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2. What is Direct Realism?

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9.8 INDIRECT REALISM: A HYPOTHETICO-DEDUCTIVE ACCOUNT OF THE JUSTIFICATION OF BELIEFS ABOUT THE PAST

The Indirect Realist Account

Let us consider, then, indirect realism, where this is the view that memory beliefs are inferentially justified.

If one is to defend the claim that memory beliefs are inferentially justified, four things need to be done:

(1) First, one needs to specify the type of beliefs that it is claimed can provide an evidential foundation for memory beliefs;

(2) Secondly, one needs to show that one can be justified in accepting beliefs of the type in question even in the absence of any justified memory beliefs, so that the path of justification that one is proposing is not circular;

(3) Thirdly, one needs to specify the type of inference involved;

(4) Finally, one needs to show that that inference is sound.

As regards the first of these tasks, the idea is that the proposal is that one can justify beliefs about the past on the basis of justified beliefs to the effect that one does have beliefs about the past that exhibit certain characteristics. So the idea is that certain first-order beliefs - beliefs about the past - can be justified on the basis of certain second-order beliefs - beliefs about beliefs about the past.

Next, let us skip, for the moment, the second task listed above, and turn to the third task, that of specifying the type of inference involved. Here the basic idea is that the inference is an inference to the best explanation. Or, in more detail, the claim is that the theory that provides the best

account of an individual's present sense experiences and memory beliefs is one involving the following hypotheses:

(1) There are more things that exist than merely an individual's present experiences and (ostensible) memory beliefs. There are also past experiences and beliefs, and enduring external objects.

(2) There are causal laws that relate states of physical objects at different times.

(3) Physical objects can act upon organisms to produce both sense experiences and beliefs about those sense experiences.

(4) Some of the beliefs that an organism acquires about his experiences can be retained by the organism for at least short intervals of time.

The fourth task is to show that the inference to this hypothesis is justified, What is immediately clear is that given a theory T with these features, one can, together with appropriate assumptions about initial conditions, explain the fact that a given individual has certain sense experiences and certain memory beliefs at a given time. So theory T is an explanation. But the critical question is this:

Does theory T provide the best explanation?

If the claim that theory T provides the best explanation is to be sustained, one must show that it is superior to alternative explanations. In the present case, it seems that there are two main competing theories that one must show are less satisfactory:

(1) Theories such as "Russell's hypothesis" that the world has only existed for five minutes;

(2) The more dramatic theory that nothing at all existed up until the present moment.

1. Against Russellian-type Theories

Russellian-type theories involve three of the hypotheses that are present in theory T - namely, (1), (3), and (4). The difference is that hypothesis (2), in contrast, is not accepted in its unrestricted form. For while, on a Russellian-type hypothesis, there are laws relating present and past physical events to earlier physical events, those laws are restricted in a certain respect. In particular, if the world began five minutes ago, then all physical events have at least partial, prior physical causes except for those physical events that occurred exactly five minutes ago.

2. Against the Theory that the World Has Just Now Begun

The first objection urged against Russell's hypothesis cannot be used here. If only the present moment exists, there are no laws that one can argue are being restricted in an arbitrary way. The central objection to the present theory is instead that it cannot provide any explanation of certain striking correspondences of two sorts:

(1) Between one's present sensory experiences, if one is having any, and some of one's present, apparent memories;

(2) Between different apparent memories that one is now having.

Thus, as regards the first, consider the following:

Time: t1 t2

E1 M2 of E1
E2
The experience E2 at time t2 might be, for example, a visual experiences of some very detailed type, S. If E1 is also a very detailed visual experience, and if the temporal interval between t1 and t2 is not very great, then the memory M2 of E1 should also have quite a detailed

content — call it T. Suppose, now. that S is very similar to T. For this to happen by accident would be very unlikely. Accordingly, it seems that one is justified in postulating a common cause of the experience E2 and the memory M2 of E1. This will be, as a matter of fact, the perceptual environment just before time t1 - an environment that changes only slightly between t1 and t2.

The idea, in short, is that if the world had just now begun, these very striking correlations would be simply fantastic accidents that could not be explained in any way, whereas if the world has not just begun, then they can be explained - in particular, by theory T.

This sort of situation is surely very common, since one is almost always aware of whether one's experience is changing or remaining the same, and therefore one must have memories of what one's experience were like at very slightly earlier times.

The drawback, however, of this type of case is that this particular inference to the best explanation is not available if one is having no sensory experiences, or very limited ones, at a given time. As we shall now see, however, there are other inferences to the best explanation that are available when one is not having any experiences, since they involve only correlations between different beliefs about the past.

Such correlations can arise in two different ways. First, a single experience can give rise both to direct memories and indirect memories - where a direct memory is a memory of an experience, and an indirect memory is either a memory of a memory of an experience, or memory of a memory of a memory of an experience, or . . . and so on. Secondly, two distinct, but very similar experiences that occur near one another may give rise to very similar memories at a given time. Here, for example, is a picture of the first sort of situation:

Time: t1 t2 t3 t4

E1 M2 of E1 M3 of E1 M4 of E1

E1 M2 of E1 M3 of E1 M4 of M2 of E1

E1 M2 of E1 M3 of M2 of E1 M4 of M3 of M2 of E1

The idea here is this. If the time between t1 and t3 is not very great, and if one's memory is at least reasonably reliable, then the two different memories, M3 of E1, and M3 of M2 of E1, which one has at time t3 should be quite similar in content. Accordingly, if one finds two memories that are quite similar in content, one is justified in inferring a common cause — which, in the above case, will, as a matter of fact, be experience E1.

In this case, one is comparing a direct memory of an experience with what is, as a matter of fact, an indirect memory of one and the same experience. The two memories do not by themselves enable one to determine, of course, that they are memories of one and the same experience, but that does not matter: all that is crucial for the inference is that the contents of the two memories are very similar.

One can also have cases where what is involved are two indirect memories that are, as a matter of fact, indirect memories of one and the same experience. Consider, for example, the two memories, M4 of M2 of E1, and M4 of M3 of M2 of E1, which exist at time t4.

Here, now, is a picture of the second possibility - that is, where two distinct experiences are involved:

Time: t1 t2 t3 t4

E1 M2 of E1 M3 of E1 M4 of E1
E2 M3 of E2 M4 of E2

E1 M2 of E1 M3 of E1 M4 of M2 of E1

E2 M3 of E2 M4 of M3 of E2

In this case, the idea is this. If the time between t1 and t3 is not very great, and if one is not in a situation that is changing rapidly, then one's experience at time t2 may be very similar to one's experience at time t2. Then, if one's memory is at least reasonably reliable, those two very similar experiences may well give rise to corresponding direct memories at a slightly later time t3 — here M3 of E1, and M3 of E2 — that will be very similar in content. Accordingly, if one finds two memories that are quite similar in content, one is justified in inferring a common cause — which, in the present case, in contrast to the first, will not be a single experience. Instead, it will be the relatively unchanging perceptual environment that has given rise to the two very similar experiences.

The preceding case involves a direct memory and an indirect memory. But one can equally well have cases where what is involved are two indirect memory beliefs. Consider, for example, the two indirect memories M4 of M2 of E1, and M4 of M3 of E2, that exist at time t4.

How common are these cases that do not involve any current experience? It would seem that they are also very common, since it is surely often the case that one has an apparent memory belief about having an apparent memory belief about an experience of which one also has, as a matter of fact, a direct memory.

One often has, in short, pairs of apparent memories, either direct or indirect, that exhibit a high degree of similarity with regard to the type of experiences involved in the two cases. How is one to account, then, for the high degree of correspondence of content between, for example, a memory, M, of a certain experience, and a memory, N, of a memory of a very similar experience? The point, once again, is that the correspondence cannot be explained if one assumes that the world has just begun. But it can be explained if one assumes that there has been was a past. For one can then account for the correspondence by saying that the reason that there is the relationship of close resemblance between M and N is that when one traces back the different causal chains that resulted in M and the N one is led back to a single collection of physical

objects - though slightly different temporal slices of that single collection of physical objects.

The upshot, in short, is that the structural correspondences in question have to be treated as a colossal accident on the hypothesis that there is no past, but can be explained if one adopts the hypothesis that there is a past that causally affects the present.

Notice, finally, that this basic point can be made without reference to memories. For consider, instead, a number of photographs taken of some object, from roughly the same position. The content of those photographs will be quite similar, and if the object in question is still around, and hasn't changed too much, the content of the photographs will be similar in structure to the object. If one were to suppose that the world has just now popped into existence, those similarities would have to be treated as sheer accidents. But if one assumes, instead, that there was a past, etc., one can explain those relationships by the hypothesis that the object existed in the past, was photographed a number of times, and that the object and the resulting photographs have continued to exist without undergoing significant change.

In the case of memory, one does not have only what correspond to photographs of the object, since one also has what corresponds to photographs of photographs of the object: memories of memories. But while this alters things slightly, it does not change the basic logic of the argument.

Finally, notice that the photographic case establishes a claim that I advanced near the beginning of this chapter - namely, the claim that it might well be possible to have some justified beliefs about the past even if one had no memory beliefs at all.

9.9   THE CHOICE BETWEEN DIRECT REALISM AND INDIRECT REALISM

Let us now turn to a consideration of the relative merits of direct realism and indirect realism. The choice between these two views rests, I shall suggest, upon certain general considerations concerning the sorts of states of affairs that can be the object of noninferentially justified or prima facie credible, beliefs.

1. The Scope of Noninferentially Justified, or Prima Facie Credible, Beliefs

According to direct realism, memory beliefs possess prima facie credibility. One might begin by asking, then, what support, if any, one can offer for this claim.

Some philosophers would, I think, be content to respond by arguing that unless one is willing to accept this view, one will inevitably be driven to skepticism, on the grounds that any attempt to show that knowledge of the past is inferential is doomed to failure. We have just seen, however, that that claim is not true.

But one also wants to ask whether, even if no inferential account of the justification of memory beliefs were available, one would be justified in simply assuming that memory beliefs possess prima facie credibility. After all, mightn't skepticism be the right position? Mightn't it be true that we just cannot have any justified beliefs about the past, even including the belief that there is a past? For May it not be that the reason why we believe, in everyday life, that we do have knowledge of the past is that we think that it must be possible somehow to show that memory is generally reliable? And if it then turns out that there is no way of doing that, shouldn't our conclusion be that we were mistaken in thinking that we had knowledge of the past? To conclude, instead, that we do have knowledge of the past, but that it must therefore be noninferential, rather than inferential, would seem ad hoc, and unjustified.

In addition, the skeptic can push his or her case further by arguing that one should not be allowed, in general, simply to postulate that certain

beliefs are noninferentially justified, or prima facie credible, whenever one has trouble providing a justification for some knowledge claims. One should try, rather, to delimit the sorts of things that one can have noninferentially justified beliefs about. Moreover, this delimiting should not be done simply by offering a list. One should, instead, try to find some property that is possessed by all and only things of which one can have noninferential knowledge.

Having made this general point, the skeptic can then go on to mention some characteristics that have been suggested in "past" philosophical discussions:

(a) The only beliefs that are noninferentially justified, or prima facie credible, are incorrigible beliefs - beliefs that could not possibly be mistaken;
(b) The only things that can be the objects of noninferentially justified, or prima facie credible beliefs are self-intimating states of affairs - i.e., states of affairs of which it is logically impossible for one to be ignorant;

(c) The only things that can be the objects of noninferentially justified, or prima facie credible beliefs are present states of oneself;

(d) The only things that can be the objects of noninferentially justified, or prima facie credible beliefs are states of affairs that can be immediately given in experience, where something is immediately given in experience only if the experience itself, considered as a purely subjective state, entails the existence of the thing that is immediately given.

Past events, however, do not possess any of these characteristics: beliefs about them are not incorrigible; nor are past events self-intimating; nor are they present states of one; nor are they immediately given in experience, since no experience can entail the existence of any past event. And in general, the skeptic can contend that it is hard to see what appealing, uniform characterization one might offer of those states of affairs that can be no inferentially known which would have the

consequence that past events were included. Consequently, the prospects for offering any rationale of justification for the claim those beliefs about the past can be no inferentially justified, or prima facie credible do not seem especially promising.

Notice, however, that the problem here is not a problem specifically for indirect realism, since regardless of what view one adopts with regard to the justification of memory beliefs, one surely wants to accept the following theses:

(1) One can have justified beliefs about one's own present beliefs;

(2) One can have justified beliefs, about one's own present beliefs, that are not justified on the basis of evidence.

But if this is right, then the question becomes what account one can give of the scope of no inferentially justified beliefs that will allow one to have no inferentially justified beliefs about one's own present beliefs.

The most appealing candidates for objects of no inferentially justified beliefs are objects that are immediately given. Experiences are such objects. But is there anything else which is? Initially, one might think that thoughts are also immediately given in experience; however I think that the fact that thoughts are characterized by intentionality provides grounds for holding that thoughts cannot be completely, given in immediate experience. And the situation is even worse in the case of beliefs, since while thoughts are states of consciousness, beliefs are not.

2. The Advantages of Indirect Realism over Direct Realism

There are, I now want to suggest, four reasons for preferring indirect realism to direct realism:

(1) Indirect realism can offer a more plausible account of what beliefs can be noninferentially justified;

(2) Indirect realism requires fewer basis rules;

(3) Indirect realism can specify, in a non-arbitrary way, the level of confidence that is warranted in the case of beliefs about the past;

(4) The question of the relation between first-person beliefs and third-person beliefs poses a problem for direct realism, but not for indirect realism.

2.1 What Types of Beliefs Can Be No inferentially justified?

This is the issue that we have just been considering. The most appealing view, it would seem, is that the only beliefs that can be no inferentially justified are beliefs about what is given in immediate experience. But if this view is correct, then beliefs about one's own present beliefs cannot be no inferentially justified. The question therefore arises as to whether a less stringent principle - such as the Potential Access Principle - might not be defensible. If so, then it may be possible to show that beliefs about one's own present beliefs can be no inferentially justified, and this will provide the indirect realist with the necessary starting point for a defense of the view that beliefs about the past can be inferentially justified. The Potential Access Principle, on the other hand, does not enable the direct realist to show that beliefs about the past are no inferentially justified.

Moreover, it is not clear what plausible alternative the direct realist can put forward. One possible suggestion is this:

The Principle of the Prima Facie Credibility of All Beliefs

Any belief that seems to one to be true is no inferentially justified, or at least prima facie credible.
This principle would certainly entail that beliefs about the past are at least prima facie credible, but it does so at the cost of admitting an

enormous number of other beliefs, some of which may well be untestable, and if there are a sufficient number of such beliefs that support one another, then they may turn out to be justified all things considered. The alternative, in short, appears to make justification highly relative to individual believers, in a way that seems far from satisfactory.

2.2 Indirect Realism Requires Fewer Basis Rules

This second point follows on immediately from the preceding point. For unless something like the Principle of the Prima Facie Credibility of All Beliefs can be sustained, the direct realist will need to accept basis rules that entail that beliefs about one's own present beliefs can be no inferentially justified, along with other basis rules that entail that at least some beliefs about the past are no inferentially justified, or at least prima facie credible. The indirect realist, by contrast, needs only the former basis rules.

2.3 What Level of Confidence Is Justified for Beliefs about the Past?

The idea that one can be absolutely certain concerning propositions about the past does not seem at all plausible. On the contrary, C. I. Lewis's idea that beliefs about the past are, on their own, and initially, only prima facie credible, rather than being noninferentially justified, seems quite appealing. But if it is not appropriate to treat propositions about the past as certain, then what level of confidence is appropriate?

2.4 First-Person versus Third-Person Beliefs

Suppose that A has a noninferentially justified belief that event E took place in the past. What makes it the case that A is thus noninferentially justified? What is the ground, or the basis, of A's being thus justified?

It is hard to see what answer can be given, other than that the ground of A's being noninferentially justified in believing that event E took place is simply the fact that A does have a belief that event E took place.

Suppose this is right. Consider, now, another person, B, who has no beliefs about whether event E took place, but who comes to know that A believes that event E took place. Is B now inferentially justified in believing that event E took place?

It seems to me doubtful that B is justified, given only the evidence that A believes that event E took place. For while I think that this evidence certainly makes it more likely, other things being equal, that event E took place, it seems to me far from clear that it makes it more likely than not.

But now there seems to be a problem for the direct realist, since I think that the following principle is very plausible:

The Equal Weight Principle

If A's being in state S is a GROUND of A's being noninferentially justified in believing that p, then B's knowing that A is in state S is equally strong EVIDENCE for B that p.

If this principle is right and if B is not inferentially justified in believing that event E took place, given only the evidence that A believes that event E took place, then it follows that A is not noninferentially justified in believing that event E took place.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

1. Discuss the Indirect Realism: A Hypothetico-Deductive Account of the Justification of Beliefs about the Past.

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2. Compare The Choice between Direct Realism and Indirect Realism.

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9.10 LET US SUM UP

1) Provided that one can be noninferentially justified in believing that one has memory beliefs, the use of hypothetico-deductive method can serve to justify the claim that specific memory beliefs are very likely to be accurate.

(2) One advantage of this approach is that what memory beliefs are justified at a given time does not depend either upon one's having any sensory experiences at a given time, or upon what memory experiences one is having at a given time.

(3) The skeptic can challenge this justification by arguing that noninferentially justified beliefs should be restricted to beliefs about one's present states of consciousness, and that one does not have noninferentially justified beliefs about any of one's present mental states that are not states of consciousness - such as beliefs. The indirect realist's account is, accordingly, incomplete, and needs to be supplemented by a defense of the claim that one can have noninferential knowledge of, or noninferentially justified beliefs about, one's own present beliefs. One way in which one might try to deal with this latter issue was briefly set out above.

(4) As was argued in the last section, there appear to be a number of ways in which direct realism is exposed to difficulties that do not apply to the indirect realist's account of the justification of beliefs about the past.

9.11 KEY WORDS

Deductive: Deductive reasoning, also deductive logic, is the process of reasoning from one or more statements to reach a logically certain conclusion. Deductive reasoning goes in the same direction as that of the conditionals, and links premises with conclusions.

Skepticism: a sceptical attitude; doubt as to the truth of something.

Realism: Realism was an artistic movement that emerged in France in the 1840s, around the 1848 Revolution. Realists rejected Romanticism, which had dominated French literature and art since the early 19th century

Memory: Memory is the faculty of the brain by which data or information is encoded, stored, and retrieved when needed. It is the retention of information over time for the purpose of influencing future action.

9.12 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

3. Discuss the Skepticism and Memory Knowledge.
4. What are the possible Answers to Skepticism about Memory Knowledge?
5. What is an A Priori Argument for the Reliability of Memory?
6. What is an Appeal to the Specious Present
7. What is Direct Realism?
8. Discuss the Indirect Realism: A Hypothetico-Deductive Account of the Justification of Beliefs about the Past
9. Compare The Choice between Direct Realism and Indirect Realism

9.13 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

- Fernyhough, Charles (2013). Pieces of Light: How the New Science of Memory Illuminates Stories We Tell About Our Pasts. ISBN 978-0-06-223789-7.

- Eck, Allison (June 3, 2014). "For More Effective Studying, Take Notes With Pen and Paper". Nova Next. PBS.

- Leyden, Andrea (January 24, 2014). "20 Study Hacks to Improve Your Memory". Exam Time.

9.14 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1. See Section 9.2
2. See Section 9.3

Check Your Progress 2

1. See Section 9.4
2. See Section 9.5

Check Your Progress 3

1. See Section 9.6
2. See Section 9.7

Check Your Progress 4

1. See Section 9.8
2. See Section 9.9

UNIT 10: NOT MIRRORS BUT MAPS (KNOWLEDGE AND HUMAN INTERESTSHABERMAS, MESOCOSM)

STRUCTURE

10.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit explores the contributions of Jürgen Habermas, a second generation critical theorist and one of the most distinguished contemporary social and political philosophers, whose influence spans the fields of philosophy, political science, law, literature, communication, religion and international relations.

- To know the main emphasis of this module would be on the epistemological foundations of Habermas' theory of communicative action. Knowledge and Human Interests (1968; 1987) is one of Habermas' seminal works that contains a very strong argument for a theory of knowledge as social theory. Habermas also emphasizes emancipatory intent in Knowledge and Human Interests. In his most famous work,

- To discuss the Theory of Communicative Action (1984; 1987), the emphasis shifts to consensus through a process of rational argumentation among communicatively competent social actors. From this module, you would be able to evaluate the paradigm shift in Habermas' thought from an emphasis on human interests which was founded on the paradigm of a conscious subject to that of a universal pragmatics, in which language becomes the paradigm.

10.1 INTRODUCTION

At a superficial glance it can look as if there is agreement about what the problem is and how we might address it. But on closer inspection one finds there is little agreement either about the problem or the solution to it. Indeed, there is little agreement about whether there is a problem here at all. What seems clear is that there was a period in philosophy, roughly around the mid-twentieth century, when there was much discussion about other minds. The problem here has most commonly been thought to arise within epistemology: how do I know (or how can I justify the belief) that other beings exist who have thoughts, feelings and other mental attributes? One standard line of reply to this question has been to appeal to analogy, another to best explanation. A less standard approach has been to appeal to criteria. Connected with this approach, and fueled by the later work of Ludwig Wittgenstein, some philosophers argue that the *real* problem of other minds is conceptual: why do I so much as think that there are other thinking, feeling beings? Both the conceptual and the epistemological problems may be thought to be connected with a more general metaphysical problem of understanding what minds and mental states are.

