

**DIRECTORATE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION  
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL**

**MASTER OF ARTS- PHILOSOPHY  
SEMESTER -IV**

**EXISTENTIALISM**

**ELECTIVE 405**

**BLOCK-1**

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## **UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL**

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## **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 endeavours.

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# EXISTENTIALISM

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## BLOCK-1

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# **BLOCK 1: EXISTENTIALISM**

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## **Introduction to the Block**

Unit 1 deals with Existentialism- Introduction. The main objective of this unit is to give a 'General Introduction' to existentialism.

Unit 2 deals with Atheistic Existentialists. The main objective of this Unit is to present another group of existentialists who developed their philosophy in which God did not have any place.

Unit 3 deals with Theistic Existentialists. The main objective of this Unit is to present one type of existentialists who are strong believers in God.

Unit 4 deals with Man's Being – I. discuss about the Man's being-in-the world;To know about the Man's being-in-the body;To discuss Man's being-with other

Unit 5 deals with Man's Being – I. To know the Man's being-in-feeling; To discuss the Man's being-in-action.

Unit 6 deals with Freedom. In this unit we try to understand the concept of freedom in all its complexities beginning from the Greek period. The problem of Free will is the key issue examined and studied in detail, giving special emphasis to deterministic theories and explaining the position of its opponents in detail.

Unit 7 deals with Divine Freedom. The topic of divine freedom concerns the extent to which a divine being — in particular, the supreme divine being, God — can be free.

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# UNIT 1: EXISTENTIALISM-

## INTRODUCTION

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### STRUCTURE

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 General Background of Existentialism
- 1.3 Sources of Existentialism
- 1.4 General Characteristics of Existentialism
- 1.5 Important Themes in Existentialism
- 1.6 Let us sum up
- 1.7 Key Words
- 1.8 Questions for Review
- 1.9 Suggested readings and references
- 1.10 Answers to Check Your Progress

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## 1.0 OBJECTIVES

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The main objective of this unit is to give a 'General Introduction' to existentialism. Study of the various existentialists has to be based on such an introduction, since it is intended to serve as a horizon for the particular thoughts of individual thinkers to be situated. A particular thought can be comprehended in its depth and width only in the light of its general background. In fact, what is vaguely and generally delineated in the 'General Introduction' takes different concrete shapes in the thoughts of different existentialists. Hence the 'General Introduction to Existentialism' and the 'Deeper Study of Individual Existentialists' complement each other: the former is given a depth in the latter, and the latter is given a width in the former. Besides, even when one is not able to make a study of the various existentialists, this 'General Introduction' can serve as a supplement, since it considers most of the existential themes. In this unit we begin with an introduction on the meaning and definition of existentialism; it will be followed by a look into the general background (what gave rise to existentialism), and sources (the tracing of the gradual growth of existentialism). It is important to look into its various characteristics in order to show the specificity of existentialism

as a different way of philosophizing. Finally we take a quick glance at some of the important families (groups) of themes in existentialism. Consideration of these points will hopefully give the searching minds of the students at the Master's level a solidity of basis for further personal search and academic research into different existentialists.

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## **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Existentialism got developed mainly in the first half of 20th century in continental Europe. Although it is primarily a philosophical movement, we can find its 'roots' and 'branches' (basis and influence) in various fields, such as art, literature, religion culture, etc.. Traditional philosophy did not bother about the problem of concrete existence, like death, love, despair, body, finitude, anxiety, hope, etc. As humans were caught up in the trap of their naked and concrete existence, they could not get away to an ideal and abstract realm. In such a situation existentialism made its appearance not as a stroke of chance but of necessity. The luxury of philosophizing was not limited to the few arm-chair philosophers; existentialism brought philosophy to the appeal of the ordinary humans. Existentialism is an elusive notion that escapes all definitions. The term itself is surrounded by a certain amount of confusion, ambiguity and lack of precision, since it includes the widely disparate philosophers and philosophies, ranging from Kierkegaard's theistic commitment to Sartre's categorical denial of the existence of God. Besides, what was intended as a serious type of philosophy has been vulgarized to the level of a fad so that the existentialist label gets applied to all sorts of peoples and activities. At the same time, the difficulty in defining existentialism is in keeping with the nature of its philosophizing. All the thinkers of this movement are against constructing any 'system' of philosophy, and hence it is more appropriate to address this movement as a way of philosophizing rather than a philosophy. Just as existentialism refuses to be labeled as a 'system,' so also most of the thinkers of this movement do not want to be categorized as 'existentialist.' Although no adequate definition of existentialism is possible, the following seems to be quite significant: "Existentialism is a type of philosophy which endeavours to analyze the basic structures of human existence, and to the call

individuals to an awareness of their existence in its essential freedom.” From this definition—so also from most of the other ones—it is evident that existentialism first of all deals with the question of the human who alone is said to be existing. Secondly, existentialism is not a theory about the human, but it is a call that keeps on calling the human away from the intellectual and social forces that destroy freedom, and from the stifling abstractions and automatic conformity. It bids and challenges each individual to sort out the existential problems in authentic freedom, instead of taking easy answers from someone else. It pays heed to those existential questions that are usually passed over by the academic philosophers. Instead of retreating to a realm of eternal truths, existentialism hugs close to the terrain of ordinary living. Thus existentialism has brought about a revolution in philosophizing.

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## 1.2 GENERAL BACKGROUND OF EXISTENTIALISM

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Although existentialism made its arrival as a corrective to the traditional philosophy, there are certain factors that have accelerated its appearance in the 20th century. As the background of existentialism we present two fundamental experiences in the West: experience of ‘nothingness’ in the decline of religion, and of ‘finitude’ in the economico-scientific growth. Experience of ‘Nothingness’ in the Decline of Religion Although religion has not totally disappeared from the West, its all pervasive character has been lost. It is no more the uncontested centre of human life. The waning of religion is so complex a fact that it penetrates the deepest strata of human’s psychic life. In losing religion humans lost the connection with the transcendent realm of being; they were set free to deal with this world in all its brute objectivity. Besides, they were forced to find themselves ‘wanderers’ and ‘homeless’ on the face of this earth that no longer answered the needs of the inner spirit. Religion and reason reigned supreme in the middle ages. They no longer have the same sway in the contemporary period. The rationalism of the medieval philosophy was well contained by the mysteries of faith and dogma, which were powerfully real and meaningful. Whereas the approach of the modern rationalism was different! With the newly found scientific attitude,



humans began to be critical to all that the religion has been standing for. The religion-less human is like the earth set free from the sun—a human picture that is grim, bleak, dark and naked! 3 A similar experience can be seen in the context of the movement of Protestantism that laid stress on the irrational datum of faith, as against the imposing rational structure of medieval catholic theology. The institutional character of the Catholic Church was in keeping with the rational nature of medieval theology. Faith as an intellectual assent never touched the interior of the human. As against this, Protestantism succeeded in raising the religious consciousness to a higher level of individual sincerity and strenuous inwardness. Faith for the Protestantism is the numinous centre of religion, stripped of all mediating rites and dogmas. But the cosines of the bourgeois civilization made the protestant Western humans more secularized, and their faith began to lose its grip on them. This too made them starkly naked; and their relation to God turned out to be a relation to nothingness! It is in the wake this deterioration that the theistic existentialists call the humans to a life of faith as a personal commitment.

Experience of 'Finitude' in Economico-Scientific Growth Protestantism and capitalism went hand in hand, seemingly to prove that this earth itself is the Promised Land. Capitalism emerged from the feudal society as the enterprising and calculating mind who must organize production rationally to show a favorable balance of profits over costs. Everything is calculatively done in the interest of efficiency. The capacity for easy living seemed to be within human power. But the tremendous economic power of modern society is accompanied by human ambiguities, and rootlessness. Life is reduced to a bundle of needs and wants. The human is looked at in terms of functions. The First World War shattered the apparent stability of this human world. The stability, security and material progress rested upon the void. The human came face to face with oneself as a stranger. The question: 'what is human being?' came out of the bourgeois society in a state of dissolution. With capitalism, society has become more secular, rational, utilitarian, and democratic, with the accompanying wealth and progress. But the unpredictable realities like wars, political upheavals were on the increase. In this

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impersonal mass society the human is terribly alienated: a stranger to god, to nature, and to the social apparatus, and a stranger to oneself! The economic growth has only entrenched human limitation. The modern age is characterized also by rapid scientific growth. This is countered by the growing awareness of human inability, fragility and the impotence of reason. On the one hand, there seemed to have no limits to the technological conquest of the nature. But science had to reconcile to the human finitude. Several theories in mathematics, science and philosophy during the first half of 20th century pointed to the human finitude: Heisenberg's principle of indeterminacy, Skolem's and Godel's theories on mathematics, Heidegger's philosophy in his *Being and Time*, Spengler's prophecy in his *The Decline of the West*, etc. When events run parallel this way independently of each other, we can conclude that they are not meaningless coincidences, but meaningful symptoms of humans becoming convinced of their finitude. All these thoughts shed light on the sad plight of the Western humans, and point to the impending finale. Thus, the two deep experiences of the Western people—that of 'nothingness' and of 'finitude'— have touched their inner being, and from out of this experience the new school of existentialism was born. In this new thought-pattern 'nothingness' and 'finitude' found themselves at home.

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### 1.3 SOURCES OF EXISTENTIALISM

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After having seen the events and contexts that gave rise to existentialism, we take a journey back to see its sources. The little source that began from the Old Testament period gradually gathered momentum, and became a powerful movement in the 20th century.

#### **Hebraic Source**

Existentialism can be traced as far back as Hebraism—the life and thought of the Hebrews or Jewish people. There is a clear contrast between Hebraism and Hellenism, the two rival forces that influence and move our world, at least in the West. The Hebrews are concerned about practice and right conduct, whereas the Greeks, with knowledge and right thinking; duty and conscience for the Hebrews, and intelligence or

reason for the Greeks. The Hebrews see the human in his/her feebleness and finitude as creatures, standing naked in the presence of God. The Greeks keep all the difficulties and contingencies out of view in their life and thought. The Jewish community was held together not so much by law, as with 'faith.' Faith is well depicted in the book of Job. In the experience of extreme difficulties, Job in his whole person meets God; it was a confrontation or meeting between two persons in the fullness and violence of his passion, with the unknowable and overwhelming God. The relation between God and Job was one of I and thou. It is not a confrontation between two rational minds, demanding an explanation that will satisfy the reason. They meet on the level of 'existence' and not of 'reason'. Job's relation to God remained one of faith from start to finish although it took on the varying shapes of revolt, anger, dismay and confusion. In this personal relation the meaning of faith takes its shape. Faith here is not a propositional one, but personal trust. This trust embraces the whole man, his anger and dismay, his bones and bowels, his flesh and blood. No separation of body and soul is made. As a person of flesh and blood, the Hebrew is very much bound to the 'earth,' the 'dust,' a creature of time. The human is a 'nothing' before one's Creator; one's temporal existence is compared to wind, shadow or bubbles. Hebraism contains no eternal realm of essences, as an intellectual deliverance from the evil of time. In short, the Hebrews emphasized the contingent and finite individual, standing naked before God in personal trust and faith. The approach taken by the Hebrews is very much existential. The Hebraic approach can be better seen in opposition to the Hellenistic one. Among the Greeks we note a different picture. The Greeks achieved victory of reason over mythology—victory of logos over mythos. In the period between 480 and 322 BCE (from Heraclitus to Aristotle) the human enters history as 'rational animal.' From Heraclitus Plato learned that there is no escape from death and change. Tormented by this vision, Plato desired at all costs a refuge in the eternal realm from the insecurities of time. Only the eternal is really real. For him the individual is less real. This is totally against the existentialist approach that seeks to establish the importance of the individual. Plato's was a philosophy of essence, and not of 'existence.' With Aristotle philosophy became purely

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theoretical and objective discipline. For him reason is the highest part of our personality. The primacy of reason is rested on the fact that everything has a 'reason,' i.e., everything is rationally explicable. Thus the Greeks touched nothing of human finitude, but rather they made an exaltation of human reason. The emphasis on the personal dimension, as opposed to the rational, made Hebraism to be the very first source from which existentialism began its flow of thought.

### Christian Sources

The distinction between Hebraism and Hellenism continued to show itself in Christianity in the form of faith and reason. Christianity belongs to the Hebraic rather than to the Hellenistic side of human's nature, since it is based on faith rather than reason. Christian faith is more intense in the sense that it is beyond and even against 'reason.' The opposition between faith and reason is the one between the vital and the rational. The question is as to where the centre of human personality is to be located: St. Paul places in faith, Aristotle in reason. Christian faith is paradoxical since Christianity is foolishness to the Greeks and scandal to the Jews, because the Greek demand 'wisdom,' and the Jews, sign.' Christian faith is not based on either. Although Christianity has been on the side of faith rather than reason, there were varying emphases on one or the other even in Christianity itself. Tertullian is one of the precursors of existentialism who stresses the violence of the conflict between faith and reason. Augustine, with his existentialist bend of mind, asks 'who am I?,' rather than 'what is man?' as did Aristotle. This is well expressed in his Confessions. He looks at the human not with a detached reason but from personal experience. As a theologian he was trying to harmonize faith and reason. Thomas Aquinas took the theoretical intellect as the highest human faculty, following the example of Aristotle. According to him the end of the human is beatific vision of God's essence. Dun Scotus insisted on the primacy of will and love. Thus the problem between faith and reason reappeared in the form of a controversy between voluntarism and intellectualism. We may put it thus: a controversy between the primacy of the thinker over his thoughts, and thoughts over the thinker. The source of existentialism that started with Hebraism, continued with

faith, and then with voluntarism of the Franciscan school in the middle ages. Blaise Pascal (1623-62) is uniquely different from other philosophers of his time with his existentialist type of thinking, and thus he too is referred to as a source of existentialism. He was living in a world of science, especially of astronomy. Pascal spoke about the homelessness of the human in the infinite space. Reason cannot help this homelessness of the human. Faith takes up where reason leaves off. One has to search and find the sign-posts, that would lead the mind in the direction of faith, in the radically miserable condition of the human. Religion is the only cure for this desperate condition of the human that is inadequate, empty, and impotent. Living in an age of science, he experienced the feebleness of human reason as well. Reason cannot deal with God or Religion as its objects. Hence his famous outcry: “not the God of philosophers, but the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” He also is said to have said: “The heart has its reason that reason does not know.” He has expressed very powerfully about the radical contingency that lies at the heart of human existence. He could find ‘the contingent’ in the apparently insignificant in human existence: in the length of Cleopatra’s nose that marked the destinies of mark Antony and of Roman Empire; in the grain of sand in Cromwell’s kidney, that put an end to his military dictatorship. ‘Nothingness’ for Pascal opens both downward and upward. He lives in the age of microscope and telescope, when the finite cosmos is expanded in both the direction, toward the infinitesimally minute and the infinitely great, and the human occupying a mid-position between both. This mid-position is the perfect image of human finitude, invaded from both sides by nothingness. The short duration of our life is swallowed up in the eternity before and after. Such thoughts of Pascal make him an existentialist, and gave rise to the existentialism of the 20th century in full vehemence.

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## **1.4 GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF EXISTENTIALISM**

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Existentialism does not refer so much to a particular philosophical system as to a movement in contemporary philosophy. Since it includes several philosophies with opposing characteristics, it is difficult to show

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any set of clearly defined characteristics that will mark off existentialism from all other forms of philosophy. All the same, we can still point to certain general characteristics of existentialism. The first characteristic of existentialism is that it begins philosophizing from human being, rather than from reality in general. The human being that is referred to in existentialism is a subject that exists, rather than an object that is. Formerly the human has been submerged in the physical cosmos as just one of the items in nature. The existentialist subject is not the epistemological subject—the subject that stands apart as the knower to the known, rather it is the ontological subject that exists. Here the term ‘to exist’ has a meaning, more comprehensive than the term ‘to be.’ The term ‘existence’ has to be taken in the dynamic and active sense of the ‘act of being,’ rather than the mere ‘fact of being;’ and it implies a width of meaning that includes the human as the centre of feeling, of experience, of freedom, of actions and thought, and thus an incarnate being-in-the-world. Such a subject is passionately involved in the actualities of existence, and philosophizes not merely with reason, but the whole person with one’s feelings and emotions, with will and intellect, with flesh and bones, philosophizes. Thus existentialism begins with the human as existent. Although existentialism begins with ‘existence,’ it does not take ‘existence’ as a notion, but as experienced by oneself. Thus we can say that existential philosophy arose from the existential experience of existence. Different philosophers has had varying experience of existence, and it is with one’s basic experience of existence that each philosopher carries out one’s philosophizing: in Jaspers it was an awareness of the brittleness of being, in Heidegger, Dasein as being-towardsdeath, in Sartre, the experience of existence as nauseating and superfluous, in Marcel and Buber, the experience of the ‘I’ as necessarily related to a ‘thou’, in Levinas, the experience of the epiphany of the other and of one’s ethical responsibility in the face of another, etc. Existentialism can be described as an attempt to philosophize from the stand point of ‘actor’ rather than of ‘spectator.’ The attitude of Aristotle was that of a spectator, looking at the world impersonally. Kierkegaard on the other hand philosophizes from his own personal experience. Philosophy arises as a response to the questions, to

be met on the existential level, rather than on the conceptual level. The existentialist does not stand back from the problems as an impersonal analyst or spectator, but grapples with them as one who is involved in them. The questions are not matters of 'intellectual curiosity' but of 'vital concern.' Marcel's distinction between mystery and problem corresponds to 'actor' and 'spectator.' The problem lies over against me to be analyzed by me as an epistemological subject. I do not approach the problem with my uniqueness, but as an impersonal I, that could be replaced by anyone, even by a machine. A mystery, on the other hand, is a question which involves the very 'being' of the questioner. The problems can be solved and an exhaustive solution can be given; but no solution can be given for a 'mystery.' The standpoint of an 'actor' is found in all the existentialist thinkers. Marcel and Kierkegaard were personal thinkers, who reflected on questions arising from personal experiences. There is a close relation between biography and philosophy in the case of Kierkegaard. For Marcel philosophy was part of his spiritual itinerary. Another characteristic of existentialism is that it functions as a corrective to the traditional tendency of engulfing the human in the physical cosmos. It stands as a protest against all that threatens human's unique position as an 'existent.' This is why Kierkegaard revolted against the Hegelian exaltation of the absolute at the expense of the individual. He was also against submerging the individual in the collectivity or universality. Heidegger calls the human from being the 'they-self' (das Man) to one's ownmost self. Sartre wants the human to take over one's freedom in good faith rather than to evade it in bad faith; in short, existentialism asserts the human freedom, and calls the human to appropriate it; thus existentialism functions as a corrective to the traditional tendency of depersonalization and of reduction of the human in collectivity. If existentialism has been a corrective to the traditional way of thinking, then its advent was taken as a ray of hope to the humans in a situation of strangled thought. In various respects the humans have been strangled. To the religionless human, cut off from the divine, hope is given with a person-centred religion. To the humans who are unable to find in themselves the answers to the problems that beset them, the message of existentialism seems to be

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addressed. Jaspers shows that even in the face of earthly disasters, the human can still affirm one's relationship to the transcendent. Heidegger speaks to the human thrown into the world, that s/he is faced with the possibility of choosing the authentic self.

### Check Your Progress 1

**Note: Use the space provided for your Answers.**

1. Briefly describe the historical background for emergence of Existentialism.

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2. Discuss the characteristics of Existentialism.

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## 1.5 IMPORTANT THEMES IN EXISTENTIALISM

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It is impossible to give an exhaustive list of all the themes in existentialism. But there are certain outstanding themes that often recur in most of the existentialists. We tabulate them into different families

### 1.5.1 Existence, Individuality, Freedom, Choice, Creativity, Possibility

Existentialism is centred on the human, characterized by existence, and it insists on a return to the concrete, individual existent as against the essence and nature of things. It emphasizes the primacy of existence over essence. For most of the existentialists the essence of the human consists in one's existence. Existence is a dynamic notion that implies a constant attaining of the self in the self-directed life of the individual. To exist as individual means to become individual in freedom and choice. As existent, the human creates oneself. By virtue of one's freedom the human is not only what one has become, but also what one can become. To escape into the crowd is same as running away from one's



responsibility to exist as an individual. It is uncomfortable to stand alone in one's uniqueness; hence it needs courage to exist, to assert oneself as an individual. In a widely growing situation wherein anonymity is the saving virtue, numerical superiority is the decisive consideration and mass opinion is the criterion of truth, all the existentialists call on the human to exist, to become, to choose as an individual in freedom and courage.

### **1.5.2 Finitude, Death, Guilt, Anxiety, Nothingness**

Although humans are primarily free and self-creative, their quest for authentic personal being meets with resistance, and sometimes even frustration. Humans' ability to choose is restricted by their ultimate possibility, death, that places a limit to their choice, and on which they have no choice. As the ultimate possibility and facticity, death surrounds human existence with the boundary wall, revealing humans' limit-situation. The human experiences the presence of the 'not' (nothingness) in one's being; and before this existential awareness of one's finite freedom, one experiences dread or anxiety. Anxiety is had before the nothingness of human existence. The presence of nothingness in the human is same as human finitude or ontological guilt, that makes guilty action possible.

### **1.5.3 Authenticity and Inauthenticity**

In the face of one's finite freedom, humans have the possibility to be authentic or inauthentic. These terms (authenticity and inauthenticity) are mainly employed by Heidegger, but others too make the distinction between what the human should be (authenticity), and what one is prone to be normally (inauthenticity). Both theists and atheists make this distinction. Different philosophers propose different ideals as the authentic mode of existence. Thus for Kierkegaard, authenticity consists in making a leap of faith, and in becoming totally committed to a life of subjectivity and truth. For Heidegger, the authentic Dasein has to choose to be itself in the face of the temptation to be the they-self. For Buber and Marcel authenticity is grounded in communion and intersubjectivity. The I-thou relation between two human beings bestows authentic existence

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upon them as they reach out to the absolute and eternal thou. For Sartre authentic human is one who accepts one's freedom in good faith. For Camus, authentic existence is a life of resistance amidst the absurd. It demands a rejection of the physical and the philosophical suicide.

### **1.5.4 Community, Intersubjectivity, Love, Commitment, Faith**

The themes of togetherness, I-thou, being-with, etc., are fundamental to Marcel, Buber, Levinas, etc. No existentialist considers oneself to be solipsist. Even Sartre accepts the presence of the other, though with a hateful stare. Thus even Sartrean notion of hatred is a mode of intersubjectivity. The I is necessarily related to a thou. Those who take the positive aspect of intersubjectivity, consider that this relation is characterized by availability, fidelity, commitment etc. The other is a genuine means of enriching one's existence. Marcel and Buber speak of the Ithou relationship. The other is not an object, a problem, an it, or a functionary, not even a 's/he' but a 'thou,' a subject with whom I communicate. Heidegger speaks of the essential character of Dasein as being-with. According to Levinas, the face reveals the indubitable presence of the other. Even in later Camus, a sense of togetherness and community become the dominant theme. When this relation of commitment is extended to the Transcendent being, it is referred to as 'faith.'

### **1.5.5 Absurdity, Homelessness, Rootlessness, Meaninglessness**

To the contemporary human, absurdity or meaninglessness has become a catch-word. It stands for humanity's plight as purposelessness in an existence out of harmony with its surroundings. The 20th century neurosis is the neurosis of purposelessness, valuelessness, hollowness and emptiness. Most people continue with the business of living in it, but the existentialists cry out in anguish that they are gratuitous in an impossible world. The main spokespersons for human absurdity are Sartre and Camus. For Sartre 'absurdity' is the awareness of oneself as superfluous. One finds oneself as unnecessary, and thus there is no reason for one to exist. Camus considers absurdity as an awareness of oneself as condemned to tragic purposelessness. He traces to absurdity

the dilemma of modern human, groaning under the structures of organized injustice and hypocrisy. In this tragic situation the human should not try to run away from it by suicide, rather one should accept it as a rebel. The fate of meaningless existence becomes tragic when one is conscious of it. The tragic hero of the Myth of Sisyphus bears his burden without joy of hope, refusing any of the palliatives offered by religion or philosophy, and without distractions of pleasure or ambition.