In analytic philosophy, towards the end of the twentieth century, interest in these problems waned, but there has been a revival of interest in recent years. This is in part due to the fact that philosophers have begun to explore in earnest the possibility that we come by our knowledge of other minds in much the same way that we come by our knowledge of objects

in the world—by perception. This possibility is also explored in phenomenology and in recent times philosophers schooled in both the analytic and phenomenological traditions have contributed to discussion of this topic. Some philosophers have found inspiration even further afield, in the texts of Indian Buddhist philosophers. Philosophical interest in other minds has also been stimulated by work in psychology and neuroscience. A more naturalistic turn in philosophy has led to questions concerning our understanding of others. One might see this work as leaving behind traditional epistemological concerns with radical scepticism, addressing instead the question of how we go about ascribing mental states to others—a question that can be asked not just of adult humans, but of infants (when and how do they come to ascribe mental states to others), and also of other, non-human, animals. Furthermore, one can consider the possibility of a deficit in the capacity to attribute minds to others and how this might manifest itself in, for example, autism.

Jürgen Habermas, a German philosopher, is a leading second generation critical theorist and a well-known philosopher in the contemporary scene. He has inherited the philosophical lineage from the pioneers of the Frankfurt school like Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Walter Benjamin, and Erich Fromm who were instrumental in bringing critical theory into prominence. Critical social theory or Critical theory is the name of the philosophical doctrine of the Frankfurt school otherwise known as Institute for Social Research (Institut fur Sozialforschung), a movement founded in 1932 by Max Horkheimer, Karl Wittfogel, Friedrich Pollock, and Leo Lowenthal, and funded by Felix Weil, which later included Theodor Adorno, Erich Fromm, Herbert Marcuse, Walter Benjamin, Karl Korsch and Frank Borkenau. Officially, the Frankfurt school was attached to the Frankfurt University. The abundant academic and publicistic output of the school covered multifarious domains of humanities, science, philosophy, empirical sociology, musicology, social psychology, history of the Far East, the soviet economy, psychoanalysis, theory of literature and law. Habermas took critical theory in a positive direction from that of a sheer social

critique to that of a theory of ransformation of public sphere, discourse ethics, and communicative action oriented towards achieving a rationally motivated consensus. Habermas' attempt to reorient critical theory is based on strong epistemological foundations given by Kant, Hegel and Marx.

10.2 THE CONCEPTUAL PROBLEM OF OTHER MINDS

Thomas Nagel once wrote:

The interesting problem of other minds is not the epistemological problem… It is the conceptual problem, how I can understand the attribution of mental states to others. (1986: 19-20)

Bilgrami agrees (1992). Some philosophers go further than Nagel and insist that the conceptual is the fundamental problem; others see little in it (Hyslop 1995). How one understands this problem is a matter of some contention (Gomes 2011). What all agree is that the problem is associated with the work of Wittgenstein, and in particular section 302 from the Philosophical Investigations:

If one has to imagine someone else's pain on the model of one's own, this is none too easy a thing to do: for I have to imagine pain which I do not feel on the model of pain which I do feel. That is, what I have to do is not simply to make a transition in imagination from one place of pain to another. As, from the pain in the hand to pain in the arm. For I am not to imagine that I feel pain in some region of his body….

Malcolm understands 302 as providing an "external attack" on the possibility of a private language (contrast the argument of §1.1). That is to say, 302 is designed to show the difficulty that one runs into if one begins with the idea that one knows from one's own case what it is to feel pain: one risks conceptual solipsism. [12] Colin McGinn has

suggested that the problem raised in 302 can be thought of in the following way: if I learn through introspection what it is, say, to be in pain, then there is a "a way of thinking about my experiences which (a) only I have and (b) enters into my understanding of the concept in question" (1984: 127). The way I learn about the object of my thought here is as something that has a "distinctively first-person element" from which it seems impossible to prescind (ibid). This explains why I can make a transition from the pain in my hand to the pain in my arm, but it is "none too easy a thing" to make a transition from a pain that I feel in my hand to a pain that you feel somewhere in your body (for a very different interpretation of the 302, see Kripke 1982, Postscript).

Some associate the conceptual problem here with the problem of coming to have mental concepts that are completely general. Evans has proposed that to have a thought about an object to the effect that it is F (consider: Tom is angry) requires the exercise of the following two capacities:

One being the capacity to think of x, which could be equally exercised in thoughts about x to the effect that it is G or H; and the other being a conception of what it is to be F, which could be equally exercised in thoughts about other individuals, to the effect that they are F. (1982: 75)

Evans labels this the "generality constraint" (Ibid, ftnt. 15), and it has been thought to raise a problem for thoughts about mental states if one takes it that one comes to know what a mental state is by inward reflection alone. The problem, reflected in 302, is how to understand the extension to others of a concept acquired in this way.

P.F. Strawson in effect acknowledges the generality constraint when he writes:

It is a necessary condition of one's ascribing states of consciousness, experiences, to oneself, in the way that one does, that one should also ascribe them, or be prepared to ascribe them, to others who are not oneself. (1959: 99)

Strawson considers how it is that one ascribes mental states to others and concludes that one cannot do this if we insist on divorcing mental states from the behaving body. Strawson claims that we must acknowledge what he calls the "primitiveness of the concept of a person", the concept of a type of entity such that both predicates ascribing states of consciousness and predicates ascribing corporeal characteristics…are equally applicable…. (1959: 101–2)

While many will accept that the conceptual problem is the first problem we encounter in connection with others, others go further and claim that once one addresses the conceptual problem there is no room for the epistemological one. This is because our way of thinking and talking about mind will have application to others built into it from the start. It has been pointed out that to say what is required for grasp of a concept is not yet to show that that concept is instantiated. It can be said in reply that it is a particular proposed solution to this conceptual problem that may be thought to make the epistemological question otiose. As we can see with Strawson's proposal, the idea is that we break down the gap between mind and behavior and understand what one experiences when one sees another's behavior as itself requiring mental state attributions to the other. Some can only see in this proposal a retreat into behaviorism. Others, however, insist that this is not the case—at least if behaviorism is understood as a reductionist thesis. It is not reductionist to hold that behavior is expressive of another's mental life; genuinely expressive behavior is held to be distinguishable from 'mere behavior' (cf. Austin 1946).

McDowell claims to echo Strawson's work when he writes in this connection that we must regain the concept of a human being from what he takes to be a "philosophically generated" concept of a human body (McDowell 1982: 469; cf. Cook 1969). Some take issue with McDowell over whether the latter is only a philosophically generated concept (Wright 1998), but it is hard to deny that the move from the former concept to the latter is deeply significant.

The Naturalist Turn

Alvin Goldman (2006) has distinguished a descriptive from a normative epistemological problem of other minds. Section 1 and section 2 were largely concerned with the latter; this section will concern itself with the former. The descriptive problem is associated with what Goldman terms mind reading (or mentalizing). Mind reading involves the capacity to think about mind and is a second or higher order activity that involves representing or conceptualizing others (as well as oneself) as "loci of mental life" (Goldman 2006: 3). While many species of animal may be thought to have minds, only some will be capable of representing another as having minds. Questions of justification and conceptual difficulty are not of concern to the descriptive theorist, nor are metaphysical questions concerning the nature of mind; what concerns the descriptive epistemologist is how what she says measures up with what is being learned in the empirical disciplines of developmental psychology and neuroscience. Work on the descriptive problem is developing at a rapid pace and, while at first attention in all the relevant disciplines was concentrated on two prominent accounts of mind reading—theory-theory and simulation theory—a variety of accounts now exist which challenge both of these accounts (see §3.2).

3.1 Theory-Theory and Simulation Theory

Theory-theory has its roots in a paper by Premack and Woodruff (1978), which argued that certain problem-solving behavior observed in chimpanzees should be taken as evidence that they possess a theory of mind, as evidence that they are able to make predictions about the behavior of others that impute to them unobservable mental states. Premack and Woodruff take this imputation to be a rather primitive and unsophisticated reaction to the observation of certain behavior, so natural in both humans and chimpanzees that it would take an effort to suppress it.

In their commentaries on this paper (1978), Dennett, Bennett, and Harman pointed out that further experimentation was required in order to determine whether a creature possesses the concept of belief (which concept is required in order to have thoughts about another's mental states). In particular, it would need to be shown that the creature possesses the concept of false belief. Wimmer and Perner (1983) devised a test that purported to show just that. The original test was carried out with normally developing human children and taken to show that the capacity to represent false beliefs is present in 4 to 6 year olds, but absent in 3 year olds. Two different proposals have been put forward to explain this developmental change. One proposal (see, e.g., Gopnik & Wellman 1992) suggests that the child possesses a naïve psychological theory that it uses to explain and predict the behavior of others and that gets revised by the child over time. The other proposal (see, e.g., Leslie & Roth 1993) suggests a native, domain-specific (or modular) mechanism that matures at a certain point as what explains the child's success with the false-belief test.

This approach to understanding how we attribute mental states to others has several notable features: (i) it dovetails with the dominant approach to solving the knowledge-of-other-minds problem as it proposes that our belief here is the result of postulating mental states as the best explanation of observed behavior; (ii) it dovetails with a functionalist account of mind; and (iii) it can solve the asymmetry problem, as some hold the child comes to attribute mental states to herself on the same model as she does others (Gopnik 2009). All three features of this theory have come under criticism. This approach has also been challenged by further empirical work that purports to show that infants as young as 15 months have the concept of false belief (Onishi & Baillargeon 2005). One suggestion to accommodate this data is that we postulate two systems: one that operates in the infant and that is fast, efficient, inflexible and non-normative, and another that develops later (and operates in tandem with the earlier one in the mature human) and that is effortful, inflexible, normative and language-dependent (Apperly and

Butterfill 2009; for a good summary of this work and a critique of it, see Jacob forthcoming).

Robert Gordon, Jane Heal and Alvin Goldman propose an alternative to the theory-theory account of how to understand the attribution of mental states to others. Heal identifies in theory-theory a scientific motivation that runs roughshod over important differences between human beings and the rest of the natural world. While theory-theorists extend a style of understanding from its application in connection with the latter to the former, Heal and others propose that we come to understand what the other persons are thinking "from the inside", that we "exploit the fact that we are or have minds" (Heal 1998 [2003: 84]). Heal is particularly concerned with the question, What further thoughts will a person have given what thoughts I already know her to have? (Heal (1998) also traces out further questions about others that may concern us.) Gordon (1986, 1995) insists that simulation theory must be formulated in such a way as to avoid reliance on both introspection and inference from oneself to the other. Rather than imagine what I would do in your situation, he suggests that I imagine being you in your situation. In this way, thinking about others is taken to parallel understanding of one's own future behavior: one predicts what one will do by imagining or pretending that the world is a certain way. Simulation theory has its roots in Verstehen theories favored by sociologists and historians such as Collingwood and Dilthey (as well as work by Lipps on empathy; for an overview here see Stueber 2018). Simulation theory was thought to be given neurophysiological backing by the discovery of mirror neurons in the pre-motor cortex and in Broca's area of the human brain that are activated both when an individual acts and when she observes the actions of another (Gallese and Goldman 1998; Gallese 2001; Rizzolatti et al. 1996). (For an overview of the different versions of simulation theory that have been advocated see Barlassina and Gordon 2017.)

3.2 The Second Person and Person Model Theory

Over the years theory-theory and simulation theory have moved closer towards each other, giving rise to various hybrid accounts of how it is that we attribute minds to others. But there are those who challenge both theories and any hybrid versions that they have spawned. One such challenge arises from Gallagher & Zahavi 2008 who urge that we cast aside both third-person (theory) and first-person (simulation) approaches, and concentrate instead on second-person interaction. (In its development in Gallagher's work, this approach has come to be known as "interaction theory".) Influenced by work in phenomenology and embodied cognition, Gallagher and Zahavi propose that our attribution of mental states to others is the result of perception of and reaction to behavior understood as expressive of mental life. Furthermore, they suggest that the activation of mirror neurons be understood as serving action or response preparation (rather than as supporting simulation, cf. §3.1). Drawing on the work of developmental psychologists such as Meltzoff, Trevarthen, and Hobson, they identify two forms of intersubjectivity: a primary form identifiable in early infancy that involves a differential response to persons and inanimate objects; and a secondary form when the behavior of persons is interpreted "in terms of their goals and intentions set in contextualized situations" (Gallagher & Zahavi 2008: 190). In addition to primary and secondary intersubjectivity, and at the point when the child has language, it is suggested that a more nuanced way of understanding others becomes possible through the development of communicative and narrative practices (Hutto 2008; Gallagher & Hutto 2008). Gallagher and Zahavi reject inferential accounts of how we know others in favor of a direct perceptual one, and they understand behavior (e.g., gesture, facial expressions, contextualized actions) to be constitutive of mental life. Importantly, they point out that one shouldn't conceive of interpersonal understanding as if it was merely and primarily a question of bridging the gap between two isolated subjects. Interpersonal understanding occurs in a context and through "our shared engagement in the common world" (Gallagher & Zahavi 2008: 190; cf. Gurwitsch 1977 [1979]).

Notes

This work aims to move us away from an overly-intellectualized way of thinking of other minds and to turn our attention to the world that we live and act in with others. The emphasis here is less on individual beliefs and desires than in shared intentions and goals. As Gallagher says in one place, "social cognition is often nothing more than…social interaction" (2008: 541).

Interaction theory can be seen as an extension of enactivist theories of perception that understand perception as a highly complex action-oriented phenomenon, incorporating both meaning and emotion: to see an object is to see it as affording me opportunity for action, and this opportunity is taken to be part of how I make sense of the world and what gives the world value for me (cf. Clarke, Noe, Varela et al). The extension of this idea allows that social interactions also constitute for me "novel domains of possibilities for sense making" (De Jaegher 2009). To see the other person is to see her as affording interaction; in this regard, direct perception is direct enactive perception. Interactionist theorists have suggested concrete proposals for empirical work in psychology and neuroscience in the hopes of moving this research away from what they see as individualism and methodological solipsism (De Jaegher, DiPaulo, & Gallagher 2010). Rather than taking individual agents to be constitutive of social interaction, these interaction theorists take them to be constituted by their interaction with others.

Person model theory challenges theory-theory (TT) and simulation theory (ST)—as well as interaction theory (IT; Newen 2015, Newen & Schlicht 2009). Person model theory finds certain limitations in each of the theories that it opposes. In the place of the two forms of intersubjectivity recommended by Gallagher and Zahavi, person theory suggests that the infant works with a "non-conceptual person-schema" which develops—through the combined work of observation and narrative—into "conceptualized person-images". Thus, it is proposed that the understanding of persons is a step-by-step process of enrichment, central to which is the acceptance of a multiplicity of strategies (TT, ST, and IT among them). Which strategy is deployed is dependent upon such

things as context, how similar or different the other is from oneself, whether the understanding is of an emotion or a propositional attitude, and the complexity of the mental state. The idea of the deployment of a multiplicity of strategies is not unique to Person Theory. Gallagher and Fiebich (forthcoming) argue for what they call a "pluralist approach" to the understanding of others, drawing on inference, simulation, direct perception, and/or interaction—depending on the situation (cf. Nichols & Stich 2003). What this work highlights is how much may be involved when it comes to understanding others.

10.3 CHARACTERISTIC TRAITS OF THE FRANKFURT SCHOOL

Though the origins of critical social theory/critical theory were Marxian, the Frankfurt theorists did not treat Marxism as the sole contender for the role of a critique of the society. They incorporated many non-Marxist strands of thought like that of Kant, Hegel, Freud, Mead, Durkheim, and Austin. The Frankfurt School was critical of politics. The critical theory was in agreement with Lukacs and Korsch regarding reification as the `epitome of the problems of the modern world.' The critical theorists took a broader view as affecting all strata of the society.

Dialectic of Enlightenment (1947; 2002) written jointly by Horkheimer and Adorno dwelt upon the travails of the period after Enlightenment which was expected to bring about drastic changes in the entire fabric of the society. But, reason which ascended the throne of arbiter during the Enlightenment, became more and more instrumental and great political and social renaissance expected of it failed to fructify. This was a crushing disappointment for the staunch supporters of the Enlightenment. Adorno and Horkheimer also lamented the rapid increase in industrialization with less and less emphasis on values. The society which was envisioned as free and fair with the reason at the helm gave way to a society ruled by science and technology which called itself value-neutral. Horkheimer was particularly critical of viewing social sciences from a scientific angle because he felt that natural sciences aimed only at the end-result, whereas social sciences were highly

conscious of the means of observation as historical. The point of variance with Marxism stemmed from Horkheimer's acceptance of the functional value of theory and its autonomy. In order to avoid reductionism, Horkheimer was against the traditional pairing of concepts like `phenomena' and `essence', `subject' and `object', `base' and `superstructure'. Hence, he emphasized the need for constant mediation.

The Frankfurt theorists were apprehensive about over-emphasis on logical necessity and technological rigour because both can abet authoritarian tendencies as was the case with religious authority till the dawn of the Enlightenment. Horkheimer foresaw totalitarian symptoms in the scientific-instrumental approach of the epoch sans any humane face. Critical theorists indicted the mass media for its destructive influence on culture, art, and the society. They followed Nietzsche in criticizing sensus communis. They also bitterly criticized the social apathy, which allowed professional bureaucracy to manipulate the masses. This applied equally to both Fascist and Communist totalitarian regimes and Western democracies. Aesthetic and nomological disciplines accommodate varied interpretations whereas science aims at structured explanations without any room for any preponderance. The Frankfurt theorists were not in favour of stringent scientistic framework in social sciences, which emphasized the methodology of the sciences and treated human activity as observable phenomena. Critical theorists argued that excessive objectivation of human activities could lead to a controlled environment which could be manipulated to suit the needs of a chosen few. At one stage, science became the measuring frame for even social activities as the only form of legitimation. Science abstracted knowledge from society and created an idea that it was independent of any social grounding. Lezsek Kolakowski cites Horkheimer:

Perception cannot be isolated from its social genesis; both it and its objects are social and historical products. The individual observer is passive vis-a-vis the object, but the society as a whole is an active element in the process, unconsciously so. The facts ascertained are partly determined by the collective praxis of human beings who have devised

the methods used to observe the facts. Objects are partly the product of concepts and of collective praxis.

Critical theory viewed society not as a natural necessity thrust upon the people. Rather, it viewed society as a mosaic of subjective, objective, and inter-subjective modes of understanding. The dynamic social processes are not irrevocable and can be altered. Critical theory scrutinized social categories. In the words of Horkheimer:

Critical thought is motivated today by the endeavour genuinely to transcend the situation of tension, to remove the opposition between the purposiveness, spontaneity, and rationality of the individual and the labour conditions on which the society is based. It implies that man is in conflict with himself until he recovers this identity.

Unlike other theories, critical theory acknowledged the possibility of its own judgements being coloured by established beliefs of the society in which it is housed. But it also emphasizes the power of reason to critically reflect upon the customs, manners, and beliefs prevalent in the society. Habermas applies this trait in the debate aimed at norm formation. Critical theory views social progress as the end of the intellectual progress. This would strip the social life of its quasinatural `external' character and makes it an inalienable part of the lifeworld. For this to become a reality, subject-object-society relationship must be redefined. Critical theory is a critique of the existing society in the Marxian sense, a tirade against marketoriented capitalistic political system which was perpetrated in the name of democracy. Even in democracies which hold the best hopes for human freedom and expression, monetary considerations are synonymous with success. People seek external sources to quench their thirst for recognition and affirmation of identity. The Frankfurt School accepts the need for material resources. But its critique is about the institutionalization of the purposive rational action as the most coveted form of social action in liberal democracies. Frankfurt school opposes the manipulating tendencies of the market, which are rampant in liberal democracies.

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

1) What are the characteristic traits of the Frankfurt school?

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2) What is the significance of the term critical in critical theory?

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10.4 CRITICAL THEORY: INFLUENCE OF GERMAN IDEALISM

The critical theorists were strongly influenced by the German idealists thinkers such as Kant, Hegel, and Marx are discussed. Kant's philosophical program was to crown philosophy as the Emperor of sciences and so he ventured into an analysis of the cognitive faculty. He sought to make philosophy the highest arbiter, by mapping the limits of reason. By laying down the rules governing the most fundamental function of understanding Kant superseded other disciplines, at least in his ingenuity, by making philosophy ontologically prior. Habermas, who labelled Kant maitre pensieur, i.e., the magician of the false paradigm, criticized Kant for arrogating authority to philosophy, as if only philosophy had the sole right to probe into the operations of the mental faculty and draw the limits of knowledge. Habermas conceded Richard Rorty's claim that the role of philosophy could only be that of a stand-in interpreter and social critique. The Kantian enterprise of defining the limits of pure and practical reason and aesthetic judgment redefined the subject-object relation. What Kant did was undoubtedly a critical analysis of the traits of the cognitive faculty with the intention of revamping the whole system. Kant's critical inquiry into the structures of

understanding benefitted all disciplines. But, philosophy became more speculative. Kant's own schemata became a double-edged weapon in turning philosophy against itself. In this light, Hegel's critique is centred upon the monological primacy accorded to the subject, by Kant, even though the object was not relegated to the sidelines. Hegel felt that this would restrict the creativity of the faculty of reason. Kant's emphasis on the subject led to transcendental philosophy. Instead, Hegel suggested "immanent critique" which involves constant revision of concepts with emphasis on continuous refinement. 'This path of alternating criticism and amendment is the `dialectical' way of the Phenomenology of Spirit, where each position establishes itself as superior to its predecessor purely through the force of argument.' Marx criticized Hegel for neglecting the social factors in the conception of the subject, experience, and knowledge in which errors are viewed as merely intellectual. The maladies afflicting a society have to be eliminated successively and each stage has its residue of contradictions. Marx's contention was that the prognosis and diagnosis of the problem should be found in social reality. Habermas writes as follows:

The theory gives an account both of the content in which it itself arises (its Entstehungseusammenhang), along with all the inadequacies of existing conceptions and reality, and of its context of effective application (its Vervendungszusammenhang) as a guide for changing what exists.

Habermas appreciated the importance of Kant's critical philosophy, categorical imperative, practical reason and an understanding of the role played by the external world in the knowledge episode. For Hegel, the transition of consciousness which includes the social is from a lesser to a more advanced stage. `Philosophy only arrives at a retrospective understanding'. In the famous image of the preface to the Philosophy of Right, Hegel writes: "The Owl of Minerva flies only at the dusk." Thus, Hegel subsumed social critique in his dialectic. The reason would finally deliver the society from all contradictions. For Marx, unmasking of the irrationality imbedded in the society was the prime task and

transformation ensued only in its aftermath. For Hegel, thought must be reconciled with a rational reality. For Marx, thought should unmask existent irrationality and guide its transformation.' Marxism has to evaluate both levels of contradictions; in the historical realm in the society as well as the conceptual framework of the individuals. Kortian says:

If it tries to abandon the first level and to develop a `science' of society which would make no reference to conceptions and aspirations as integral to or partially constitutive of our institutions, then it just becomes just another would be positive science...

Habermas disagrees with Marx on setting aside theories after a critique and espouses an approach, which is reflective and evaluative. Thus, he turns to Kant and Hegel. Habermas charts a divergent course by advocating plurality of interests, which prompts knowledge claims. His transcendental inquiry leads to a theory of communicative competence, which underlies an unadulterated urge to communicate. Hence, language becomes the paradigm. Garbis Kortian calls critical theory a metacritique because of its critique of presuppositions, even its own. The `meta' is valid only if the critique does not fasten itself to any absolute standpoints. Hegel's enterprise was to deconstruct the structure of presuppositions. Kortian says, `positive concepts which take over words from ordinary language epitomize these presuppositions which, according to Hegel, are so `well-known' precisely because they are not `known'.' This knowledge is `phenomenal knowledge' (erscheinendes Wissen), which is the object of Phenomenology. Hegel, in stressing the speculative experience as the experience of absolute knowledge, criticized Kant for treating knowledge as the tool for arriving at the truth. Hegel claimed that the medium or instrument of knowing incorporated into the process could not be abstracted from it. Hegel wrote, "... Or if, representing knowledge as a medium, we learn the law of its refraction, it is likewise of no avail to substract the refraction from the result..." In Hegel's critique of Kant, a distinct metacritical moment is palpable and his speculative experience is far more incisive though culminating in the

cul de sac of the absolute knowledge. `In speculative thinking, the negative moment of reflection belongs to the content itself, and is the positive, both as its immanent movement and determination and as the whole of this moment and determination.' While the phenomenal understanding processes external data, the speculative experience internally scrutinizes the content and the passive subject-object relationship is abandoned for a dynamic interface in the historical manifestation of reason. The Aufhebung of the difference between the phenomenal and the truth produces speculative experience. Truth is the philosophical knowledge, which is the self-reflective reconstruction of the phenomenal knowledge objectified by the transcendental-absolute concept. This is the absolute knowledge. But Marx's polemic against Hegel led to the dissociation of the whole project and also the project of the whole; i.e. `the moment of recognition and appropriation of (anerkunnung and annignung) the phenomenalized totality of the absolute concept in its otherness.'

The Frankfurt school gladly accepted the metacritique. Horkheimer added the social dimension to the Hegelian dialectics. Adorno especially employed metacritique ruthlessly to denounce any attempt at foundational enterprise in philosophy. He was unsparing of Hegel for capitulating his dialectic in the Absolute. For Adorno, the dialectic is unending and its function is to continue unearthing falsity which alone is the unprevaricated truth. Horkheimer and Adorno called such a process materialism, which denotes the nexus between the dialectic and the socio-historic relationships. These relationships serve as millstones around the neck and prevent emancipation as envisioned in the Enlightenment. Hegel attributes this `pre-supposition of the unachieved end' to Kantian `ought to be' or duty (Sollen). Critical theory envisages emancipation as a product of both socio-historical reality and the subjective perseverance of the human understanding.

The introspection, the retrospection, and the deintellectualization of the theory and the deobjectivization of the praxis were at the top of the agenda for the Frankfurt theorists. The method recommended by

Habermas was practical discourse, which propagates dialogical-dialectical understanding. Habermas also introduces the concept of interest into the process of rationalization. This interest is the one, which furthers the appetite for emancipation. Enlightenment confronts the problems of reason, dogmatism, and decision. The will to decide reasonably sets in motion the interest in emancipation.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

1) Explain the contributions of Kant, Hegel and Marx to the epistemological foundations of critical theory and how they are related to each other.

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2) Elucidate Habermas' critique of Kant, Hegel and Marx.

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10.5 KNOWLEDGE AS SOCIAL PRAXIS

Habermas accepted, in principle, Horkheimer's and Adorno's critique of the Enlightenment reason for fostering technical interests intent on domination. Reason, which was considered to be the acme of emancipatory power, lost its supremacy to the methodology of the sciences. Reason and science became increasingly identified with each other. For Marx, any social critique could only be practical with the intent of abolishing false consciousness thereby facilitating social emancipation. Reason, being the bedrock of communication, performs a

meaning generating function. A consensus on mutually accepted conventions is imperative to understand meanings attributed to actions. Habermas accepts the idea of praxis bereft of technical stigma fastened to it but comprising of social aims not infused extrinsically but gained by virtue of its own rationality. In this context, Richard Rorty says, "Either all justifications, whether in matters of knowledge or morals, appeals to social practices or to illusory foundations." Social practice, for Habermas, is the starting point of any inquiry. It is classified into labour (purposive rational action) and interaction (communicative action).

While technical and practical interests drive both natural sciences as well as the historical-hermeneutical sciences, respectively, the reason which operates can never be termed neutral because of the guiding aims of their activity. While the former is identified with activity that involves domination and achieving the desired ends, the latter is linked to preserving and enlarging the domain of understanding. Habermas argues that interests drive all cognitive activities. This interest operates in three spheres of 'media' – work, language, and authority corresponding to the natural, historical-hermeneutical, and social sciences respectively. In self-reflection, interest and cognition coincide and 'emancipative reason' takes shape. The irony of how science has become the paradigm for all knowledge claims in a stark reversal of the Kantian project led Habermas to distinguish between scientific temper and scientific method. The emphasis on purposive activity in a capitalistic society leads to an understanding of social practice as a system of commercial exchange and not human interaction. Politics becomes a pawn in the hands of the market aided by technological forms of control. Thus, science and technology becomes an ideology wedded to the technical model of social control. Human activity loses the element of moral autonomy. Habermas argues that only a return to 'praxis' in the form of communicative action could lead to lessened social control.

10.6 COMMUNICATIVE RATIONALITY

Scientific-technical or purposive-instrumental rationality revels in discovering the secrets of the external world and helps humans establish

a mastery over it. Thus, it becomes a purpose-oriented and goal-directed rationality. Communicative rationality is concerned with transactions in the sphere of exchange of thoughts, ideas, and meaning-forming activity, which is the bedrock of any learning process, which instrumental rationality does not take cognizance of. Communicative rationality aims at social rationalization, social integration, and socialization. These are protracted discursive, justificatory and redeemable processes in which arriving at a conclusion is not the culmination. Purposive rationality is concerned with truth claims. Though the reflective element in the scientific-technical activity cannot be doubted it is affirmed only in the success or the efficiency of the action performed. In the case of communicative action, success or failure of the action is immaterial if the process of communication is authored under the canopy of reflection. What is coveted is the potential for unconstrained consensus purely based on the force of rational argumentation. Communicative rationality is situated upon the reflective competence of the interacting subjects to justify and defend a thesis through the force of reason. This presupposes a common-shared lifeworld of meanings, which acts as the transcendental binding force. Purposive rationality takes the lifeworld for granted ignoring its historical situatedness while communicative rationality derives its strength from intersubjective communicative action.

Habermas criticizes Kant for dividing the domain of knowledge into science, morality, and art and anointing pure reason, practical reason, and judgment to govern respective domains. Though Habermas accepts the inherent relation between various concepts of reason, ironically, he had to resort to demarcating reason into purposive rational and communicative rational. It becomes imperative for Habermas to separate them because science applies a different standard of rationality and it would condemn moral-ethical and aesthetic to the irrational. Since social sciences have to explain social processes that are invariably associated with human activity, the method of validation of claims is possible only through argumentation, which Habermas describes as the systematic way of adducing reasons and grounds for the justification of validity claims.

Habermas, in order to distinguish the domains of science and social sciences recommends theoretical discourse in the case of the former and practical discourse in the case of the latter. As Habermas reiterates, his idea of practical discourse is not identical to moral discourse but the validation of normative validity claims, i.e. not only what is right but also what makes it right. This is where justification, discursivity, and redeemability of the validity claims surface.

This makes the process of argumentation rational. Another reason for Habermas to choose argumentative technique for expounding his theory of communicative action is its pragmatic character. A formal linguistic framework is required in an `ideal speech situation', which presupposes linguistic competence of the interlocutors. Habermas distinguishes the archaic from modern world-views and forms of understanding associated with them. The modern interpreters are prejudiced when analyzing the archaic worldviews. Habermas claims that though the archaic world-views cannot be completely divested of any rationality, the claims were not always rationally articulated. He says that the modern understanding is far more dialogical and accommodative. There is little or no separation between culture, religion, science and various symbolic practices in the archaic understanding. There is a need for demythologization and denaturalization of the society and only then would socialization be possible.

The concept of validity claims and their justification is possible only in a society with shared meanings with common linguistic framework. The problems of truth and morality have to be released from the narrow perspective of justification on survival instinct and selfpreservation. Dialogue or argumentation is not possible in an atmosphere foreboding violence or anarchy. The term society itself symbolizes a rational community with mutually agreed upon laws to be administered for various social acts and conventions to be adhered. The transition to language from symbolism must have been prompted by a need to communicate. The natural expressive impulse that manifested in various

pictorial and other symbolic artefacts must have been a substitute for the undeveloped linguistic apparatus.

10.7 HABERMAS' EMPHASIS ON ARGUMENTATION

Habermas classifies social action into four types. They are:

1) Teleological action
2) Dramaturgical action
3) Normatively regulated action and
4) communicative action.

Teleological action is result-oriented. Dramaturgical action is expressive in nature. Normatively regulated action is governed by norms. Communicative action leads to consensus through a rational discourse. Communicative action stresses the need for asserting validity claims concerning subjective, objective and intersubjective spheres. Validity claims typically involve truthfulness for the subjective, truth for the objective and rightness for the intersubjective spheres. In order to strengthen communicative action, Habermas stipulates comprehensibility, discursivity, redeemability and justifiability as the constituent elements of a debate aimed at achieving understanding and consensus. Habermas' method of argumentation for norm formation presupposes:

1) a competence on the part of the participants

2) a will to engage in a fair discourse

3) receptive to others views and welcoming criticism

4) readiness to alter one's views when proved untenable

5) conscious reflective discursive enterprise This in nutshell is an "ideal speech situation".

The justication for any argumentation lies in the discursivity and redeemability of validity claims. Habermas, after proceeding from the communicative action, which establishes understanding, aims at providing emancipatory thrust with the help of a communicative ethics, which is the boundary condition of a practical discourse. Moral-ethical aspects are problematized only in a practical discourse.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

1) Explain how knowledge could be equated with social praxis.

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2) Describe communicative rationality.

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10.8 LET US SUM UP

• This unit attempts to provide an understanding of how Habermas' was influenced by the German idealists such as Kant, Hegel and Marx in constructing epistemological scaffolding for his vast philosophical enterprise.

• In this unit, Habermas' major contributions in the form of communicative reason, communicative action, rational argumentation, metacritique and consensus are analyzed.

10.9 KEY WORDS

Critical Social Theory/Critical Theory: a critique of existing social and political structures

Praxis: socio-cultural practices

Consensus: agreement

Communicative Rationality: reason aimed at achieving understanding and consensus

Purposive-Instrumental Rationality: reason aimed at achieving success

Lifeworld: the world that we live, understand through language and experience

10.10 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1. What are the characteristic traits of the Frankfurt school?
2. What is the significance of the term critical in critical theory?
3. Explain the contributions of Kant, Hegel and Marx to the epistemological foundations of critical theory and how they are related to each other.
4. Elucidate Habermas' critique of Kant, Hegel and Marx.
5. Explain how knowledge could be equated with social praxis.
6. Describe communicative rationality.

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10.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check your Progress 1

1. Critical theory was para-Marxist in its outlook but freely incorporated ideas of Kant, Hegel, Freud, Nietzsche, Weber, and others. The Frankfurt school was critical of the politics of hatred and conformity. Critical theory identified reification as the `epitome of the problems of the modern world.' Critical theory is also a critique of the existing society in the Marxian sense, a tirade against market-oriented capitalistic political system which was perpetrated in the name of democracy.

2. Critical theory viewed society not as a natural necessity thrust upon the people. Rather, it viewed society as a lifeworld, a mosaic of subjective, objective, and intersubjective social processes. The social

processes are not irrevocable and can be altered. Critical theory critically evaluated society by analyzing its categories. Unlike other theories, critical theory acknowledged the possibility of its own judgements being coloured by established beliefs of the society in which it is housed. But it also believes in the critical power of reason to rise above and scrutinize the customs, manners, and beliefs prevalent in the society.

Answers to Check your Progress 2

1. Kant performed a critical analysis of the limits of the cognitive faculty with the intention of revamping the whole system of philosophy. What Kant did benefitted all disciplines because his inquiry was critical. Kant reconciled empiricism and rationanalism in his critical philosophy. Hegel's critique of Kant is centred upon Kant's emphasis on the primacy of the subject. This severely restricted the creativity of the mind. Kant's emphasis on the subject led to a transcendental philosophy. Instead, Hegel suggested "immanent critique" which involves constant revision of concepts with emphasis on continuous refinement through a dialectical process of history. Marx criticized Hegel for neglecting the social factors in the conception of the subject, experience, and knowledge in which errors are viewed as merely intellectual. The maladies afflicting a society have to be eliminated successively and each stage has its residue of contradictions. Marx's contention was that the prognosis and diagnosis of the problem should be found in social reality.

2. Habermas criticizes Kant for unilaterally dividing the domain of knowledge into science, morality, and art and anointing pure reason, practical reason, and judgment to govern their respective domains. Habermas differs from Hegel who subsumes social critique in his dialectic in which reason finally delivers the society from all contradictions. Social praxis cannot be a purely speculative metaphysical enterprise. According to Habermas, Marxism fails to evaluate both levels of contradictions; in the historical realm in the society as well as the conceptual framework of the individuals.

Answers to Check your Progress 3

1. Social practice, for Habermas, is the starting point of any inquiry. He divides social practice into labour (purposive rational action) and interaction (communicative action). While technical and practical interests drive both natural sciences as well as the historicalhermeneutical sciences, respectively, the reason which operates can never be termed neutral because of the guiding aims of their activity. While the former indulges in activity that involves domination and achieving the desired ends, the latter engages in preserving and enlarging the domain of understanding among the humans to improve communication. Habermas argues that interests drive all cognitive activities. This interest operates in three spheres of 'media' – work, language, and authority corresponding to the natural, historical-hermeneutical, and social sciences respectively. In self-reflection, interest and cognition coincide and it is in this realm that 'emancipative reason' takes shape.

2. Communicative rationality is concerned with transactions in the sphere of exchange of thoughts, ideas, and meaning-forming activity, which is the bedrock of any learning process, which instrumental rationality does not take cognizance of. The aim of communicative rationality is social rationalization, social integration, and socialization. These are protracted discursive, justificatory and redeemable processes in which arriving at a conclusion is not the culmination. Communicative rationality is situated upon the reflective competence of the interacting subjects to justify and defend a thesis through the force of reason.

UNIT 11: THEORIES OF TRUTH

STRUCTURE

11.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this Unit is to introduce the theories of truth, the core concept in the theory of knowledge. The words 'truth' and 'true' are much used, misused and misunderstood word. Though the concept appears to be simple, when we go deep into it we will feel its mysterious nature. The questions, "What is truth?" and "How to know the truth?" are as ancient as man himself. In this unit we will try to make a survey of the theories of truth that the philosophers have put forward and to examine their merits and demerits. It is the duty of every human being to continue the quest to understand the importance of the concept of truth and to approach it with owe and respect. Thus by the end of this Unit you should be able to:

- to have a glimpse of the complexity of the concept "truth";

- to understand the importance of truth.

- to have a better understanding of the nature and criteria of truth;

- to get a general view of the different theories of truth; and

- to evaluate the theories you come across in contemporary reading.

11.1 INTRODUCTION

In court, witnesses swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. They are expected to know what truth means and in some sense they do. At the same time the concept 'truth' is abstract, ambiguous and mysterious. The meaning of the word "truth" that concerns philosophers is something akin to what a witness assumes in the court room to report what he/she believes to be true in statements or propositions. This is the sense of the word that matters most in our everyday lives. Voltaire says that we may define truth humanly speaking but we should always wait for a better definition because there is no final definition or one which is definitive for all times. It is a difficult task to define truth for the following reasons: first, truth is an extremely basic concept.

It is difficult to engage in any theoretical inquiry without employing it. You cannot even argue over a theory of truth without using the concept, because to question a theory is to question its truth, and to endorse a theory is to endorse it as true. We cannot get behind the concept of truth as we can with other concepts. Secondly, truth is deeply connected to belief. When witnesses assert or endorse what they believe, it implies that they are reporting what they believe to be true. Thirdly, truth is also connected to knowledge: one doesn't know that a particular person committed the crime unless he actually committed it. Truth is the central concept of logic. Fourthly, it is also related to another mysterious concept, reality. To speak the truth is to speak of reality as it is. Truth is interconnected with many concepts and it is very important to understand this interconnection if we want to know what truth is. Knowledge is the recognition of truth. To recognize falsity for truth is a false knowledge. A belief in the truth of a false statement is a mistaken belief. If knowledge

excludes all falsity, then certainty becomes essential for knowledge. And if certainty is unattainable it follows that truth and knowledge are also unattainable.

Philosophers have been driven to a conception of knowledge so rigorous that there is very little that we can claim to know. But to say that there is no truth is to neglect everything valuable, for what is the use of the good and the beautiful if there were no truths about them? We should admit that absolute certainty or truth is unattainable. Even scientists do not entitle their findings as final or definitive. However, we should continue our search and be ready to abandon the prevailing beliefs when they are proved to be false. We must learn to doubt and then to believe all over again; or, to believe without believing absolutely. How much can we doubt? Skepticism may be defined as the claim that none of our beliefs is objectively justified as more probably true than its negation. According to the skeptics the search for truth is hopeless and hence every opinion is as good as the others. Skepticism expresses the concern that our beliefs may not accurately correspond to the world in it. It poses a problem for every theory of truth. A certain degree of doubt is natural and motivates us to search for the truth. But in our daily life we are more believers than doubters. For instance, we believe that our doctor knows how to cure us; we believe that the pilot of our plane knows how to fly it.

11.2 THE NATURE AND CRITERIA OF TRUTH

Theories of truth attempt to give satisfactory answers to the following questions: "What is truth?" and "How to know the truth?" We want to know whether propositions or beliefs are true or false. To deal with propositional truth we can take either the definitional route and define "is true" as qualifying the proposition, or the criterial route and justify the application of "is true" to the proposition. What is the nature of truth? This is similar to the question, what is the underlying nature of the property of being gold or the substantive facts about gold? Or, what does the word "gold" mean in ordinary English? The result of the inquiry is that gold is an element with atomic number 79. My concept of gold picks

out many important and substantive facts about gold, that it is a malleable yellow metal, for instance. When philosophers ask what truth is, they are interested sometimes in the concept, sometimes in the underlying nature of its property, and sometimes in both. Unlike the case of gold, we have no independent, empirical access to the property of truth except via that concept. Thus disputes over the property of truth are frequently fought on conceptual ground, over how we might best define the concept of truth. According to this latter method, we learn about the property of truth by learning about the concept. On the other hand, we might hold that as in the case of gold, learning about the concept can tell us much about the property without necessarily telling us everything about that property.

We may know something about the nature of truth and may be able to define truth, but it is not of much value if we are not able to prove that something is true. The nature and criteria of truth are obviously different. The definition of gold as a yellow metal having atomic number 79 does not help us to determine whether an ornament is really gold. The assayer's test of solubility in aqua regia provides criteria to verify gold, but does not define it. Such a distinction is applicable to truth. To know the meaning of the word "true" is only half the matter; we should also be able to apply it. If we adopt the criterial route critics will say, "You are not really tackling the core issue of what is true, but only the marginal issue of what is taken as true." On the contrary if we take the definitional route he/she will say, "Your definition is only formal; it does not help us determine whether a proposition is actually true or false."

11.3 PERSPECTIVES ON TRUTH

Our perspectives on truth differ depending on whether we take a detached point of view or agent point of view or a combination of the two. The ontic perspective is a view from nowhere or a totally detached view of facts regardless of its being believed to be true. The descriptively epistemic perspective is an agent point of view of facts as actually believed to be true. The normatively epistemic perspective is a fusion of the agent and detached points of view that truth is what would be

rationally accepted regardless of anyone's actually doing so. Its epistemic component consists in its reference to thought, and its ontic component in its reference to what is rationally warranted. Those who take the ontic perspective claim that the truth-value of a belief does not vary over different epistemic situations. A belief does not alter its truth-value contextually. Hence we cannot simply identify truth with justification.

As there are three perspectives on truth we can divide the theories of truth into three groups: Realist, Anti-realist and Quasi-realist theories. All these theories are motivated by questions like: Is there such a thing as absolute truth? Is truth in some way or other subjective or relative? What sort of relationship do true propositions have to the world? Are all truths verifiable or justifiable? These questions concern the subjectivity and objectivity of truth. The root intuition behind Realism is that truth hinges not on us but on the world. A proposition is true when things in the world are as that proposition says they are. It implies that truth has a nature and that its nature is objective: whether a proposition is true does not depend on what anyone believes. Realism is a doctrine about truth which holds that for a belief or proposition to be true, a certain states of affairs must obtain independent of any mind. For example, the belief that snow is white is true only if snow is white in the extra-mental world. Classical realist theory of truth is the correspondence theory. Anti-realists or non-realist theories about truth have in common the view that extra-mental reality or facts have nothing to do with truth or falsity. It is not a necessary or a sufficient condition for the truth of the belief that "snow is white," that snow be actually white in the extra mental world. So it is theoretically possible for it to be true even if it is not an extra-mental fact that snow is white. Classical non-realist theories of truth are coherence and pragmatic theories.