### **1.5.6 Depersonalization, Dehumanization, Objectification, Functionalization**

Existentialism made its origin as a reaction to the reduction of the human to a mere object in the universe. Marcel and Buber fight against treating the human as an 'it' rather than a 'thou'. The disproportionate growth of 20th century technology is instrumental to the frightening erosion of human values and dignity by the use of strict 'scientific method' in investigations, and functional approach in dealings. The human is made an 'object' of analysis, and a commodity of transactions. As against this calculative approach, the existentialists suggest that the other be considered as a 'thou,' as another existing subject. Depersonalization can be present in two ways: (i) by keeping the human in an impersonal collectivity of anonymity, mediocrity and facelessness. People are regimented and packed together in the service of the powerful, or (ii) by reducing the humans as mere objects for one's purpose. This is what takes place in the so-called free situation of capitalism and globalization.

### **Check Your Progress 2**

**Note: Use the space provided for your Answers.**

1. Explain the understanding of Existentialists on human relationship.

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2. Discuss the 'limit situations' of human existence.

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## 1.6 LET US SUM UP

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As a philosophical movement, existentialism is based on phenomenology initiated as a method for the first time by Husserl. This does not mean that the existentialists merely copied what Husserl proposed; far from it. In fact the existentialist thinking is centered on existence, bracketed by Husserl. But the underlying basic inspiration that guides the type of thinking in phenomenology and existentialism is the same.

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## 1.7 KEY WORDS

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Intersubjectivity: Theme of togetherness, I-thou, being-with, etc., a relation that is characterized by availability, fidelity, commitment etc.

Dasein: Heidegger speaks of the essential character of being as being-with.

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## 1.8 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

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1. Discuss about the Sources of Existentialism
2. What are the General Characteristics of Existentialism
3. Discuss about the Important Themes in Existentialism

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## 1.9 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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## 1.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Check Your Progress 1

1. See Section 1.2
2. See Section 1.3

### Check Your Progress 2

1. Existentialism, any of various philosophies, most influential in continental Europe from about 1930 to the mid-20th century, that have in common an interpretation of human existence in the world that stresses its concreteness and its problematic character.

## Notes

2. A limit situation (German: Grenzsituation) is any of certain situations in which a human being is said to have differing experiences from those arising from ordinary situations. The concept was developed by Karl Jaspers, who considered fright, guilt, finality and suffering as some of the key limit situations arising in everyday life.

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# UNIT 2: ATHEISTIC EXISTENTIALISTS

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## STRUCTURE

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Jean Paul Sartre
- 2.3 Albert Camus
- 2.4 Let us sum up
- 2.5 Key Words
- 2.6 Questions for Review
- 2.7 Suggested readings and references
- 2.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

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## 2.0 OBJECTIVES

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The main objective of this Unit is to present another group of existentialists who developed their philosophy in which God did not have any place. It is not that God did not find a place in their philosophy, but God could not have found any, as their philosophy did not give any opening to the Transcendent.

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## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

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The short General Introduction given at the beginning of the Unit on ‘Theistic Existentialists,’ is equally valid for this Unit to situate Sartre and Camus, the two atheistic existentialists we are considering. The first atheistic existentialist we consider is Jean Paul Sartre, with whom contemporary atheism is almost identified. His philosophy is centred on the exaltation of human existence. Camus’ philosophy got developed from his concrete experience of injustice; and he gave expression to it in two ways: a violent expression (Camus-I) and a moderate expression (Camus-II). Although, for the believing people with a positive frame of mind, their philosophy may appear to be negatively exaggerated, it is quite useful that the students are introduced to it, so that they can purify and develop their philosophy of life.

## Notes

Like “rationalism” and “empiricism,” “existentialism” is a term that belongs to intellectual history. Its definition is thus to some extent one of historical convenience. The term was explicitly adopted as a self-description by Jean-Paul Sartre, and through the wide dissemination of the postwar literary and philosophical output of Sartre and his associates—notably Simone de Beauvoir, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Albert Camus—existentialism became identified with a cultural movement that flourished in Europe in the 1940s and 1950s. Among the major philosophers identified as existentialists (many of whom—for instance Camus and Heidegger—repudiated the label) were Karl Jaspers, Martin Heidegger, and Martin Buber in Germany, Jean Wahl and Gabriel Marcel in France, the Spaniards José Ortega y Gasset and Miguel de Unamuno, and the Russians Nikolai Berdyaev and Lev Shestov. The nineteenth century philosophers, Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche, came to be seen as precursors of the movement. Existentialism was as much a literary phenomenon as a philosophical one. Sartre's own ideas were and are better known through his fictional works (such as *Nausea* and *No Exit*) than through his more purely philosophical ones (such as *Being and Nothingness* and *Critique of Dialectical Reason*), and the postwar years found a very diverse coterie of writers and artists linked under the term: retrospectively, Dostoevsky, Ibsen, and Kafka were conscripted; in Paris there were Jean Genet, André Gide, André Malraux, and the expatriate Samuel Beckett; the Norwegian Knut Hamsun and the Romanian Eugene Ionesco belong to the club; artists such as Alberto Giacometti and even Abstract Expressionists such as Jackson Pollock, Arshile Gorky, and Willem de Kooning, and filmmakers such as Jean-Luc Godard and Ingmar Bergman were understood in existential terms. By the mid 1970s the cultural image of existentialism had become a cliché, parodied in countless books and films by Woody Allen.

It is sometimes suggested, therefore, that existentialism just is this bygone cultural movement rather than an identifiable philosophical position; or, alternatively, that the term should be restricted to Sartre's



philosophy alone. But while a philosophical definition of existentialism may not entirely ignore the cultural fate of the term, and while Sartre's thought must loom large in any account of existentialism, the concept does pick out a distinctive cluster of philosophical problems and helpfully identifies a relatively distinct current of twentieth- and now twenty-first-century philosophical inquiry, one that has had significant impact on fields such as theology (through Rudolf Bultmann, Paul Tillich, Karl Barth, and others) and psychology (from Ludwig Binswanger and Medard Boss to Otto Rank, R. D. Laing, and Viktor Frankl). What makes this current of inquiry distinct is not its concern with “existence” in general, but rather its claim that thinking about human existence requires new categories not found in the conceptual repertoire of ancient or modern thought; human beings can be understood neither as substances with fixed properties, nor as subjects interacting with a world of objects.

On the existential view, to understand what a human being is it is not enough to know all the truths that natural science—including the science of psychology—could tell us. The dualist who holds that human beings are composed of independent substances—“mind” and “body”—is no better off in this regard than is the physicalist, who holds that human existence can be adequately explained in terms of the fundamental physical constituents of the universe. Existentialism does not deny the validity of the basic categories of physics, biology, psychology, and the other sciences (categories such as matter, causality, force, function, organism, development, motivation, and so on). It claims only that human beings cannot be fully understood in terms of them. Nor can such an understanding be gained by supplementing our scientific picture with a moral one. Categories of moral theory such as intention, blame, responsibility, character, duty, virtue, and the like do capture important aspects of the human condition, but neither moral thinking (governed by the norms of the good and the right) nor scientific thinking (governed by the norm of truth) suffices.

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“Existentialism”, therefore, may be defined as the philosophical theory which holds that a further set of categories, governed by the norm of authenticity, is necessary to grasp human existence. To approach existentialism in this categorial way may seem to conceal what is often taken to be its “heart” (Kaufmann 1968: 12), namely, its character as a gesture of protest against academic philosophy, its anti-system sensibility, its flight from the “iron cage” of reason. But while it is true that the major existential philosophers wrote with a passion and urgency rather uncommon in our own time, and while the idea that philosophy cannot be practiced in the disinterested manner of an objective science is indeed central to existentialism, it is equally true that all the themes popularly associated with existentialism—dread, boredom, alienation, the absurd, freedom, commitment, nothingness, and so on—find their philosophical significance in the context of the search for a new categorial framework, together with its governing norm.

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## 2.2 JEAN PAUL SARTRE

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### Introducing Sartre

“God is impossible; reality is absurd; man is absolutely free; he makes his morals and destiny; he lives in anguish and despair; hell is other people; man is a useless passion; death is the end of his absurd existence; ...” These few sentences sum up and point to the philosophy of Sartre, one of the most popular of contemporary philosophers. He became popular due mainly to two reasons: the content of his philosophy and the mode of communication. The content of his thought was quite appealing to the people at that period of history—a time of the struggles of wars and the after-effects of wars, a time of people of under oppression of colonization challenging the colonizers, a time of the cold-war dividing the world into two socio-economic systems, a time when people began asking questions about the meaning of their existence. Such a juncture of history was the ripe time for his leftist-leaning, negative-centred and atheistic philosophy to be sold out. Besides, Sartre put forward his thought the popular means of novels and plays, as a result of which his philosophy was easily accessible and available even to people of academically and economically lower standing. His philosophy had a

good market in the independent India with a newly awakened hatred towards all structure of exploitation and injustice. Jean Paul Sartre was born in 1905 in Paris; his father died when he was only two years old. His mother married a second time, when he was eleven years old and hence he was brought up in his uncle's house. His life was a bundle of bitter experiences; he became unsociable and lonely and he spent much of his time in libraries and cafes. "Cafe," he says, "has an immense advantage of indifference." He rejected all honours, including the 'Nobel Prize' for literature, as he did not want to be tied down to any institution. Some of his important works are: *Being and Nothingness*, *Nausea*, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, *Existentialism and Humanism*, *Troubled Sleep*, etc.

### **Analysis of Being**

Sartre distinguished reality into two opposing modes: Being-in-itself (l'être-en-soi) and Being-for-itself (l'être-pour-soi). The object of consciousness which is non-conscious is called 'Being-in-itself. It is always material. All that we can say about it is this: it is there; opaque, compact density; without aspiration, hope or fear, meaning or relation. It is uncreated; it is there without any reason for its being; it is superfluous, unjustifiable, contingent and absurd. Such an absurd being-in-itself generates in us a disgust, a nausea. The existence as unmasked in being-in-itself, and revealed in its terrifying obscene nudity is absurdity—there is no necessary reason for it to be with this particular 'suchness,' it just happened to be! It is superfluous. The superfluity of the in-itself is found true also of myself, the conscious being. There is no reason for me to exist either. Even doing away with my life would be superfluous as well. Thus existence for Sartre is nauseating, absurd and contingent. Reality is not exhausted by the compact material things, there is also 'consciousness', through which there exist similarity, meaning, difference, etc. The 'sea' gets different meanings according to the consciousness that encounters it: for the swimmers, a place of adventure; for the fishermen, a source of livelihood; for the artists and poets, a source of inspiration; etc. Consciousness is being-for-itself. It is vacuous, and is characterized by potency and incompleteness. It is based on the

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‘in-itself’ which alone is being in the proper sense. The ‘for-itself’ is nothingness. It is through the conscious being or man that ‘nothingness’ enters into the world. A piece of chalk is complete in itself, but man finds it as incomplete or half; an arch is found to be an incomplete circle. Consciousness finds absence, incompleteness and lacks. My being conscious of my watch goes with my consciousness of its not being my pen. The source nothingness must itself be nothing. Sartre shows that nothingness exists, just as gap, silence, hole, darkness, none, etc. Man is the oppositional unity of the in-itself and the for-itself, body and consciousness; man is the struggle to bridge them, which is bound to fail.

### **The Destroying Presence of the Other**

As I observe the in-itself entities, I become aware of other people observing me. Awareness of myself as acting (subject) goes with the awareness of myself as being acted upon (object). There is nothing more remarkable in Sartre’s philosophy than his phenomenological analysis of the other as staring. Sartre clarifies it with an example. Suppose, I am peeping and eavesdropping through the key-hole of another’s room. Then I realize that someone else is observing me. This awareness ‘nails me to the spot’; I am petrified and immobilized in the act. I become ashamed. Shame is the recognition that I am as the other sees me. To be ashamed is to be aware of the presence of someone else. It is at the expense of my subjectivity that the existence of the other is revealed. In the stare of the other—which is always hateful—I am reduced to an ‘object’; the other is revealed as the one who hatefully stares at me. My freedom is frozen under his stare. To regain my subjectivity, I try to reduce the other to an object by my stare. Thus each one is trying to enslave the other; the result is the inevitable conflict. If a third person looks at ‘us in conflict’, we become objectified for the third person, and ‘we’ become ashamed. To love another means to hate the common enemy. Love, for Sartre, is an impossibility. Out of the futile effort to love is born hatred which annihilates the freedom of the other in mortal combat.

### **Human Condemned to Freedom**

The essence of man is consciousness or nothingness. To fill in this emptiness, man makes free choices. Man is necessarily free; the only necessity of man is his freedom. He is absolutely free: he is so free that he is not free not to be free. According to Sartre, freedom is a curse, a horrible yoke, a condemnation. The terrible responsibility attached to freedom fills man with anguish. "I am responsible for everything, and I am condemned to be so. I find myself alone with my heavy responsibility, from which I cannot get out, nor can I throw it onto someone else. Anguish is the awareness that everything is upto me. To evade from this responsibility of freedom man devices 'bad\_faith'—pretending to oneself and to others that one is bound or obliged to act in a particular way, namely, by duty, law, or temperament. In bad faith, unlike in lying, truth is hidden even from oneself. Even sincerity can be a form of bad faith.

### **Impossibility of God and of Moral Values**

Sartre is the most ardent atheist in existentialism. He gives several proofs for the impossibility of God. (1) The existence of a God will make man dependent on God. But man is absolutely free. Hence there cannot be a God. (2) If there is a God, he will be the other, who will be reducing me to an object. I will not be able to stare back because of his transcendence. For man to be perpetually unfree is impossible. Hence there cannot be a God, (3) If there is a God, he has to be the fullness of being (in-itself) and consciousness (for-itself). It is an impossibility to identify being and nothingness. Hence God is an impossibility. According to Sartre, God is not merely dead, but there cannot be a God. Man and God cannot co-exist. Just as there cannot be a God because of man's freedom, so also there cannot be a system of moral values. Man creates values in his freedom. Every act is concrete, and it is performed in a definite situation. Hence there cannot be any pre-set moral principles. The only sin that man can commit is to act in bad faith, deceiving oneself with the ought of eternal values, or with the hope of a reward or fear of punishment.

Sartre's existentialism drew its immediate inspiration from the work of the German philosopher, Martin Heidegger. Heidegger's 1927 *Being and*

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Time, an inquiry into the “being that we ourselves are” (which he termed “Dasein,” a German word for existence), introduced most of the motifs that would characterize later existentialist thinking: the tension between the individual and the “public”; an emphasis on the worldly or “situated” character of human thought and reason; a fascination with liminal experiences of anxiety, death, the “nothing” and nihilism; the rejection of science (and above all, causal explanation) as an adequate framework for understanding human being; and the introduction of “authenticity” as the norm of self-identity, tied to the project of self-definition through freedom, choice, and commitment. Though in 1946 Heidegger would repudiate the retrospective labelling of his earlier work as existentialism, it is in that work that the relevant concept of existence finds its first systematic philosophical formulation.

As Sartre and Merleau-Ponty would later do, Heidegger pursued these issues with the somewhat unlikely resources of Edmund Husserl's phenomenological method. And while not all existential philosophers were influenced by phenomenology (for instance Jaspers and Marcel), the philosophical legacy of existentialism is largely tied to the form it took as an existential version of phenomenology. Husserl's efforts in the first decades of the twentieth century had been directed toward establishing a descriptive science of consciousness, by which he understood not the object of the natural science of psychology but the “transcendental” field of intentionality, i.e., that whereby our experience is meaningful, an experience of something as something. The existentialists welcomed Husserl's doctrine of intentionality as a refutation of the Cartesian view according to which consciousness relates immediately only to its own representations, ideas, sensations. According to Husserl, consciousness is our direct openness to the world, one that is governed categorially (normatively) rather than causally; that is, intentionality is not a property of the individual mind but the categorial framework in which mind and world become intelligible.

A phenomenology of consciousness, then, explores neither the metaphysical composition nor the causal genesis of things, but the

“constitution” of their meaning. Husserl employed this method to clarify our experience of nature, the socio-cultural world, logic, and mathematics, but Heidegger argued that he had failed to raise the most fundamental question, that of the “meaning of being” as such. In turning phenomenology toward the question of what it means to be, Heidegger insists that the question be raised concretely: it is not at first some academic exercise but a burning concern arising from life itself, the question of what it means for me to be. Existential themes take on salience when one sees that the general question of the meaning of being involves first becoming clear about one’s own being as an inquirer. According to Heidegger, the categories bequeathed by the philosophical tradition for understanding a being who can question his or her being are insufficient: traditional concepts of a substance decked out with reason, or of a subject blessed with self-consciousness, misconstrue our fundamental character as “being-in-the-world.” In his phenomenological pursuit of the categories that govern being-in-the-world, Heidegger became the reluctant father of existentialism because he drew inspiration from two seminal, though in academic circles then relatively unknown, nineteenth-century writers, Søren Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche. One can find anticipations of existential thought in many places (for instance, in Socratic irony, Augustine, Pascal, or the late Schelling), but the roots of the problem of existence in its contemporary significance lie in the work of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche.

Kierkegaard developed this problem in the context of his radical approach to Christian faith; Nietzsche did so in light of his thesis of the death of God. Subsequent existential thought reflects this difference: while some writers—such as Sartre and Beauvoir—were resolutely atheist in outlook, others—such as Heidegger, Jaspers, Marcel, and Buber—variously explored the implications of the concept “authentic existence” for religious consciousness. Though neither Nietzsche’s nor Kierkegaard’s thought can be reduced to a single strand, both took an interest in what Kierkegaard termed “the single individual.” Both were convinced that this singularity, what is most my own, “me,” could be meaningfully reflected upon while yet, precisely because of its

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singularity, remain invisible to traditional philosophy, with its emphasis either on what follows unerring objective laws of nature or else conforms to the universal standards of moral reason. A focus on existence thus led, in both, to unique textual strategies quite alien to the philosophy of their time.

In Kierkegaard, the singularity of existence comes to light at the moment of conflict between ethics and religious faith. Suppose it is my sense of doing God's will that makes my life meaningful. How does philosophy conceive this meaning? Drawing here on Hegel as emblematic of the entire tradition, Kierkegaard, in his book *Fear and Trembling*, argues that for philosophy my life becomes meaningful when I “raise myself to the universal” by bringing my immediate (natural) desires and inclinations under the moral law, which represents my “telos” or what I ought to be. In doing so I lose my individuality (since the law holds for all) but my actions become meaningful in the sense of understandable, governed by a norm. Now a person whose sense of doing God's will is what gives her life meaning will be intelligible just to the extent that her action conforms to the universal dictates of ethics. But what if, as in case of Abraham's sacrifice of his son, the action contradicts what ethics demands? Kierkegaard[3] believes both that Abraham's life is supremely meaningful (it is not simply a matter of some immediate desire or meaningless tic that overcomes Abraham's ethical consciousness; on the contrary, doing the moral thing is itself in this case his tempting inclination) and that philosophy cannot understand it, thus condemning it in the name of ethics. God's command here cannot be seen as a law that would pertain to all; it addresses Abraham in his singularity. If Abraham's life is meaningful, it represents, from a philosophical point of view, the “paradox” that through faith the “single individual is higher than the universal.” Existence as a philosophical problem appears at this point: if there is a dimension to my being that is both meaningful and yet not governed by the rational standard of morality, by what standard is it governed? For unless there is some standard it is idle to speak of “meaning.”



To solve this problem there must be a norm inherent in singularity itself, and, in his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Kierkegaard tries to express such a norm in his claim that “subjectivity is the truth,” an idea that prefigures the existential concept of authenticity. Abraham has no objective reason to think that the command he hears comes from God; indeed, based on the content of the command he has every reason, as Kant pointed out in *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, to think that it cannot come from God. His sole justification is what Kierkegaard calls the passion of faith. Such faith is, rationally speaking, absurd, a “leap,” so if there is to be any talk of truth here it is a standard that measures not the content of Abraham's act, but the way in which he accomplishes it. To perform the movement of faith “subjectively” is to embrace the paradox as normative for me in spite of its absurdity, rather than to seek an escape from it by means of objective textual exegesis, historical criticism, or some other strategy for translating the singularity of my situation into the universal. Because my reason cannot help here, the normative appropriation is a function of my “inwardness” or passion. In this way I “truly” become what I nominally already am. To say that subjectivity is the truth is to highlight a way of being, then, and not a mode of knowing; truth measures the attitude (“passion”) with which I appropriate, or make my own, an “objective uncertainty” (the voice of God) in a “process of highest inwardness.”

In contrast to the singularity of this movement, for Kierkegaard, stands the crowd: “the crowd is untruth.” The crowd is, roughly, public opinion in the widest sense—the ideas that a given age takes for granted; the ordinary and accepted way of doing things; the complacent attitude that comes from the conformity necessary for social life—and what condemns it to “untruth” in Kierkegaard's eyes is the way that it insinuates itself into an individual's own sense of who she is, relieving her of the burden of being herself: if everyone is a Christian there is no need for me to “become” one. Since it is a measure not of knowing but of being, one can see how Kierkegaard answers those who object that his concept of subjectivity as truth is based on an equivocation: the objective truths of science and history, however well-established, are in themselves

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matters of indifference; they belong to the crowd. It is not insofar as truth can be established objectively that it takes on meaning, but rather insofar as it is appropriated “passionately” in its very uncertainty. To “exist” is always to be confronted with this question of meaning. The truths that matter to who one is cannot, like Descartes' morale definitif, be something to be attained only when objective science has completed its task.

### Check Your Progress 1

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

**b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit**

1) How has Sartre analyzed Being or reality?

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2) Dwell on Sartre's conception of the other.

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## 2.3 ALBERT CAMUS

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### Introducing Camus

Albert Camus was born in 1913 in Algeria; his father died in the war, when Albert was only one year old. He experienced extreme poverty during the childhood. He was a great lover of nature, which is evidently present in his writings. Together with poverty he experienced illness as well (Tuberculosis); during II world war, he worked with resistance group. In 1957 he received nobel prize for literature. In 1960 died in a car accident. His main works are: The Myth of Sisyphus, The Stranger, The Rebel, The Plague, etc. The North African background of Camus must have had a role to play in his “Neopaganism and love for nature.” There is in every Algerian, an earthly naïveté by which he lives the present life to the full – the sensual empirical life world. Camus is critical

of the European approach—an attitude that is more “future oriented”. They, says Camus, turn their back to the concreteness of the here and now, and turn to the delusion of power; they reject the misery of the slums in preference to the mirage of an eternal city, ordinary justice for a promised land. Hence he refuses to repudiate the pleasures, joys and beauties of the world.

### **Absurdity and Rebellion: Camus-I**

The theme of absurdity is as old as the book of Ecclesiastes, but Camus has expressed it so accurately as the mood of his time. The setting was ideal, and he epitomized the prevalent climate of France under German occupation. He does not equate absurdity with meaninglessness, as life has still some meaning, though absurd. Contributing Factors There are many contributing factors for his development of absurdity in the world. Man seeks reasons and explanations, but he is frustrated as no explanation is forthcoming. The following are presented as the contributing factors for this frustration. (1) Science: Despite its dogmatic claims, science ends in hypothesis, and thus inadequate. Science has made the world and reality a bundle of atoms. When he looks for understanding and clarity, he finds irrationality and opacity of the world. (2) Monotony of life: Life goes on in an orderly and systematic way: the daily time-table, the weekly programme, the monthly schedule, the yearly plans... all these go on in an uninterrupted way. They suddenly become monotonous, when we become conscious of it. The ‘awakening’ of the humans gives rise to ‘monotony’. (3) Time: Man suddenly becomes aware that time is his worst enemy. We are being carried by time, and suddenly it destroys us, as it takes us to the “no further.” This too begets absurdity. (4) World: The darkness, opacity and hostility of the world, which mostly remain dormant, suddenly show themselves; and the humans are thrown into absurdity. (5) Inhumanity: Camus says: “men too secrete the ‘inhuman’. We perform meaningless actions, and utter formal words; but they remain purely external show, without any inner basis of conviction. When we pause and look, we find the ‘absurdity of it. (6) Death: The inevitability of death puts an end to all of man’s plans

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and ambitions. The futility of man's life comes to the forefront, and we are thrown into absurdity.