Deflationists go a step farther and ask whether truth even has a nature to explain. They suspect that the so-called problem of truth was really a pseudo-problem. They believe that there is no single property shared by all the propositions we consider as true. Consequently our concept of

truth should not be understood as expressing such a property but as fulfilling some other function. Deflationists believe that the problem of truth should not be explained but be explained away. There is a growing consensus among philosophers that neither traditional realist theories nor the anti-realist theories are adequate. Some philosophers have tried to clear new paths to think about this old concept. Whereas a few philosophers name their theories of truth others claim that they provide only some elucidation of the concept of truth.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

1) What do you understand by the nature and criteria of truth?

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2) Classify the different perspectives and theories of truth?

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11.4 CLASSICAL THEORIES OF TRUTH

The Correspondence Theory of Truth

According to the correspondence theory of truth a proposition is true just when it agrees with reality. It demands a unique conformity between judgments and states of affairs. It is a systematic development of the commonsense account of truth expressed in dictionary definitions like "conformity with fact." "Delhi is the capital of India" is true because it corresponds to the fact. Aristotle writes: "To say that that which is, is not, or that which is not is, is false; and to say that that which is, is, and that which is not, is not, is true." For St Thomas Aquinas, truth is the

agreement or conformity of thing and intellect. Michael Devitt claims that "truth is neither to be identified with, nor to be eliminated in favour of any epistemic notion. Truth is one thing, evidence for it quite another." According to him a sentence correctly represents reality if and only if its component parts bear an appropriate causal relation to certain objects in the world. Correspondence as congruence says that every truth bearer is correlated to a state of affairs. If the state of affairs to which a given truth bearer is correlated actually obtains, the truth bearer is true; otherwise it is false. For Bertrand Russell it is beliefs that are true or false and facts make beliefs true. He agrees that beliefs depend on minds for their existence, but claims that they do not depend on minds for their truth. According to him "assertions correspond to states of affairs; they are true if the corresponding states of affairs obtains, and false if it does not." Correspondence as correlation claims that there is a structural isomorphism between the truth bearers and the facts to which they correspond when the truth bearer is true. Like the two halves of a torn piece of paper, the parts of the truth bearer fit with the parts of the fact. It is because of this isomorphism that the fact and the truth bearer can be said to correspond with each other. J.L. Austin takes correspondence to be a matter of correlation between whole statements and whole facts or states of affairs. For him this correspondence is not natural but the result of linguistic conventions.

The Coherence Theory of Truth

Immanuel Kant challenged the validity of the classical correspondence theory. Consequently, the post-Kantian philosophical tradition was bound to seek its theory of truth elsewhere. A significant alternative to correspondence theory is the coherence theory, according to which the truthfulness of a proposition is implicit in its "coherence" with other propositions. The coherence theory has its roots in the idea of a system. According to F.H. Bradley, "Truth is an ideal expression of the Universe, at once coherent and comprehensive. It must not conflict with itself, and there must be no suggestion which fails to fall inside it. Perfect truth, in short, must realize the idea of a systematic whole." A statement is true if

it coheres with a system of other statements, and false if it fails to cohere. But the coherence at issue is not coherence with reality or with facts. The coherence theory proposes the criteria to classify empirical propositions as true or false; it does not specify the constitutive essence of truth. Coherence is the test by which truth-candidates are validated as genuinely true or rejected as false. It resembles the solving of a jigsaw puzzle by rejecting superfluous pieces that cannot possibly be fitted into the orderly picture.

Idealists or anti-realists reject the traditional distinction between subject and object. For them, to think of a thing is to get that thing to a certain degree within the mind. A thought and its object do not differ in kind but in degree of realization. Thought should develop and become more and more coherent until it is literally identical to, or one with reality. Hence reality is the realization of a fully articulated and maximally coherent system of judgments. A particular judgment is true if it belongs to such a system. For Blanshard "Coherence is the sole criterion of truth." Having accepted the coherence theory of justification, Blanshard felt compelled to accept the coherence theory of truth. He believed that if reality is something completely external to human minds then no theory of justification would ever work. We would never have knowledge except by luck and therefore be forced to accept general scepticism. "If thought and things are conceived as related only externally then knowledge is luck." The way to avoid this, he suggested, is to postulate that the thoughts in our minds are really not completely distinct from the things in the world we think about. For him, "To think of a thing is to get that thing itself in some degree within the mind." With the assumption that the world is coherent, it seems to follow that our beliefs are probably true to the extent they cohere. Hence he endorses the claim that the coherence of beliefs is evidence of their truth.

The Pragmatic Theory

Pragmatism envisages a conception of truth that recognizes a close link between truth and human experience. The pragmatic theory of truth bases

itself on the intuition that one cannot profit from error either by rejecting a true proposition or by accepting a false proposition. Being right is the most advantageous policy, and so maximal utility is a safe indicator of truth. The prominent advocates of classical pragmatism are Charles Peirce, William James and John Dewey.

For Peirce, a true proposition is a final and compulsory belief, a belief unassailable by doubt. The opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate is what we mean by the truth, and the object represented in this opinion is the real. Even though the possible hypotheses are infinite, investigation in the long run will eliminate all of them except the true one. A judgment is true if and only if it is justified at the end of scientific inquiry. He renamed his theory as pragmaticism when pragmatism was appropriated by Dewey, Schiller and James to label their view. He claims that "human opinion universally tends in the long run to the truth." For him the opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate is what we mean by truth. Peirce's theory of truth is plausible only because it is parasitic on truth as correspondence with reality. James' pragmatism could be characterized as a kind of instrumentalism. According to James an empirical judgment is true if it is verifiable. The truth of an idea is the process of its verification and validation. A true idea guides us in our dealings with reality, and hence, a true judgment is what is expedient to believe. Our knowledge of the world, according to James, results from the interaction between our minds and the world. But our minds do not, like mirrors, passively copy facts, but actively manipulate them according to our needs and ends. James insists that truth should be useful, having cash value in experiential terms. Something is useful because it is true and it is true because it is useful. An empirical judgment is true just when it is verifiable. The truth of a judgment consists in its continuous practical use in our lives. Instrumentalism holds that a belief can be useful if it leads to accurate predictions and hence true. I see your knitted brow, see you rub your temples, hear you utter "Owwoo". The hypothesis that you have a headache would explain these three events. For James the facts of the matter are irrelevant. What counts is the usefulness of the belief. For

James usefulness means useful over the long term and when all things are considered. According to John Dewey an idea is a plan of action or a possible solution and not a copy of the environment. Their validity and value are tested by their practical success. If they succeed in dealing with the problem they are true; if they fail they are false. The idea that guides us well or the hypothesis that works is true. For example, a human being lost in the woods can use his idea as a working hypothesis. If he finds his way home, then his idea is true because it agrees with reality. According to Dewey truth is a mutable concept; it works within the process of inquiry. Truth happens to an idea when it becomes a verified or warranted assertion. Thus he claims that all received truths should be critically tested by new experiences.

Critical Evaluation of Classical Theories of Truth

The oldest criticism against correspondence theory is that it cannot withstand skeptical challenge. If truth is independent of our epistemic values, we have no reason to believe that our best theories are approximately true. Since we cannot step outside our beliefs, we cannot ever check to see if they correspond to the world or not. Therefore we can never know whether our beliefs are true. Another general problem concerns their scope. Traditional correspondence theories take correspondence to be the nature of truth for every proposition. But propositions vary. What would be the correspondence for abstract objects like numbers, fictional characters, justice etc? There are objections to coherence theory of truth. It allows any proposition to be true, since any proposition can be a member of some coherent set or other. There is no independent way, outside coherence, of determining which beliefs are true. The main charge against pragmatic theory of truth is that it leads to relativism. Relativism is incoherent and self-refuting. It is self-refuting to hold a point of view and then say that all points of view are equally right. If all points of view are equally good, then the point of view that relativism is false could be as good as relativism is true. Another problem is that there could be judgments that are true but that are never discovered to be so by any investigation.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

1) What do you understand by the Correspondence theory of truth?

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2) How do you distinguish between coherence and pragmatic theories of truth?

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11.5 OTHER THEORIES OF TRUTH

Semantic Theory

Alfred Tarski claims that his semantic conception of truth is the essence of the correspondence theory of truth. He calls truth a semantic concept because it is defined in terms of other semantic concepts, especially the concept of 'satisfaction'. Tarski's strategy is to define all semantic concepts, save satisfaction, in terms of truth, truth in terms of satisfaction, and satisfaction in terms of physical and logico-mathematical concepts. According to him, an adequate definition of truth is one from which all equivalencies of the form "X is true if and only if p" follow, where X is the name of the sentence and p is the sentence. He limits his definition of truth to artificial or formal languages of logic and mathematics because the natural languages are semantically closed and hopelessly paradoxical. Such formal languages are semantically open and

contain none of the ambiguity and vagueness of ordinary language. Secondly, it is crucial to Tarski's definition that it is not a general definition of true in any language L, but a definition of 'true-in-L1' 'truein-L2' etc. We must always climb up to a meta-language to define truth for the language below. Quine regards "true" as a philosophically neutral notion. It is a mere device for raising assertions from the object language to the meta-language without any epistemological or metaphysical commitment. Quine claims that his view is in accordance with the correspondence theory of truth. His truth predicate functions as an intermediary between the words and the world. What is true is the sentence, but its truth consists in the correspondence between the sentence and the world.

Deflationary Theories

Deflationism is the name for a family of views which aim to deflate the lofty pretensions of traditional theories of truth. They believe that truth has no nature. It is not so important a concept. Deflationary theories call attention to the transparency of truth. When we say that "it is true that roses are red", we can look right through the truth that roses are red. We automatically infer that roses are red. There is no reason to try to explain why something is true by appealing to correspondence or coherence. According to Frank Ramsey's Redundancy theory 'is true' is a superfluous addition; in reality we ascribe no property to the proposition. All ascriptions of truth are gratuitous or redundant. But the question arises as to why we would have the word 'true' in our language if it is redundant. According to P.F.Strawson's Performative theory ascriptions of truth to propositions are actually nonassertoric performative utterances like command.

If I tell you to close the door, I am not making an assertion or stating a fact; I am telling you to do something. Strawson argues that we should regard utterances of the form "It is true that p" in a similar way. It calls our attention to an often neglected feature of our concept of truth: its normative and performative role in our language. According to Quine's

Disquotation theory "ascription of truth just cancels the quotation marks. Truth is disquotation." According to Minimalism there is no more to understanding truth than understanding the equivalence of saying something is true and to asserting it. For instance, we know what it is for people to assert propositions and we normally know what kinds of considerations confirm or disconfirm the propositions.

Neo-pragmatic Theory

Richard Rorty follows Dewey and tells us to leave behind our realist intuitions. According to Rorty anything we believe as true we also believe as justified, and anything we believe as justified we also believe as true. There is no practical difference between truth and justification. He identifies truth with rational acceptability to one's own cultural peers or ethnos. According to his "ethnocentrism" truth depends on the conventions of particular communities. He claims that justification as criteria of truth will always be relative to audiences. For him truth is a compliment paid to justified beliefs. Rorty dismisses the problem of truth as unreal because when we are able to justify something the problem about truth vanishes.

For Michael Foucault truth is by nature political. For him there are no objectively true statements in the usual sense; there are only statements that 'pass for true' in a particular community at a particular time. And what passes for true is determined by the hegemonic systems of power. He reduces truth to power. He advocates a view of truth that takes power relations to be more or less constitutive of truth depending on the statement and context in question. Hilary Putnam derives inspiration from James and wants to reconcile pragmatist insights with realism. According to Putnam totality of objects is not fixed because objects themselves exist only relative to conceptual schemes. For him a proposition is true just when that proposition would be rationally acceptable in ideal epistemic conditions. Putnam's picture of truth is not a kind of verificationism though verification is an important aspect of it. For him truth is idealized verification under sufficiently good epistemic

conditions. He is not reducing truth to epistemic notions. Instead, he just claims that truth and rational acceptability depend upon on each other. His concept of truth involves a defence of objectivity. Truth is not subjective; it goes beyond justification. There is no conclusive justification even for empirical sentences. Truth depends on the meaning of the assertions as well as on their reference. For him objects are theory-dependent, and hence two theories, in spite of their incompatible ontologies, can both be right. His picture of truth refutes both metaphysical realism as well as relativism. He seeks objectivity neither in correspondence nor in consensus. Instead, he proposes an alternative to both realist and idealist concepts of truth.

Postmodern theories

According to Martin Heidegger's Phenomenological theory propositional truth presupposes a more primordial relation of accordance between humanity and beings in the world which he calls "openness" or "unconcealedness". Truth is "disclosure of being through which an openness essentially unfolds." To speak truly is to uncover beings as they are. According to Heidegger there is an absolute world structure that grounds the possibility of objective truth. Our thoughts are true when they conform to that structure. It is our way of being in the world that makes truth and falsity possible. Heidegger's view challenges the idea that truth is a static, binary relation between a subject's representation of an object and that object itself. Truth is neither correspondence nor coherence but the product of an activity that presents the world directly. Truth depends on humanity in some sense. "There is truth only when and as long as Dasein exists." Without human thinkers there would be no true thoughts. It is only against the background of human interests and needs that parts of the world become possible objects of knowledge. A common thread running through Primitivism and Pluralism is the claim that the failure of substantive definitions of truth needn't lead to a thoroughgoing deflationism. Primitivism takes truth as a basic indefinable concept. For Moore truth "is a simple unanalyzable property which is possessed by some propositions and not by others." Donald

Davidson and Earnest Sosa are advocates of this theory today. Traditional theories have failed because truth cannot be defined. The concept of truth is already so basic to our thought that without it we might not have any concepts at all. What we can say about truth is how that concept relates to other concepts, our attitudes and our behaviour. Pluralism takes truth to have different natures in different discourses. Putnam argues against the usual alternatives: deflationism and metaphysical realism. There is a plurality of ways for propositions to relate to reality. The word "true" has different uses, depending on whether we are talking about morality, mathematics, physics etc. Pluralist theories of truth have significant advantages. They account for the fact that every traditional theory of truth seems plausible in some domains but not in others.

Critical Evaluation

Though the semantic theory of truth adequately defines the nature of truth, it is unable to provide any criteria to decide what is and what is not to be counted as true. A logician is not concerned with the intuitive notion of truth. On the contrary, a philosopher is concerned with discovering the intuitive notion of truth. Tarski tries to substitute the intuitive notion with a logical notion useful for scientific purposes. His theory fails to define the ordinary concept of truth and merely provide a general definition of "true". The deflationary theorists fail to substantiate that truth has no property. The Neo-Pragmatist Rorty's ethnocentrism has strong relativist overtones. We cannot agree with Foucault that truth changes with the change of systems. For example, racism and slavery were wrong and are wrong now. It also leads to a radical scepticism making any social criticism impossible. Postmodern theories of truth also are inadequate to provide a satisfactory picture of "truth".

11.6 IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY OF TRUTH

What is the importance of the study of truth for our lives? The theory of truth we choose to accept will affect our perspective, our attitude and

also our way of life. Those who accept correspondence theory of truth are normally absolutists and traditionalists. Those who opt for coherence theory of truth are idealists who give more importance to their subjective ideas and convictions. Those who accept pragmatic theory of truth give importance to useful and practical aspects of life. All the other theories are only modifications or combinations of the classical theories. It is important for us to examine our temperament. Do we give so much importance to objectivity so as to neglect subjectivity? Do our thoughts, words and actions have a human face? Are we fundamentalists who believe that only one theory or point of view can be true; or relativists who hold that anything goes or that all theories are equally true; or pluralists who consider that there may be a plurality of true or right versions of reality? Do we try to compartmentalize life and then create walls between peoples or accept unity in plurality? Are we ready to accept the role of the community in asserting that something is true or false? Truth is essentially dynamic. It emerges in the interaction between subject and object. The criteria of practical success are not enough. We have to combine successful understanding and successful practice. Do we give equal importance to means and ends? The glimpse of truth will become brighter if we approach it with an open mind. Lack of interest and involvement conceals truth to a great extent. Never be satisfied with what we know. Truth reveals itself to those who continue the search and is ready to do the same until death.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

1) What do you understand by deflationary theory of truth?

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2) Describe the post-modern theories of truth?

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11.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have introduced the problem of truth and examined the nature and criteria of truth. Truth is closely intertwined with many other concepts like world, reason, justification, thought, language etc. There have been a lot of attempts or theories to explain truth because it is such an important concept which we use in our everyday life knowingly or unknowingly. There are mainly three families of truth – Realist, Anti-realist and Quasi-realist. Realist theories of truth consider truth as objective. Anti-realist theories hold that truth is primarily subjective. The quasirealists try to combine the realist and anti-realist theories. All the modern theories of truth are modifications of the classical theories of truth viz., correspondence, coherence and pragmatic theories.

11.8 KEY WORDS

Idealism: The ontological view that ultimately every existing thing can be shown to be spiritual, mental or incorporeal.

Realism: The philosophical doctrine that a real material world exists and is accessible by means of the senses.

Relativism: The view that there are no absolute truths; all truths are relative to time, place, and culture.

Verification: Any procedure carried out to determine whether a statement is true or false.

11.9 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1) What do you understand by the nature and criteria of truth?
2) Classify the different perspectives and theories of truth?
3) What do you understand by the Correspondence theory of truth?
4) How do you distinguish between coherence and pragmatic theories of truth?
5) What do you understand by deflationary theory of truth?

6) Describe the post-modern theories of truth?

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11.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check your Progress 1

1) To determine the truth of a proposition we can either define "is true" as qualifying the proposition or justify the application of "is true" in the proposition. The first way illustrates the nature of truth and the second way its criteria. To know the meaning of the word "true" is only half the matter; we should also be able to apply it. For example, to know that gold is a malleable yellow metal with the atomic number 79 does not help us to know whether an ornament is gold or not. There should be some way of testing to prove that it is really gold. Similarly, it is not enough to know what truth is; we should also know how to justify the claim that something is true.

2) There are three perspectives on truth. The ontic perspective is a detached point of view of facts regardless of its being believed to be true. The descriptively epistemic perspective is an agent point of view of facts as actually believed to be true. The normatively epistemic perspective is a fusion of the agent and detached points of view. We can divide the theories of truth into Realist, Anti-realist and Quasi-realist. According to realism a belief or proposition is true if a certain states of affairs obtain independent of any mind. According to non-realist theories extra-mental reality or facts have nothing to do with truth or falsity. For quasi-realists truth depends not only on values but also on facts; both subject and object play equal roles.

Answers to Check your Progress 2

1) According to the correspondence theory of truth a proposition is true when it agrees with reality. It demands a unique conformity between judgments and states of affairs. It is obvious that my statement, "Delhi is the capital of India" is true because it corresponds to the fact. There are two types of correspondence: correspondence as congruence and correspondence as correlation. Correspondence as congruence says that every truth bearer is correlated to a state of affairs. If the state of affairs to which a given truth bearer is correlated actually obtains, the truth

bearer is true; otherwise it is false. Correspondence as correlation claims that there is a structural isomorphism between the truth bearers and the facts to which they correspond when the truth bearer is true. Like the two halves of a torn piece of paper, the parts of the truth bearer fit with the parts of the fact. However, this correspondence is not natural but conventional.

2) According to the coherence theory of truth a statement is true if it coheres with a system of other statements, and false if it does not. But this coherence is not agreement with reality or with facts. The coherence theory provides the criteria or test by which truthcandidates are proved as true or rejected as false. It resembles the solving of a jigsaw puzzle by rejecting superfluous pieces that cannot possibly be fitted into the orderly picture. The pragmatic theory of truth also provides the criteria to justify a belief or proposition as true or false. Unlike in coherence theory which gives importance to mutual agreement pragmatic theory lays stress on practical usefulness or success as the proof. Beliefs or propositions are like hypotheses to be tested by empirical investigation or verification to prove their truth or falsity. A belief can be useful if it leads to accurate predictions and hence true.

Answers to Check your Progress 3

1) Deflationary theories of truth aim to deflate the lofty pretensions of traditional theories of truth. According to them truth has no nature. The concept of truth is unimportant; it is transparent and evident. When we say "It is true that roses are red", we can look right through the truth that roses are red. We can automatically infer that roses are red. Hence truth needs no special explanation or justification. For Frank Ramsey 'is true' is a superfluous addition; in reality we ascribe no property to the proposition. All ascriptions of truth are gratuitous or redundant.

2) According to Martin Heidegger propositional truth presupposes a more primordial relation of accordance or "openness" between man and other beings in the world. There is an absolute world structure that

grounds the possibility of objective truth. Our thoughts are true when they conform to that structure. It is our way of being in the world that makes truth and falsity possible. Primitivism takes truth as a basic indefinable concept. The concept of truth is so basic to our thought that without it we would have no concepts at all. We can only say how concept of truth relates to other concepts. Pluralism allows truth to have different natures in different discourses. There is a plurality of ways for propositions to relate to reality. The word "true" has different uses in different discourses about morality, mathematics, physics etc.

UNIT 12: CRITICAL APPRAISAL AND SYNTHESIS

STRUCTURE

12.0 OBJECTIVES

Having made the journey of epistemology through the this unit, it is time to take stock. In this unit we shall try to get a summary view of the places we have visited in this journey. At the end of this unit you will be able to do the following:

- To attain a synthetic perspective on epistemology today;
- To know the Sources of Knowledge;
- To discuss the Methods and Justification of Knowledge.

12.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous units of the this block introduced you to the discipline of epistemology, beginning with its definition. One of the crucial issues in the definition of epistemology is the distinction between knowledge and knowledge of knowledge; it is only the latter that is epistemology. Since all knowledge involves awareness, epistemology involves an awareness

of awareness. My seeing of a tree in front of me is knowledge; it is awareness. The object that is known (the tree) is outside me. But when I become aware of the nature of my awareness of the tree (for example, was the tree the focus of my attention or was it just a peripheral vision?) the object of knowledge is not something outside of me. Similarly, science is an important part of the knowledge we possess; reflecting upon scientific knowledge (which comes in philosophy of science) is an important part of epistemology. Such is the crucial distinction between knowledge and epistemology. This distinction is important because it determines the kind of questions that are raised in epistemology and how they come to be answered. In order to know what a zebra is I need to find out from reliable external sources such as an encyclopaedia; but do I need to do the same when I am trying to find out what knowledge is? That would be a very odd procedure. If I claim that I know what a zebra is, then I must be having some understanding of what knowledge is. Unearthing that understanding is reflective task than a matter of gathering information. Similarly, we get scientific knowledge from outside of ourselves; but reflecting on the nature of science (philosophy of science) is not a matter of getting further information from outside. Epistemology, as knowledge of knowledge, has this reflexive character. From the realization that epistemology is a reflective enterprise we proceeded to reflect on the nature of knowledge. As a result we arrived at the conclusion that knowledge has three characteristics: it is a belief that is true and there is reason for believing that to be true. The activity of giving reasons for believing is called justification. Knowledge, in short, is justified true belief. This tripartite analysis is the second issue that gave an orientation to our course on epistemology. Although questioned by Edmund Gettier, this analysis is intuitively taken to be a correct way of understanding knowledge. Of the three parts that make up knowledge, justification has a special place in epistemology because of scepticism or the denial of knowledge. If epistemology is a matter of truth seeking, scepticism tells us that truth is a chimera; it cannot be had. This is one of the issues that epistemology deals with. The very fact that we seek to justify a belief to anyone who might doubt its truth demonstrates some unwritten assumptions about truth and knowledge. The first assumption

is that the other person can be brought to see the truth; if we did not believe that the contending sides can be brought to agree on truth justification would be a pointless exercise. When we reflect on this we come to see an even more fundamental assumption of all epistemology, namely, the universality of truth. If what is true for one were to be different from that of another, there would be no point in trying to convince anyone that a given proposition is true or not true. The very fact that when a wrong statement is made we disagree with it and try to give the correct version is proof enough for our ordinary everyday assumption that what is true is universally so. Truth, in other words, is not relative to persons or cultures.

12.2 ORIENTING ISSUES

Universality of truth, as opposed to relativism, is the third orienting issue we studied in the first block. Relativism is the philosophical view that holds that one thing (A) is relative to another (B). This one thing (A) may be truth, values, meaning, etc; and the something else (B) may be personal interests, cultural biases, conceptual frameworks, and so on. Relativism of truth is the idea that what is true is true only in relation to the personal interests and biases of an individual, the cultural biases of a society and so on. Negatively, it is the idea that there are no absolute truths, i.e., no truths are independent of such biases. Relativism is not just a matter of fact claim that what one considers true is often influenced by one's personal interests or cultural biases or conceptual frameworks. For example, if a person acknowledges the possibility of one's belief being biased and expresses a willingness to correct it, if it is shown to be biased, that person is not a relativist because willingness to be corrected presupposes a standard that is independent of one's bias. Relativism, rather, is the denial that there are any external or absolute standards that are free from biases. Positively, it is the claim that all our standards of truth are immanent to the individual, culture, conceptual framework, etc. Another important issue that was seen in the first block was truth. The word "true" is one of the most commonly used words. We say things like "It is true that the Taj Mahal is in Agra", "It is not true that Char Minar is in Agra". But what is meant by saying that a proposition is true or not

true? This is the question that is dealt with in the unit on truth. Intuitively we tend to think of truth as a correspondence between what is affirmed or denied in a proposition and what the case is really. But this theory runs into the problem of having to compare what is captured in the proposition (or mind) with reality. The difficulty arises because whatever is captured in a proposition is no longer reality-in-itself and therefore there can be no real comparison. All such attempts will only lead to an infinite regress, argue the critics of correspondence theory. Supporters of correspondence theory say that other theories like coherence theory and pragmatic theory run into even more serious problems than correspondence. Nicholas Rescher's distinction between a theory (or definition) of truth on the one hand and a criterion of truth on the other, help us realize that there are at least two different questions that are often confused. According to him correspondence is a theory of truth, coherence is the criterion. If there is clarity as to the problem that one is concerned with, then much of the difficulties of the different theories may also be resolved. While Rescher has a point here, it remains an open question as to whether the criteria and theory can go in their separate ways. If correspondence is accepted as the definition of truth, it would seem to fit most of our uses of the word "true"; but some uses like "being true to oneself" or "God is truth" do not seem to be matters of correspondence at all. In spite of these difficulties correspondence could be considered as an appropriate definition.

12.3 SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE

The second block of our program dealt with the sources of our knowledge. Although as individuals most of our knowledge comes to us from testimony (of parents, teachers, scholarly books, newspapers, and so on), this is not our only or even the most primary source of knowledge. Ultimately all such indirect knowledge must have come from some direct source. For example, I know quite a lot about polar bears. And the source of my knowledge is the BBC documentary on them. This is testimony because it is based on the knowledge someone else has. But how did BBC gather information about polar bears? They could have collected some of it from other sources, but no amount of such second

hand information would suffice to make the kind of magnificent documentary they have made. Someone has to go to the poles and film these bears in action. That is direct knowledge, knowledge by perception. Perception is ordinarily defined as sense knowledge or immediate knowledge in western philosophy. Defining it in terms of the five senses can be quite problematic if you believe that there is something like Extra Sensory Perception or (ESP) whereby one can know events happening at a distance, or something that happened in the past and so on. It is for this reason that many prefer to define perception as immediate knowledge and divide this kind of immediate knowledge into sense knowledge and intuition. This is similar to some schools of Indian philosophy that would not restrict perception to sense experience but consider sense experience as ordinary perception (laukika pratyaka). Apart from ordinary perception, they would also acknowledge extra-ordinary perception (alaukika pratyaka). Those who rule out even the possibility of such knowledge, of course, would not face any such problem in defining perception in terms of sense knowledge. Without ruling out the possibility of extrasensory perception, we limited our considerations to ordinary perception.

After such preliminary considerations we proceeded to examine the different theories of perception found in Western Philosophy. They can be broadly divided into realist and constructivist theories. Western theories of perception, for the most part, have been realist theories. Realism, in this context means that (1) the object of perception or reality exists independently of the perceiver; (2) perception is caused by that perceiver independent reality; (3) truth of perception consists in correspondence between what is perceived and the outside object. Realist theory, in this form, faces some serious difficulties. An important difficulty is this: If our perceptual knowledge is caused by the object, how could we ever mis-perceive objects, as we doubtlessly do on occasions? In order to avoid such difficulties, some thinkers made some modifications to this view. They suggested that we do not perceive the objects directly. What we directly perceive are not the objects; objects have the capacity to produce some effects on us which are called

variously as "sensations", "ideas" and the like. It is these effects that we directly perceive and on the basis of these we infer to the object. This view is called indirect realism. This view has the advantage that perceptual errors can be attributed to the second stage of perception, the process of inferring. As far as the sensations or ideas are concerned, they cannot be mistaken. But the difficulty is that these ideas are in us; what we are said to perceive are objects outside our mind. So how can we ever know that these sensations or ideas really represent the objects? There comes about an unbridgeable gap between the mind and the object. This is called the problem of the bridge. This is the starting point for such philosophical theories as phenomenalism and solipsism. Constructivist theories can be said to originate in Kant. It arises from the realization that perceptual knowledge is not simply a matter of receiving sensations from the objects outside. Rather, perceptual knowledge is conceptualized knowledge. As such, concepts in the mind are as important as sensations from the objects outside. This Kantian insight is developed further and contemporary hermeneutics insists that all knowledge (including perceptual knowledge) is a matter of interpretation. John Hick, for example, would say that all our conscious experiencing is an "experiencingas". He gives the following example. When we see a fork we recognize the cutlery for what it is and say "It is a fork" whereas a primitive who has no familiarity with forks might see the same object, but instead of recognizing it as cutlery might consider it a weapon. The point is that all our perception involves an interpretation; this interpretation is done in terms of some prior knowledge that we already possess. This difference between realist and constructivist theories of perception might seem confusing at first sight because when we look at them individually, both seem reasonable. On the one hand we know that there is an interpretative element in our perception and our prior conceptions do influence what we perceive; on the other hand our perception would be true only if it is linked in some manner to the world outside. Both the constructivist and realist theories tell us something true about perception. To put it differently, although our perception involves an interpretation, it is not only a matter of interpretation: there must be some information that is gained in the process of perception. W.V. Quine

holds these two together by talking about "degrees of observationality" where some observations are relatively free of interpretations than others. These relatively "pure" observations are "directly keyed to the world" according to him. The second most important source of knowledge is inference. Inference is also studied in logic. But the perspective of the study of inference in epistemology is not the same. Formal logic is concerned with the form of arguments to see if the arguments are valid; in epistemology the concern is with the truth of the statements involved in inference, not only with validity. When the concern is with truth there arises the difficulty as to how we can come to know the truth of universal statements. This is known as the problem of induction. Universal statements are important because every inference (whether inductive or deductive) contains at least one universal statement. Therefore if truth of universal statements is problematic then all knowledge we have from inference is also problematic.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

1) Briefly explain the four orienting issues that guided our course in epistemology?

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2) What are the respective insights of the constructivist and realist theories of perception? How does Quine hold them together?

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12.4 METHODS AND JUSTIFICATION OF KNOWLEDGE –I

We noted that justification has a special place in epistemology because of the sceptical context of this discipline. But not all theory of knowledge begins with scepticism. The epistemology of metaphysical thinkers (like Aristotle and Aquinas) differs in this respect from the epistemology of modern thinkers like Descartes, Hume or Kant. Whether or not one takes scepticism as the starting point of epistemology plays a major role in how justification is done and the shape epistemology takes. In the third block of our course we dealt with this. The metaphysical thinkers did not, as a rule, begin with scepticism. Rather, they begin with the assumption that we possess knowledge and on that basis ask the question: "Given that we do have knowledge, what should we (the knowers) and the world (the known) be like if this is to happen?" When the question is posed in this manner, it calls for an answer in the form of descriptions: description of the knower as well as the knowable world. And this is what the metaphysical thinkers do: they describe both in a manner that coheres with each other. For example, the knowers have senses and the knowable world has sensible qualities. The knowable, however, is not exhausted by its sensible qualities: it has also a structure that cannot be grasped by the senses. In a corresponding manner, the knowers possess not only the senses but also an intellect that can go beyond sensations to grasp the intelligible structure of the world. The metaphysical method can be used only as long as there are no serious questions about our capacity for knowing the world or ourselves. And this is what comes to be questioned during the modern period. Descartes, the father of modern Western Philosophy, took scepticism very seriously and could not begin with any descriptions. He refused to accept as knowledge anything that comes from the senses or even the testimony of his teachers or parents. Thus all descriptions become questionable for him. But it is in and through that very process of doubting that he arrives at the cogito, one thing that he found he could not doubt. Using this indubitable truth as the foundation he attempts to build up the rest of his beliefs. This method or the manner of justifying beliefs has come to be called foundationalism. Foundationalism holds that all our knowledge is made up of two kinds of beliefs: (1) basic or foundational and (2) non-basic or non-foundational. Having divided all our beliefs into these two classes, foundationalism

says further that there is an asymmetrical relationship between the two classes. The relationship is asymmetrical because it is always the basic beliefs that support the non-basic beliefs and not vice versa. Both empiricists and rationalists, in fact the whole of modern epistemology, follow the foundationalist method in justifying knowledge. The only difference consisted in what is counted as basic. If rationalists like Descartes took truths of reason (like the cogito) as foundational, the empiricists took the truths of the senses (perception) as foundational. Apart from a few indubitable truths like the cogito or sense experience, the vast body of our knowledge is called into question until they are shown to be supported by these self-evident basic beliefs. Whether empiricist or rationalist, foundationalist standards of justification were found to be too stringent to be viable. Is it possible for us to justify any of our beliefs without relying on a lot of the other beliefs we possess? Even if we have some beliefs that are held to be self evident, it has been found to be impossible to build the whole world of our knowledge on such meagre foundations. We only have to think of the problem of induction to realize that we cannot be completely sure of even simple universal statement like "All crows are black", much less of more complicated scientific theories! From the realization that the foundationalist standards are too stringent comes an alternative method of justification called coherentism. The classic imagery used to convey a sense of this method comes to us from Otto Neurath. The imagery is that of sailors in the open sea who find that their boat has developed leaks. They cannot discard the boat or go to the shore to repair the leak. All they can do is to repair or replace the damaged beams by standing on beams that are in relatively good condition. The idea is that the ship of our knowledge cannot be rebuilt from the start as the foundationalists wanted. We can always replace beliefs that are problematic, but not replace all beliefs at once. In other words the strategy of putting all our knowledge in doubt and starting from the beginning is not a viable option, say the coherentists. These three methods can be summarised in this way: scepticism is not the starting point of the metaphysical method, as it is for foundationalism. Accordingly the metaphysical method can begin with descriptions, but the foundationalists cannot. The

metaphysicians aim at coherent descriptions but the foundationalists aim at justifying non-basic beliefs on the basis of non-basic beliefs. This kind of one way relationship between beliefs is repudiated by the coherentists. They hold that there are no privileged beliefs that can be considered basic. All beliefs mutually support one another.

12.5 METHODS AND JUSTIFICATION OF KNOWLEDGE –II

Wittgenstein's "language games" is not primarily about justification of knowledge. Primarily, it is about the rule governed nature of language. It is a corrective to the early philosophy of Wittgenstein that took the meaning of language to be dependent on the world. As opposed to that early view, "language games" is the view that meaning depends, not on linguistic referents, but on the rules that govern its use. In this respect, it is similar to games. What makes a given game a game of "football" or "cricket" or "chess" is not anything outside the game but the rules by which the game is played. To know a game is to know these rules that constitute the game. We know something to be a "king" in chess when we know the rules whereby that piece is moved or affected by the moves of other pieces. Similarly we know what is said in language, not by looking for its referent outside the language but by the rules that constitute the given use. Secondly, just as there is a variety of rules that constitute different games, each independent of the others, so too, there is a variety of language games, each of which is autonomous. To ignore this autonomy and to use the rules that are applicable in one language game in another would lead to linguistic muddles and confusion. To use one of Wittgenstein's own example, when we talk about human eyes, it makes good sense to talk of someone's eyebrows being "thick" or "bushy". But just because religious believers often talk about God seeing us, it would not make sense to ask how thick God's eyebrows are! The rules that govern the use of "seeing" or "eyes" in the one context is very different from the other. Thirdly, language games are rooted in "forms of life". Meaning may not be fixed by how the world is; it might change from one language game to another. But it does not mean that meaning is arbitrary. Not only is the use of language governed by rules, but they are

also linked to certain ways of living our lives ("forms of life"). Wittgenstein often used "forms of life" in the plural to indicate that there are different language games and different forms of life. But he also uses this in the singular as "form of life", the "common behaviour of mankind". These two ways of talking about "forms of life" reflects exactly the kind of differences we saw in connection with perception. On the one hand, the realist theories of perception tell us that what we perceive is somehow "directly keyed to the world" or caused by the world, and on the other hand, the constructivist theory makes us aware that our perceptions involve also an interpretative dimension. Just as there are some relatively "pure" cases of observation that are common to the human species, so too, there is a certain "common behavior of mankind" which is "the system of reference by means of which we interpret an unknown language" (PI 206). But neither our language nor our "forms of life" are limited to this common heritage. The best human achievements –that which make human behaviour different from the instinctual behaviour of animals— may consist in these different and distinctly human forms of life. The idea of "language games" and the related concept of "forms of life" have wide ranging application, including the method of epistemic justification. It tells us that justification of beliefs must take into account the particular language game in which it occurs. In this respect, the implication of language games for justification is similar to the coherentist method of Neurath. But it differs from the boat metaphor of Neurath in two respects. First, there is an explicit acknowledgement in Wittgenstein that there are different language games, and the rules of one language game do not apply in another; such misapplication comes from a "craving for generality" that refuses to look at how our language actually functions. Second, our language games (as well as epistemic justification) are rooted in forms of life. Our knowledge can be said to be existentially rooted. It is not made up of free floating theoretical balloons that are unrelated to concrete human ways of living.

The fact that language games and forms of life are used in the plural, and coherentist method in general, would seem to have relativistic

implications. It is here that naturalized epistemology, in the form in which James Maffie has explained, come into the picture. There we saw that naturalised epistemology retains some of the coherentist features of justification without making justification merely a matter of coherence with already accepted beliefs. Non-controversial observational data play a critical role in justification. In this respect it is similar to the metaphysical method. Applying it to language games we can say that just as observation has a special role in naturalized epistemology, so too, the fact that we have not only different language games and forms of life, but also some kind of a universal form of life, prevents the different autonomous language games from being completely cut off from one another. It tells us that there are continuities between different language games. No language game, therefore, is identical with another; nor are they completely cut of from one another. There are continuities and discontinuities between them. Only detailed examination of each language game would reveal what these continuities and discontinuities are.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

1) How do the metaphysical, foundationalist and coherentist methods differ from one another?

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2) Understood as methods of justification, what are the similarities and differences between Neurath's coherentism and Wittgenstein's language games?

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12.6 THE KNOWING SUBJECT

The last block of this course was about the human knower. Western epistemology, at least modern epistemology, conceived the human knower as a transparent entity who can know itself merely by looking within. For example, we saw Descartes, after his discovery of the cogito coming to the conclusion that he is thinking thing for whose "existence there is no need of any place, nor does it depend on any material thing …" And he knows it just by looking within himself and meditating over it. The empiricists follow suit. For John Locke the knower is a tabula rasa, a blank slate until it receives impressions from the objects outside. Thus, whether empiricists or rationalists, modern philosophers thought of the human knower as transparent to itself. Richard Rorty graphically called this kind of knower as a "glassy essence". There is another idea that is related to the idea of the transparent knower. It is the idea that truth is an achievement of a neutral, disembodied mind, "devoid of passions, committed solely to truth". Some would trace this tendency all the way back to Plato, and not merely to modern philosophy. Irrespective of when it began, it is clear that Western philosophy thought of the knower as self-lucent and truth as the reflection of unchanging, eternal entities that are mirrored in the neutral medium of the knowing mind. Both of these assumptions have come to be questioned. Nietzsche was most forceful in questioning the transparency of knower. According to him, "We remain of necessity strangers to ourselves, we do not understand ourselves, we must mistake ourselves, for us the maxim reads to all eternity: 'each is furthest from himself,' - with respect to ourselves we are not 'knowers'." Regarding the neutral character of truth, we saw how Kierkegaard insisted on the passionate inwardness of the knower. The postmoderns and the feminist trends in epistemology, in a special way, raise serious doubts about the dispassionate, neutral character of the knower as well as of knowledge. They insist that that neutrality of truth is only a façade for unconcealed passion. This, of course, has led to some extreme positions that deny all objectivity to truth. It is said that a matter of parochial interests, social domination, money and power. As Richard Rorty put it, truth is "what society lets us say". Once this character of "truth" is recognised, there is a need to repudiate it and other "truths" to

be brought to prominence: truth as seen by the feminists and the subalterns, for example. Such relativism of truth, of course, is destructive of epistemology. While dealing with the orienting issues in epistemology we noted that the assumption regarding the universality of truth is its driving force. Thus we are in another relativistic quandary.

On the one hand, there is enough evidence to show that truth is much more than the result of dispassionate contemplation; the interests of the knower do play a role in the attainment of knowledge. On the other hand, if truth is the product of parochial interests of different sections of society, it would undermine epistemology itself. It is in this context that Habermas's theory of cognitive interests offers a viable way out of the morass. We saw his contention that no knowledge is neutral. All knowledge is informed by certain interests. But these are not parochial interests that set one group of people against another, but universal interests that we share as human beings. He has identified three such interests and accordingly three kinds of knowledge. First, there are the natural sciences that are guided by the technical interest that is oriented to the control nature. Second, there is the practical interest in communicating with our fellow human beings that guides the hermeneutic sciences, and third, there is the emancipatory interest that guides the critical sciences. If the technical interest is tied to instrumental action and practical interest guided by communicative action, emancipatory interest is built on the activity of reflection. The first two interests of Habermas could be understood in terms of the human need for being in nature and being with others. The third is a little more difficult to characterize as it is something that enables us to recognize the limits and to go beyond. It is the emancipatory interest that enables us to recognise the power games and narrow interests operative in knowledge production and go beyond them in a dialogical, inter-subjective manner.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

1) How does Habermas help us overcome the destructive kind of relativism that makes truth into a matter of power and money?

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2) Explain the difference between old and new ways (as mirrors and maps) of understanding human knowledge.

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12.7 LET US SUM UP

Epistemology, we saw, is knowledge of knowledge. The realization that the human knower is not a glassy essence or truth a mirror image of reality in the mind enables us to conceive of knowledge in a more realistic manner. We begin to realize that human knowledge is more like maps than mirrors. Maps are limited models of a given area. Not everything found in a geographical area gets into a map. What gets into a map and what gets omitted depends on the interests of the map maker. Moreover, we can have different maps of the same geographical area – say a political map, an industrial map, an agricultural map, and so on. In a similar manner we can say that not everything that is there in reality becomes a matter of human knowledge. What comes to be known are only those dimensions of reality that are linked to the human interests of being with nature, of being with others, or the emancipatory interest of wanting to overcome the limits we encounter. This way of understanding human knowledge is especially true of our perceptual knowledge. Evolutionary theorists have come to the realization that each kind of creature comes to possess knowledge of their surroundings in a manner that is appropriate to them. There are animals who can sense the electro-magnetic waves, but we cannot; things that we can sense which other creatures cannot. In other words, different kinds of creatures have their

own cognitive niche. The cognitive niche of human perception is known as mesocosm. Although the idea of mesocosm is primarily about our perceptual knowledge and we can go beyond our perceptual knowledge in various ways, it does bring to our attention that our knowledge remains basically human. We are neither divine beings who can see everything, nor animals led by their instincts, but human beings who can know their surrounding world in a typically human way, that is appropriate to who we are.