### **Absurdity and the Responses to**

It The world is neither rational nor absurd in itself; only in relation to human consciousness (awareness) it becomes absurd. The absurd is born of the confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world to give reason. The absurd is neither exclusively in the humans nor in the world, but in their confrontation. This confrontation can be between one's intentions and the given possibilities, between an action and the world not in accord with that action. The Myth of Sisyphus quite dramatically presents the absurd hero. Based on this, absurdity can be explained as the "awareness of oneself as condemned to tragic purposelessness." Sisyphus was the personification of it as he had, without purpose, to roll the huge stone up the hill to allow it to roll down. Sisyphus was punished for disobeying the gods by refusing to return to the underworld. He was forcibly taken to the underworld where the stone was awaiting him. His scorn of gods, hatred of death, passion for life, brought about this punishment. There is happiness in him in his refusal to give in, in his resentful stubbornness to remain in this struggle. In his *The Stranger* Camus presents 'indifference' to everything as the meaning of absurdity. The world is indifferent to the humans, and the humans are indifferent to everything in his life and death.

### **Responses to Absurdity:**

One of the common responses to absurdity is that of escaping from it either by physical suicide or by philosophical suicide. Physical suicide is the voluntary termination of life. Philosophical suicide is a taking refuge in faith and religion to escape the absurd. According to Camus, neither physical suicide nor hope (philosophical suicide) is the authentic response to absurdity. Suicide is a cowardly act, by which absurdity is destroyed. It is not an expression of revolt. These are 'facile solutions' in the face of absurdity. Both physical and philosophical suicide lacks a fundamental honesty, since they represent a refusal to face the situation of absurdity. It is a cowardly compromise. After rejecting physical and

philosophical suicide as a way out, Camus opts to face the absurd squarely by constant confrontation. Man has to engage in an ongoing struggle, although he knows that he can never win the struggle. It is a confrontation between man and his own absurdity. The sight of such a struggle is an example of human pride in action. There is Majesty in this relentless struggle. According to Camus, "it is essential to die unreconciled". His 'absurd man' can be said to be without hope only in terms of the two human dreams of eternity and total understanding.

Man's revolt against the absurd results in a new freedom. He begins to experience genuine freedom. There are no restraints in his actions. This freedom is owing to his having no future and no superior being. He is his own master. The truly liberated man is completely indifferent to the future, and thus rejects all scales of values. That is, he rejects the 'ethics of quality' and accepts an 'ethics of quantity'. What is important for the 'absurd man' is not the 'best' way of living, but the 'most' living. He strives to live more, and not better. Every action is of equal value. Man can live with the 'irresponsibility of the condemned criminal,' who has nothing to lose.

**Moderation and Reconciliation:**

Camus-II After the World War II, Camus began to show signs of moderation from his philosophical extremity. The Myth of Sisyphus conclusions were in agreement with Hitler's atrocities. Camus became convinced of a change, since the Nazi atrocities were the logical outcome of an 'ethics of quantity' that admits of no distinction between right and wrong. In his letters to a German friend he openly confessed his inability to continue his Sisyphus thought-pattern. Camus opts for some sort of values in life and limit in freedom. In the later works of Camus, he gradually expressed his changed thought. In his *The Plague* (1947) Camus argues that we must extend a helping hand to our brothers in combating the 'plague' of the irrational absurdity. But it falls short of the Judeo-Christian attitude to suffering. In the common struggle against the oppressive plague, men have discovered their solidarity. And with this, they have learned meaning of compassion. Man has an obligation to keep

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the human solidarity alive. But in spite of man's solidarity and love for each other, there is still a collective impotence, i.e., despite his fight against the absurd, man's ultimate end is defeat and death. Thus no victory over the absurd is possible. Still Camus has now opted for an 'ethics of quality'. In his *The Rebel* (1951) Camus makes the penetrating analysis of 'rebellion'. He takes the rejection of suicide as the foundational principle in this work; man has decided to live since our personal existence has some value. Camus distinguishes between metaphysical and historical rebellion. Metaphysical rebellion denies absolute freedom, and acknowledges existence with some limits. When the slave says 'no' to his master, he means to say 'up to now "yes" but 'beyond it, "no". He chooses to fight for justice rather than for his own life. It is not an interchange of roles, rather an affirmation of the value of humanity, a value shared by others as well. Revolt is based on a belief in a common human dignity. Camus also looks at the way some of the historical figures, under the guise of defense of human rights became notorious oppressors of humanity. All dreamers of utopians have ended in failure, as they lost sight of 'limit' (measure). In his last two works, *The Fall* (1956) and *Exile and Kingdom*, Camus enters into a state of repentance. Man is presented not as the 'innocent rebel' but as 'the guilty other'. He cannot live with his conscience. He looks for a judge who will condemn him and then pardon him, but there is neither condemnation nor pardon in sight. "Who would dare condemn me in a world without judge, where no one is innocent?"

### Check Your Progress 2

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

**b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit**

1) What is Camus' understanding of 'absurdity'?

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2) Clarify the authentic and inauthentic responses to absurdity.

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3) Dwell on Camus' Phase of "Moderation and Reconciliation".

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## 2.4 LET US SUM UP

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Sartre takes man to the heights of absolute freedom, and drops down to utter meaninglessness. I march forward in triumph alone to my own future; but death puts a halt to my triumphant march. Sartre cries out in good faith: "It is meaningless that we are born; it is meaningless that we die." It is to his credit that Sartre has brought to the open the naked, dark, and hidden aspects of life; but he did it at the expense of all positive aspects. Camus met with a sudden death. Within a short period of time, he has imprinted his mark on the literary and philosophical world. He is an eloquent spokesman of our age. He had the intellectual honesty to change his views, instead of stubbornly holding to the earlier views of absurdity; he kept himself open and thus ended up in solidarity, justice and compassion, and repentance. Both the thinkers have contributed in their style towards clarifying some of the aspects of human existence, however unpleasant they may appear to be. A holistic philosophy of life can be developed only with the help of a multidimensional clarification of the reality of human existence.

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## 2.5 KEY WORDS

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Being-in-itself ( $\exists$ tre en soi): material reality

Being-for-itself ( $\exists$ tre pour soi): conscious reality

Shame: the intentional experience of one's subjectivity being killed

Absurdity: experience of meaninglessness

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## 2.6 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

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## Notes

1. Discuss the contribution of Jean Paul Sartre.
2. Discuss the contribution Albert Camus.

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## 2.7 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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- Lescoe, Francis J. *Existentialism: With or Without God*. New York: Alba House, 1974.
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## 2.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Check Your Progress 1

1) How has Sartre analyzed Being or reality? Sartre distinguishes reality into two opposing modes: Being-in-itself (l'être-en-soi) and Being-for-itself (l'être-pour-soi). The object of consciousness which is non-conscious is called 'Being-in-itself. It is always material. It is there; opaque, compact density; without aspiration, hope or fear, meaning or relation. It is uncreated; it is there without any reason for its being; it is superfluous, unjustifiable, contingent and absurd. Such an absurd being-in-itself generates in us a disgust, a nausea. The existence as unmasked in being-in-itself, and revealed in its terrifying obscene nudity is absurdity—there is no necessary reason for it to be with this particular 'suchness,' it just happened to be! It is superfluous. Reality is not exhausted by the compact material things, there is also 'consciousness', through which there exist similarity, meaning, difference, etc. Consciousness is being-for-itself. It is vacuous, and is characterized by potency and incompleteness. It is based on the 'in-itself' which alone is being in the



proper sense. The 'for-itself' is nothingness. It is through the conscious being or man that 'nothingness' enters into the world. Consciousness finds absence, incompleteness and lacks. Man is the oppositional unity of the in-itself and the for-itself, body and consciousness.

2) Dwell on Sartre's conception of the other. As I observe the in-itself entities, I become aware of other people observing me. Awareness of myself as acting (subject) goes with the awareness of myself as being acted upon (object). There is nothing more remarkable in Sartre's philosophy than his phenomenological analysis of the other as staring. The awareness of being stared at 'nails me to the spot'; I am petrified and immobilized in the act. I become ashamed. Shame is the recognition that I am as the other sees me. To be ashamed is to be aware of the presence of someone else. It is at the expense of my subjectivity that the existence of the other is revealed. In the stare of the other— which is always hateful—I am reduced to an 'object'; the other is revealed as the one who hatefully stares at me. My freedom is frozen under his stare. To regain my subjectivity, I try to reduce the other to an object by my stare. Thus each one is trying to enslave the other; the result is the inevitable conflict. If a third person looks at 'us in conflict', we become objectified for the third person, and 'we' become ashamed. To love another means to hate the common enemy. Love, for Sartre, is an impossibility. Out of the futile effort to love is born hatred which annihilates the freedom of the other in mortal combat.

3) Delineate Sartre's Understanding of freedom and its implications. According to Sartre, man is necessarily free; the only necessity of man is his freedom. He is absolutely free: he is so free that he is not free not to be free. According to Sartre, freedom is a curse, a horrible yoke, a condemnation. The terrible responsibility attached to freedom fills man with anguish. "I am responsible for everything, and I am condemned to be so. I find myself alone with my heavy responsibility, from which I cannot get out, nor can I throw it onto someone else. To evade from this responsibility of freedom man devices 'bad faith'. Sartre gives several proofs for the impossibility of God, all of which are based on the

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absolute freedom of the humans: if there is a God, man cannot be absolutely free. Hence God is an impossibility. According to Sartre, God is not merely dead, but there cannot be a God. Man and God cannot co-exist. Just as there cannot be a God because of man's freedom, so also there cannot be a system of moral values. Man creates values in his freedom. Every act is concrete, and it is performed in a definite situation. The only sin that man can commit is to act in bad faith, deceiving oneself with the ought of eternal values, or with the hope of a reward or fear of punishment. Thus Sartre's notion of freedom has many serious consequences.

### **Check Your Progress 2**

1) What is Camus' understanding of 'absurdity'? The theme of absurdity is accurately expressed by Camus as the mood of his time. The setting was ideal, and he epitomized the prevalent climate of France under German occupation. There are many contributing factors for his development of absurdity in the world. Man seeks reasons and explanations, but he is frustrated as no explanation is forthcoming. The following are presented as the contributing factors for this frustration. He points out some of the glaring aspects from the contemporary life as factors that accelerated the experience of absurdity. The world is neither rational nor absurd in itself; only in relation to human consciousness (awareness) it becomes absurd. The absurd is born of the confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world to give reason. The Myth of Sisyphus quite dramatically presents the absurd hero. Based on this, absurdity can be explained as the "awareness of oneself as condemned to tragic purposelessness." Sisyphus was the personification of it as he had, without purpose, to roll the huge stone up the hill to allow it to roll down. Sisyphus was punished for disobeying the gods by refusing to return to the underworld. He was forcibly taken to the underworld where the stone was awaiting him. There is happiness in him in his refusal to give in, in his resentful stubbornness to remain in this struggle.

2) Clarify the authentic and inauthentic responses to absurdity. Camus, before presenting the authentic response to absurdity, speaks on the ordinary and inauthentic responses. One of the common responses to absurdity is that of escaping from it either by physical suicide or by philosophical suicide. Physical suicide is the voluntary termination of life. Philosophical suicide is a taking refuge in faith and religion to escape the absurd. According to Camus, neither physical suicide nor hope (philosophical suicide) is the authentic response to absurdity. Suicide is a cowardly act, by which absurdity is destroyed. It is not an expression of revolt. These are 'facile solutions' in the face of absurdity. After rejecting physical and philosophical suicide as an inauthentic way out, Camus opts to face the absurd squarely by constant confrontation. Man has to engage in an ongoing struggle, although he knows that he can never win the struggle. It is a confrontation between man and his own absurdity. There is Majesty in this relentless struggle. According to Camus, "it is essential to die un-reconciled". Man's revolt against the absurd results in a new freedom. He is his own master. The truly liberated man is completely indifferent to the future, and thus rejects all scales of values. That is, he rejects the 'ethics of quality' and accepts an 'ethics of quantity'. Man can live with the 'irresponsibility of the condemned criminal,' who has nothing to lose.

3) Dwell on Camus' Phase of 'Moderation and Reconciliation'. After the World War II, Camus began to show signs of moderation from his philosophical extremity. The Myth of Sisyphus conclusions were in agreement with Hitler's atrocities. Camus became convinced of a change, which he gradually unfolds. In his *The Plague* (1947) Camus argues that we must extend a helping hand to our brothers in combating the 'plague' of the irrational absurdity. In the common struggle against the oppressive plague, men have discovered their solidarity. And with this, they have learned meaning of compassion. Camus has gradually opted for an 'ethics of quality'. In his *The Rebel* (1951) Camus makes the penetrating analysis of 'rebellion'. He distinguishes between metaphysical and historical rebellion. Metaphysical rebellion denies absolute freedom, and acknowledges existence with some limits. Historical Rebellion is a fight

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for one's own self. He chooses to fight for justice rather than for his own life. In his last two works, *The Fall* (1956) and *Exile and Kingdom*, Camus enters into a state of repentance. Man is presented not as the 'innocent rebel' but as 'the guilty other'. He cannot live with his conscience. He looks for a judge who will condemn him and then pardon him, but there is neither condemnation nor pardon in sight. "Who would dare condemn me in a world without judge, where no one is innocent?" Thus Camus gradually moved towards a phase of reconciliation in his thought.

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## **UNIT 3: THEISTIC EXISTENTIALISTS**

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### **STRUCTURE**

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Kierkegaard's Philosophy
- 3.3 Marcel's Philosophy
- 3.4 Let us sum up
- 3.5 Key Words
- 3.6 Questions for Review
- 3.7 Suggested readings and references
- 3.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

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### **3.0 OBJECTIVES**

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The main objective of this Unit is to present one type of existentialists who are strong believers in God. As against the popular belief that existentialists are generally atheists, this unit will show that faith in God is the central theme in their thought. It is not that God is just given a place in their philosophy, but rather their philosophy would not have been possible without God. Before we look into the theistic existentialists, we begin with a short introductory reflection on existentialism. It will help the students to situate Kierkegaard and Marcel better. The first existentialist we consider is Kierkegaard, who is rightly regarded as the Father of Existentialism. His philosophy of existence is held together by the central notion in his thought, namely, choice. The growth in choice is disclosed by the three stages of existence, the culmination of which is the leap of faith. Thus Kierkegaard has taken philosophy away from the clutches of reason. The other theistic existentialist that we will be considering is Gabriel Marcel. His thought is a philosophical reflection of Christian theology. His philosophy, after having made a distinction between the traditional and the existential approach of philosophizing, passes through the intersubjective relation and culminates itself in the transcendental relation to the Absolute Thou,

God. Consideration of these two theistic thinkers is intended to give a religious solidity to the searching minds of the students.

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### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

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Existentialism got developed in the 20th century in continental Europe. Although it is primarily a philosophical movement, we can find its ‘roots’ and ‘branches’ (basis and influence) in various fields. Traditional philosophy did not bother about the problem of concrete existence, like death, love, despair, body, finitude, anxiety, hope, etc. Man became more and more aware of his naked existence, and he could not get away to an ideal and abstract realm. In such a situation Existentialism made its appearance not as a stroke of chance but of necessity. The luxury of philosophizing was not limited to the few arm-chair philosophers; existentialism brought philosophy to the appeal of the ordinary man. Existentialism is an elusive notion, escaping all definitions. It is not a system of philosophy, rather a way of philosophizing. It is a type of philosophizing that looks into human existence, calling the individuals to an awareness of their existence in its essential freedom. Existentialism, instead of retreating to a realm of eternal truths, hugs close to the terrain of ordinary living. No rigid classification of existentialists is possible. All the same, historians, in spite of the fact that some of the existentialists cannot be placed in any of these two groups, divide the existentialists into two groups: theistic existentialists who admit the existence of God in their philosophy, and atheistic existentialists who deny the existence of God. Although existentialism traces its origins to the strongly theistic Christian polemics of Kierkegaard—what it means to be a Christian—the atheistic stance of Sartre and Camus has become more popular, and existentialism got identified mostly with their philosophy. We shall consider from each group two representative thinkers; and in this Unit we focus our attention on the philosophies of Kierkegaard and Marcel.

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### 3.2 KIERKEGAARD’S PHILOSOPHY

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Kierkegaard developed this problem in the context of his radical approach to Christian faith; Nietzsche did so in light of his thesis of the

death of God. Subsequent existential thought reflects this difference: while some writers—such as Sartre and Beauvoir—were resolutely atheist in outlook, others—such as Heidegger, Jaspers, Marcel, and Buber—variously explored the implications of the concept “authentic existence” for religious consciousness. Though neither Nietzsche's nor Kierkegaard's thought can be reduced to a single strand, both took an interest in what Kierkegaard termed “the single individual.” Both were convinced that this singularity, what is most my own, “me,” could be meaningfully reflected upon while yet, precisely because of its singularity, remain invisible to traditional philosophy, with its emphasis either on what follows unerring objective laws of nature or else conforms to the universal standards of moral reason. A focus on existence thus led, in both, to unique textual strategies quite alien to the philosophy of their time.

In Kierkegaard, the singularity of existence comes to light at the moment of conflict between ethics and religious faith. Suppose it is my sense of doing God's will that makes my life meaningful. How does philosophy conceive this meaning? Drawing here on Hegel as emblematic of the entire tradition, Kierkegaard, in his book *Fear and Trembling*, argues that for philosophy my life becomes meaningful when I “raise myself to the universal” by bringing my immediate (natural) desires and inclinations under the moral law, which represents my “telos” or what I ought to be. In doing so I lose my individuality (since the law holds for all) but my actions become meaningful in the sense of understandable, governed by a norm. Now a person whose sense of doing God's will is what gives her life meaning will be intelligible just to the extent that her action conforms to the universal dictates of ethics. But what if, as in case of Abraham's sacrifice of his son, the action contradicts what ethics demands? Kierkegaard<sup>[3]</sup> believes both that Abraham's life is supremely meaningful (it is not simply a matter of some immediate desire or meaningless tic that overcomes Abraham's ethical consciousness; on the contrary, doing the moral thing is itself in this case his tempting inclination) and that philosophy cannot understand it, thus condemning it in the name of ethics. God's command here cannot be seen as a law that

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would pertain to all; it addresses Abraham in his singularity. If Abraham's life is meaningful, it represents, from a philosophical point of view, the “paradox” that through faith the “single individual is higher than the universal.” Existence as a philosophical problem appears at this point: if there is a dimension to my being that is both meaningful and yet not governed by the rational standard of morality, by what standard is it governed? For unless there is some standard it is idle to speak of “meaning.”

To solve this problem there must be a norm inherent in singularity itself, and, in his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Kierkegaard tries to express such a norm in his claim that “subjectivity is the truth,” an idea that prefigures the existential concept of authenticity. Abraham has no objective reason to think that the command he hears comes from God; indeed, based on the content of the command he has every reason, as Kant pointed out in *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone*, to think that it cannot come from God. His sole justification is what Kierkegaard calls the passion of faith. Such faith is, rationally speaking, absurd, a “leap,” so if there is to be any talk of truth here it is a standard that measures not the content of Abraham's act, but the way in which he accomplishes it. To perform the movement of faith “subjectively” is to embrace the paradox as normative for me in spite of its absurdity, rather than to seek an escape from it by means of objective textual exegesis, historical criticism, or some other strategy for translating the singularity of my situation into the universal. Because my reason cannot help here, the normative appropriation is a function of my “inwardness” or passion. In this way I “truly” become what I nominally already am. To say that subjectivity is the truth is to highlight a way of being, then, and not a mode of knowing; truth measures the attitude (“passion”) with which I appropriate, or make my own, an “objective uncertainty” (the voice of God) in a “process of highest inwardness.”

In contrast to the singularity of this movement, for Kierkegaard, stands the crowd: “the crowd is untruth.” The crowd is, roughly, public opinion in the widest sense—the ideas that a given age takes for granted; the



ordinary and accepted way of doing things; the complacent attitude that comes from the conformity necessary for social life—and what condemns it to “untruth” in Kierkegaard's eyes is the way that it insinuates itself into an individual's own sense of who she is, relieving her of the burden of being herself: if everyone is a Christian there is no need for me to “become” one. Since it is a measure not of knowing but of being, one can see how Kierkegaard answers those who object that his concept of subjectivity as truth is based on an equivocation: the objective truths of science and history, however well-established, are in themselves matters of indifference; they belong to the crowd. It is not insofar as truth can be established objectively that it takes on meaning, but rather insofar as it is appropriated “passionately” in its very uncertainty. To “exist” is always to be confronted with this question of meaning. The truths that matter to who one is cannot, like Descartes' morale definitif, be something to be attained only when objective science has completed its task.

### **The Background: Personal Life and Western Tradition**

Soren Kierkegaard was born in Kopenhagen in 1813 in a wealthy family of extreme religious views. He was physically frail and melancholic in temperament. A gloomy atmosphere of religiosity prevailed in the house. A philosophically important event in his life was a love affair he had with Regina Olsen. Although they were engaged, he experienced the difficulty of making a choice for her as his life-partner. He was not sure whether he, with his temperament, would be able to live with her as a family; and thus he experienced the struggle of decision. Kierkegaard also experienced gossip from the society, which made him withdraw more to himself away from the society. In his mature years he turned to Religion, different from the existing stereotyped and rationalistic one. He lived a lonely life, died a lonely death in 1855. Some of the important works of his are the following: *Either/or*, *Fear and Trembling*, *Concept of Dread*, *Stages on Life's Way*, etc. Kierkegaard's personal life and his philosophy cannot be separated. His philosophical problem arose from some of the touching experiences of his life. Thus his philosophy is a

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reflection and universalization based on his personal experience. The struggle of choice, the call to be an individual, the need to be distanced from the anonymous crowd, the yearning for a genuine Religion and God of personal commitment and choice, etc., are some of the personally experienced themes that prominently reflected in his philosophy. Thus in his philosophical thoughts, one who speaks is the 'actor', rather than the 'spectator'. He calls himself a subjective thinker rather than an objective theorist. His philosophy is incidental to his main purpose, namely, the search as to what it means to be a human being? What it means to be a Christian? The questions are presented in the form of alternatives for his choice, rather than for an intellectual solution. Thus his philosophy is very much centred on choice or decision. Kierkegaard found that both western philosophy and Christian Religion were engaged in making life easy and comfortable by abstract thinking and superficial living, as both were centred on reason. Kierkegaard did not want religion and philosophy to be matters to be intellectually known, but to be lived personally by a choice. Just as Socrates who disturbed the conscience of the Athenians by making them aware of their ignorance through his questioning approach, Kierkegaard found it his duty to disturb the easy conscience of an age that was smug in the conviction of its own material progress and intellectual enlightenment. He would be the modern Christian 'gadfly' who would make people think regarding their individual Christian existence. In opposition to Hegel who was the main spokesman for the universal and the rational, Kierkegaard stood for his exaltation of the individual existence.

### **Existence: the Whence and the Whither of Philosophizing**

Philosophy has to start with existence which is not to be proved from reason, and thus it is the whence of philosophizing. Thinking has to begin from existence, since it is a response to the irruption of existence in our subjectivity. Hence, unlike Descartes, he holds that 'one exists and thinks' as a single personal entity. Existence is an indubitable truth. It is the attainment of self-possession in the self-directed life of the individual. To exist is not merely to be or to live. It is in choosing one's true self that one exists. Those who persist through life do not necessarily

exist; they drift along without becoming individuals. Thus existence has to be won by choice. It means thus to become an individual. The philosophy of Kierkegaard emphasizes the importance of the individual. His excessive emphasis on individuality is negatively influenced by Hegel's excessive universalism. Man has the tendency to escape in the 'crowd', just as Adam under evil conscience tried to hide himself among the trees. Man today is lost in the crowd, and are at a loss without the crowd. Kierkegaard wants to deliver the human being from the crowd and make him aware of himself as the centre of responsibilities. When one sinks into the crowd, one becomes demoralized by evading responsibilities. It is only by a choice that man can deliver himself from the crowd, and become an individual. Man truly can exist only insofar as he becomes an individual. Kierkegaard challenges man to this end. Looking at the whole of his philosophy, we notice that we have to start philosophizing from existence; and we have to move towards existence, insofar as his philosophy is nothing but keeping on growing in our existence. Thus existence is not only the whence, but the whither of philosophizing as well.

### **The Three Stages of Existence**

The three stages of existence, that Kierkegaard speaks of, had its basis in his life. By his personal choice he moved from a life of sensuality to ethical integrity, and thence to a life of religious commitment. That was the picture of the journey of his life. Hegel's dialectics and Kierkegaard's three stages have similarities and dissimilarities. Both speak of a movement through three stages. But they are very much different. According to Hegel, the process takes place in the universal (humanity), for Kierkegaard it takes place in the individual. In the former case the movement takes place necessarily and logically (dialectical process), in the latter, by a personal choice. If one does not make a choice one will continue to remain in the same stage. 5 Once a choice is made for the higher stage, the dethroned stage does not disappear fully; according to Kierkegaard, the lower can be incorporated into the higher. The first stage is called the Aesthetic Stage (The Stage of the lone individual). This stage is characterized by an attitude in which one has no continuity

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or commitment in one's life. It is called the Don Juan stage, which includes not merely a life of sensuality, but an attitude of not wanting anything 'fixed', and of desiring to taste all experiences. The man of this stage wants to sample the nectar from every flower. The man in this stage is governed by sense-impulse and emotion; he hates all that limits his field of choice. There is no constancy in his life, as he lives for the moment. There is nothing for him to cling or relate himself to: neither to God nor to other people, nor again to the past or to the future. Thus it is a stage of the lone individual. The next stage is Ethical Stage (the stage of the individual and society). This stage is marked by some constancy and consistency since man in this stage makes a choice for a determinate moral standard. He turns away from the lure and glamour of aesthetic stage, and decides to 'settle down' in life with its obligations. The presence of the other or the society has an influence on him. The shapeless individualism is changed, and he is able to relate himself to the past and the future, as a result of which there is a continuity in his life. By being ethical, one misses the category of the 'exceptional': i.e., being a 'saint' or a 'sinner'. Holding fast to a moral standard, one is protected from deviating to be a sinner and to be a saint. Socrates is given as an example for the 'ethical man'. In this stage my individual fancies are subordinated to the social and the legal. Life gets a rootedness and a shape. It is rightly called the stage of the individual and the society. The final stage that Kierkegaard speaks of is the Religious Stage (the stage of the individual before God). From one's commitment to the impersonal law, man takes a leap to a personal Absolute. Only in this stage the sense of sin makes its presence. A wrong behaviour is not merely a violation of law; rather it is expressive of man's option against God. Man attains the genuine selfhood as he makes a leap of faith, a leap into the dark. In this leap as long as one believes, one is carried along; as long as one despairs one sinks. The more man accepts his weakness, the stronger will be the presence of God in him. The leap of faith—the choice to move away from the ethical stage—cuts across the ethical demands, as it is evident in the case of Abraham's preparedness to sacrifice his son at God's demand. Only one who has been faithful to the ethical laws can transcend them in the religious stage. This stage is characterized by essential

suffering, fear and trembling, guilt and dread. It is the stage of the individual before God.

### **The Philosophy of Leap:**

Faith and Truth Kierkegaard's is a philosophy of choice or leap, the structure of which remains basically the same. But it can be best explained in relation to man's leap to the Absolute. The central problem in Kierkegaard's philosophy has been the question as to how to be a Christian. Thus he reflected on the relationship between God and man. The existence of God is an indubitable fact for him. As God is infinite, there is an impassable gulf between God and man who is finite. Bridging this gulf is not possible with rational systems, but only with a leap of faith—not with a theory of knowledge, but with an act of commitment or choice. Such a leap is a self commitment to the 'objective uncertainty', a leap into the unknown. Man is as though sitting on a precipice, with an attraction and repulsion to take the leap—repulsion because of the objective uncertainty, and attraction because of the subjective certainty. He is in a situation of dread, wherein attraction and repulsion, sympathy and antipathy, are interwoven.

Dread is the struggle of choice, the alarming possibility of freedom! Faith as the leap links the objective uncertainty and subjective certainty. Such a leap is a venture, a challenge, which I have to struggle to make. Faith is both a gift and a choice; a gift, as man is given the capacity to make the choice; a choice, as it has to be appropriated by oneself. The truth to which I commit myself by a leap of faith is not same as the objective truth of creed or belief, as Religion is not a system of intellectual propositions to which a believer assents. We ordinarily speak of 'objective truth', the knowledge of which is highly impersonal. For example,  $2 + 2 = 4$ . Once I know it, I know it; I do not have to make it my own constantly. Kierkegaard doesn't deny the validity of such truths. But he gives priority to the existential truth or truth as subjectivity. It is that on which I stake my whole being. It is so important for me; still I can doubt it. If I accept it, I do so with a passionate self commitment. I make a choice for it. It is in a sense my truth. I have to

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renew such truth constantly to make it my own. To hold to such a truth is a venture, which chooses an objective uncertainty. I make a choice for the existential truths, and I have to maintain them as it were over a fathomless sea by the passionate appropriation of the objectively uncertain. Thus, Kierkegaard reiterates the centrality of 'choice' in faith and truth, in religion and life.

### Check Your Progress 1

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1) How is Kierkegaard's life related to his philosophy?

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2) The role of 'existence' in Kierkegaard's philosophy?

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3) Dwell on the three stages of existence.

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## 3.3 MARCEL'S PHILOSOPHY

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Among the theistic existentialists, Gabriel Marcel occupies an important place. Just as in the case of Kierkegaard, so also Marcel's life and experience played a significant role in the birth and growth of his philosophy.

### Experiential Background to His Philosophy

Gabriel Marcel was born in 1889 in a Catholic family; his mother died when he was just four years old. Thereafter he was brought up by his aunt, who became his step-mother. He experienced an a-religious attitude

in the family. After his secondary schooling, he was awarded a fellowship in philosophy by Sorbonne-university. He taught philosophy in different places. During the First World War, he served as a Red-Cross official. In the second half of his life, he began to move closer to religion, especially Catholicism. Thereafter his life was a journey of thought and commitment. Some of the important works of his are the following: *Metaphysical Journal*, *The Mystery of Being*, *Being and Having*, *Homo Viator*, etc. In 1973 Gabriel Marcel died at the age of eighty-three. Certain experiences in his life stand out in contributing towards his thought: (1) the difference of temperament made him realize that some of the incompatibilities of life cannot be reconciled by intellectual formulae. People cannot be regimented into a group, without consideration of their uniqueness. 2) The spiritual aridity at home set him forth on a spiritual quest that culminated in his faith in God. He did not inherit a religion of passionate commitment, and this absence set him forth towards a genuine religion. 3) His mother's early death made him develop a phenomenology of presence from his experience of physical absence of his mother. 4) His experience at the war-field took him away from abstract dialectics to anxious meditations on life and being. He started reflecting on life and death, personal relations and encounters, pain and suffering. In the light of these experiences, he looked at the prevalent academic life, which he found to be very dissatisfying, since it has been stifling all creativity. Thus he began his own philosophical reflection.

### **Twofold Approach to Reality**

Marcel, before he begins his philosophizing, looks into the two ways of looking at reality: the way reality has been looked at traditionally, and the new way that he proposes in his philosophy. This new 'way' is not exclusively of Marcel, but that which emerged with existentialism. But Marcel has given a precise expression to it, by showing the contrast with the traditional approach. First of all, he makes a distinction between the primary and the secondary reflection. The primary reflection is analytical and dissective, and it has a place in scientific research. It looks at the reality, part by part. The reflecting subject here is an 'impersonal anyone'; and here the subject-object dichotomy is maintained. The

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secondary reflection, on the other hand, is synthetic and recuperative; it takes a holistic approach. This has greater role to play in philosophy. Another corresponding distinction that Marcel makes is that between problem and mystery. The object of scientific knowledge is ‘problem’ and of philosophical reflection is ‘mystery’. Problems are open to solution. Once the solution is reached, the problem is no more. For the problems I am an epistemological subject, grappling with an object as a problem. The mystery is a question in which the being of the questioner is involved. No solution is aimed at in a mystery. I cannot stand apart from the mystery; it is in me, and I am in it. The third distinction that Marcel makes is that between ‘being’ and ‘having’. The mystery deals with being, and the problem with having. In ‘having’ the relation between the possessor and the possessed, between the ‘who’ and ‘what’ is external, and in ‘being’ the bond is internal, as between I and thou. My relation to ‘having’ is such that what I ‘have’ is at my disposal, and I can dispose it off as and when I want without ceasing to be myself. It is not constitutive of my being.

### **Incarnation and Freedom**

While clarifying the distinction between ‘being’ and ‘having’, Marcel gives two instances of ‘having’: secret and body. Secret is the pure type of having, since it is fully under my control and disposal. Body is not a having as normally understood, since I cannot dispose of my body and be myself. As a phenomenological existentialist, Marcel speaks of the ‘mine-character’ of body, and in this context and tone Marcel speaks of ‘incarnation’ or man as ‘incarnate’ or ‘bodily’. Body cannot be considered as an object, as the body, rather as my body—body preceded by a possessive personal pronoun. Although body is not a having, it is the prototype of all kinds of having—condition for all possessions. I can possess many things because of my bodily character. If body is not a having, is then being? No, I can neither say I have my body, nor can I say that I am my body. It has an ambivalent position of being and having. My relation to my body best expressed by the expression: I am bodily, just as I am spiritual. It is the ‘I’ that is the centre of all actions and thoughts: I am hungry, I know, I decide, I have pain. etc., instead of my



body is hungry, my body has pain, my soul knows, etc. There is a constant tension between being having. Bible speaks of ‘gaining the whole world’ (having) and ‘losing one’s soul’ (being). The ‘having-centred man’ sees the others as ‘having’ (at his disposal). Man has to keep the right priority, and balance them both. The notion of incarnation has to be seen against the dualistic conception of body and soul, and that of man and world. To be bodily and to be worldly essentially belong to man. In other words, through my incarnation, I am in the world. Marcel considers freedom, not as a condemnation, but as a grace, as an invocation to be free. The free act is creative of the personal subject; the anonymous persons do not act in freedom, and thus, they do not create themselves. It is in and through freedom that I create myself. It is a creative response to the appeal of my being. Freedom is primarily a freedom for the project of self-fulfilment, which is to be realized through one’s freedom for or commitment to God and others. I create myself in my committing myself to others and to God. Man has the capacity for commitment or betrayal. Freedom is not merely the choice between these two alternatives. By choosing to be committed, one fulfils and creates oneself; when one does not make a choice to be oneself, one is in captivity. Freedom is a conquest: it has to be won from the situation of captivity. The free activity is marked by both ‘receptivity’ and ‘creativity’, thrownness and possibility: in one word, ‘finite freedom’. Thus Marcel’s notion of freedom rests on an act of ‘ontological humility’—the recognition that man is a created being, and not an autonomous God.

### **Philosophy of Relation**

Marcel’s is a philosophy of relation—totally different from the philosophy, propagated by Sartre, his compatriot and contemporary. While speaking of the two-directional relations, Marcel differentiates them, showing their complementarity. The two-directional relations are directed to the finite others and to the absolute other.

### **Relation to the Finite Other:**

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Inter-subjectivity Marcel is known primarily for his theory of inter-subjectivity which he developed, basing himself on the theory of intentionality in phenomenology, applied to the notion of ‘availability’. The act of being available is directed necessarily to other persons. The very act through which ‘I am’ implies an allusion to other people: an I to a thou. Although inter-subjectivity is presented as the authentic mode of existence, people have the leaning towards living an inauthentic existence of faceless anonymity, living a self-enclosed existence. In this case, the other is seen, not as a ‘thou’, but as an ‘it’—a functionary, an instrument, an object, ... I may start my relation to the other, taking the other as a s/he; but gradually the barrier disappears, and we together form an ‘us’. The relation becomes inter-subjective or I-thou relation—the relation between subjects. From The narrowness of the initial subject-object relation (I-it relation) I move to an I-thou relation or intersubjectivity, in which we become mutually available, we accept each other as subjects. It is in the intersubjective relation that there takes place presence and encounter (meeting). Only a personal subject can be present to me, and we encounter each other. An object cannot be present to me, nor can I encounter an object. It is on the plane of secondary reflection and mystery that the other is present to me. Thus encountering and presence have deep metaphysical nuances. There is present here an unconditional mutuality that affects the very being of the individuals. The mutually encountering subjects are available to each other. Availability and unavailability (disponibilit[ ] and indisponibilit[ ])—the typically Marcelian notions—become meaningful in the context of his explanation of inter-subjectivity. The notion of ‘availability’ carries with it a stance which is characterized by a readiness to respond, an openness, being at the service of the other, a welcoming, etc. Through one’s ‘creative fidelity’—responding to the other in a creative manner—one grows in one’s inter-subjective relation.

### **Relation to the Absolute Other:**

Faith and Hope When I enter into communion with the other, I transcend the level of ‘having’ (object) to that of ‘being’. But here too I want to go beyond to the Absolute. My exigency for commitment, fidelity and

transcendence is only partially fulfilled in human interrelationships. Hence I aspire towards a self-commitment towards the Absolute. But it is through the finite 'thous' that I can transcend to the Absolute Thou. In my existential relation to the finite thou, I become aware of my orientation to the Absolute Thou (God). Through my spiritual orientation of love and fidelity to others, we begin to participate in the Absolute Other. It is in the Absolute Thou that the universal human fraternity has attained its total actualization. All the finite thous are solidly grounded in the Absolute Thou. My openness to Being passes through the transcending of egoism in the communion with others, to a personal self-transcending to God. God is not to be proved objectively, but to be encountered as the 'absolute Thou'. It is specifically through faith that I relate myself to the Absolute Thou. Faith implies a personal commitment. Marcel distinguishes between personal and propositional faith: believing in and believing that respectively. Man has the freedom for commitment or betrayal of the covenant with God. Faith and freedom disclose the need for transcendence to the horizontal and thence to the vertical: through the finite thou to the absolute Thou. Faith goes with its concomitant love and hope. A relation of commitment is a relation of inter-subjectivity and hope. The threefold gift of faith, hope and love has to be won by freedom. The evils that disable my freedom can be summed up in the category of 'death'. Death is the meeting of life in time, and life beyond time. Here Marcel introduces the notion of 'hope'. It is the active reaction against the state of captivity, exile and meaninglessness. It is directed to an absolute end, unlike desire which is directed to finite ends. Just as faith, hope too can be distinguished between 'hoping in' and 'hoping that'; the former is the genuine hope in a person. Finally in a profoundly religious tone, Marcel says that salvation is not a static state, but a continued entering into that universal community grounded in God. Marcel's philosophy thus is based on the indispensability of faith, hope and love in a concrete ontology.

**Check Your Progress 2**

**Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer**

**b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit**

## Notes

1) Has Marcel's philosophy got developed from his life-experience?

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2) Dwell on the twofold approach in philosophy.

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3) Can Marcel's philosophy be characterized as a philosophy of relation?

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### 3.4 LET US SUM UP

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We have considered two of the most important theistic existentialists: Kierkegaard and Marcel. Their thoughts complement each other, and this justifies the choice of these two thinkers as the theistic existentialists. Kierkegaard emphasizes the individual existence, which is to be growing towards making a leap to the Absolute. He has dwelt at length on man's relation to God, which can be built and maintained by personal choice. Kierkegaard's philosophy has made the Christians reflect on what it means to be a Christian; for the others it was an inspiration to develop their individual responsibility. Christian theology is very much indebted to the philosophy of Kierkegaard. In the existential movement almost all the themes of Kierkegaard are found, divorced from their original religious setting. Hence rightly he is called 'the father of existentialism'. His philosophy of existence and choice poses a constant disturbance to the flockreligion and mass-life. Marcel too dwells on man's relation to God; but he has built it up in terms of Christian theological thought-pattern. The dimension of the finite-other, which hardly finds a place in

Kierkegaard, is worked out elaborately by Marcel. Thus both of them complement each other. Being a 'Christian existentialist' is both the strength and the weakness of Marcel's philosophy: it is a strength insofar as his thought provides a philosophical basis to Christian theology in contemporary existential terms; it is a weakness insofar as his philosophy is almost exclusively dependent on Christian theology.

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### **3.5 KEY WORDS**

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Existence: the dynamic character of the being of the human

Leap of faith: making a choice for the Absolute

Intersubjectivity: relation between subject to subject

Incarnation: the essential character of the humans as bodily

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### **3.6 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW**

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1. Discuss the contribution of Kierkegaard's Philosophy.
2. Discuss the contribution of Marcel's Philosophy.

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### **3.7 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES**

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- Lescoe, Francis J. Existentialism: With or Without God. New York: Alba House, 1974.
- Grossmann, Reinhardt. Phenomenology and existentialism: An Introduction. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984.
- Bhadra, Mrinal Kanti. A Critical Survey of Phenomenology and Existentialism. New Delhi: ICPR, 1990.

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### **3.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

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#### **Check Your Progress 1**

1) How is Kierkegaard's life related to his philosophy? Kierkegaard's personal life and his philosophy cannot be separated. His philosophical

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problem arose from some of the touching experiences of his life. A philosophically important event in his life was a love affair he had with Regina Olsen. Although they were engaged, he experienced the difficulty of making a choice for her as his life-partner. Thus his philosophy is a reflection and universalization based on his personal experience. The struggle of choice, the call to be an individual, the need to be distanced from the anonymous crowd, the yearning for a genuine Religion and God of personal commitment and choice, etc., are some of the personally experienced themes that prominently reflected in his philosophy. Thus in his philosophical thoughts, one who speaks is the 'actor', rather than the 'spectator'. He calls himself a subjective thinker rather than an objective theorist. His philosophy is incidental to his main purpose, namely, the search as to what it means to be a human being? What it means to be a Christian? The questions are presented in the form of alternatives for his choice, rather than for an intellectual solution. Thus his philosophy is very much centred on choice or decision.

2) The role of 'existence' in Kierkegaard's philosophy? Philosophy has to start with existence which is not to be proved from reason, and thus it is the whence of philosophizing. Existence is an indubitable truth. To exist is not merely to be or to live. It is in choosing one's true self that one exists. Those who persist through life do not necessarily exist; they drift along without becoming individuals. Thus existence has to be won by choice. The philosophy of Kierkegaard emphasizes the importance of the individual. Man has the tendency to escape in the 'crowd', just as Adam under evil conscience tried to hide him among the trees. Kierkegaard wants to deliver the human being from the crowd and make him aware of himself as the centre of responsibilities. Man truly can exist only insofar as he becomes an individual. Kierkegaard challenges man to this end. Looking at the whole of his philosophy, we notice that we have to start philosophizing from existence; and we have to move towards existence, insofar as his philosophy is nothing but keeping on growing in our existence. Thus existence is not only the whence, but the whither of philosophizing as well.

3) Dwell on the three stages of existence. The three stages of existence, that Kierkegaard speaks of, had its basis in his life. By his personal choice he moved from a life of sensuality to ethical integrity, and thence to a life of religious commitment. The first stage is called the Aesthetic Stage and it is characterized by an attitude in which one has no continuity or commitment in one's life. The man in this stage is governed by sense-impulse and emotion; he hates all that limits his field of choice. The next stage is Ethical Stage, and it is marked by some constancy and consistency since man in this stage makes a choice for a determinate moral standard. The presence of the other or the society has an influence on him. The shapeless individualism is changed, and he is able to relate himself to the past and the future, as a result of which there is a continuity in his life. The final stage that Kierkegaard speaks of is the Religious Stage. From one's commitment to the impersonal law, man takes a leap to a personal Absolute. Only in this stage the sense of sin makes its presence. A wrong behaviour is not merely a violation of law; rather it is expressive of man's option against God. Man attains the genuine selfhood as he makes a leap of faith, a leap into the dark. The leap of faith—the choice to move away from the ethical stage—cuts across the ethical demands, as it is evident in the case of Abraham's preparedness to sacrifice his son. Only one who has been faithful to the ethical laws can transcend them in the religious stage.

**Check Your Progress 2**

1) Has Marcel's philosophy got developed from his life-experience? Just as most of the existentialists, Marcel's philosophy too got developed from out of his existential experience. Certain experiences in his life stand out in contributing towards his thought: 1) the difference of temperament made him realize that some of the incompatibilities of life cannot be reconciled by intellectual formulae. People cannot be regimented into a group, without consideration of their uniqueness. 2) The spiritual aridity at home set him forth on a spiritual quest that culminated in his faith in God. He did not inherit a religion of passionate commitment, and this absence set him forth towards a genuine religion. 3) His mother's early death made him develop a phenomenology of

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presence from his experience of physical absence of his mother. 4) His experience at the war-field took him away from abstract dialectics to anxious meditations on life and being. He started reflecting on life and death, personal relations and encounters, pain and suffering. In the light of these experiences, he looked at the prevalent academic life, which he found to be very dissatisfying, since it has been stifling all creativity. Thus he began his own philosophical reflection.

2) Dwell on the twofold approach in philosophy. Before he begins his philosophizing, Marcel looks into the two ways of looking at reality: the way reality has been looked at traditionally, and the new way that he proposes in his philosophy. This new 'way' is not exclusively of Marcel, but that which emerged with existentialism. But Marcel has given a precise expression to it, by showing the contrast with the traditional approach. First of all, he makes a distinction between the primary and the secondary reflection. The primary reflection is analytical and dissective, and it has a place in scientific research. It looks at the reality, part by part. The reflecting subject here is an 'impersonal anyone'; and here the subject-object dichotomy is maintained. The secondary reflection, on the other hand, is synthetical and recuperative; it takes a holistic approach. This has greater role to play in philosophy. Another corresponding distinction that Marcel makes is that between problem and mystery. The object of scientific knowledge is 'problem' and of philosophical reflection is 'mystery'. Problems are open to solution. Once the solution is reached, the problem is no more. For the problems I am an epistemological subject, grappling with an object as a problem. The mystery is a question in which the being of the questioner is involved. No solution is aimed at in a mystery. I cannot stand apart from the mystery; it is in me, and I am in it. The third distinction that Marcel makes is that between 'being' and 'having'. The mystery deals with being, and the problem with having. In 'having' the relation between the possessor and the possessed, between the 'who' and 'what' is external, and in 'being' the bond is internal, as between I and thou.



3) Can Marcel's philosophy be characterized as a philosophy of relation? Marcel's is a philosophy of relation. While speaking of the two-directional relations, Marcel differentiates them, showing their complementarity. The two-directional relations are directed to the finite others and to the absolute other. Marcel is known primarily for his theory of inter-subjectivity which he developed, basing himself on the theory of intentionality in phenomenology, applied to the notion of 'availability'. The act of being available is directed necessarily to other persons. The very act through which 'I am' implies an allusion to other people: an I to a thou. Although inter-subjectivity is presented as the authentic mode of existence, people have the leaning towards living an inauthentic existence of faceless anonymity, living a self-enclosed existence. In this case, the other is seen, not as a 'thou', but as an 'it' or a functionary. The relation becomes inter-subjective or I-thou relation—the relation between subjects. In the intersubjective relation there takes place presence and encounter (meeting). Only a personal subject can be present to me, and we encounter each other. The mutually encountering subjects are available to each other. Availability and unavailability (disponibilit[é] and indisponibilit[é])—the typically Marcelian notions—become meaningful in the context of his explanation of inter-subjectivity. When I enter into the communion with the other, I want to go beyond to the Absolute. My exigency for commitment, fidelity and transcendence is only partially fulfilled in human interrelationships. Hence I aspire towards a self-commitment towards the Absolute. But it is through the finite 'thous' that I can transcend to the Absolute Thou. It is in the Absolute Thou that the universal human fraternity has attained its total actualization. All the finite thous are solidly grounded in the Absolute Thou. It is through faith that I relate myself to the Absolute Thou. Faith implies a personal commitment. Man has the freedom for commitment or betrayal of the covenant with God. Faith and freedom disclose the need for transcendence to the horizontal and thence to the vertical: through the finite thous to the absolute Thou. Thus Marcel's philosophy is eminently a philosophy of relation.

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## **UNIT 4: MAN'S BEING - I**

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### **STRUCTURE**

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Man's being-in-the world
- 4.3 Man's being-in-the body
- 4.4 Man's being-with other
- 4.5 Let us sum up
- 4.6 Key Words
- 4.7 Questions for Review
- 4.8 Suggested readings and references
- 4.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

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### **4.0 OBJECTIVES**

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After this unit, we can able to know:

- To discuss about the Man's being-in-the world
- To know about the Man's being-in-the body
- To discuss Man's being-with other

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### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

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The relation between thinking things and extended things is one of knowledge and the philosophical and indeed scientific task consists in ensuring that what a later tradition called "subject" might have access to a world of objects. This is what we might call the epistemological construal of the relation between human beings and the world, where epistemology means "theory of knowledge". Heidegger does not deny the importance of knowledge; he simply denies its primacy. Prior to this dualistic picture of the relation between human beings and the world lies a deeper unity that he tries to capture in the formula "Dasein is being-in-the-world". What might that mean?