12.8 KEY WORDS

Foundationalist: Foundationalism concerns philosophical theories of knowledge resting upon justified belief, or some secure foundation of certainty such as a conclusion inferred from a basis of sound premises.

Coherentist: Coherentism is the name given to a few philosophical theories in modern epistemology. There are two distinct types of coherentism. One is the coherence theory of truth; the other, the coherence theory of justification

12.9 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1) Briefly explain the four orienting issues that guided our course in epistemology?

2) What are the respective insights of the constructivist and realist theories of perception? How does Quine hold them together?

3) How do the metaphysical, foundationalist and coherentist methods differ from one another?

4) Understood as methods of justification, what are the similarities and difference?

5) How does Habermas help us overcome the destructive kind of relativism that makes truth into a matter of power and money?

6) Explain the difference between old and new ways (as mirrors and maps) of understanding human knowledge.

12.10   SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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12.11   ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check your progress 1

1) The four orienting issues are:

i)   The reflective character of epistemology: epistemology as knowledge of knowledge is a not a matter of gaining further information from outside, but of reflecting upon and making explicit what we already know.

ii)   The tripartite analysis of knowledge: When we reflect upon knowledge we find that our understanding of knowledge has three dimensions. They are believed by us; they are true and we must be able to justify them as and when needed.

iii)   Universality of truth: The very fact that when a wrong statement is made we disagree with it and try to give the correct version shows our ordinary everyday assumption that what is true is universally so. Truth, in other words, is not relative to persons or cultures.

iv)   Theory of truth: Although there are various theories of truth that have been proposed by philosophers, correspondence

theory seems to be what most people intuitively understand when they speak of truth. Moreover, Rescher's distinction between definition and criterion shows that most objections to correspondence theory comes from confusing definition with criterion.

2)The insight of the cosnstructivist theories is that there is an interpretative element in our perception and our prior conceptions influence what we perceive. The insight of the realist theories is that our perception would be true only if it is linked in some manner to the world outside. Both tell us something true about perception. Together they make us aware that although our perception involves an interpretation, we indeed perceive something in the world. Otherwise it could not be called a perception at all. To put it still differently, although our perception involves an interpretation, it is not only a matter of interpretation: there must be some information that is gained in the process of perception. W.V. Quine holds these two together by talking about "degrees of observationality" where some observations are relatively free of interpretations than others. These relatively "pure" observations are "directly keyed to the world" according to him.

Answers to Check your progress 2

1) How do the metaphysical, foundationalist and coherentist methods differ from one another? The difference between these three methods can be summarised in this way: scepticism is not the starting point of the metaphysical method, whereas it is the starting point for foundationalism. Accordingly the metaphysical method can begin with descriptions, but the foundationalist method cannot. The metaphysicians aim at coherent descriptions but the foundationalists aim at justifying non-basic beliefs on the basis of non-basic beliefs. This kind of oneway relationship between beliefs is repudiated by the coherentists. Coherentists hold that there are no privileged beliefs that can be considered basic. All beliefs mutually support one another.

2) Understood as methods of justification, what are the similarities and differences between Neurath's coherentism and Wittgenstein's language games? The implication of language games for justification is similar to the coherentist method of Neurath. Both tell us that justification of beliefs must take into account the particular context in which a belief occurs. Wittgenstein's analogy differs from the boat metaphor of Neurath in two respects. First, there is an explicit acknowledgement in Wittgenstein that there are different language games, and the rules of one language game do not apply in another; such misapplication comes from a "craving for generality" that refuses to look at how our language actually functions. Second, our language games (as well as epistemic justification) are rooted in forms of life. Our knowledge can be said to be existentially rooted. It is not made up of free floating theoretical balloons that are unrelated to concrete human ways of living.

Answers to Check your progress 3

1) How does Habermas help us overcome the destructive kind of relativism that makes truth into a matter of power and money? Habermas acknowledges that all knowledge is informed by certain human interests. But these are not parochial interests that set one group of people against another, but universal interests that we share as human beings. He has identified three such interests and accordingly three kinds of knowledge. First, there are the natural sciences that are guided by the technical interest that is oriented to the control nature. Second, there is the practical interest in communicating with our fellow human beings that guides the hermeneutic sciences, and third, there is the emancipatory interest that guides the critical sciences. The first two interests of Habermas could be understood in terms of the human need for being in nature and being with others. The third is a little more difficult to characterize as it is something that enables us to recognize the limits

and to go beyond. This emancipatory interest enables us to recognise the power games and narrow interests operative in knowledge production and go beyond them in a dialogical, inter-subjective manner.

2) Explain the difference between old and new ways (as mirrors and maps) of understanding human knowledge. Earlier human knowledge was understood more as a mirror image of reality. But now we have come to realize that human knowledge is more like maps than mirrors. Maps are limited models of a given area. Not everything found in a geographical area gets into a map. What gets into a map and what gets omitted depends on the interests of the map maker. Moreover, we can have different maps of the same geographical area –say a political map, an industrial map, an agricultural map, and so on. In a similar manner we can say that not everything that is there in reality becomes a matter of human knowledge. What comes to be known are only those dimensions of reality that are linked to the human interests of being with nature, of being with others, or the emancipatory interest wanting to overcome the limits we encounter.

UNIT 13: KNOWLEDGE OF KNOWLEDGE

STRUCTURE

13.0 OBJECTIVES

After this unit we can able to know:

- To know about the nature of knowledge;
- To describe Five distinctions like Mental and nonmental conceptions of knowledge; Occasional and dispositional knowledge; A priori and a posteriori knowledge; Necessary and contingent propositions; Analytic and synthetic propositions

- To know Description and justification
- To discuss the Knowledge and certainty
- To know the origins of knowledge

13.1 INTRODUCTION

Suppose a surgeon tells a patient who is about to undergo a knee operation that when he wakes up he will feel a sharp pain. When the patient wakes up, the surgeon hears him groaning and contorting his face in certain ways. Although one is naturally inclined to say that the surgeon knows what the patient is feeling, there is a sense in which she does not know, because she is not feeling that kind of pain herself. Unless she has undergone such an operation in the past, she cannot know what her patient feels. Indeed, the situation is more complicated than that, for even if the surgeon has undergone such an operation, she cannot know that what she felt after her operation is the same sort of sensation as what her patient is feeling now. Because each person's sensations are in a sense "private," for all the surgeon knows, what she understands as pain and what the patient understands as pain could be very different. (Similar remarks apply to the use of colour terms. For all one knows, the colour sensation one associates with "green" could be very different from the sensations other people associate with that term. That possibility is known as the problem of the inverted spectrum.)

It follows from the foregoing analysis that each human being is inevitably and even in principle prevented from having knowledge of the minds of other human beings. Despite the widely held conviction that in principle there is nothing in the world of fact that cannot be known through scientific investigation, the other-minds problem shows to the contrary that an entire domain of human experience is resistant to any sort of external inquiry. Thus, there can never be a science of the human mind.

13.2 THE NATURE OF KNOWLEDGE

As indicated above, one of the basic questions of epistemology concerns the nature of knowledge. Philosophers normally treat the question as a conceptual one—i.e., as an inquiry into a certain concept or idea. The question raises a perplexing methodological issue: namely, how does one go about investigating concepts?

It is frequently assumed, though the matter is controversial, that one can determine what knowledge is by considering what the word knowledge means. Although concepts are not the same as words, words—i.e., languages—are the medium in which concepts are displayed. Hence, examination of the ways in which words are used can yield insight into the nature of the concepts associated with them.

An investigation of the concept of knowledge, then, would begin by studying uses of knowledge and cognate expressions in everyday language. Expressions such as know them, know that, know how, know where, know why, and know whether, for example, have been explored in detail, especially since the beginning of the 20th century. As Gilbert Ryle (1900–76) pointed out, there are important differences between know that and know how. The latter expression is normally used to refer to a kind of skill or ability, such as knowing how to swim. One can have such knowledge without being able to explain to other people what it is that one knows in such a case—that is, without being able to convey the same skill. The expression know what is similar to know how in that respect, insofar as one can know what a clarinet sounds like without being able to say what one knows—at least not succinctly. Know that, in contrast, seems to denote the possession of specific pieces of information, and the person who has such knowledge generally can convey it to others. Knowing that the Concordat of Worms was signed in the year 1122 is an example of such knowledge. Ryle argued that, given such differences, some cases of knowing how cannot be reduced to cases of knowing that, and, accordingly, that the kinds of knowledge expressed by the two phrases are independent of each other.

For the most part, epistemology from the ancient Greeks to the present has focused on knowing that. Such knowledge, often referred to as propositional knowledge, raises a number of peculiar epistemological problems, among which is the much-debated issue of what kind of thing one knows when one knows that something is the case. In other words, in sentences of the form "A knows that p"—where "A" is the name of some person and "p" is a sentential clause, such as "snow is white"—what sort of entity does "p" refer to? The list of candidates has included beliefs, propositions, statements, sentences, and utterances of sentences. Although the arguments for and against the various candidates are beyond the scope of this article, two points should be noted here. First, the issue is closely related to the problem of universals—i.e., the problem of whether qualities or properties, such as redness, are abstract objects, mental concepts, or simply names. Second, it is agreed by all sides that one cannot have "knowledge that" of something that is not true. A necessary condition of "A knows that p," therefore, is p.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

1) Discuss about the nature of knowledge.

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13.3 FIVE DISTINCTIONS

13.3.1 Mental and nonmental conceptions of knowledge

Some philosophers have held that knowledge is a state of mind—i.e., a special kind of awareness of things. According to Plato (c. 428–c. 348 BCE), for example, knowing is a mental state akin to, but different from, believing. Contemporary versions of the theory assert that knowing is a

member of a group of mental states that can be arranged in a series according to increasing certitude. At one end of the series would be guessing and conjecturing, for example, which possess the least amount of certitude; in the middle would be thinking, believing, and feeling sure; and at the end would be knowing, the most certain of all such states. Knowledge, in all such views, is a form of consciousness. Accordingly, it is common for proponents of such views to hold that if A knows that p, A must be conscious of what A knows. That is, if A knows that p, A knows that A knows that p.

Beginning in the 20th century, many philosophers rejected the notion that knowledge is a mental state. Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951), for example, said in On Certainty, published posthumously in 1969, that " 'Knowledge' and certainty belong to different categories. They are not two mental states like, say, surmising and being sure." Philosophers who deny that knowledge is a mental state typically point out that it is characteristic of mental states like doubting, being in pain, and having an opinion that people who are in such states are aware that they are in them. Such philosophers then observe that it is possible to know that something is the case without being aware that one knows it. They conclude that it is a mistake to assimilate cases of knowing to cases of doubting, being in pain, and the like.

But if knowing is not a mental state, what is it? Some philosophers have held that knowing cannot be described as a single thing, such as a state of consciousness. Instead, they claim that one can ascribe knowledge to someone, or to oneself, only when certain complex conditions are satisfied, among them certain behavioral conditions. For example, if a person always gives the right answers to questions about a certain topic under test conditions, one would be entitled, on that view, to say that that person has knowledge of that topic. Because knowing is tied to the capacity to behave in certain ways, knowledge is not a mental state, though mental states may be involved in the exercise of the capacity that constitutes knowledge.

A well-known example of such a view was advanced by J.L. Austin (1911–60) in his 1946 paper "Other Minds." Austin claimed that when one says "I know," one is not describing a mental state; in fact, one is not "describing" anything at all. Instead, one is indicating that one is in a position to assert that such and such is the case (one has the proper credentials and reasons) in circumstances where it is necessary to resolve a doubt. When those conditions are satisfied—when one is, in fact, in a position to assert that such and such is the case—one can correctly be said to know.

13.3.2 Occasional and dispositional knowledge

A distinction closely related to the previous one is that between "occurrent" and "dispositional" knowledge. Occurrent knowledge is knowledge of which one is currently aware. If one is working on a problem and suddenly sees the solution, for example, one can be said to have occurrent knowledge of it, because "seeing" the solution involves being aware of or attending to it. In contrast, dispositional knowledge, as the term suggests, is a disposition, or a propensity, to behave in certain ways in certain conditions. Although Smith may not now be thinking of his home address, he certainly knows it in the sense that, if one were to ask him what it is, he could provide it. Thus, one can have knowledge of things of which one is not aware at a given moment.

13.3.3 Priori and a posteriori knowledge

Since at least the 17th century, a sharp distinction has been drawn between a priori knowledge and a posteriori knowledge. The distinction plays an especially important role in the work of David Hume (1711–76) and Immanuel Kant (1724–1804).

The distinction is easily illustrated by means of examples. Assume that the sentence "All Model T Fords are black" is true and compare it with the true sentence "All husbands are married." How would one come to know that those sentences are true? In the case of the second sentence,

the answer is that one knows that it is true by understanding the meanings of the words it contains. Because husband means "married male," it is true by definition that all husbands are married. That kind of knowledge is a priori in the sense that one need not engage in any factual or empirical inquiry in order to obtain it.

In contrast, just such an investigation is necessary in order to know whether the first sentence is true. Unlike the second sentence, simply understanding the words is not enough. Knowledge of the first kind is a posteriori in the sense that it can be obtained only through certain kinds of experience.

The differences between sentences that express a priori knowledge and those that express a posteriori knowledge are sometimes described in terms of four additional distinctions: necessary versus contingent, analytic versus synthetic, tautological versus significant, and logical versus factual. These distinctions are normally spoken of as applying to "propositions," which may be thought of as the contents, or meanings, of sentences that can be either true or false. For example, the English sentence "Snow is white" and the German sentence "Schnee ist weiß" have the same meaning, which is the proposition "Snow is white."

13.3.4 Necessary and contingent propositions

A proposition is said to be necessary if it holds (is true) in all logically possible circumstances or conditions. "All husbands are married" is such a proposition. There are no possible or conceivable conditions in which this proposition is not true (on the assumption, of course, that the words husband and married are taken to mean what they ordinarily mean). In contrast, "All Model T Fords are black" holds in some circumstances (those actually obtaining, which is why the proposition is true), but it is easy to imagine circumstances in which it would not be true. To say, therefore, that a proposition is contingent is to say that it is true in some but not in all possible circumstances. Many necessary propositions, such as "All husbands are married," are a priori—though it has been argued

that some are not (see below Necessary a posteriori propositions)—and most contingent propositions are a posteriori.

13.3.5 Analytic and synthetic propositions

A proposition is said to be analytic if the meaning of the predicate term is contained in the meaning of the subject term. Thus, "All husbands are married" is analytic, because part of the meaning of the term husband is "being married." A proposition is said to be synthetic if this is not so. "All Model T Fords are black" is synthetic, since "black" is not included in the meaning of Model T Ford. Some analytic propositions are a priori, and most synthetic propositions are a posteriori. Those distinctions were used by Kant to ask one of the most important questions in the history of epistemology—namely, whether a priori synthetic judgments are possible (see below Modern philosophy: Immanuel Kant).

13.3.6 Tautological and significant propositions

A proposition is said to be tautological if its constituent terms repeat themselves or if they can be reduced to terms that do, so that the proposition is of the form "a = a" ("a is identical to a"). Such propositions convey no information about the world, and, accordingly, they are said to be trivial, or empty of cognitive import. A proposition is said to be significant if its constituent terms are such that the proposition does provide new information about the world.

The distinction between tautological and significant propositions figures importantly in the history of the philosophy of religion. In the so-called ontological argument for the existence of God, St. Anselm of Canterbury (1033/34–1109) attempted to derive the significant conclusion that God exists from the tautological premise that God is the only perfect being together with the premise that no being can be perfect unless it exists. As Hume and Kant pointed out, however, it is fallacious to derive a proposition with existential import from a tautology, and it is now generally agreed that from a tautology alone, it is impossible to derive

any significant proposition. Tautological propositions are generally a priori, necessary, and analytic, and significant propositions are generally a posteriori, contingent, and synthetic.

13.3.7 Logical and factual propositions

A logical proposition is any proposition that can be reduced by replacement of its constituent terms to a proposition expressing a logical truth—e.g., to a proposition such as "If p and q, then p." The proposition "All husbands are married," for example, is logically equivalent to the proposition "If something is married and it is male, then it is married." In contrast, the semantic and syntactic features of factual propositions make it impossible to reduce them to logical truths. Logical propositions are often a priori, always necessary, and typically analytic. Factual propositions are generally a posteriori, contingent, and synthetic.

13.3.8 Necessary a posteriori propositions

The distinctions reviewed above have been explored extensively in contemporary philosophy. In one such study, Naming and Necessity (1972), the American philosopher Saul Kripke argued that, contrary to traditional assumptions, not all necessary propositions are known a priori; some are knowable only a posteriori. According to Kripke, the view that all necessary propositions are a priori relies on a conflation of the concepts of necessity and analyticity. Because all analytic propositions are both a priori and necessary, most philosophers have assumed without much reflection that all necessary propositions are a priori. But that is a mistake, argued Kripke. His point is usually illustrated by means of a type of proposition known as an "identity" statement—i.e., a statement of the form "a = a." Thus, consider the true identity statements "Venus is Venus" and "The morning star is the evening star." Whereas "Venus is Venus" is knowable a priori, "The morning star [i.e., Venus] is the evening star [i.e., Venus]" is not. It cannot be known merely through reflection, prior to any experience. In fact, the statement was not known until the ancient Babylonians

discovered, through astronomical observation, that the heavenly body observed in the morning is the same as the heavenly body observed in the evening. Hence, "The morning star is the evening star" is a posteriori. But it is also necessary, because, like "Venus is Venus," it says only that a particular object, Venus, is identical to itself, and it is impossible to imagine circumstances in which Venus is not the same as Venus. Other types of propositions that are both necessary and a posteriori, according to Kripke, are statements of material origin, such as "This table is made of (a particular piece of) wood," and statements of natural-kind essence, such as "Water is H_2O." It is important to note that Kripke's arguments, though influential, have not been universally accepted, and the existence of necessary a posteriori propositions continues to be a much-disputed issue.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

1) Describe Mental and nonmental conceptions of knowledge?

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2) What is meant by Occasional and dispositional knowledge?

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3) Discuss the priori and a posteriori knowledge?

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4) Describe Necessary and contingent propositions?

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5)   What is Analytic and synthetic propositions?

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6) What is Tautological and significant propositions?

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7)   Discuss the Logical and factual propositions?

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8)   What is the Necessary a posteriori propositions?

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13.4 DESCRIPTION AND JUSTIFICATION

Notes

Throughout its very long history, epistemology has pursued two different sorts of task: description and justification. The two tasks of description and justification are not inconsistent, and indeed they are often closely connected in the writings of contemporary philosophers.

In its descriptive task, epistemology aims to depict accurately certain features of the world, including the contents of the human mind, and to determine what kinds of mental content, if any, ought to count as knowledge. An example of a descriptive epistemological system is the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl (1859–1938). Husserl's aim was to give an exact description of the phenomenon of intentionality, or the feature of conscious mental states by virtue of which they are always "about," or "directed toward," some object. In his posthumously published masterpiece Philosophical Investigations (1953), Wittgenstein stated that "explanation must be replaced by description," and much of his later work was devoted to carrying out that task. Other examples of descriptive epistemology can be found in the work of G.E. Moore (1873–1958), H.H. Price (1899–1984), and Bertrand Russell (1872–1970), each of whom considered whether there are ways of apprehending the world that do not depend on any form of inference and, if so, what that apprehension consists of (see below Perception and knowledge). Closely related to that work were attempts by various philosophers, including Moritz Schlick (1882–1936), Otto Neurath (1882–1945), and A.J. Ayer (1910–89), to identify "protocol sentences"—i.e., statements that describe what is immediately given in experience without inference.

Epistemology has a second, justificatory, or normative, function. Philosophers concerned with that function ask themselves what kinds of belief (if any) can be rationally justified. The question has normative import since it asks, in effect, what one ought ideally to believe. (In that respect, epistemology parallels ethics, which asks normative questions about how one ought ideally to act.) The normative approach quickly takes one into the central domains of epistemology, raising questions such as: "Is knowledge identical with justified true belief?," "Is the

difference between knowledge and belief merely a matter of probability?," and "What is justification?"

13.5 KNOWLEDGE AND CERTAINTY

Philosophers have disagreed sharply about the complex relationship between the concepts of knowledge and certainty. Are they the same? If not, how do they differ? Is it possible for someone to know that p without being certain that p, or to be certain that p without knowing that p? Is it possible for p to be certain without being known by someone, or to be known by someone without being certain?

In his 1941 paper "Certainty," Moore observed that the word certain is commonly used in four main types of idiom: "I feel certain that," "I am certain that," "I know for certain that," and "It is certain that." He pointed out that there is at least one use of "I know for certain that p" and "It is certain that p" on which neither of those sentences can be true unless p is true. A sentence such as "I knew for certain that he would come, but he didn't," for example, is self-contradictory, whereas "I felt certain he would come, but he didn't" is not. On the basis of such considerations, Moore contended that "a thing can't be certain unless it is known." It is that fact that distinguishes the concepts of certainty and truth: "A thing that nobody knows may quite well be true but cannot possibly be certain." Moore concluded that a necessary condition for the truth of "It is certain that p" is that somebody should know that p. Moore is therefore among the philosophers who answer in the negative the question of whether it is possible for p to be certain without being known.

Moore also argued that to say "A knows that p is true" cannot be a sufficient condition for "It is certain that p." If it were, it would follow that in any case in which at least one person did know that p is true, it would always be false for anyone to say "It is not certain that p," but clearly this is not so. If one says that it is not certain that Smith is still alive, one is not thereby committing to the statement that nobody knows that Smith is still alive. Moore is thus among the philosophers who

would answer in the affirmative the question of whether it is possible for p to be known without being certain. Other philosophers have disagreed, arguing that if a person's knowledge that p is occurrent rather than merely dispositional, it implies certainty that p.