If the human being is really being-in-the-world, then this entails that the world itself is part of the fundamental constitution of what it means to be

human. That is to say, I am not a free-floating self or ego facing a world of objects that stands over against me. Rather, for Heidegger, I am my world. The world is part and parcel of my being, of the fabric of my existence. We might capture the sense of Heidegger's thought here by thinking of Dasein not as a subject distinct from a world of objects, but as an experience of openness where my being and that of the world are not distinguished for the most part. I am completely fascinated and absorbed by my world, not cut off from it in some sort of "mind" or what Heidegger calls "the cabinet of consciousness".

Heidegger's major claim in his discussion of world in *Being and Time* is that the world announces itself most closely and mostly as a handy or useful world, the world of common, average everyday experience. My proximal encounter with the table on which I am writing these words is not as an object made of a certain definable substance (wood and iron, say) existing in a geometrically ordered space-time continuum. Rather, this is just the table that I use to write and which is useful for arranging my papers, my laptop and my coffee cup. Heidegger insists that we have to "thrust aside our interpretative tendencies" which cover over our everyday experience of the world and attend much more closely to that which shows itself.

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## 4.2 MAN'S BEING-IN-THE WORLD

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Heidegger's attempt to destroy our standard, traditional philosophical vocabulary and replace it with something new. What Heidegger seeks to destroy in particular is a certain picture of the relation between human beings and the world that is widespread in modern philosophy and whose source is Descartes (indeed Descartes is the philosopher who stands most accused in *Being and Time*). Roughly and readily, this is the idea that there are two sorts of substances in the world: thinking things like us and extended things, like tables, chairs and indeed the entire fabric of space and time.

The world is full of handy things that hang together as a whole and which are meaningful to me. In even more basic terms, the world is a whole load of stuff that is related together: my laptop sits on my desk,

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my spectacles sit on my nose, the desk sits on the floor, and I can look over to the window at the garden and hear the quiet hum of traffic and police sirens that make up life in this city. This is what Heidegger calls "environment" (Umwelt), where he is trying to describe the world that surrounds the human being and in which it is completely immersed for the most part.

Heidegger insists that this lived experience of the world is missed or overlooked by scientific inquiry or indeed through a standard philosophy of mind, which presupposes a dualistic distinction between mind and reality. What is required is a phenomenology of our lived experience of the world that tries to be true to what shows itself first and foremost in our experience. To translate this into another idiom, we might say that Heidegger is inverting the usual distinction between theory and practice. My primary encounter with the world is not theoretical; it is not the experience of some spectator gazing out at a world stripped of value. Rather, I first apprehend the world practically as a world of things which are useful and handy and which are imbued with human significance and value. The theoretical or scientific vision of things that find in a thinker like Descartes is founded on a practical insight that is fascinated and concerned with things.

Heidegger introduces a distinction between two ways of approaching the world: the present-at-hand (Vorhandenheit) and the ready-to-hand (Zuhandenheit). Present-at-hand refers to our theoretical apprehension of a world made up of objects. It is the conception of the world from which science begins. The ready-to-hand describes our practical relation to things that are handy or useful. Heidegger's basic claim is that practice precedes theory, and that the ready-to-hand is prior to the present-at-hand. The problem with most philosophy after Descartes is that it conceives of the world theoretically and thus imagines, like Descartes, that I can doubt the existence of the external world and even the reality of the persons that fill it – who knows, they might be robots! For Heidegger, by contrast, who we are as human beings is inextricably bound up and bound together with the complex web of social practices that make up my world. The world is part of who I am. For Heidegger, to cut oneself off from the world, like Descartes, is to miss the point

entirely: the fabric of our openness to the world is one piece. And that piece should not be cut up. Furthermore, the world is not simply full of handy, familiar meaningful things. It is also full of persons. If I am fundamentally with my world, then that world is a common world that experienced together with others. This is what Heidegger calls "being-with" (Mitsein).

Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) was a German philosopher whose work is perhaps most readily associated with phenomenology and existentialism, although his thinking should be identified as part of such philosophical movements only with extreme care and qualification. His ideas have exerted a seminal influence on the development of contemporary European philosophy. They have also had an impact far beyond philosophy, for example in architectural theory (see e.g., Sharr 2007), literary criticism (see e.g., Ziarek 1989), theology (see e.g., Caputo 1993), psychotherapy (see e.g., Binswanger 1943/1964, Guignon 1993) and cognitive science (see e.g., Dreyfus 1992, 2008; Wheeler 2005; Kiverstein and Wheeler 2012).

### **1. Biographical Sketch**

Martin Heidegger was born in Messkirch, Germany, on September 26, 1889. Messkirch was then a quiet, conservative, religious rural town, and as such was a formative influence on Heidegger and his philosophical thought. In 1909 he spent two weeks in the Jesuit order before leaving (probably on health grounds) to study theology at the University of Freiburg. In 1911 he switched subjects, to philosophy. He began teaching at Freiburg in 1915. In 1917 he married Elfride Petri, with whom he had two sons (Jörg and Hermann) and from whom he never parted (although his affair with the philosopher Hannah Arendt, his student at Marburg in the 1920s, is well-known).

Heidegger's philosophical development began when he read Brentano and Aristotle, plus the latter's medieval scholastic interpreters. Indeed, Aristotle's demand in the *Metaphysics* to know what it is that unites all possible modes of Being (or 'is-ness') is, in many ways, the question that ignites and drives Heidegger's philosophy. From this platform he proceeded to engage deeply with Kant, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and,

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perhaps most importantly of all for his subsequent thinking in the 1920s, two further figures: Dilthey (whose stress on the role of interpretation and history in the study of human activity profoundly influenced Heidegger) and Husserl (whose understanding of phenomenology as a science of essences he was destined to reject). In 1915 Husserl took up a post at Freiburg and in 1919 Heidegger became his assistant. Heidegger spent a period (of reputedly brilliant) teaching at the University of Marburg (1923–1928), but then returned to Freiburg to take up the chair vacated by Husserl on his retirement. Out of such influences, explorations, and critical engagements, Heidegger's magnum opus, *Being and Time* (*Sein und Zeit*) was born. Although Heidegger's academic and intellectual relationship with his Freiburg predecessor was complicated and occasionally strained (see Crowell 2005), *Being and Time* was dedicated to Husserl, “in friendship and admiration”.

Published in 1927, *Being and Time* is standardly hailed as one of the most significant texts in the canon of (what has come to be called) contemporary European (or Continental) Philosophy. It catapulted Heidegger to a position of international intellectual visibility and provided the philosophical impetus for a number of later programmes and ideas in the contemporary European tradition, including Sartre's existentialism, Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, and Derrida's notion of ‘deconstruction’. Moreover, *Being and Time*, and indeed Heidegger's philosophy in general, has been presented and engaged with by thinkers such as Dreyfus (e.g., 1990) and Rorty (e.g., 1991a, b) who work somewhere near the interface between the contemporary European and the analytic traditions. A cross-section of broadly analytic reactions to Heidegger (positive and negative) may be found alongside other responses in (Murray 1978). *Being and Time* is discussed in section 2 of this article.

In 1933 Heidegger joined the Nazi Party and was elected Rector of Freiburg University, where, depending on whose account one believes, he either enthusiastically implemented the Nazi policy of bringing university education into line with Hitler's nauseating political programme (Pattison 2000) or he allowed that policy to be officially implemented while conducting a partially underground campaign of

resistance to some of its details, especially its anti-Semitism (see Heidegger's own account in *Only a God can Save Us*). During the short period of his rectorship—he resigned in 1934—Heidegger gave a number of public speeches (including his inaugural rectoral address; see below) in which Nazi images plus occasional declarations of support for Hitler are integrated with the philosophical language of *Being and Time*. After 1934 Heidegger became increasingly distanced from Nazi politics. Although he didn't leave the Nazi party, he did attract some unwelcome attention from its enthusiasts. After the war, however, a university denazification committee at Freiburg investigated Heidegger and banned him from teaching, a right which he did not get back until 1949. One year later he was made professor Emeritus. Against this background of contrary information, one will search in vain through Heidegger's later writings for the sort of total and unambiguous repudiation of National Socialism that one might hope to find. The philosophical character of Heidegger's involvement with Nazism is discussed later in this article.

After *Being and Time* there is a reorienting shift in Heidegger's philosophy known as 'the turn' (*die Kehre*). Exactly when this occurs is a matter of debate, although it is probably safe to say that it is in progress by 1930 and largely established by the early 1940s. If dating the turn has its problems, saying exactly what it involves is altogether more challenging. Indeed, Heidegger himself characterized it not as a turn in his own thinking (or at least in his thinking alone) but as a turn in Being. As he later put it in a preface he wrote to Richardson's ground-breaking text on his work (Richardson 1963), the "Kehre is at work within the issue [that is named by the titles 'Being and Time'/'Time and Being.']. . . It is not something that I did, nor does it pertain to my thinking only". The core elements of the turn are indicated in what is now considered by many commentators to be Heidegger's second greatest work, *Contributions to Philosophy (From Enowning)*, (*Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)*). This uncompromising text was written in 1936–7, but was not published in German until 1989 and not in English translation until 1999. Section 3 of this article will attempt to navigate the main currents of the turn, and thus of Heidegger's later philosophy, in the light of this increasingly discussed text.

## Notes

Heidegger died in Freiburg on May 26, 1976. He was buried in Messkirch.

### 2. Being and Time

#### 2.1 The Text and its Pre-History

Being and Time is a long and complex book. The reader is immediately struck by what Mulhall (2005, viii) calls the “tortured intensity of [Heidegger's] prose”, although if the text is read in its original German it is possible to hear the vast number of what appear to be neologisms as attempts to reanimate the German language. According to this latter gloss, the linguistic constructions concerned—which involve hyphenations, unusual prefixes and uncommon suffixes—reveal the hidden meanings and resonances of ordinary talk. In any case, for many readers, the initially strange and difficult language of Being and Time is fully vindicated by the realization that Heidegger is struggling to say things for which our conventional terms and linguistic constructions are ultimately inadequate. Indeed, for some thinkers who have toiled in its wake, Heidegger's language becomes the language of philosophy (although for an alternative and critical view of the language of Being and Time, see Adorno 1964/2002). Viewed from the perspective of Heidegger's own intentions, the work is incomplete. It was meant to have two parts, each of which was supposed to be divided into three divisions. What we have published under the title of Being and Time are the first two divisions of (the intended) part one. The reasons for this incompleteness will be explored later in this article.

One might reasonably depict the earliest period of Heidegger's philosophical work, in Freiburg (1915–23) and Marburg (1923–6), before he commenced the writing of Being and Time itself, as the pre-history of that seminal text (although for an alternative analysis that stresses not only a back-and-forth movement in Heidegger's earliest thought between theology and philosophy, but also the continuity between that earliest thought and the later philosophy, see van Buren 1994, 2005). Viewed in relation to Being and Time, the central philosophical theme in these early years is Heidegger's complex critical relationship with Husserl's transcendental phenomenology—what



Crowell (2005, p.49) calls “a dynamic of attraction and repulsion”—as driven by Heidegger's transformative reading of Aristotle. As early as a 1919 lecture course, for example, we find Heidegger arguing that Husserl's view (developed in the *Logical Investigations*, Husserl 1900/1973), that philosophy should renounce theory and concentrate on the things given directly in consciousness, is flawed because such givenness is itself a theoretical construct. For the young Heidegger, then, it is already the case that phenomenological analysis starts not with Husserlian intentionality (the consciousness of objects), but rather with an interpretation of the pre-theoretical conditions for there to be such intentionality. This idea will later be central to, and elaborated within, *Being and Time*, by which point a number of important developments (explained in more detail later in this article) will have occurred in Heidegger's thinking: the Husserlian notion of formal ontology (the study of the a priori categories that describe objects of any sort, by means of our judgments and perceptions) will have been transformed into fundamental ontology (a neo-Aristotelian search for what it is that unites and makes possible our varied and diverse senses of what it is to be); Husserl's transcendental consciousness (the irreducible thinking ego or subject that makes possible objective inquiry) will have been transfigured into *Dasein* (the inherently social being who already operates with a pre-theoretical grasp of the a priori structures that make possible particular modes of Being); and Husserlian intentionality (a consciousness of objects) will have been replaced by the concept of care or Being-in-the-world (a non-intentional, or perhaps pre-intentional, openness to a world).

Each of these aspects of Heidegger's framework in *Being and Time* emerges out of his radical rethinking of Aristotle, a rethinking that finds its fullest and most explicit expression in a 1925–6 lecture course entitled *Logik* (later renamed *Logik (Aristoteles)* by Heidegger's student Helene Weiß, in order to distinguish this lecture course from a later one he gave also entitled *Logik*; see Kisiel 1993, 559, note 23). On Heidegger's interpretation (see Sheehan 1975), Aristotle holds that since every meaningful appearance of beings involves an event in which a human being takes a being as—as, say, a ship in which one can sail or as a god

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that one should respect—what unites all the different modes of Being is that they realize some form of presence (present-ness) to human beings. This presence-to is expressed in the ‘as’ of ‘taking-as’. Thus the unity of the different modes of Being is grounded in a capacity for taking-as (making-present-to) that Aristotle argues is the essence of human existence. Heidegger's response, in effect, is to suggest that although Aristotle is on the right track, he has misconceived the deep structure of taking-as. For Heidegger, taking-as is grounded not in multiple modes of presence, but rather in a more fundamental temporal unity (remember, it's Being and time, more on this later) that characterizes Being-in-the-world (care). This engagement with Aristotle—the Aristotle, that is, that Heidegger unearths during his early years in Freiburg and Marburg—explains why, as Sheehan (1975, 87) puts it, “Aristotle appears directly or indirectly on virtually every page” of *Being and Time*. (For more on Heidegger's pre-Being-and-Time period, see e.g., Kisiel 1993, Kisiel and van Buren 1994, and Heidegger's early occasional writings as reproduced in the collection *Becoming Heidegger*. For more on the philosophical relationship between Husserl and Heidegger, see e.g., Crowell 2001 and the review of Crowell's book by Carman 2002; Dahlstrom 1994; Dostal 1993; Overgaard 2003.)

### 2.2 Division 1

#### 2.2.1 The Question

Let's back up in order to bring Heidegger's central concern into better view. (The ‘way in’ to *Being and Time* that I am about to present follows Gelven 1989 6–7.) Consider some philosophical problems that will be familiar from introductory metaphysics classes: Does the table that I think I see before me exist? Does God exist? Does mind, conceived as an entity distinct from body, exist? These questions have the following form: does *x* (where *x* = some particular kind of thing) exist? Questions of this form presuppose that we already know what ‘to exist’ means. We typically don't even notice this presupposition. But Heidegger does, which is why he raises the more fundamental question: what does ‘to exist’ mean? This is one way of asking what Heidegger calls the question

of the meaning of Being, and Being and Time is an investigation into that question.

Many of Heidegger's translators capitalize the word 'Being' (Sein) to mark what, in the Basic Problems of Phenomenology, Heidegger will later call the ontological difference, the crucial distinction between Being and beings (entities). The question of the meaning of Being is concerned with what it is that makes beings intelligible as beings, and whatever that factor (Being) is, it is seemingly not itself simply another being among beings. Unfortunately the capitalization of 'Being' also has the disadvantage of suggesting that Being is, as Sheehan (2001) puts it, an ethereal metaphysical something that lies beyond entities, what he calls 'Big Being'. But to think of Being in this way would be to commit the very mistake that the capitalization is supposed to help us avoid. For while Being is always the Being of some entity, Being is not itself some kind of higher-order being waiting to be discovered. As long as we remain alert to this worry, we can follow the otherwise helpful path of capitalization.

According to Heidegger, the question of the meaning of Being, and thus Being as such, has been forgotten by 'the tradition' (roughly, Western philosophy from Plato onwards). Heidegger means by this that the history of Western thought has failed to heed the ontological difference, and so has articulated Being precisely as a kind of ultimate being, as evidenced by a series of namings of Being, for example as idea, energeia, substance, monad or will to power. In this way Being as such has been forgotten. So Heidegger sets himself the task of recovering the question of the meaning of Being. In this context he draws two distinctions between different kinds of inquiry. The first, which is just another way of expressing the ontological difference, is between the ontical and the ontological, where the former is concerned with facts about entities and the latter is concerned with the meaning of Being, with how entities are intelligible as entities. Using this technical language, we can put the point about the forgetting of Being as such by saying that the history of Western thought is characterized by an 'onticization' of Being (by the practice of treating Being as a being). However, as Heidegger explains, here in the words of Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics, "an ontic

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knowledge can never alone direct itself 'to' the objects, because without the ontological... it can have no possible Whereto" (translation taken from Overgaard 2002, p.76, note 7). The second distinction between different kinds of inquiry, drawn within the category of the ontological, is between regional ontology and fundamental ontology, where the former is concerned with the ontologies of particular domains, say biology or banking, and the latter is concerned with the a priori, transcendental conditions that make possible particular modes of Being (i.e., particular regional ontologies). For Heidegger, the ontical presupposes the regional-ontological, which in turn presupposes the fundamental-ontological. As he puts it:

The question of Being aims... at ascertaining the a priori conditions not only for the possibility of the sciences which examine beings as beings of such and such a type, and, in doing so, already operate with an understanding of Being, but also for the possibility of those ontologies themselves which are prior to the ontical sciences and which provide their foundations. Basically, all ontology, no matter how rich and firmly compacted a system of categories it has at its disposal, remains blind and perverted from its ownmost aim, if it has not first adequately clarified the meaning of Being, and conceived this clarification as its fundamental task. (Being and Time 3: 31) (References to Being and Time will be given in the form of 'section: page number', where 'page number' refers to the widely used Macquarrie and Robinson English translation.)

So how do we carry out fundamental ontology, and thus answer the question of the meaning of Being? It is here that Heidegger introduces the notion of Dasein (Da-sein: there-being). One proposal for how to think about the term 'Dasein' is that it is Heidegger's label for the distinctive mode of Being realized by human beings (for this reading, see e.g., Brandom 2002, 325). Haugeland (2005, 422) complains that this interpretation clashes unhelpfully with Heidegger's identification of care as the Being of Dasein, given Heidegger's prior stipulation that Being is always the Being of some possible entity. To keep 'Dasein' on the right side of the ontological difference, then, we might conceive of it as Heidegger's term for the distinctive kind of entity that human beings as such are. This fits with many of Heidegger's explicit characterizations of

Dasein (see e.g., *Being and Time* 2: 27, 3: 32), and it probably deserves to be called the standard view in the secondary literature (see e.g., Haugeland 2005 for an explicit supporting case). That said, one needs to be careful about precisely what sort of entity we are talking about here. For Dasein is not to be understood as ‘the biological human being’. Nor is it to be understood as ‘the person’. Haugeland (2005, 423) argues that Dasein is “a way of life shared by the members of some community”. (As Haugeland notes, there is an analogy here, one that Heidegger himself draws, with the way in which we might think of a language existing as an entity, that is, as a communally shared way of speaking.) This appeal to the community will assume a distinctive philosophical shape as the argument of *Being and Time* progresses.

The foregoing considerations bring an important question to the fore: what, according to Heidegger, is so special about human beings as such? Here there are broadly speaking two routes that one might take through the text of *Being and Time*. The first unfolds as follows. If we look around at beings in general—from particles to planets, ants to apes—it is human beings alone who are able to encounter the question of what it means to be (e.g., in moments of anxiety in which the world can appear meaning-less, more on which later). More specifically, it is human beings alone who (a) operate in their everyday activities with an understanding of Being (although, as we shall see, one which is pre-ontological, in that it is implicit and vague) and (b) are able to reflect upon what it means to be. This gives us a way of understanding statements such as “Dasein is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that Being is an issue for it” (*Being and Time* 4: 32). Mulhall, who tends to pursue this way of characterizing Dasein, develops the idea by explaining that while inanimate objects merely persist through time and while plants and non-human animals have their lives determined entirely by the demands of survival and reproduction, human beings lead their lives (Mulhall 2005, 15). In terms of its deep ontological structure, although not typically in terms of how it presents itself to the individual in consciousness, each moment in a human life constitutes a kind of branch-point at which a person ‘chooses’ a kind of life, a possible way to be. It is crucial to emphasize that one may, in the relevant sense, ‘choose’ an existing path

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simply by continuing unthinkingly along it, since in principle at least, and within certain limits, one always had, and still has, the capacity to take a different path. (This gives us a sense of human freedom, one that will be unpacked more carefully below.) This can all sound terribly inward-looking, but that is not Heidegger's intention. In a way that is about to become clearer, Dasein's projects and possibilities are essentially bound up with the ways in which other entities may become intelligible. Moreover, terms such as 'lead' and 'choose' must be interpreted in the light of Heidegger's account of care as the Being of Dasein (see later), an account that blunts any temptation to hear these terms in a manner that suggests inner deliberation or planning on the part of a reflective subject. (So perhaps Mulhall's point that human beings are distinctive in that they lead their lives would be better expressed as the observation that human beings are the nuclei of lives laying themselves out.)

The second route to an understanding of Dasein, and thus of what is special about human beings as such, emphasizes the link with the taking-as structure highlighted earlier. Sheehan (2001) develops just such a line of exegesis by combining two insights. The first is that the 'Da' of Dasein may be profitably translated not as 'there' but as 'open'. This openness is in turn to be understood as 'the possibility of taking-as' and thus as a preintellectual openness to Being that is necessary for us to encounter beings as beings in particular ways (e.g., practically, theoretically, aesthetically). Whether or not the standard translation of 'Da' as 'there' is incapable of doing justice to this idea is moot—one might express the same view by saying that to be Dasein is to be there, in the midst of entities making sense a certain way. Nevertheless, the term 'openness' does seem to provide a nicely graphic expression of the phenomenon in question. Sheehan's second insight, driven by a comment of Heidegger's in the Zollikon seminars to the effect that the verbal emphasis in 'Da-sein' is to be placed on the second syllable, is that the 'sein' of 'Da-sein' should be heard as 'having-to-be', in contrast with 'occasionally or contingently is'. These dual insights lead to a characterization of Dasein as the having-to-be-open. In other words, Dasein (and so human beings as such) cannot but be open: it is a

necessary characteristic of human beings (an a priori structure of our existential constitution, not an exercise of our wills) that we operate with the sense-making capacity to take-other-beings-as.

The two interpretative paths that we have just walked are not necessarily in conflict: in the words of Vallega-Neu (2003, 12), “in existing, Dasein occurs... as a transcending beyond beings into the disclosure of being as such, so that in this transcending not only its own possibilities of being [our first route] but also the being of other beings [our second route] is disclosed”. And this helps us to grasp the meaning of Heidegger's otherwise opaque claim that Dasein, and indeed only Dasein, exists, where existence is understood (via etymological considerations) as *ek-sistence*, that is, as a standing out. Dasein stands out in two senses, each of which corresponds to one of the two dimensions of our proposed interpretation. First, Dasein can stand back or ‘out’ from its own occurrence in the world and observe itself (see e.g., Gelven 1989, 49). Second, Dasein stands out in an openness to and an opening of Being (see e.g., Vallega-Neu 2004, 11–12).

As we have seen, it is an essential characteristic of Dasein that, in its ordinary ways of engaging with other entities, it operates with a preontological understanding of Being, that is, with a distorted or buried grasp of the a priori conditions that, by underpinning the taking-as structure, make possible particular modes of Being. This suggests that a disciplined investigation of those everyday modes of engagement on the part of Dasein (what Heidegger calls an “existential analytic of Dasein”) will be a first step towards revealing a shared but hidden underlying meaning of Being. Heidegger puts it like this:

whenever an ontology takes for its theme entities whose character of Being is other than that of Dasein, it has its own foundation and motivation in Dasein's own ontical structure, in which a pre-ontological understanding of Being is comprised as a definite characteristic... Therefore fundamental ontology, from which alone all other ontologies can take their rise, must be sought in the existential analytic of Dasein. (Being and Time 3: 33–4)

It is important to stress here that, in Heidegger's eyes, this prioritizing of Dasein does not lead to (what he calls) “a vicious subjectivizing of the

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totality of entities” (Being and Time 4: 34). This resistance towards any unpalatable anti-realism is an issue to which we shall return.

Dasein is, then, our primary ‘object’ of study, and our point of investigative departure is Dasein's everyday encounters with entities. But what sort of philosophical method is appropriate for the ensuing examination? Famously, Heidegger's adopted method is a species of phenomenology. In the Heideggerian framework, however, phenomenology is not to be understood (as it sometimes is) as the study of how things merely appear in experience. Rather, in a recognizably Kantian staging of the idea, Heidegger follows Husserl (1913/1983) in conceiving of phenomenology as a theoretical enterprise that takes ordinary experience as its point of departure, but which, through an attentive and sensitive examination of that experience, aims to reveal the a priori, transcendental conditions that shape and structure it. In Heidegger's Being-centred project, these are the conditions “which, in every kind of Being that factual Dasein may possess, persist as determinative for the character of its Being” (Being and Time 5: 38). Presupposed by ordinary experience, these structures must in some sense be present with that experience, but they are not simply available to be read off from its surface, hence the need for disciplined and careful phenomenological analysis to reveal them as they are. So far so good. But, in a departure from the established Husserlian position, one that demonstrates the influence of Dilthey, Heidegger claims that phenomenology is not just transcendental, it is hermeneutic (for discussion, see e.g., Caputo 1984, Kisiel 2002 chapter 8). In other words, its goal is always to deliver an interpretation of Being, an interpretation that, on the one hand, is guided by certain historically embedded ways of thinking (ways of taking-as reflected in Dasein's preontological understanding of Being) that the philosopher as Dasein and as interpreter brings to the task, and, on the other hand, is ceaselessly open to revision, enhancement and replacement. For Heidegger, this hermeneutic structure is not a limitation on understanding, but a precondition of it, and philosophical understanding (conceived as fundamental ontology) is no exception. Thus Being and Time itself has a spiral structure in which a



sequence of reinterpretations produces an ever more illuminating comprehension of Being. As Heidegger puts it later in the text:

What is decisive is not to get out of the circle but to come into it the right way... In the circle is hidden a positive possibility of the most primordial kind of knowing. To be sure, we genuinely take hold of this possibility only when, in our interpretation, we have understood that our first, last and constant task is never to allow our fore-having, fore-sight and fore-conception to be presented to us by fancies and popular conceptions, but rather to make the scientific theme secure by working out these fore-structures in terms of the things themselves. (Being and Time 32: 195)

On the face of it, the hermeneutic conception of phenomenology sits unhappily with a project that aims to uncover the a priori transcendental conditions that make possible particular modes of Being (which is arguably one way of glossing the project of “working out [the] fore-structures [of understanding] in terms of the things themselves”). And this is a tension that, it seems fair to say, is never fully resolved within the pages of Being and Time. The best we can do is note that, by the end of the text, the transcendental has itself become historically embedded. More on that below. What is also true is that there is something of a divide in certain areas of contemporary Heidegger scholarship over whether one should emphasize the transcendental dimension of Heidegger's phenomenology (e.g., Crowell 2001, Crowell and Malpas 2007) or the hermeneutic dimension (e.g., Kisiel 2002).

### **2.2.2 Modes of Encounter**

How, then, does the existential analytic unfold? Heidegger argues that we ordinarily encounter entities as (what he calls) equipment, that is, as being for certain sorts of tasks (cooking, writing, hair-care, and so on). Indeed we achieve our most primordial (closest) relationship with equipment not by looking at the entity in question, or by some detached intellectual or theoretical study of it, but rather by skillfully manipulating it in a hitch-free manner. Entities so encountered have their own distinctive kind of Being that Heidegger famously calls readiness-to-hand. Thus:

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The less we just stare at the hammer-thing, and the more we seize hold of it and use it, the more primordial does our relationship to it become, and the more unveiledly is it encountered as that which it is—as equipment. The hammering itself uncovers the specific ‘manipulability’ of the hammer. The kind of Being which equipment possesses—in which it manifests itself in its own right—we call ‘readiness-to-hand’. (Being and Time 15: 98)

Readiness-to-hand has a distinctive phenomenological signature. While engaged in hitch-free skilled activity, Dasein has no conscious experience of the items of equipment in use as independent objects (i.e., as the bearers of determinate properties that exist independently of the Dasein-centred context of action in which the equipmental entity is involved). Thus, while engaged in trouble-free hammering, the skilled carpenter has no conscious recognition of the hammer, the nails, or the work-bench, in the way that one would if one simply stood back and thought about them. Tools-in-use become phenomenologically transparent. Moreover, Heidegger claims, not only are the hammer, nails, and work-bench in this way not part of the engaged carpenter's phenomenal world, neither, in a sense, is the carpenter. The carpenter becomes absorbed in his activity in such a way that he has no awareness of himself as a subject over and against a world of objects. Crucially, it does not follow from this analysis that Dasein's behaviour in such contexts is automatic, in the sense of there being no awareness present at all, but rather that the awareness that is present (what Heidegger calls *circumspection*) is non-subject-object in form. Phenomenologically speaking, then, there are no subjects and no objects; there is only the experience of the ongoing task (e.g., hammering).

Heidegger, then, denies that the categories of subject and object characterize our most basic way of encountering entities. He maintains, however, that they apply to a derivative kind of encounter. When Dasein engages in, for example, the practices of natural science, when sensing takes place purely in the service of reflective or philosophical contemplation, or when philosophers claim to have identified certain

context-free metaphysical building blocks of the universe (e.g., points of pure extension, monads), the entities under study are phenomenologically removed from the settings of everyday equipmental practice and are thereby revealed as fully fledged independent objects, that is, as the bearers of certain context-general determinate or measurable properties (size in metres, weight in kilos etc.). Heidegger calls this mode of Being presence-at-hand, and he sometimes refers to present-at-hand entities as 'Things'. With this phenomenological transformation in the mode of Being of entities comes a corresponding transformation in the mode of Being of Dasein. Dasein becomes a subject, one whose project is to explain and predict the behaviour of an independent, objective universe. Encounters with the present-at-hand are thus fundamentally subject-object in structure.

The final phenomenological category identified during the first phase of the existential analytic is what Heidegger calls un-readiness-to-hand. This mode of Being of entities emerges when skilled practical activity is disturbed by broken or malfunctioning equipment, discovered-to-be-missing equipment, or in-the-way equipment. When encountered as un-ready-to-hand, entities are no longer phenomenologically transparent. However, they are not yet the fully fledged objects of the present-at-hand, since their broken, malfunctioning, missing or obstructive status is defined relative to a particular equipmental context. The combination of two key passages illuminates this point: First:

[The] presence-at-hand of something that cannot be used is still not devoid of all readiness-to-hand whatsoever; equipment which is present-at-hand in this way is still not just a Thing which occurs somewhere. The damage to the equipment is still not a mere alteration of a Thing—not a change of properties which just occurs in something present-at-hand. (Being and Time 16: 103)

And second:

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When something cannot be used—when, for instance, a tool definitely refuses to work—it can be conspicuous only in and for dealings in which something is manipulated. (Being and Time 68: 406)

Thus a driver does not encounter a punctured tyre as a lump of rubber of measurable mass; she encounters it as a damaged item of equipment, that is, as the cause of a temporary interruption to her driving activity. With such disturbances to skilled activity, Dasein emerges as a practical problem solver whose context-embedded actions are directed at restoring smooth skilled activity.

Although Heidegger does not put things this way, the complex intermediate realm of the un-ready-to-hand is seemingly best thought of as a spectrum of cases characterized by different modes and degrees of engagement/disengagement. Much of the time Dasein's practical problem solving will involve recovery strategies (e.g., switching to a different mode of transport) which preserve the marks of fluid and flexible know-how that are present in ready-to-hand contexts. In the limit, however (e.g., when a mechanic uses his theoretical knowledge of how cars work to guide a repair), Dasein's problem solving activity will begin to approximate the theoretical reasoning distinctive of scientific inquiry into present-at-hand entities. But even here Dasein is not 'just theorizing' or 'just looking', so it is not yet, in Heidegger's terms, a pure disengaged subject. With this spectrum of cases in view, it is possible to glimpse a potential worry for Heidegger's account. Cappuccio and Wheeler (2010; see also Wheeler 2005, 143) argue that the situation of wholly transparent readiness-to-hand is something of an ideal state. Skilled activity is never (or very rarely) perfectly smooth. Moreover, minimal subjective activity (such as a nonconceptual awareness of certain spatially situated movements by my body) produces a background noise that never really disappears. Thus a distinction between Dasein and its environment is, to some extent, preserved, and this distinction arguably manifests the kind of minimal subject-object dichotomy that is characteristic of those cases of un-readiness-to-hand that lie closest to readiness-to-hand.

On the interpretation of Heidegger just given, Dasein's access to the world is only intermittently that of a representing subject. An alternative reading, according to which Dasein always exists as a subject relating to the world via representations, is defended by Christensen (1997, 1998). Christensen targets Dreyfus (1990) as a prominent and influential exponent of the intermittent-subject view. Among other criticisms, Christensen accuses Dreyfus of mistakenly hearing Heidegger's clear rejection of the thought that Dasein's access to the world is always theoretical (or theory-like) in character as being, at the same time, a rejection of the thought that Dasein's access to the world is always in the mode of a representing subject; but, argues Christensen, there may be non-theoretical forms of the subject-world relation, so the claim that Heidegger advocated the second rejection is not established by pointing out that he advocated the first. Let's assume that Christensen is right about this. The supporter of the intermittent-subject view might still argue that although Heidegger holds that Dasein sometimes emerges as a subject whose access to the world is non-theoretical (plausibly, in certain cases of un-readiness-to-hand), there is other textual evidence, beyond that which indicates the non-theoretical character of hitch-free skilled activity, to suggest that readiness-to-hand must remain non-subject-object in form. Whether or not there is such evidence would then need to be settled.

### **2.2.3 Being-in-the-World**

What the existential analytic has given us so far is a phenomenological description of Dasein's within-the-world encounters with entities. The next clarification concerns the notion of world and the associated within-ness of Dasein. Famously, Heidegger writes of Dasein as Being-in-the-world. In effect, then, the notion of Being-in-the-world provides us with a reinterpretation of the activity of existing (Dreyfus 1990, 40), where existence is given the narrow reading (*ek-sistence*) identified earlier. Understood as a unitary phenomenon (as opposed to a contingent, additive, tripartite combination of Being, in-ness, and the world), Being-

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in-the-world is an essential characteristic of Dasein. As Heidegger explains:

Being-in is not a 'property' which Dasein sometimes has and sometimes does not have, and without which it could be just as well as it could be with it. It is not the case that man 'is' and then has, by way of an extra, a relationship-of-Being towards the 'world'—a world with which he provides himself occasionally. Dasein is never 'proximally' an entity which is, so to speak, free from Being-in, but which sometimes has the inclination to take up a 'relationship' towards the world. Taking up relationships towards the world is possible only because Dasein, as Being-in-the-world, is as it is. This state of Being does not arise just because some entity is present-at-hand outside of Dasein and meets up with it. Such an entity can 'meet up with' Dasein only in so far as it can, of its own accord, show itself within a world. (Being and Time 12: 84)

As this passage makes clear, the Being-in dimension of Being-in-the-world cannot be thought of as a merely spatial relation in some sense that might be determined by a GPS device, since Dasein is never just present-at-hand within the world in the way demanded by that sort of spatial in-ness. Heidegger sometimes uses the term dwelling to capture the distinctive manner in which Dasein is in the world. To dwell in a house is not merely to be inside it spatially in the sense just canvassed. Rather, it is to belong there, to have a familiar place there. It is in this sense that Dasein is (essentially) in the world. (Heidegger will later introduce an existential notion of spatiality that does help to illuminate the sense in which Dasein is in the world. More on that below.) So now, what is the world such that Dasein (essentially) dwells in it? To answer this question we need to spend some time unpacking the Heideggerian concept of an 'involvement' (Bewandtnis).

The German term Bewandtnis is extremely difficult to translate in a way that captures all its native nuances (for discussion, see Tugendhat 1967; thanks to a reviewer for emphasizing this point). And things are made more complicated by the fact that, during his exposition, Heidegger

freely employs a number of closely related notions, including ‘assignment’, ‘indication’ and ‘reference’. Nevertheless, what is clear is that Heidegger introduces the term that Macquarrie and Robinson translate as ‘involvement’ to express the roles that equipmental entities play—the ways in which they are involved—in Dasein's everyday patterns of activity. Crucially, for Heidegger, an involvement is not a stand-alone structure, but rather a link in a network of intelligibility that he calls a totality of involvements. Take the stock Heideggerian example: the hammer is involved in an act of hammering; that hammering is involved in making something fast; and that making something fast is involved in protecting the human agent against bad weather. Such totalities of involvements are the contexts of everyday equipmental practice. As such, they define equipmental entities, so the hammer is intelligible as what it is only with respect to the shelter and, indeed, all the other items of equipment to which it meaningfully relates in Dasein's everyday practices. This relational ontology generates what Brandom (1983, 391–3) calls Heidegger's ‘strong systematicity condition’, as given voice in Heidegger's striking claim that “[t]aken strictly, there ‘is’ no such thing as an equipment” (Being and Time, 15: 97). And this radical holism spreads, because once one begins to trace a path through a network of involvements, one will inevitably traverse vast regions of involvement-space. Thus links will be traced not only from hammers to hammering to making fast to protection against the weather, but also from hammers to pulling out nails to dismantling wardrobes to moving house. This behaviour will refer back to many other behaviours (packing, van-driving) and thus to many other items of equipment (large boxes, removal vans), and so on. The result is a large-scale holistic network of interconnected relational significance. Such networks constitute worlds, in one of Heidegger's key senses of the term—an ontical sense that he describes as having a pre-ontological signification (Being and Time 14: 93).

Before a second key sense of the Heideggerian notion of world is revealed, some important detail can be added to the emerging picture. Heidegger points out that involvements are not uniform structures. Thus I

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am currently working with a computer (a with-which), in the practical context of my office (an in-which), in order to write this encyclopedia entry (an in-order-to), which is aimed towards presenting an introduction to Heidegger's philosophy (a towards-this), for the sake of my academic work, that is, for the sake of my being an academic (a for-the-sake-of-which). The final involvement here, the for-the-sake-of-which, is crucial, because according to Heidegger all totalities of involvements have a link of this type at their base. This forges a connection between (i) the idea that each moment in Dasein's existence constitutes a branch-point at which it chooses a way to be, and (ii) the claim that Dasein's projects and possibilities are essentially bound up with the ways in which other entities may become intelligible. This is because every for-the-sake-of-which is the base structure of an equipment-defining totality of involvements and reflects a possible way for Dasein to be (an academic, a carpenter, a parent, or whatever). Moreover, given that entities are intelligible only within contexts of activity that, so to speak, arrive with Dasein, this helps to explain Heidegger's claim (*Being and Time* 16: 107) that, in encounters with entities, the world is something with which Dasein is always already familiar. Finally, it puts further flesh on the phenomenological category of the un-ready-to-hand. Thus when I am absorbed in trouble-free typing, the computer and the role that it plays in my academic activity are transparent aspects of my experience. But if the computer crashes, I become aware of it as an entity with which I was working in the practical context of my office, in order to write an encyclopedia entry aimed towards presenting an introduction to Heidegger's philosophy. And I become aware of the fact that my behaviour is being organized for the sake of my being an academic. So disturbances have the effect of exposing totalities of involvements and, therefore, worlds. (For a second way in which worlds are phenomenologically 'lit up', see Heidegger's analysis of signs (*Being and Time* 17:107–114); for discussion, see Dreyfus 1990, 100–2, Cappuccio and Wheeler 2010.)

### 2.2.4 The Critique of Cartesianism



Having completed what we might think of as the first phase of the existential analytic, Heidegger uses its results to launch an attack on one of the front-line representatives of the tradition, namely Descartes. This is the only worked-through example in *Being and Time* itself of what Heidegger calls the destruction (*Destruktion*) of the Western philosophical tradition, a process that was supposed to be a prominent theme in the ultimately unwritten second part of the text. The aim is to show that although the tradition takes theoretical knowledge to be primary, such knowledge (the prioritization of which is an aspect of the ‘onticization’ of Being mentioned earlier) presupposes the more fundamental openness to Being that Heidegger has identified as an essential characteristic of *Dasein*.

According to Heidegger, Descartes presents the world to us “with its skin off” (*Being and Time* 20: 132), i.e., as a collection of present-at-hand entities to be encountered by subjects. The consequence of this prioritizing of the present-at-hand is that the subject needs to claw itself into a world of equipmental meaning by adding what Heidegger calls ‘value-predicates’ (context-dependent meanings) to the present-at-hand. In stark contrast, Heidegger's own view is that *Dasein* is in primary epistemic contact not with context-independent present-at-hand primitives (e.g., raw sense data, such as a ‘pure’ experience of a patch of red), to which context-dependent meaning would need to be added via value-predicates, but rather with equipment, the kind of entity whose mode of Being is readiness-to-hand and which therefore comes already laden with context-dependent significance. What is perhaps Heidegger's best statement of this opposition comes later in *Being and Time*.

What we ‘first’ hear is never noises or complexes of sounds, but the creaking waggon, the motor-cycle. We hear the column on the march, the north wind, the woodpecker tapping, the fire crackling... It requires a very artificial and complicated frame of mind to ‘hear’ a ‘pure noise’. The fact that motor-cycles and waggons are what we proximally hear is the phenomenal evidence that in every case *Dasein*, as Being-in-the-world, already dwells alongside what is ready-to-hand within-the-world;

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it certainly does not dwell proximally alongside 'sensations'; nor would it first have to give shape to the swirl of sensations to provide a springboard from which the subject leaps off and finally arrives at a 'world'. Dasein, as essentially understanding, is proximally alongside what is understood. (Being and Time 34: 207)

For Heidegger, then, we start not with the present-at-hand, moving to the ready-to-hand by adding value-predicates, but with the ready-to-hand, moving to the present-at-hand by stripping away the holistic networks of everyday equipmental meaning. It seems clear, then, that our two positions are diametrically opposed to each other, but why should we favour Heidegger's framework over Descartes'? Heidegger's flagship argument here is that the systematic addition of value-predicates to present-at-hand primitives cannot transform our encounters with those objects into encounters with equipment. It comes in the following brief but dense passage: "Adding on value-predicates cannot tell us anything at all new about the Being of goods, but would merely presuppose again that goods have pure presence-at-hand as their kind of Being. Values would then be determinate characteristics which a thing possesses, and they would be present-at-hand"(Being and Time 21: 132). In other words, once we have assumed that we begin with the present-at-hand, values must take the form of determinate features of objects, and therefore constitute nothing but more present-at-hand structures. And if you add more present-at-hand structures to some existing present-at-hand structures, what you end up with is not equipmental meaning (totalities of involvements) but merely a larger number of present-at-hand structures.

Heidegger's argument here is (at best) incomplete (for discussion, see Dreyfus 1990, Wheeler 2005). The defender of Cartesianism might concede that present-at-hand entities have determinate properties, but wonder why the fact that an entity has determinate properties is necessarily an indication of presence-at-hand. On this view, having determinate properties is necessary but not sufficient for an entity to be present-at-hand. More specifically, she might wonder why involvements

cannot be thought of as determinate features that entities possess just when they are embedded in certain contexts of use. Consider for example the various involvements specified in the academic writing context described earlier. They certainly seem to be determinate, albeit context-relative, properties of the computer. Of course, the massively holistic character of totalities of involvements would make the task of specifying the necessary value-predicates (say, as sets of internal representations) incredibly hard, but it is unclear that it makes that task impossible. So it seems as if Heidegger doesn't really develop his case in sufficient detail. However, Dreyfus (1990) pursues a response that Heidegger might have given, one that draws on the familiar philosophical distinction between knowing-how and knowing-that. It seems that value-predicates constitute a form of knowing-that (i.e., knowing that an entity has a certain context-dependent property) whereas the circumspective knowledge of totalities of involvements (Dasein's skilled practical activity) constitutes a form of knowing-how (i.e., knowing how to use equipment in appropriate ways; see the characterization of readiness-to-hand given earlier). Given the plausible (although not universally held) assumption that knowing-how cannot be reduced to knowledge-that, this would explain why value-predicates are simply the wrong sort of structures to capture the phenomenon of world-embeddedness.

### **2.2.5 Spatiality**

In the wake of his critique of Cartesianism, Heidegger turns his attention to spatiality. He argues that Dasein dwells in the world in a spatial manner, but that the spatiality in question—Dasein's existential spatiality—cannot be a matter of Dasein being located at a particular coordinate in physical, Cartesian space. That would be to conceive of Dasein as present-at-hand, and presence-at-hand is a mode of Being that can belong only to entities other than Dasein. According to Heidegger, the existential spatiality of Dasein is characterized most fundamentally by what he calls de-severance, a bringing close. “‘De-severing’ amounts to making the farness vanish—that is, making the remoteness of something disappear, bringing it close” (Being and Time: 23: 139). This is of course not a bringing close in the sense of reducing physical

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distance, although it may involve that. Heidegger's proposal is that spatiality as de-severance is in some way (exactly how is a matter of subtle interpretation; see e.g., Malpas 2006) intimately related to the 'reach' of Dasein's skilled practical activity. For example, an entity is 'near by' if it is readily available for some such activity, and 'far away' if it is not, whatever physical distances may be involved. Given the Dasein-world relationship highlighted above, the implication (drawn explicitly by Heidegger, see *Being and Time* 22: 136) is that the spatiality distinctive of equipmental entities, and thus of the world, is not equivalent to physical, Cartesian space. Equipmental space is a matter of pragmatically determined regions of functional places, defined by Dasein-centred totalities of involvements (e.g., an office with places for the computers, the photocopier, and so on—places that are defined by the way in which they make these equipmental entities available in the right sort of way for skilled activity). For Heidegger, physical, Cartesian space is possible as something meaningful for Dasein only because Dasein has de-severance as one of its existential characteristics. Given the intertwining of de-severance and equipmental space, this licenses the radical view (one that is consistent with Heidegger's prior treatment of Cartesianism) that physical, Cartesian space (as something that we can find intelligible) presupposes equipmental space; the former is the present-at-hand phenomenon that is revealed if we strip away the worldhood from the latter.

Malpas (forthcoming) rejects the account of spatiality given in *Being and Time*. Drawing on Kant, he argues that “[any] agent, insofar as it is capable of action at all (that is, insofar as it is, indeed, an agent), acts in a space that is an objective space, in which other agents also act, and yet which is always immediately configured subjectively in terms of the agent's own oriented locatedness” (Malpas forthcoming, 14). According to Malpas, then, equipmental space (a space ordered in terms of practical activity and within which an agent acts) presupposes a more fundamental notion of space as a complex unity with objective, intersubjective and subjective dimensions. If this is right, then of course equipmental space cannot itself explain the spatial. A further problem, as Malpas also notes,

is that the whole issue of spatiality brings into sharp focus the awkward relationship that Heidegger has with the body in *Being and Time*. In what is now a frequently quoted remark, Heidegger sets aside Dasein's embodiment, commenting that "this 'bodily nature' hides a whole problematic of its own, though we shall not treat it here" (*Being and Time* 23: 143). Indeed, at times, Heidegger might be interpreted as linking embodiment with Thinghood. For example: "[as] Dasein goes along its ways, it does not measure off a stretch of space as a corporeal Thing which is present-at-hand" (*Being and Time* 23: 140). Here one might plausibly contain the spread of presence-at-hand by appealing to a distinction between material (present-at-hand) and lived (existential) ways in which Dasein is embodied. Unfortunately this distinction isn't made in *Being and Time* (a point noted by Ricoeur 1992, 327), although Heidegger does adopt it in the much later Seminar in Le Thor (see Malpas forthcoming, 5). What seems clear, however, is that while the Heidegger of *Being and Time* seems to hold that Dasein's embodiment somehow depends on its existential spatiality (see e.g., 23: 143), the more obvious thing to say is that Dasein's existential spatiality somehow depends on its embodiment.

Before leaving this issue, it is worth noting briefly that space reappears later in *Being and Time* (70: 418–21), where Heidegger argues that existential space is derived from temporality. This makes sense within Heidegger's overall project, because, as we shall see, the deep structure of totalities of involvements (and thus of equipmental space) is finally understood in terms of temporality. Nevertheless, and although the distinctive character of Heidegger's concept of temporality needs to be recognized, there is reason to think that the dependency here may well travel in the opposite direction. The worry, as Malpas (forthcoming, 26) again points out, has a Kantian origin. Kant (1781/1999) argued that the temporal character of inner sense is possible only because it is mediated by outer intuition whose form is space. If this is right, and if we can generalize appropriately, then the temporality that matters to Heidegger will be dependent on existential spatiality, and not the other way round. All in all, one is tempted to conclude that Heidegger's treatment of

spatiality in *Being and Time*, and (relatedly) his treatment (or lack of it) of the body, face serious difficulties.