The most radical position on such matters was the one taken by Wittgenstein in On Certainty. Wittgenstein held that knowledge is radically different from certitude and that neither concept entails the other. It is thus possible to be in a state of knowledge without being certain and to be certain without having knowledge. For him, certainty is to be identified not with apprehension, or "seeing," but with a kind of acting. A proposition is certain, in other words, when its truth (and the truth of many related propositions) is presupposed in the various social activities of a community. As he said, "Giving grounds, justifying the evidence comes to an end—but the end is not certain propositions striking us immediately as true—i.e., it is not a kind of seeing on our part; it is our acting which lies at the bottom of the language game."

13.6 THE ORIGINS OF KNOWLEDGE

Philosophers wish to know not only what knowledge is but also how it arises. That desire is motivated in part by the assumption that an investigation into the origins of knowledge can shed light on its nature. Accordingly, such investigations have been one of the major themes of epistemology from the time of the ancient Greeks to the present. Plato's Republic contains one of the earliest systematic arguments to show that sense experience cannot be a source of knowledge. The argument begins with the assertion that ordinary persons have a clear grasp of certain concepts—e.g., the concept of equality. In other words, people know what it means to say that a and b are equal, no matter what a and b are. But where does such knowledge come from? Consider the claim that two pieces of wood are of equal length. A close visual inspection would show them to differ slightly, and the more detailed the inspection, the more disparity one would notice. It follows that visual experience cannot be the source of the concept of equality. Plato applied such reasoning to all five senses and concluded that the corresponding knowledge cannot

originate in sense experience. As in the Meno, Plato concluded that such knowledge is "recollected" by the soul from an earlier existence.

It is highly significant that Plato should use mathematical (specifically, geometrical) examples to show that knowledge does not originate in sense experience; indeed, it is a sign of his perspicacity. As the subsequent history of philosophy reveals, mathematics provides the strongest case for Plato's view. Mathematical entities—e.g., perfect triangles, disembodied surfaces and edges, lines without thickness, and extensionless points—are abstractions, none of which exists in the physical world apprehended by the senses. Knowledge of such entities, it is argued, must therefore come from some other source.

Innate and acquired knowledge

The problem of the origins of knowledge has engendered two historically important kinds of debate. One of them concerns the question of whether knowledge is innate—i.e., present in the mind, in some sense, from birth—or acquired through experience. The matter has been important not only in philosophy but also, since the mid-20th century, in linguistics and psychology. The American linguist Noam Chomsky, for example, argued that the ability of young (developmentally normal) children to acquire any human language on the basis of invariably incomplete and even incorrect data is proof of the existence of innate linguistic structures. In contrast, the experimental psychologist B.F. Skinner (1904–90), a leading figure in the movement known as behaviourism, tried to show that all knowledge, including linguistic knowledge, is the product of learning through environmental conditioning by means of processes of reinforcement and reward. There also have been a range of "compromise" theories, which claim that humans have both innate and acquired knowledge.

Rationalism and empiricism

The second debate related to the problem of the origins of knowledge is that between rationalism and empiricism. According to rationalists, the ultimate source of human knowledge is the faculty of reason; according

to empiricists, it is experience. The nature of reason is a difficult problem, but it is generally assumed to be a unique feature or faculty of the mind through which truths about reality may be grasped. Such a thesis is double-sided: it holds, on the one hand, that reality is in principle knowable and, on the other hand, that there is a human faculty (or set of faculties) capable of knowing it. One thus might define rationalism as the theory that there is an isomorphism (a mirroring relationship) between reason and reality that makes it possible for the former to apprehend the latter just as it is. Rationalists contend that if such a correspondence were lacking, it would be impossible for human beings to understand the world.

Almost no philosopher has been a strict, thoroughgoing empiricist—i.e., one who holds that literally all knowledge comes from experience. Even John Locke (1632–1704), considered the father of modern empiricism, thought that there is some knowledge that does not derive from experience, though he held that it was "trifling" and empty of content. Hume held similar views.

Empiricism thus generally acknowledges the existence of a priori knowledge but denies its significance. Accordingly, it is more accurately defined as the theory that all significant or factual propositions are known through experience. Even defined in that way, however, it continues to contrast significantly with rationalism. Rationalists hold that human beings have knowledge that is prior to experience and yet significant. Empiricists deny that that is possible.

The term experience is usually understood to refer to ordinary physical sensations—or, in Hume's parlance, "impressions." For strict empiricists, that definition has the implication that the human mind is passive—a "tabula rasa" that receives impressions and more or less records them as they are.

The conception of the mind as a tabula rasa posed serious challenges for empiricists. It raised the question, for example, of how one can have

knowledge of entities, such as dragons, that cannot be found in experience. The response of classical empiricists such as Locke and Hume was to show that the complex concept of a dragon can be reduced to simple concepts (such as wings, the body of a snake, the head of a horse), all of which derive from impressions. On such a view, the mind is still considered primarily passive, but it is conceded that the mind has the power to combine simple ideas into complex ones.

But there are further difficulties. Empiricists must explain how abstract ideas, such as the concept of a perfect triangle, can be reduced to elements apprehended by the senses when no perfect triangles are found in nature. They must also give an account of how general concepts are possible. It is obvious that one does not experience "humankind" through the senses, yet such concepts are meaningful, and propositions containing them are known to be true. The same difficulty applies to colour concepts. Some empiricists have argued that one arrives at the concept of red, for example, by mentally abstracting from one's experience of individual red items. The difficulty with that suggestion is that one cannot know what to count as an experience of red unless one already has a concept of red in mind. If it is replied that the concept of red and others like it are acquired when we are taught the word red in childhood, a similar difficulty arises. The teaching process, according to the empiricist, consists of pointing to a red object and telling the child "This is red." That process is repeated a number of times until the child forms the concept of red by abstracting from the series of examples shown. But such examples are necessarily very limited: they do not include even a fraction of the shades of red the child might ever see. Consequently, it is possible for the child to abstract or generalize from them in a variety of different ways, only some of which would correspond to the way the community of adult language users happens to apply the term red. How then does the child know which abstraction is the "right" one to draw from the examples? According to the rationalist, the only way to account for the child's selection of the correct concept is to suppose that at least part of it is innate.

Skepticism

Many philosophers, as well as many people studying philosophy for the first time, have been struck by the seemingly indecisive nature of philosophical argumentation. For every argument there seems to be a counterargument, and for every position a counterposition. To a considerable extent, skepticism is born of such reflection. Some ancient skeptics contended that all arguments are equally bad and, accordingly, that nothing can be proved. The contemporary American philosopher Benson Mates, who claimed to be a modern representative of that tradition, held that all philosophical arguments are equally good.

Ironically, skepticism itself is a kind of philosophy, and the question has been raised whether it manages to escape its own criticisms. The answer to that question depends on what is meant by skepticism. Historically, the term has referred to a variety of different views and practices. But however it is understood, skepticism represents a challenge to the claim that human beings possess or can acquire knowledge.

In giving even that minimal characterization, it is important to emphasize that skeptics and nonskeptics alike accept the same definition of knowledge, one that implies two things:

(1) if A knows that p, then p is true, and

(2) if A knows that p, then A cannot be mistaken (i.e., it is logically impossible that A is wrong. Thus, if people say that they know Smith will arrive at nine o'clock and Smith does not arrive at nine o'clock, then they must withdraw their claim to know. They might say instead that they thought they knew or that they felt sure, but they cannot rationally continue to insist that they knew if what they claimed to know turns out to be false.

Given the foregoing definition of knowledge, in order for the skeptical challenge to succeed, it is not necessary to show that the person who

claims to know that p is in fact mistaken; it is enough to show that a mistake is logically possible. That condition corresponds to the second of the two clauses mentioned above. If skeptics can establish that the clause is false in the case of a person's claim to know that p, they will have proved that the person does not know that p. Thus arises skeptics' practice of searching for possible counterexamples to ordinary knowledge claims.

One variety of radical skepticism claims that there is no such thing as knowledge of an external world. According to that view, it is at least logically possible that one is merely a brain in a vat and that one's sense experiences of apparently real objects (e.g., the sight of a tree) are produced by carefully engineered electrical stimulations. Again, given the definition of knowledge above, that kind of argument is sound, because it shows that there is a logical gap between knowledge claims about the external world and the sense experiences that can be adduced as evidence to support them. No matter how much evidence of this sort one has, it is always logically possible that the corresponding knowledge claim is false.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

    1. Discuss the Description and justification.

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    2. What is the relation of Knowledge and certainty?

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3.   What are the origins of knowledge?

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13.7 LET US SUM UP

The epistemological interests of analytic philosophers in the first half of the 20th century were largely focused on the relationship between knowledge and perception. The major figures in that period were Russell, Moore, H.H. Price (1899–1984), C.D. Broad (1887–1971), Ayer, and H. Paul Grice (1913–88). Although their views differed considerably, all of them were advocates of a general doctrine known as sense-data theory.

The technical term sense-data is sometimes explained by means of examples. If one is hallucinating and sees pink rats, one is having a certain visual sensation of rats of a certain colour, though there are no real rats present. The sensation is what is called a "sense-datum." The image one sees with one's eyes closed after looking fixedly at a bright light (an afterimage) is another example. Even in cases of normal vision, however, one can be said to be apprehending sense-data. For instance, when one looks at a round penny from a certain angle, the penny will seem to have an elliptical shape. In such a case, there is an elliptical sense-datum in one's visual field, though the penny itself continues to be round. The last example was held by Broad, Price, and Moore to be particularly important, for it seems to make a strong case for holding that one always perceives sense-data, whether one's perception is normal or abnormal.

In each of those examples, according to defenders of sense-data theory, there is something of which one is "directly" aware, meaning that one's awareness of it is immediate and does not depend on any inference or judgment. A sense-datum is thus frequently defined as an object of direct perception. According to Broad, Price, and Ayer, sense-data differ from physical objects in that they always have the properties they appear to

have; i.e., they cannot appear to have properties they do not really have. The problem for the philosopher who accepts sense-data is then to show how, on the basis of such private sensations, one can be justified in believing that there are physical objects that exist independently of one's perceptions. Russell in particular tried to show, in such works as The Problems of Philosophy (1912) and Our Knowledge of the External World (1914), that knowledge of the external world could be logically constructed out of sense-data.

13.8 KEY WORDS

Tautological: In logic, a tautology is a formula or assertion that is true in every possible interpretation. An example of a tautology is " or". A less abstract example is "The ball is green, or the ball is not green". It is either one or the other—it cannot be both and there are no other possibilities

Analytic: Analytics is the discovery, interpretation, and communication of meaningful patterns in data. It also entails applying data patterns towards effective decision making. In other words, analytics can be understood as the connective tissue between data and effective decision making within an organization.

Synthetic: (of a proposition) having truth or falsity determinable by recourse to experience.

13.9 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

1) Describe Mental and nonmental conceptions of knowledge?
2) What is meant by Occasional and dispositional knowledge?
3) Discuss the priori and a posteriori knowledge?
4) Describe Necessary and contingent propositions?
5) What is Analytic and synthetic propositions?
6) What is Tautological and significant propositions?
7) Discuss the Logical and factual propositions?
8) What is the Necessary a posteriori proposition?
9) Discuss the Description and justification.
10) What is the relation of Knowledge and certainty?
11) What are the origins of knowledge?

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13.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1) See Section 13.2

Check Your Progress 2

1) See Sub Section 13.3.1
2) See Sub Section 13.3.2
3) See Sub Section 13.3.3
4) See Sub Section 13.3.4
5) See Sub Section 13.3.5
6) See Sub Section 13.3.6
7) See Sub Section 13.3.7
8) See Sub Section 13.3.8

Check Your Progress 3

1) See Section 13.4
2) See Section 13.5
3) See Section 13.6

UNIT 14: LIMITS OF KNOWLEDGE

STRUCTURE

14.0 OBJECTIVES

Having dealt with the methods adopted by classical as well as modern thinkers in the last three units, we have also become aware that the foundationalist method of the moderns is highly problematic. And a purely coherentist method is not satisfactory either. In this unit we shall deal with two new developments, namely the idea of naturalized epistemology and the Hypothetico Deductive method of Karl Popper. By the end of this unit, you will be familiar with:

- The basic idea of naturalized epistemology
- A preliminary understanding of the hypothetico-deductive (H-D) method
- The distinction between discovery and justification
- Some Implications of Naturalized Epistemology.

14.1 INTRODUCTION

Modern Western philosophy is beset with a paradox: the tremendous explosion of scientific knowledge on the one hand, and an unscientific approach to theory of knowledge, on the other. Their approach to theory of knowledge, if not unscientific in the sense of going against science, is unscientific at least in the sense that it was not based on what practicing scientists actually do in acquiring knowledge. Naturalized epistemology as well as the Popperian method can be seen as attempts to overcome this paradox of modern epistemology. Both seek to learn from the actual practice of scientists to see how knowledge –understood as beliefs that have been justified or given reasons for believing to be true— is acquired and suggest that epistemology should be modelled on their practice. Let us see these in more detail.

Knowledge is a familiarity, awareness, or understanding of someone or something, such as facts, information, descriptions, or skills, which is acquired through experience or education by perceiving, discovering, or learning.

Knowledge can refer to a theoretical or practical understanding of a subject. It can be implicit (as with practical skill or expertise) or explicit (as with the theoretical understanding of a subject); it can be more or less formal or systematic. In philosophy, the study of knowledge is called epistemology; the philosopher Plato famously defined knowledge as "justified true belief", though this definition is now thought by some analytic philosophers to be problematic because of the Gettier problems, while others defend the platonic definition. However, several definitions of knowledge and theories to explain it exist.

Knowledge acquisition involves complex cognitive processes: perception, communication, and reasoning; while knowledge is also said to be related to the capacity of acknowledgement in human beings.

14.2 THEORIES OF KNOWLEDGE

Notes

The eventual demarcation of philosophy from science was made possible by the notion that philosophy's core was "theory of knowledge," a theory distinct from the sciences because it was their foundation... Without this idea of a "theory of knowledge," it is hard to imagine what "philosophy" could have been in the age of modern science.

— Richard Rorty, Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature

The definition of knowledge is a matter of ongoing debate among philosophers in the field of epistemology. The classical definition, described but not ultimately endorsed by Plato, specifies that a statement must meet three criteria in order to be considered knowledge: it must be justified, true, and believed. Some claim that these conditions are not sufficient, as Gettier case examples allegedly demonstrate. There are a number of alternatives proposed, including Robert Nozick's arguments for a requirement that knowledge 'tracks the truth' and Simon Blackburn's additional requirement that we do not want to say that those who meet any of these conditions 'through a defect, flaw, or failure' have knowledge. Richard Kirkham suggests that our definition of knowledge requires that the evidence for the belief necessitates its truth.

In contrast to this approach, Ludwig Wittgenstein observed, following Moore's paradox, that one can say "He believes it, but it isn't so," but not "He knows it, but it isn't so." He goes on to argue that these do not correspond to distinct mental states, but rather to distinct ways of talking about conviction. What is different here is not the mental state of the speaker, but the activity in which they are engaged. For example, on this account, to know that the kettle is boiling is not to be in a particular state of mind, but to perform a particular task with the statement that the kettle is boiling. Wittgenstein sought to bypass the difficulty of definition by looking to the way "knowledge" is used in natural languages. He saw knowledge as a case of a family resemblance. Following this idea, "knowledge" has been reconstructed as a cluster concept that points out relevant features but that is not adequately captured by any definition.

14.3 COMMUNICATING KNOWLEDGE

Symbolic representations can be used to indicate meaning and can be thought of as a dynamic process. Hence the transfer of the symbolic representation can be viewed as one ascription process whereby knowledge can be transferred. Other forms of communication include observation and imitation, verbal exchange, and audio and video recordings. Philosophers of language and semioticians construct and analyze theories of knowledge transfer or communication.

While many would agree that one of the most universal and significant tools for the transfer of knowledge is writing and reading (of many kinds), argument over the usefulness of the written word exists nonetheless, with some scholars skeptical of its impact on societies. In his collection of essays Technopoly, Neil Postman demonstrates the argument against the use of writing through an excerpt from Plato's work Phaedrus (Postman, Neil (1992) Technopoly, Vintage, New York, p. 73). In this excerpt, the scholar Socrates recounts the story of Thamus, the Egyptian king and Theuth the inventor of the written word. In this story, Theuth presents his new invention "writing" to King Thamus, telling Thamus that his new invention "will improve both the wisdom and memory of the Egyptians" (Postman, Neil (1992) Technopoly, Vintage, New York, p. 74). King Thamus is skeptical of this new invention and rejects it as a tool of recollection rather than retained knowledge. He argues that the written word will infect the Egyptian people with fake knowledge as they will be able to attain facts and stories from an external source and will no longer be forced to mentally retain large quantities of knowledge themselves (Postman, Neil (1992) Technopoly, Vintage, New York, p. 74).

Classical early modern theories of knowledge, especially those advancing the influential empiricism of the philosopher John Locke, were based implicitly or explicitly on a model of the mind which likened ideas to words. This analogy between language and thought laid the foundation for a graphic conception of knowledge in which the mind was treated as a table, a container of content, that had to be stocked with facts

reduced to letters, numbers or symbols. This created a situation in which the spatial alignment of words on the page carried great cognitive weight, so much so that educators paid very close attention to the visual structure of information on the page and in notebooks.

Major libraries today can have millions of books of knowledge (in addition to works of fiction). It is only recently that audio and video technology for recording knowledge has become available and the use of these still requires replay equipment and electricity. Verbal teaching and handing down of knowledge is limited to those who would have contact with the transmitter or someone who could interpret written work. Writing is still the most available and most universal of all forms of recording and transmitting knowledge. It stands unchallenged as mankind's primary technology of knowledge transfer down through the ages and to all cultures and languages of the world.

14.4 HARAWAY ON SITUATED KNOWLEDGE

Situated knowledges" redirects here. For the Donna Haraway essay.

Situated knowledge is knowledge specific to a particular situation. It was used by Donna Haraway as an extension of the feminist approaches of "successor science" suggested by Sandra Harding, one which "offers a more adequate, richer, better account of a world, in order to live in it well and in critical, reflexive relation to our own as well as others' practices of domination and the unequal parts of privilege and oppression that makes up all positions." This situation partially transforms science into a narrative, which Arturo Escobar explains as, "neither fictions nor supposed facts." This narrative of situation is historical textures woven of fact and fiction, and as Escobar explains further, "even the most neutral scientific domains are narratives in this sense," insisting that rather than a purpose dismissing science as a trivial matter of contingency, "it is to treat (this narrative) in the most serious way, without succumbing to its mystification as 'the truth' or to the ironic skepticism common to many critiques."

Haraway's argument stems from the limitations of the human perception, as well as the overemphasis of the sense of vision in science. According to Haraway, vision in science has been, "used to signify a leap out of the marked body and into a conquering gaze from nowhere." This is the "gaze that mythically inscribes all the marked bodies that makes the unmarked category claim the power to see and not be seen, to represent while escaping representation." This causes a limitation of views in the position of science itself as a potential player in the creation of knowledge, resulting in a position of "modest witness". This is what Haraway terms a "god trick", or the aforementioned representation while escaping representation. In order to avoid this, "Haraway perpetuates a tradition of thought which emphasizes the importance of the subject in terms of both ethical and political accountability".

Some methods of generating knowledge, such as trial and error, or learning from experience, tend to create highly situational knowledge. Situational knowledge is often embedded in language, culture, or traditions. This integration of situational knowledge is an allusion to the community, and its attempts at collecting subjective perspectives into an embodiment "of views from somewhere."

Even though Haraway's arguments are largely based on feminist studies, this idea of different worlds, as well as the skeptic stance of situated knowledge is present in the main arguments of post-structuralism. Fundamentally, both argue the contingency of knowledge on the presence of history; power, and geography, as well as the rejection of universal rules or laws or elementary structures; and the idea of power as an inherited trait of objectification

Check Your Progress 1

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

1. Write about the Theories of knowledge?

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2. Discuss the Communicating knowledge.

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3. Discuss the Haraway on situated knowledge

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14.5 PARTIAL KNOWLEDGE

One discipline of epistemology focuses on partial knowledge. In most cases, it is not possible to understand an information domain exhaustively; our knowledge is always incomplete or partial. Most real problems have to be solved by taking advantage of a partial understanding of the problem context and problem data, unlike the typical math problems one might solve at school, where all data is given and one is given a complete understanding of formulas necessary to solve them.

This idea is also present in the concept of bounded rationality which assumes that in real life situations people often have a limited amount of information and make decisions accordingly.

14.6 SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE

The development of the scientific method has made a significant contribution to how knowledge of the physical world and its phenomena is acquired. To be termed scientific, a method of inquiry must be based

on gathering observable and measurable evidence subject to specific principles of reasoning and experimentation. The scientific method consists of the collection of data through observation and experimentation, and the formulation and testing of hypotheses. Science, and the nature of scientific knowledge have also become the subject of Philosophy. As science itself has developed, scientific knowledge now includes a broader usage in the soft sciences such as biology and the social sciences – discussed elsewhere as meta-epistemology, or genetic epistemology, and to some extent related to "theory of cognitive development". Note that "epistemology" is the study of knowledge and how it is acquired. Science is "the process used every day to logically complete thoughts through inference of facts determined by calculated experiments." Sir Francis Bacon was critical in the historical development of the scientific method; his works established and popularized an inductive methodology for scientific inquiry. His famous aphorism, "knowledge is power", is found in the Meditations Sacrae (1597).

Until recent times, at least in the Western tradition, it was simply taken for granted that knowledge was something possessed only by humans – and probably adult humans at that. Sometimes the notion might stretch to Society-as-such, as in (e. g.) "the knowledge possessed by the Coptic culture" (as opposed to its individual members), but that was not assured either. Nor was it usual to consider unconscious knowledge in any systematic way until this approach was popularized by Freud.

Other biological domains where "knowledge" might be said to reside, include: (i) the immune system, and (ii) in the DNA of the genetic code. See the list of four "epistemological domains": Popper, (1975); and Traill (2008: Table S, p. 31) – also references by both to Niels Jerne.