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### 4.3 MAN'S BEING-IN-THE BODY

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Heidegger turns next to the question of “who it is that Dasein is in its everydayness” (*Being and Time*, Introduction to IV: 149). He rejects the idea of Dasein as a Cartesian ‘I-thing’ (the Cartesian thinking thing conceived as a substance), since once again this would be to think of Dasein as present-at-hand. In searching for an alternative answer, Heidegger observes that equipment is often revealed to us as being for the sake of (the lives and projects of) other Dasein.

The boat anchored at the shore is assigned in its Being-in-itself to an acquaintance who undertakes voyages with it; but even if it is a ‘boat which is strange to us’, it still is indicative of Others. The Others who are thus ‘encountered’ in a ready-to-hand, environmental context of equipment, are not somehow added on in thought to some Thing which is proximally just present-at-hand; such ‘Things’ are encountered from out of a world in which they are ready-to-hand for Others—a world which is always mine too in advance. (*Being and Time* 26: 154)

On the basis of such observations, Heidegger argues that to be Dasein at all means to Be-with: “So far as Dasein is at all, it has Being-with-one-another as its kind of Being” (*Being and Time* 26: 163). One's immediate response to this might be that it is just false. After all, ordinary experience establishes that each of us is often alone. But of course Heidegger is thinking in an ontological register. Being-with (*Mitsein*) is thus the a priori transcendental condition that makes it possible that Dasein can discover equipment in this Other-related fashion. And it's because Dasein has Being-with as one of its essential modes of Being that everyday Dasein can experience being alone. Being-with is thus the a priori transcendental condition for loneliness.

It is important to understand what Heidegger means by ‘Others’, a term that he uses interchangeably with the more evocative ‘the “they”’ (*das Man*). He explains:

By ‘Others’ we do not mean everyone else but me—those over against whom the ‘I’ stands out. They are rather those from whom, for the most

part, one does not distinguish oneself—those among whom one is too...  
By reason of this with-like Being-in-the-world, the world is always the one that I share with Others. (Being and Time 26: 154–5)

A piece of data (cited by Dreyfus 1990) helps to illuminate this idea. Each society seems to have its own sense of what counts as an appropriate distance to stand from someone during verbal communication, and this varies depending on whether the other person is a lover, a friend, a colleague, or a business acquaintance, and on whether communication is taking place in noisy or quiet circumstances. Such standing-distance practices are of course normative, in that they involve a sense of what one should and shouldn't do. And the norms in question are culturally specific. So what this example illustrates is that the phenomenon of the Others, the 'who' of everyday Dasein, the group from whom for the most part I do not stand out, is my culture, understood not as the sum of all its members, but as an ontological phenomenon in its own right. This explains the following striking remark. "The 'who' is not this one, not that one, not oneself, not some people, and not the sum of them all. The 'who' is the neuter, the 'they' " (Being and Time 27: 164). Another way to capture this idea is to say that what I do is determined largely by 'what one does', and 'what one does' is something that I absorb in various ways from my culture. Thus Dreyfus (1990) prefers to translate *das Man* not as 'the "they" ', but as 'the one'.

This all throws important light on the phenomenon of world, since we can now see that the crucial for-the-sake-of-which structure that stands at the base of each totality of involvements is culturally and historically conditioned. The specific ways in which I behave for the sake of being an academic are what one does if one wants to be considered a good academic, at this particular time, in this particular historically embedded culture (carrying out research, tutoring students, giving lectures, and so on). As Heidegger himself puts the point: "Dasein is for the sake of the 'they' in an everyday manner, and the 'they' itself articulates the referential context of significance" (Being and Time 27: 167). Worlds (the referential context of significance, networks of involvements) are then culturally and historically conditioned, from which several things

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seem to follow. First, Dasein's everyday world is, in the first instance, and of its very essence, a shared world. Second, Being-with and Being-in-the-world are, if not equivalent, deeply intertwined. And third, the sense in which worlds are Dasein-dependent involves some sort of cultural relativism, although, as we shall see later, this final issue is one that needs careful interpretative handling.

Critics of the manner in which Heidegger develops the notion of Being-with have often focussed, albeit in different ways, on the thought that Heidegger either ignores or misconceives the fundamental character of our social existence by passing over its grounding in direct interpersonal interaction (see e.g., Löwith 1928, Binswanger 1943/1964, Gallagher and Jacobson forthcoming). From this perspective, the equipmentally mediated discovery of others that Heidegger sometimes describes (see above) is at best a secondary process that reveals other people only to the extent that they are relevant to Dasein's practical projects. Moreover, Olafson (1987) argues that although Heidegger's account clearly involves the idea that Dasein discovers socially shared equipmental meaning (which then presumably supports the discovery of other Dasein along with equipment), that account fails to explain why this must be the case. Processes of direct interpersonal contact (e.g., in learning the use of equipment from others) might plausibly fill this gap. The obvious move for Heidegger to make here is to claim that the processes that the critics find to be missing from his account, although genuine, are not a priori, transcendental structures of Dasein. Rather, they are psychological factors that enable (in a 'merely' developmental or causal way) human beings to realize the phenomenon of Being-with (see e.g., Heidegger's response to the existentialist psychologist and therapist Binswanger in the Zollikon seminars, and see Dreyfus 1990, chapter 8, for a response to Olafson that exploits this point). However, one might wonder whether it is plausible to relegate the social processes in question to the status of 'mere' enabling factors (Gallagher and Jacobson forthcoming; Pöggeler 1989 might be read as making a similar complaint). If not, then Heidegger's notion of Being-with is at best an incomplete account of our social Being.



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## 4.4 MAN'S BEING-WITH OTHER

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The introduction of the 'they' is followed by a further layer of interpretation in which Heidegger understands Being-in-the-world in terms of (what he calls) thrownness, projection and fallen-ness, and (interrelatedly) in terms of Dasein as a dynamic combination of disposedness, understanding and fascination with the world. In effect, this is a reformulation of the point that Dasein is the having-to-be-open, i.e., that it is an a priori structure of our existential constitution that we operate with the capacity to take-other-beings-as. Dasein's existence (ek-sistence) is thus now to be understood by way of an interconnected pair of three-dimensional unitary structures: thrownness-projection-fallen-ness and disposedness-understanding-fascination. Each of these can be used to express the "formally existential totality of Dasein's ontological structural whole" (Being and Time 42: 237), a phenomenon that Heidegger also refers to as disclosedness or care. Crucially, it is with the configuration of care that we encounter the first tentative emergence of temporality as a theme in Being and Time, since the dimensionality of care will ultimately be interpreted in terms of the three temporal dimensions: past (thrownness/disposedness), future (projection/understanding), and present (fallen-ness/fascination).

As Dasein, I ineluctably find myself in a world that matters to me in some way or another. This is what Heidegger calls thrownness (Geworfenheit), a having-been-thrown into the world. 'Disposedness' is Kisiel's (2002) translation of Befindlichkeit, a term rendered somewhat infelicitously by Macquarrie and Robinson as 'state-of-mind'. Disposedness is the receptiveness (the just finding things mattering to one) of Dasein, which explains why Richardson (1963) renders Befindlichkeit as 'already-having-found-oneself-there-ness'. To make things less abstract, we can note that disposedness is the a priori transcendental condition for, and thus shows up pre-ontologically in, the everyday phenomenon of mood (Stimmung). According to Heidegger's analysis, I am always in some mood or other. Thus say I'm depressed, such that the world opens up (is disclosed) to me as a sombre and gloomy place. I might be able to shift myself out of that mood, but only

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to enter a different one, say euphoria or lethargy, a mood that will open up the world to me in a different way. As one might expect, Heidegger argues that moods are not inner subjective colourings laid over an objectively given world (which at root is why ‘state-of-mind’ is a potentially misleading translation of *Befindlichkeit*, given that this term names the underlying a priori condition for moods). For Heidegger, moods (and disposedness) are aspects of what it means to be in a world at all, not subjective additions to that in-ness. Here it is worth noting that some aspects of our ordinary linguistic usage reflect this anti-subjectivist reading. Thus we talk of being in a mood rather than a mood being in us, and we have no problem making sense of the idea of public moods (e.g., the mood of a crowd). In noting these features of moods we must be careful, however. It would be a mistake to conclude from them that moods are external, rather than internal, states. A mood “comes neither from ‘outside’ nor from ‘inside’, but arises out of Being-in-the-world, as a way of such being” (Being and Time 29: 176). Nevertheless, the idea that moods have a social character does point us towards a striking implication of Heidegger's overall framework: with Being-in-the-world identified previously as a kind of cultural co-embeddedness, it follows that the repertoire of world-disclosing moods in which I might find myself will itself be culturally conditioned. (For recent philosophical work that builds, in part, on Heidegger's treatment of moods, in order to identify and understand certain affective phenomena—dubbed ‘existential feelings’—that help us to understand various forms of psychiatric illness, see Ratcliffe 2008.)

Dasein confronts every concrete situation in which it finds itself (into which it has been thrown) as a range of possibilities for acting (onto which it may project itself). Insofar as some of these possibilities are actualized, others will not be, meaning that there is a sense in which not-Being (a set of unactualized possibilities of Being) is a structural component of Dasein's Being. Out of this dynamic interplay, Dasein emerges as a delicate balance of determination (thrownness) and freedom (projection). The projective possibilities available to Dasein are delineated by totalities of involvements, structures that, as we have seen, embody the culturally conditioned ways in which Dasein may inhabit the

world. Understanding is the process by which Dasein projects itself onto such possibilities. Crucially, understanding as projection is not conceived, by Heidegger, as involving, in any fundamental way, conscious or deliberate forward-planning. Projection “has nothing to do with comporting oneself towards a plan that has been thought out” (Being and Time 31: 185). The primary realization of understanding is as skilled activity in the domain of the ready-to-hand, but it can be manifested as interpretation, when Dasein explicitly takes something as something (e.g., in cases of disturbance), and also as linguistic assertion, when Dasein uses language to attribute a definite character to an entity as a mere present-at-hand object. (NB: assertion of the sort indicated here is of course just one linguistic practice among many; it does not in any way exhaust the phenomenon of language or its ontological contribution.) Another way of putting the point that culturally conditioned totalities of involvements define the space of Dasein's projection onto possibilities is to say that such totalities constitute the fore-structures of Dasein's practices of understanding and interpretation, practices that, as we have just seen, are projectively oriented manifestations of the taking-as activity that forms the existential core of Dasein's Being. What this tells us is that the hermeneutic circle is the “essential fore-structure of Dasein itself” (Being and Time 32: 195).

Thrownness and projection provide two of the three dimensions of care. The third is fallen-ness. “Dasein has, in the first instance, fallen away from itself as an authentic potentiality for Being its Self, and has fallen into the world” (Being and Time 38: 220). Such fallen-ness into the world is manifested in idle talk (roughly, conversing in a critically unexamined and unexamining way about facts and information while failing to use language to reveal their relevance), curiosity (a search for novelty and endless stimulation rather than belonging or dwelling), and ambiguity (a loss of any sensitivity to the distinction between genuine understanding and superficial chatter). Each of these aspects of fallen-ness involves a closing off or covering up of the world (more precisely, of any real understanding of the world) through a fascination with it. What is crucial here is that this world-obscuring process of fallen-ness/fascination, as manifested in idle talk, curiosity and ambiguity, is to

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be understood as Dasein's everyday mode of Being-with. In its everyday form, Being-with exhibits what Heidegger calls levelling or averageness—a “Being-lost in the publicness of the ‘they’ ” (Being and Time 38: 220). Here, in dramatic language, is how he makes the point.

In utilizing public means of transport and in making use of information services such as the newspaper, every Other is like the next. This Being-with-one-another dissolves one's own Dasein completely into a kind of Being of ‘the Others’, in such a way, indeed, that the Others, as distinguishable and explicit, vanish more and more. In this inconspicuousness and unascertainability, the real dictatorship of the ‘they’ is unfolded. We take pleasure and enjoy ourselves as they take pleasure; we read, see, and judge about literature and art as they see and judge; likewise we shrink back from the ‘great mass’ as they shrink back; we find ‘shocking’ what they find shocking. The ‘they’, which is nothing definite, and which all are, though not as the sum, prescribes the kind of Being of everydayness. (Being and Time 27: 164)

This analysis opens up a path to Heidegger's distinction between the authentic self and its inauthentic counterpart. At root, ‘authentic’ means ‘my own’. So the authentic self is the self that is mine (leading a life that, in a sense to be explained, is owned by me), whereas the inauthentic self is the fallen self, the self lost to the ‘they’. Hence we might call the authentic self the ‘mine-self’, and the inauthentic self the ‘they-self’, the latter term also serving to emphasize the point that fallen-ness is a mode of the self, not of others. Moreover, as a mode of the self, fallen-ness is not an accidental feature of Dasein, but rather part of Dasein's existential constitution. It is a dimension of care, which is the Being of Dasein. So, in the specific sense that fallen-ness (the they-self) is an essential part of our Being, we are ultimately each to blame for our own inauthenticity (Sheehan 2002). Of course, one shouldn't conclude from all this talk of submersion in the ‘they’ that a state of authenticity is to be achieved by re-establishing some version of a self-sufficient individual subject. As Heidegger puts it: “Authentic Being-one's-Self does not rest upon an exceptional condition of the subject, a condition that has been detached from the ‘they’; it is rather an existentiell modification of the ‘they’ ”

(Being and Time 27: 168). So authenticity is not about being isolated from others, but rather about finding a different way of relating to others such that one is not lost to the they-self.

**Check Your Progress 1**

**Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer**

**b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit**

1. Discuss about the Man’s being-in-the world.

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2. What do you know about the Man’s being-in-the body?

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3. Discuss Man’s being-with other.

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## **4.5 LET US SUM UP**

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As already indicated, Heidegger sometimes uses the expression ‘world’ in a different key sense, to designate what he calls the “ontologico-existential concept of worldhood” (Being and Time 14: 93). At this point in the existential analytic, worldhood is usefully identified as the abstract network mode of organizational configuration that is shared by all concrete totalities of involvements. We shall see, however, that as the hermeneutic spiral of the text unfolds, the notion of worldhood is subject to a series of reinterpretations until, finally, and its deep structure gets played out in terms of temporality.

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## **4.6 KEY WORDS**

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Authentic: of undisputed origin and not a copy; genuine.

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### 4.7 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

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1. What do you know about Man's being-in-the world?
2. Discuss in details about Man's being-in-the body.

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### 4.8 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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## **4.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

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### **Check Your Progress 1**

1. See Section 4.2
2. See Section 4.3
3. See Section 4.4

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## **UNIT 5: MAN’S BEING - II**

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### **STRUCTURE**

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Man’s being-in-feeling
- 5.3 Man’s being-in-action
- 5.4 Let us sum up
- 5.5 Key Words
- 5.6 Questions for Review
- 5.7 Suggested readings and references
- 5.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

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### **5.0 OBJECTIVES**

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After this unit, we can able to know:

- To know the Man’s being-in-feeling
- To discuss the Man’s being-in-action

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### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

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No aspect of our mental life is more important to the quality and meaning of our existence than the emotions. They are what make life worth living and sometimes worth ending. So it is not surprising that most of the great classical philosophers had recognizable theories of emotions. These theories typically conceived of emotions as a subject’s phenomenologically salient responses to significant events and as capable of triggering distinctive bodily changes and behaviors. But it is surprising that throughout much of the twentieth-century, scientists and philosophers of mind tended to neglect the emotions—in part because of behaviorism’s allergy to inner mental states and in part because the variety of phenomena covered by the word “emotion” discourages tidy theorizing. In recent decades, however, emotions have once again become the focus of vigorous interest in philosophy and affective science. Our objective in this entry is to account for these developments,



focusing primarily on the descriptive question of what the emotions are, but tackling also the normative question of whether emotions are rational. In view of the proliferation of exchanges between researchers of different stripes, it is no longer useful to speak of the philosophy of emotion in isolation from the approaches of other disciplines, particularly psychology, neuroscience, and evolutionary biology. This is why we have made an effort to pay significant attention to scientific developments, as we are convinced that cross-disciplinary fertilization is our best chance for making progress in emotion theory.

After some brief methodological remarks intended to clarify what differentiates a philosophical approach from a more general cognitive science perspective on the emotions, we begin by outlining some of the ways researchers have conceived of the place of emotions in the topography of the mind. We will note that emotions have historically been conceptualized in one of three main ways: as experiences, as evaluations, and as motivations. Each of these research traditions captures something true and significant about the emotions, but no theory within any tradition appears immune from counterexamples and problem cases. Concerning the rationality of emotions, we will distinguish two main varieties of it—cognitive rationality and strategic rationality—and explore a number of ways in which the emotions can succeed or fail with respect to different standards of rationality.

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## **5.2 MAN'S BEING-IN-FEELING**

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Heidegger sometimes uses the term 'god' to mean the secularized notion of the sacred already indicated, such that to embrace a god would be to maintain due sensitivity to the thought that beings are granted to us in the essential unfolding of Being. When, in the Contributions, Heidegger writes of the last or ultimate god of the other beginning (where 'other' is in relation to the 'first beginning' of Western thought in ancient Greece—the beginning of metaphysics), it often seems to be this secularized sacredness that he has in mind (cf. Thomson 2003; see Crownfield 2001 for an alternative reading of the last god that maintains a more robust theological dimension, although one which is concrete and

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historicized). However, Heidegger sometimes seems to use the term 'god' or 'divinity' to refer to a heroic figure (a cultural template) who may initiate (or help to initiate) a transformational event in the history of Being by opening up an alternative clearing (for this interpretation, see e.g., Young 2002, 98). These heroic figures are the grounders of the abyss, the restorers of sacredness (Contributions 2: 6, see Sallis 2001 for analysis and discussion). It might even be consistent with Heidegger's view to relax the requirement that the divine catalyst must be an individual being, and thus to conceive of certain transformational cultural events or forces themselves as divinities (Dreyfus 2003). In any case, Heidegger argues that, in the present crisis, we are waiting for a god who will reawaken us to the poetic, and thereby enable us to dwell in the fourfold. This task certainly seems to be a noble one. Unfortunately, however, it plunges us into the murkiest and most controversial region of the Heideggerian intellectual landscape, his infamous involvement with Nazism.

Here is not the place to enter into the historical debate over exactly what Heidegger did and when he did it. However, given his deliberate, albeit arguably short-lived, integration of Nazi ideology with the philosophy of Being (see above), a few all-too-brief comments on the relationship between Heidegger's politics and his philosophical thought are necessary. (For more detailed evidence and discussion, as well as a range of positions on how we should interpret and respond to this relationship, see e.g., Farias 1989; Neske and Kettering 1990; Ott 1993; Pattison 2000; Polt 1999; Rockmore 1992; Sluga, 1993; Wolin 1990, 1993; Young 1997). There is no doubt that Heidegger's Nazi sympathies, however long they lasted, have a more intimate relationship with his philosophical thought than might be suggested by apologist claims that he was a victim of his time (in 1933, lots of intelligent people backed Hitler without thereby supporting the Holocaust that was to come) or that what we have here is 'merely' a case of bad political judgment, deserving of censure but with no implications for the essentially independent philosophical programme. Why does the explanation run deeper? The answer is that Heidegger believed (indeed continued to believe until he died) that the

German people were destined to carry out a monumental spiritual mission. That mission was nothing less than to be at the helm of the aforementioned transformation of Being in the West, from one of instrumental technology to one of poetic dwelling. In mounting this transformation the German people would be acting not imperialistically, but for all nations in the encounter with modern technology. Of course destining is not a fate that compels, so some divine catalyst would be needed to awake the German nation to its historic mission, a catalyst provided by the spiritual leaders of the Nazi Party.

Why did Heidegger believe that the German people enjoyed this position of world-historical significance? In the later writings Heidegger argues explicitly that “[t]hinking itself can be transformed only by a thinking which has the same origin and calling”, so the technological mode of Being must be transcended through a new appropriation of the European tradition. Within this process the German people have a special place, because of the “inner relationship of the German language with the language of the Greeks and with their thought”. (Quotations from *Only a God can Save Us* 113.) Thus it is the German language that links the German people in a privileged way to, as Heidegger sees it, the genesis of European thought and to a pre-technological world-view in which bringing-forth as poiesis is dominant. This illustrates the general point that, for Heidegger, Being is intimately related to language. Language is, as he famously put it in the *Letter on Humanism* (217), the “house of Being”. So it is via language that Being is linked to particular peoples.

Even if Heidegger had some sort of argument for the world-historical destiny of the German people, why on earth did he believe that the Nazi Party, of all things, harboured the divine catalyst? Part of the reason seems to have been the seductive effect of a resonance that exists between (a) Heidegger's understanding of traditional German rural life as realizing values and meanings that may counteract the insidious effects of contemporary technology, and (b) the Nazi image of rustic German communities, rooted in German soil, providing a bulwark against foreign contamination. Heidegger certainly exploits this resonance in his pro-

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Nazi writings. That said there is an important point of disagreement here, one that Heidegger himself drew out. And once again the role of language in Being is at the heart of the issue. Heidegger steadfastly refused to countenance any biologicistic underpinning to his views. In 1945 he wrote that, in his 1934 lectures on logic, he “sought to show that language was not the biological-racial essence of man, but conversely, that the essence of man was based on language as a basic reality of spirit” (Letter to the Rector of Freiburg University, November 4, 1945, 64). In words that we have just met, it is language and not biology that, for Heidegger, constitutes the house of Being. So the German Volk are a linguistic-historical, rather than a biological, phenomenon, which explains why Heidegger officially rejected one of the keystones of Nazism, namely its biologically grounded racism. Perhaps Heidegger deserves some credit here, although regrettably the aforementioned lectures on logic also contain evidence of a kind of historically driven ‘racism’. Heidegger suggests that while Africans (along with plants and animals) have no history (in a technical sense understood in terms of heritage), the event of an airplane carrying Hitler to Mussolini is genuinely part of history (see Polt 1999, 155).

Heidegger was soon disappointed by his ‘divinities’. In a 1935 lecture he remarks that the

works that are being peddled (about) nowadays as the philosophy of National Socialism, but have nothing whatever to do with the inner truth and greatness of this movement (namely, the encounter between global technology and contemporary man), have all been written by men fishing the troubled waters of values and totalities. (An Introduction to Metaphysics 166)

So Heidegger came to believe that the spiritual leaders of the Nazi party were false gods. They were ultimately agents of technological thought and thus incapable of completing the historic mission of the German people to transcend global technology. Nonetheless, one way of hearing the 1935 remark is that Heidegger continued to believe in the existence

of, and the philosophical motivation for, that mission, a view that Rockmore (1992, 123–4) calls “an ideal form of Nazism”. This interpretation has some force. But perhaps we can at least make room for the thought that Heidegger's repudiation of Nazism goes further than talk of an ideal Nazism allows. For example, responding to the fact that Heidegger drew a parallel between modern agriculture (as a motorized food-industry) and “the manufacturing of corpses in gas chambers and extermination camps”, Young (1997) argues that this would count as a devaluing of the Holocaust only on a superficial reading. According to Young, Heidegger's point is that both modern agriculture and the Final Solution are workings-out of the technological mode of Being, which does not entail that they should be treated as morally equivalent. (Heidegger draws the parallel in a lecture called *The Enframing* given in 1949. The quotation is taken from Young 1997, 172. For further discussion, see Pattison 2000).

Heidegger's involvement with Nazism casts a shadow over his life. Whether, and if so to what extent, it casts a more concentrated shadow over at least some of his philosophical work is a more difficult issue. It would be irresponsible to ignore the relationship between Heidegger's philosophy and his politics. But it is surely possible to be critically engaged in a deep and intellectually stimulating way with his sustained investigation into Being, to find much of value in his capacity to think deeply about human life, to struggle fruitfully with what he says about our loss of dwelling, and to appreciate his massive and still unfolding contribution to thought and to thinking, without looking for evidence of Nazism in every twist and turn of the philosophical path he lays down.