Such considerations seem to call for a separate definition of "knowledge" to cover the biological systems. For biologists, knowledge must be usefully available to the system, though that system need not be conscious. Thus the criteria seem to be:

- The system should apparently be dynamic and self-organizing (unlike a mere book on its own).
- The knowledge must constitute some sort of representation of "the outside world", or ways of dealing with it (directly or indirectly).
- Some way must exist for the system to access this information quickly enough for it to be useful.
- Scientific knowledge may not involve a claim to certainty, maintaining skepticism means that a scientist will never be absolutely certain when they are correct and when they are not. It is thus an irony of proper scientific method that one must doubt even when correct, in the hopes that this practice will lead to greater convergence on the truth in general.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

1. What is Partial knowledge?

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2. Write about Scientific knowledge

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14.7 RELIGIOUS MEANING OF KNOWLEDGE

In many expressions of Christianity, such as Catholicism and Anglicanism, knowledge is one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The Old Testament's tree of the knowledge of good and evil contained the knowledge that separated Man from God: "And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil..." (Genesis 3:22)

In Gnosticism, divine knowledge or gnosis is hoped to be attained.

विद्या दान (Vidya Daan) i.e. knowledge sharing is a major part of Daan, a tenet of all Dharmic Religions. Hindu Scriptures present two kinds of knowledge, Paroksh Gyan and Prataksh Gyan. Paroksh Gyan (also spelled Paroksha-Jnana) is secondhand knowledge: knowledge obtained from books, hearsay, etc. Pratyaksh Gyan (also spelled Pratyaksha-Jnana) is the knowledge borne of direct experience, i.e., knowledge that one discovers for oneself. Jnana yoga ("path of knowledge") is one of three main types of yoga expounded by Krishna in the Bhagavad Gita. (It is compared and contrasted with Bhakti Yoga and Karma yoga.)

In Islam, knowledge (Arabic: علم, ʿilm) is given great significance. "The Knowing" (al-ʿAlīm) is one of the 99 names reflecting distinct attributes of God. The Qur'an asserts that knowledge comes from God (2:239) and various hadith encourage the acquisition of knowledge. Muhammad is reported to have said "Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave" and "Verily the men of knowledge are the inheritors of the prophets". Islamic scholars, theologians and jurists are often given the title alim, meaning "knowledgeble".

In Jewish tradition, knowledge (Hebrew: דעת da'ath) is considered one of the most valuable traits a person can acquire. Observant Jews recite three times a day in the Amidah "Favor us with knowledge, understanding and discretion that come from you. Exalted are you, Existent-One, the gracious giver of knowledge." The Tanakh states, "A wise man gains power, and a man of knowledge maintains power", and "knowledge is chosen above gold".

As a measure of religiosity in sociology of religion

According to the sociologist Mervin F. Verbit, knowledge may be understood as one of the key components of religiosity. Religious knowledge itself may be broken down into four dimensions:

- content
- frequency
- intensity
- centrality

The content of one's religious knowledge may vary from person to person, as will the degree to which it may occupy the person's mind (frequency), the intensity of the knowledge, and the centrality of the information (in that religious tradition, or to that individual)

14.8 THE CRISIS OF MODERN EPISTEMOLOGY

The famous philosophical schools of empiricism as well as rationalism are good examples of philosophical reflection that neglects the actual process of coming to knowledge. The empiricists talk of knowledge through the senses and the rationalists proclaim knowledge through reason. But both fail to see that we have very little (if any) knowledge that actually comes to us either from the senses or from reason alone. Most of our knowledge is the result of joint working of the senses as well as reason. Ignoring this, they tried to build their foundationalist epistemologies. Foundationalism, as we have seen in Unit 2 of this Block, was the attempt to rebuild the whole gigantic ship of our knowledge using only those limited number of beliefs that are absolutely certain, indubitable (i.e., that which cannot be doubted) and which will need no correction. In other words, the vast body of beliefs that we ordinarily take to be true was to be given a go-by until they were shown to be firmly built on these indubitable foundational beliefs. Foundationalism was an attempt to overcome the skeptical challenge to knowledge. Given that both the empiricists and rationalists were foundationalists who attempted to overcome skepticism, the main difference between them consisted in what each took to be foundational:

for the one, sense experience was foundational and for the other undeniable truths of reason (like Descartes' cogito) were foundational. With the eventual realization that the whole edifice of our knowledge cannot be rebuilt from the beginning, that too on indubitable truths, disillusionment was bound to set in.

Disillusionment with foundationalism was not the only crisis faced by modern epistemology. There was also the sense that it was powerless even to carry out its main task of adjudicating cognitive disputes. Epistemology was seen by the modern thinkers in the role of a judge whose responsibility it was to pass judgements on candidates to truth. Instead, it was seen to engender disputes within its own ranks. For example, how does one adjudicate between empiricism and rationalism? The result of such disputes is that in spite of its professed goals, the fate of modern epistemology became like that of a village panchayat (originally set up to resolve the conflicts of others in the village) where the judges, instead of resolving the conflict, themselves come to blows. It is against these and other crises faced by modern epistemology that we must see the emergence of Naturalized Epistemology.

14.9 NATURALIZED EPISTEMOLOGY

One cannot discuss the naturalistic turn of contemporary epistemology without taking the name of W.V. Quine. His 1969 essay, "Epistemology Naturalized" is a landmark. This essay begins with the foundationalist attempts of the empiricists to re-build the ship of scientific knowledge on the firm foundations of sense experience. Given that we are sure of our sense experience, if all other knowledge could be derived from these experiences, then the sceptic would be put in his place. This was the hope.

Quine argues that all attempts at rebuilding the body of scientific knowledge in this manner have failed. Given this failure of traditional epistemology, Quine suggests that such attempts be given up. In place of such epistemology we need to re-conceive epistemology in a new way. His suggestion is that in the new setting, epistemology be seen as an

examination of how we come to have our understanding of the world from the sensory stimulations we receive. This is a factual question to be investigated by psychology and not a matter for armchair speculation. It is for this reason that he makes the bold claim that "Epistemology, or something like it, simply falls into place as a chapter of psychology and hence of natural science." A "conspicuous difference between old epistemology and the epistemological enterprise in this new psychological setting is that we can now make free use of empirical psychology," says Quine. Obviously such a view of epistemology goes against the view that epistemology provides the foundations for sciences. From this initial suggestion of Quine, naturalized epistemology has developed in various ways. But we will not discuss them all. In saying that epistemology simply falls into a chapter of science, Quine would seem to be advocating that we bid farewell to traditional epistemology and replace it with psychology. This view is known as Replacement Naturalism. Replacement Naturalism, however, is beset with difficulties. The most important difficulty was perhaps pointed out by Hilary Putnam: it eliminates the normative or evaluative dimension of epistemology. Notions such as a belief being "justified", being "rationally acceptable" are fundamental to any theory of knowledge. What is important is to notice that these notions are unmistakably normative.

Without such normative notions there cannot be any epistemology. The biggest problem with naturalized epistemology, according to Putnam, is that it tends to eliminate such normative notions and focuses exclusively on matters of fact, i.e., of how we come to have the beliefs we have. Without the normative, the notion of truth itself disappears since there is no way of arriving at true beliefs; without the notion of truth the notion of evidence disappears since there is nothing to distinguish "right" kind of evidence from others. For these and other reasons, replacement naturalism is not a popular view today. What is even more remarkable is that in spite of his recommendation to replace epistemology with a branch of natural science, not only has Quine himself never followed his own suggestion. He has always pursued normative investigations in his epistemological carrier. In his later writings, especially in Pursuit of

Truth, Quine has toned down his earlier view of replacement naturalism. A more modest and more popular form of naturalism is called Cooperative Naturalism. This view does not seek to replace epistemology with psychology.

It holds that while evaluative questions are essential to epistemology, empirical results from sciences are important and useful for addressing evaluative questions. It holds that empirical findings concerning our psychological and biological limitations and abilities cannot fail to be relevant to the study of human knowledge. Moreover, it can be shown and has been argued that a purely a priori armchair approach to epistemology is more an aberration of modern philosophy than the norm. Aristotle and Aquinas, for example, begin their epistemology with a psychology of the human knower. In other words, attention to psychology needs to be seen as necessary for epistemology, not as replacing it. The basic difficulty with Cooperative naturalism seem to be that while it rightly acknowledges the role of psychological findings in the study of human knowledge, its relation to the traditionally important question of justification of knowledge or the relationship between belief and evidence remains unclear. It is here that a broader understanding of naturalized epistemology is needed than the views regarding the role of psychology in human knowledge. Such a view can be found in James Maffie's survey article, "Recent Work on Naturalized Epistemology" (1990). Maffie identifies the distinguishing feature of naturalized epistemology to be the affirmation of continuity between science and epistemology. This is a broad characterization that lends itself to further elaborations. It could even be considered as a version of cooperative naturalism, although its concern is with sciences in general than only with psychology. Maffie discusses various kinds of continuity between sciences and epistemology. We shall limit our discussion to two such continuities: the methodological and the contextual. These can be seen as responses to the two crises we have mentioned: methodological continuity as a response to internal conflicts and contextual continuity as a response to the crisis of foundationalism.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

1. What is Religious meaning of knowledge?

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2. Discuss The Crisis of Modern Epistemology

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3. What is meant by Naturalized Epistemology?

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14.10 METHODOLOGICAL CONTINUITY

Continuity of method between sciences and epistemology means that the methods of inquiry followed in the sciences and in epistemology are continuous with each other. This view is opposed to the old idea of epistemology being the foundational discipline for sciences. At the heart of methodological continuity lies the reflexivity of the knowing process. It begins with the assumption that we already have some knowledge. We examine that knowledge with a view to discovering the cannons and principles through which we have come to acquire it. In other words, by examining what we already know, we come to understand the method of knowing. And by applying that method we can learn more about the world. But what we have learned about the method of knowing can be

applied not only for knowing more about the world; it can also be applied to the process of knowing itself. It is for this reason that Quine's description of naturalized epistemology as "science self-applied" is a good one. The idea of epistemology as self-application of method is very important in the light of the second crisis of epistemology we have discussed, namely the internal conflicts in epistemology. We saw that although modern epistemology aimed at settling disputes regarding truth and knowledge, it ended by creating more disputes within its own ranks, like a malfunctioning village panchayat. Therefore, if epistemology is to perform its assigned task, it must first of all put its own house in order. It is trying to put its own house in order that epistemology discovers the value of methodological continuity.

Since epistemology aims at settling cognitive disputes, to the extent that epistemology itself makes controversial knowledge claims, the method it applies to others must be applied also to itself. The perennial demand, "Physician heal thyself!" lies at the heart of methodological continuity between sciences and epistemology. Continuity, of course does not mean sameness. Epistemology being a theory of knowledge of all kinds, we should not expect it to follow exactly the same method that is followed by one kind of knowledge (science). What continuity implies is that there are significant similarities between the methods followed. While there could be differences in the various methods of human knowing there is a core to the whole process that indicates certain uniform dynamics. In order to find this dynamics an examination of the scientific practice can be helpful.

The Practice of Science: A Case Study Our example is a landmark case in the history of medical science: Ignaz Semmelweis, working as a medical doctor in Vienna General Hospital in the 19th century, noticed the large number of women who delivered their babies in one of the Maternity Divisions of the hospital died of "childbed fever" (Puerperal Fever). A number of factors about these deaths puzzled Semmelweis, including the fact that the death rate was far higher in the First Maternity Division where medical students worked than in the Second Division

where ordinary midwives took care of the women. The contrast was as follows:

Year	First Division	Second Division
1844	8.2%	2.3%
1845	6.8%	2.0%
1846	11.4%	2.7%

In order to resolve this puzzling happening Semmelweis began by considering various tentative solutions (called "hypotheses") to the problem. These were some of the possibilities he considered for explaining these excessive number of deaths in the First Division.

1. The deaths are due to an epidemic

2. The deaths are due to overcrowding in the First Division

3. The deaths are caused by the rough handling of the patients by the medical students in the course their examination.

4. The deaths are caused by fear generated by the appearance of priests ministering to the dying patients!

1. The deaths were due to the position in which the women in the First Division gave birth. (Women in the first Division delivered babies lying on their backs whereas in the Second division the women delivered lying on their sides). Now that there are many possibilities for explaining these excessive deaths in the First Division (5 of which are mentioned and others not considered), the question to consider is which one can be considered true. How is one to rationally accept any of these 5 beliefs or any other that is not mentioned? This is the epistemological task that confronted Semmelweis. He sets about patiently examining each hypothesis. Let us examine how he did it.

Consider the first hypothesis that the deaths were due to an epidemic. If this were to be true, he reasoned, how could an epidemic selectively affect the First Division and not the Second? That is not likely! Moreover, the newspapers carried no reports of an epidemic in the city. To compound matters, there were some women who delivered their babies on the way to the hospital and were brought into the First division only for postnatal care. Even among them the death rate was comparatively lower than those who delivered in the First Division. All of these militated against the first hypothesis and Semmelweis abandoned that as a plausible explanation. The second hypothesis is also easy to check for its truth. Semmelweis noticed that the Second Division was even more crowded than the First (partly because news had spread that those entering the First were more likely to die than those entering the Second!). Faced with this data, the second hypothesis also was given up. In a similar fashion, each of these hypotheses had to be abandoned. Semmelweis was completely at a loss. It is then that a colleague of his began to develop symptoms similar to those of the women suffering from childbed fever and in a few days he died. The major difference was that while the women developed the symptoms after childbirth, his colleague developed the symptoms after getting a small wound in the process of performing an autopsy. This leads him to suspect that the death of his colleague was caused by blood poisoning or what he considered as the introduction of "cadaveric matter" into the blood stream while performing the autopsy. This prompts Semmelweis to make a brilliant guess that the cause of childbed fever was the same. Since the medical students who attended to the women in the First Division, unlike the midwives in the Second Division, often came to their maternity duty after performing autopsy on dead bodies without cleaning their hands properly, they were the carriers of infection. Semmelweis tests out this hypothesis by instructing the medical students to properly disinfect their hands prior to their examination of the women and it produced dramatic results. Thus the last hypothesis was confirmed. Not only did this hypothesis explain the high mortality rates in the First Division, it also explained why the mortality rate among the women who gave birth on the road was lower. Although their hygienic conditions were not very

good, they managed to escape being infected by the medical students! There are a number of things an epistemologist can learn from cases like this. First of all, let us reflect on the method employed.

Hypothetico-Deductive Method When we examine this case we find that there are three basic steps in the process employed by Semmelweis:

> (1) It begins with a problem he confronted, namely, the high death rate due to childbed fever in the First Division of the hospital;

> (2) Various tentative solutions (called hypotheses) are suggested as possible solutions to the problem;

> (3) Those hypotheses are tested to see which of them, if any, is rationally acceptable; in this case the first five hypotheses were rejected and a sixth one that was discovered by chance came to be accepted.

Since it begins by identifying a problem and tries to find solutions to it, this model of knowing is sometimes referred to as the problem solving model. It is Karl Popper (1902-94), one of the best known philosophers of science of the 20th century, who made this method the corner stone of his philosophy. What is crucial to the method is the third step of testing a hypothesis. No hypothesis is accepted just because it seems to offer a solution. Only the one that can withstand a rational scrutiny is accepted; others are rejected. We have already examined the manner of reasoning done by Semmelweis in rejecting the first two hypotheses (epidemic and overcrowding). Consider now what prompts him to abandon the third hypothesis (that the deaths were caused by rough handling by the medical students).

Upon scrutiny, Semmelweis found that the midwives who attended to the patients in the Second Division examined the patients in much the same manner as the medical students did in the First Division. Therefore,

prima facie, it could not be the case. Even then he reduced the number of medical students in the First Division by half on an experimental basis. But this measure failed to bring down the death rate. Then this hypothesis is abandoned. Notice that the kind of reasoning involved here is in the form of a hypothetical syllogism. If the hypothesis p (high mortality rate is due to rough handling by medical students) is true, then by doing action A (reducing the number of medical students), an observable consequence q (low mortality rate) would follow. Action A is undertaken but the result does not follow. Therefore, the hypothesis is abandoned as false. The argument has the following form: If p then, q; not q; therefore, not p. Since this procedure involves deriving an observable consequence from a hypothesis and observing whether that consequence really obtains, this method is called the hypothetico deductive (H-D) method. What needs to be carefully noted is that this procedure only helps us refute a hypothesis, and not to validate it. Leaving out other complexities involved in the actual practice of the method, the logical procedure seems simple enough. If a logically observable consequence of the hypothesis does not obtain, then the hypothesis is to be considered false. For this reason, this method is also called the "falsification method". One might object: why should it be considered suitable only for refuting a theory? After all, did it not enable Semmelweis to accept the last theory as true? Yes, he did accept the last hypothesis. The hypothesis was that the high mortality rate in the First Division was caused by the "cadaveric matter" unconsciously introduced into the blood stream of the women by the medical students. This happened because the medical students came to examine the women without taking enough care to clean their hands properly after performing autopsy. In order to test this hypothesis he asks the medical students to clean their hands thoroughly before attending to the women. The result was a significant improvement in the situation and based on this observation, Semmelweis accepts this hypothesis as the proper explanation for the high mortality rate in the First Division. While this much is true, let us examine its logic. It has the following logical form: If p then, q; q; therefore, p. It does not take long to see that this is NOT a correct form of argument. Rather, it a fallacious argument, known as the

fallacy of affirming the consequent. The following example will make the fallacy clear: If it rains, the ground will be wet; the ground is wet therefore, it has rained! This, obviously, is not correct argument, as the ground could become wet in other ways than by rain! Somebody could have watered it. The point is that though a hypothesis is accepted as true for all practical purposes, it cannot be logically proved to be true.

Even if numerous experiments have shown that the expected observational results follow, still the hypothesis is not logically proven, and cannot be proven either. At best, those numerous supporting observations can be taken as confirming the hypothesis, which is not the same as logically proving it. For all practical purposes we may accept something to be true and may not want further evidence but that does not mean that it is logically shown to be true. Another important point to be learned from the given example is that falsification is a method of justification, and not of discovery. How one comes to entertain a hypothesis (discovery or origin of a hypothesis) is of no consequence as far as the Popperian method is concerned. In the case of Semmelweis the hypothesis originated in the accidental death of his colleague and the similarity of the symptoms shown by his colleague and the women who suffered from childbed fever. This can be said of scientific method in general. Scientific method is concerned with the justification of knowledge than with its origins: Origins of a belief may be as lowly as a lucky guess (as in the case of Semmelweis) or a long drawn out empirical study. But that is of no consequence; what matters is that the hypothesis is tested through observational consequences deduced from it. The fact that acceptability of a hypothesis is a matter of logic is important in as much as much as it eliminates the danger of subjectivity that is involved in the search for certainty. It is for this reason that Popperian epistemology is "epistemology without a knowing subject", to use Popper's own words. It means that in checking whether a belief is true, the individual psychology of the believer is not important. A proposition can be checked for its truth, even if no one believes it. Although we have considered the H-D method is some detail and tried to say that epistemology can also learn from it, we should not go to the

other extreme and say that epistemology is H-D method. In other words, we should not take the "continuity of method" to mean "identity of method". There are also differences. For example, Semmelweis could predict observational consequences of the hypotheses he was testing. In this matter epistemology is different, as it hardly has any place for prediction. How is testing of theories to be done in epistemology, then? Here testing is done by checking whether the theory is able to give a coherent account of the relevant phenomena. When we look closely, this is not completely different in science. In the given example, we see that Semmelweis is attending to the phenomena related to the problem of high death rates. Such phenomena include the fact that the death rate in the other Division is lower, there are no reports of epidemic in the town, and mortality rates among the "road birth" cases are low and so on. The final solution may be seen as giving a coherent account of all these phenomena. It is this idea of giving a coherent account of the relevant phenomena, rather than prediction that is important in epistemology. Thus, although there is continuity of method, there are also differences.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

1. Discuss the Methodological Continuity

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14.11   LET US SUM UP

Knowledge and its Limits, a 2000 book by philosopher Timothy Williamson, argues that the concept of knowledge cannot be analyzed into a set of other concepts; instead, it is sui generis. Thus, though knowledge requires justification, truth, and belief, the word "knowledge" can't be accurately regarded as simply shorthand for "justified true belief". It initiated a whole new approach to epistemology, generally

referred to as knowledge-first epistemology. We live in an age in which science enjoys remarkable success. We have mapped out a grand scheme of how the physical universe works on scales from quarks to galactic clusters, and of the living world from the molecular machinery of cells to the biosphere. There are gaps, of course, but many of them are narrowing.

14.12 KEY WORDS

Knowledge: Knowledge is a familiarity, awareness, or understanding of someone or something, such as facts, information, descriptions, or skills, which is acquired through experience or education by perceiving, discovering, or learning. Knowledge can refer to a theoretical or practical understanding of a subject.

Naturalized: Naturalization is the legal act or process by which a non-citizen in a country may acquire citizenship or nationality of that country. It may be done automatically by a statute, i.e., without any effort on the part of the individual, or it may involve an application or a motion and approval by legal authorities

Epistomology: Epistemology is the branch of philosophy concerned with the theory of knowledge. Epistemology is the study of the nature of knowledge, justification, and the rationality of belief.

14.13 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

3. Write about the Theories of knowledge?
4. Discuss the Communicating knowledge.
5. Discuss the Haraway on situated knowledge
6. What is Partial knowledge
7. Write about Scientific knowledge
8. Discuss Religious meaning of knowledge
9. Write about The Crisis of Modern Epistemology
10. Discuss Naturalized Epistemology
11. Discuss the Methodological Continuity

14.14   SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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14.15   ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

2) See Section 14.2

3) See Section 14.3

4) See Section 14.4

Check Your Progress 2

9) See Section 14.5

10) See Section 14.6

Check Your Progress 3

4) See Section 14.7

5) See Section 14.8

6) See Section 14.9

Check Your Progress 4

1) See Section 14.10