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### **5.3 MAN'S BEING-IN-ACTION**

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If a person's head moves, she may or may not have moved her head, and, if she did move it, she may have actively performed the movement of her head or merely, by doing something else, caused a passive movement. And, if she performed the movement, she might have done so intentionally or not. This short array of contrasts (and others like them) has motivated questions about the nature, variety, and identity of action.

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Beyond the matter of her moving, when the person moves her head, she may be indicating agreement or shaking an insect off her ear. Should we think of the consequences, conventional or causal, of physical behavior as constituents of an action distinct from but ‘generated by’ the movement? Or should we think that there is a single action describable in a host of ways? Also, actions, in even the most minimal sense, seem to be essentially ‘active’. But how can we explain what this property amounts to and defend our wavering intuitions about which events fall in the category of the ‘active’ and which do not?

Donald Davidson [1980, essay 3] asserted that an action, in some basic sense, is something an agent does that was ‘intentional under some description,’ and many other philosophers have agreed with him that there is a conceptual tie between genuine action, on the one hand, and intention, on the other. However, it is tricky to explicate the purported tie between the two concepts. First, the concept of ‘intention’ has various conceptual inflections whose connections to one another are not at all easy to delineate, and there have been many attempts to map the relations between intentions for the future, acting intentionally, and acting with a certain intention. Second, the notion that human behavior is often intentional under one description but not under another is itself hard to pin down. For example, as Davidson pointed out, an agent may intentionally cause himself to trip, and the activity that caused the tripping may have been intentional under that description while, presumably, the foreseen but involuntary tripping behavior that it caused is not supposed to be intentional under any heading. Nevertheless, both the tripping and its active cause are required to make it true that the agent intentionally caused himself to trip. Both occurrences fall equally, in that sense, ‘under’ the operative description. So further clarification is called for.

There has been a notable or notorious debate about whether the agent's reasons in acting are causes of the action — a longstanding debate about the character of our common sense explanations of actions. Some philosophers have maintained that we explain why an agent acted as he

did when we explicate how the agent's normative reasons rendered the action intelligible in his eyes. Others have stressed that the concept of 'an intention with which a person acted' has a teleological dimension that does not, in their view, reduce to the concept of 'causal guidance by the agent's reasons.' But the view that reason explanations are somehow causal explanations remains the dominant position. Finally, recent discussions have revived interest in important questions about the nature of intention and its distinctiveness as a mental state, and about the norms governing rational intending.

### **Realism and Relativism in Being and Time**

One might think that an unpalatable relativism is entailed by any view which emphasizes that understanding is never preconception-free. But that would be too quick. Of course, if authentic Dasein were individualized in the sense of being a self-sufficient Cartesian subject, then perhaps an extreme form of subjectivist relativism would indeed beckon. Fortunately, however, authentic Dasein isn't a Cartesian subject, in part because it has a transformed and not a severed relationship with the 'they'. This reconnects us with our earlier remark that the philosophical framework advocated within *Being and Time* appears to mandate a kind of cultural relativism. This seems right, but it is important to try to understand precisely what sort of cultural relativism is on offer. Here is one interpretation.

Although worlds (networks of involvements, what Heidegger sometimes calls Reality) are culturally relative phenomena, Heidegger occasionally seems to suggest that nature, as it is in itself, is not. Thus, on the one hand, nature may be discovered as ready-to-hand equipment: the "wood is a forest of timber, the mountain is a quarry of rock; the river is water-power, the wind is wind 'in the sails'" (*Being and Time* 15: 100). Under these circumstances, nature is revealed in certain culturally specific forms determined by our socially conditioned patterns of skilled practical activity. On the other hand, when nature is discovered as present-at-hand, by say science, its intelligibility has an essentially cross-cultural

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character. Indeed, Heidegger often seems to hold the largely commonsense view that there are culture-independent causal properties of nature which explain why it is that you can make missiles out of rocks or branches, but not out of air or water. Science can tell us both what those causal properties are, and how the underlying causal processes work. Such properties and processes are what Heidegger calls the Real, and he comments: “[the] fact that Reality [intelligibility] is ontologically grounded in the Being of Dasein does not signify that only when Dasein exists and as long as Dasein exists can the Real [e.g., nature as revealed by science] be as that which in itself it is” (Being and Time, 43: 255).

If the picture just sketched is a productive way to understand Heidegger, then, perhaps surprisingly, his position might best be thought of as a mild kind of scientific realism. For, on this interpretation, one of Dasein's cultural practices, the practice of science, has the special quality of revealing natural entities as they are in themselves, that is, independently of Dasein's culturally conditioned uses and articulations of them. Crucially, however, this sort of scientific realism maintains ample conceptual room for Sheehan's well-observed point that, for Heidegger, at every stage of his thinking, “there is no ‘is’ to things without a taking-as... no sense that is independent of human being... Before homo sapiens evolved, there was no ‘being’ on earth... because ‘being’ for Heidegger does not mean ‘in existence’ ” (Sheehan 2001). Indeed, Being concerns sense-making (intelligibility), and the different ways in which entities make sense to us, including as present-at-hand, are dependent on the fact that we are Dasein, creatures with a particular mode of Being. So while natural entities do not require the existence of Dasein in order just to occur (in an ordinary, straightforward sense of ‘occur’), they do require Dasein in order to be intelligible at all, including as entities that just occur. Understood properly, then, the following two claims that Heidegger makes are entirely consistent with each other. First: “Being (not entities) is dependent upon the understanding of Being; that is to say, Reality (not the Real) is dependent upon care”. Secondly: “[O]nly as long as Dasein is (that is, only as long as an understanding of Being is ontically possible), ‘is there’ Being. When Dasein does not exist,



‘independence’ ‘is’ not either, nor ‘is’ the ‘in-itself’ ”. (Both quotations from *Being and Time*, 43: 255.)

How does all this relate to Heidegger's account of truth? Answering this question adds a new dimension to the pivotal phenomenon of revealing. Heidegger points out that the philosophical tradition standardly conceives of truth as attaching to propositions, and as involving some sort of correspondence between propositions and states of affairs. But whereas for the tradition (as Heidegger characterizes it), propositional truth as correspondence exhausts the phenomenon of truth, for Heidegger, it is merely the particular manifestation of truth that is operative in those domains, such as science, that concern themselves with the Real. According to Heidegger, propositional truth as correspondence is made possible by a more fundamental phenomenon that he dubs ‘original truth’. Heidegger's key thought here is that before (in a conceptual sense of ‘before’) there can be any question of correspondence between propositions and states of affairs, there needs to be in place a field of intelligibility (Reality, a world), a sense-making structure within which entities may be found. Unconcealing is the Dasein-involving process that establishes this prior field of intelligibility. This is the domain of original truth—what we might call truth as revealing or truth as unconcealing. Original truth cannot be reduced to propositional truth as correspondence, because the former is an a priori, transcendental condition for the latter. Of course, since Dasein is the source of intelligibility, truth as unconcealing is possible only because there is Dasein, which means that without Dasein there would be no truth—including propositional truth as correspondence. But it is reasonable to hear this seemingly relativistic consequence as a further modulation of the point (see above) that entities require Dasein in order to be intelligible at all, including, now, as entities that are capable of entering into states of affairs that may correspond to propositions.

Heidegger's analysis of truth also countenances a third manifestation of the phenomenon, one that is perhaps best characterized as being located between original truth and propositional truth. This intermediate

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phenomenon is what might be called Heidegger's instrumental notion of truth (Dahlstrom 2001, Overgaard 2002). As we saw earlier, for Heidegger, the referential structure of significance may be articulated not only by words but by skilled practical activity (e.g., hammering) in which items of equipment are used in culturally appropriate ways. By Heidegger's lights, such equipmental activity counts as a manifestation of unconcealing and thus as the realization of a species of truth. This fact further threatens the idea that truth attaches only to propositions, although some uses of language may themselves be analysed as realizing the instrumental form of truth (e.g., when I exclaim that 'this hammer is too heavy for the job', rather than assert that it has the objective property of weighing 2.5 kilos; Overgaard 2002, 77; cf. *Being and Time* 33:199–200).

It is at this point that an ongoing dispute in Heidegger scholarship comes to the fore. It has been argued (e.g., Dahlstrom 2001, Overgaard 2002) that a number of prominent readings of Heidegger (e.g., Okrent 1988, Dreyfus 1991) place such heavy philosophical emphasis on Dasein as a site of skilled practical activity that they end up simply identifying Dasein's understanding of Being with skilled practical activity. Because of this shared tendency, such readings are often grouped together as advocating a pragmatist interpretation of Heidegger. According to its critics, the inadequacy of the pragmatist interpretation is exposed once it is applied to Heidegger's account of truth. For although the pragmatist interpretation correctly recognizes that, for Heidegger, propositional correspondence is not the most fundamental phenomenon of truth, it takes the fundamental variety to be exhausted by Dasein's sense-making skilled practical activity. But (the critic points out) this is to ignore the fact that even though instrumental truth is more basic than traditional propositional truth, nevertheless it too depends on a prior field of significance (one that determines the correct and incorrect uses of equipment) and thus on the phenomenon of original truth. Put another way, the pragmatist interpretation falls short because it fails to distinguish original truth from instrumental truth. It is worth commenting here that not every so-called pragmatist reading is on a par with respect

to this issue. For example, Dreyfus (2008) separates out (what he calls) background coping (Dasein's familiarity with, and knowledge of how to navigate the meaningful structures of, its world) from (what he calls) skilled or absorbed coping (Dasein's skilled practical activity), and argues that, for Heidegger, the former is ontologically more basic than the latter. If original truth is manifested in background coping, and instrumental truth in skilled coping, this disrupts the thought that the two notions of truth are being run together (for discussion, see Overgaard 2002 85–6, note 17).

How should one respond to Heidegger's analysis of truth? One objection is that original truth ultimately fails to qualify as a form of truth at all. As Tugendhat (1967) observes, it is a plausible condition on the acceptability of any proposed account of truth that it accommodate a distinction between what is asserted or intended and how things are in themselves. It is clear that propositional truth as correspondence satisfies this condition, and notice that (if we squint a little) so too does instrumental truth, since despite my intentions, I can fail, in my actions, to use the hammer in ways that successfully articulate its place in the relevant equipmental network. However, as Tugendhat argues, it is genuinely hard to see how original truth as unconcealing could possibly support a distinction between what is asserted or intended and how things are in themselves. After all, unconcealing is, in part, the process through which entities are made intelligible to Dasein in such a way that the distinction in question can apply. Thus, Tugendhat concludes, although unconcealing may be a genuine phenomenon that constitutes a transcendental condition for there to be truth, it is not itself a species of truth. (For discussions of Tugendhat's critique, see Dahlstrom 2001, Overgaard 2002.)

Whether or not unconcealing ought to count as a species of truth, it is arguable that the place which it (along with its partner structure, Reality) occupies in the Heideggerian framework must ultimately threaten even the mild kind of scientific realism that we have been attributing, somewhat tentatively, to Heidegger. The tension comes into view just at

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the point where unconcealing is reinterpreted in terms of Dasein's essential historicity. Because intelligibility, and thus unconcealing, has an essentially historical character, it is difficult to resist the thought that the propositional and instrumental truths generated out of some specific field of intelligibility will be relativistically tied to a particular culture in a particular time period. Moreover, at one point, Heidegger suggests that even truth as revealed by science is itself subject to this kind of relativistic constraint. Thus he says that “every factual science is always manifestly in the grip of historizing” (Being and Time 76: 444). The implication is that, for Heidegger, one cannot straightforwardly subject the truth of one age to the standards of another, which means, for example, that contemporary chemistry and alchemical chemistry might both be true (cf. Dreyfus 1990, 261–2). But even if this more radical position is ultimately Heidegger's, there remains space here for some form of realism. Given the transcendental relation that, according to Heidegger, obtains between fields of intelligibility and science, the view on offer might still support a historically conditioned form of Kantian empirical realism with respect to science. Nevertheless it must, it seems, reject the full-on scientific realist commitment to the idea that the history of science is regulated by progress towards some final and unassailable set of scientifically established truths about nature, by a journey towards, as it were, God's science (Haugeland 2007).

The realist waters in which our preliminary interpretation has been swimming are muddied even further by another aspect of Dasein's essential historicity. Officially, it is seemingly not supposed to be a consequence of that historicity that we cannot discover universal features of ourselves. The evidence for this is that there are many conclusions reached in Being and Time that putatively apply to all Dasein, for example that Dasein's everyday experience is characterized by the structural domains of readiness-to-hand, un-readiness-to-hand and presence-at-hand (for additional evidence, see Polt 1999 92–4). Moreover, Heidegger isn't saying that any route to understanding is as good as any other. For example, he prioritizes authenticity as the road to an answer to the question of the meaning of Being. Thus:

the idea of existence, which guides us as that which we see in advance, has been made definite [transformed from pre-ontological to ontological, from implicit and vague to explicitly articulated] by the clarification of our ownmost potentiality-for-Being. (Being and Time 63: 358)

Still, if this priority claim and the features shared by all Dasein really are supposed to be ahistorical, universal conditions (applicable everywhere throughout history), we are seemingly owed an account of just how such conditions are even possible, given Dasein's essential historicity.

Finally, one might wonder whether the 'realist Heidegger' can live with the account of temporality given in Being and Time. If temporality is the a priori condition for us to encounter entities as equipment, and if, in the relevant sense, the unfolding of time coincides with the unfolding of Dasein (Dasein, as temporality, temporalizes; see above), then equipmental entities will be intelligible to us only in (what we might call) Dasein-time, the time that we ourselves are. Now, we have seen previously that nature is often encountered as equipment, which means that natural equipment will be intelligible to us only in Dasein-time. But what about nature in a non-equipmental form—nature (as one might surely be tempted to say) as it is in itself? One might try to argue that those encounters with nature that reveal nature as it is in itself are precisely those encounters that reveal nature as present-at-hand, and that to reveal nature as present-at-hand is, in part, to reveal nature within present-at-hand time (e.g., clock time), a time which is, in the relevant sense, independent of Dasein. Unfortunately there's a snag with this story (and thus for the attempt to see Heidegger as a realist). Heidegger claims that presence-at-hand (as revealed by theoretical reflection) is subject to the same Dasein-dependent temporality as readiness-to-hand:

...if Dasein's Being is completely grounded in temporality, then temporality must make possible Being-in-the-world and therewith Dasein's transcendence; this transcendence in turn provides the support

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for concerned Being alongside entities within-the-world, whether this Being is theoretical or practical. (Being and Time 69: 415, my emphasis)

But now if theoretical investigations reveal nature in present-at-hand time, and if in the switching over from the practical use of equipment to the theoretical investigation of objects, time remains the same Dasein-time, then present-at-hand time is Dasein-dependent too. Given this, it seems that the only way we can give any sense to the idea of nature as it is in itself is to conceive of such nature as being outside of time. Interestingly, in the History of the Concept of Time (a text based on Heidegger's notes for a 1925 lecture course and often thought of as a draft of Being and Time), Heidegger seems to embrace this very option, arguing that nature is within time only when it is encountered in Dasein's world, and concluding that nature as it is in itself is entirely atemporal. It is worth noting the somewhat Kantian implication of this conclusion: if all understanding is grounded in temporality, then the atemporality of nature as it is in itself would mean that, for Heidegger, we cannot understand natural things as they really are in themselves (cf. Dostal 1993).

### **The Nature of Action and Agency**

It has been common to motivate a central question about the nature of action by invoking an intuitive distinction between the things that merely happen to people — the events they undergo — and the various things they genuinely do. The latter events, the doings, are the acts or actions of the agent, and the problem about the nature of action is supposed to be: what distinguishes an action from a mere happening or occurrence? For some time now, however, there has been a better appreciation of the vagaries of the verb 'to do' and a livelier sense that the question is not well framed. For instance, a person may cough, sneeze, blink, blush, and thrash about in a seizure, and these are all things the person has, in some minimal sense, 'done,' although in the usual cases, the agent will have been altogether passive throughout these 'doings.' It is natural to protest that this is not the sense of "do" the canny philosopher of action originally had in mind, but it is also not so easy to say just what sense

that is. Moreover, as Harry Frankfurt [1978] has pointed out, the purposeful behavior of animals constitutes a low-level type of ‘active’ doing. When a spider walks across the table, the spider directly controls the movements of his legs, and they are directed at taking him from one location to another. Those very movements have an aim or purpose for the spider, and hence they are subject to a kind of teleological explanation. Similarly, the idle, unnoticed movements of my fingers may have the goal of releasing the candy wrapper from my grasp. All this behavioral activity is ‘action’ in some fairly weak sense.

Nevertheless, a great deal of human action has a richer psychological structure than this. An agent performs activity that is directed at a goal, and commonly it is a goal the agent has adopted on the basis of an overall practical assessment of his options and opportunities. Moreover, it is immediately available to the agent's awareness both that he is performing the activity in question and that the activity is aimed by him at such-and-such a chosen end. At a still more sophisticated conceptual level, Frankfurt [1988, 1999] has also argued that basic issues concerning freedom of action presuppose and give weight to a concept of ‘acting on a desire with which the agent identifies.’ Under Frankfurt's influence on this point, a good deal has been written to elucidate the nature of ‘full-blooded’ human agency, whether the notion is finally delineated either in Frankfurt's way or along different but related lines [see Velleman 2000, essay 6, Bratman 1999, essay 10]. Thus, there are different levels of action to be distinguished, and these include at least the following: unconscious and/or involuntary behavior, purposeful or goal directed activity (of Frankfurt's spider, for instance), intentional action, and the autonomous acts or actions of self-consciously active human agents. Each of the key concepts in these characterizations raises some hard puzzles.

### **Knowledge of one's own actions**

It is frequently noted that the agent has some sort of immediate awareness of his physical activity and of the goals that the activity is aimed at realizing. In this connection, Elizabeth Anscombe [1963] spoke

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of 'knowledge without observation.' The agent knows 'without observation' that he is performing certain bodily movements (perhaps under some rough but non-negligible description), and he knows 'without observation' what purpose(s) the behavior is meant to serve [see also Falvey 2000]. Anscombe's discussion of her claim is rich and suggestive, but her conception of 'knowledge through observation' is problematic. Surely, one wants to say, proprioception and kinesthetic sensation play some role in informing the agent of the positions and movements of his body, and it is uncertain why these informational roles should fail to count as modes of inner 'observation' of the agent's own overt physical behavior. What Anscombe explicitly denies is that agents generally know of the positions or movements of their own bodies by means of 'separably describable sensations' that serve as criteria for their judgements about the narrowly physical performance of their bodies. However, when a person sees that there is a goldfinch in front of him, his knowledge is not derived as an inference from the 'separably describable' visual impressions he has in seeing the goldfinch, but this is an instance of knowledge through observation nonetheless.

In a related vein, David Velleman [1989] describes knowledge of one's present and incipient actions as 'spontaneous' (knowledge that the agent has achieved without deriving it from evidence adequate to warrant it), and as 'self-fulfilling' (expectations of acting that tend to produce actions of the kind expected). For Velleman, these expectations are themselves intentions, and they are chiefly derived by the agent through practical reasoning about what she is to perform. Thus, Velleman is what Sarah Paul (2009) calls a Strong Cognitivist, i.e., someone who identifies an intention with a certain pertinent belief about what she is doing or about to do. Setiya (2009) holds a similar view. A Weak Cognitivist, in Paul's terminology, is a theorist that holds that intentions to F are partially constituted by but are not identical with relevant beliefs that one will F. For instance, Paul Grice (1971) held that an intention to F consisted in the agent's 'willing' herself to F combined with a belief that she will actually F as a more or less immediate consequence of her having so willed. Because Strong Cognitivists maintain that the intention/beliefs of



the agent are predominantly not based either on observation or evidence of any sort, and because they claim in addition that these states are causally reliable in producing actions that validate their contents, such theorists believe that these intentions, when they have been carried out, constitute a mode of 'practical' knowledge that has not been derived from observation. Weak Cognitivists can construct a similar story about how the agent's own actions can, in a plausible sense, be known without relying on observation.

However, it is not obvious that an agent's knowledge of her intentional actions is not inferred from immediate knowledge of her own intentions. Consider, to illustrate the line of thought, Grice's theory of intention and belief. As noted above, he held a Weak Cognitivist view according to which an agent wills that he Fs and derives from his awareness of willing that he will in fact F (or at least try to F) precisely because he has willed to do so. However, it seems plausible, as Sarah Paul argues at length in her 2009, that intentions to F, rightly understood, can take the place of the counterpart 'willings' in Grice's account. Thus, an agent, intending to F in the near future, and being immediately aware of so intending, forms inferentially the belief that she will F soon (or at least try to F) precisely because she has intended to do so. After all, the conditional,

If the agent intends to F shortly and does not change her mind, then shortly she will at least try to F.

appears to be knowable a priori. The belief that the agent thereby derives is, although it is inferred, not derived from observation. Paul labels this the "the inferentialist account," and it is not easily ruled out. [See also Wilson 2000 and Moran 2001.] These puzzles about the nature of an agent's knowledge of her own intentional actions are thus closely intertwined with questions about the nature of intention and about the nature of the explanation of action. In the final section, we address briefly some further key issues that arise in this connection.

**Governance of one's own actions.**

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It is also important to the concept of 'goal directed action' that agents normally implement a kind of direct control or guidance over their own behavior. An agent may guide her paralyzed left arm along a certain path by using her active right arm to shove it through the relevant trajectory. The moving of her right arm, activated as it is by the normal exercise of her system of motor control, is a genuine action, but the movement of her left arm is not. That movement is merely the causal upshot of her guiding action, just as the onset of illumination in the light bulb is the mere effect of her action when she turned on the light. The agent has direct control over the movement of the right arm, but not over the movement of the left. And yet it is hardly clear what 'direct control of behavior' can amount to here. It does not simply mean that behavior A, constituting a successful or attempted Fing, was initiated and causally guided throughout its course by a present-directed intention to be Fing then. Even the externally guided movement of the paralyzed left arm would seem to satisfy a condition of this weak sort. Alfred Mele [1992] has suggested that the intuitive 'directness' of the guidance of action A can partially be captured by stipulating that the action-guiding intention must trigger and sustain A proximally. In other words, it is stipulated that the agent's present-directed intention to be Fing should govern action A, but not by producing some other prior or concurrent action A\* that causally controls A in turn. But the proposal is dubious. On certain assumptions, most ordinary physical actions are liable to flunk this strengthened requirement. The normal voluntary movements of an agent's limbs are caused by complicated contractions of suitable muscles, and the muscle contractions, since they are aimed at causing the agent's limbs to move, may themselves count as causally prior human actions. For instance, on Davidson's account of action they will since the agent's muscle contracting is intentional under the description 'doing something that causes the arm to move' [see Davidson 1980, essay 2]. Thus, the overt arm movement, in a normal act of voluntary arm moving, will have been causally guided by a prior action, the muscle contracting, and consequently the causal guidance of the arm's movement will fail to be an instance of 'proximal' causation at all [see Sehon 1998].

As one might imagine, this conclusion depends upon how an act of moving a part of one's body is to be conceived. Some philosophers maintain that the movements of an agent's body are never actions. It is only the agent's direct moving of, say, his leg that constitutes a physical action; the leg movement is merely caused by and/or incorporated as a part of the act of moving [see Hornsby 1980]. This thesis re-opens the possibility that the causal guidance of the moving of the agent's leg by the pertinent intention is proximal after all. The intention proximally governs the moving, if not the movement, where the act of moving is now thought to start at the earliest, inner stage of act initiation. Still, this proposal is also controversial. For instance, J.L. Austin [1962] held that the statement

(1) The agent moved his leg  
is ambiguous between (roughly)

(1') The agent caused his leg to move  
and the more specific

(1'') The agent performed a movement with his leg.

If Austin is right about this, then the nominalization “the agent's moving of his leg” should be correspondingly ambiguous, with a second reading that denotes a certain leg movement, a movement the agent has performed. Thus, no simple appeal to a putative distinction between ‘movement’ and ‘moving’ will easily patch up the conception of ‘direct control of action’ under present scrutiny.

In any event, there is another well-known reason for doubting that the ‘directness’ of an agent's governance of his own actions involves the condition of causal proximity — that an action is not to be controlled by still another action of the same agent. Some philosophers believe that the agent's moving his leg is triggered and sustained by the agent's trying to move his leg in just that way, and that the efficacious trying is itself an action [see Hornsby 1980, Ginet 1990, and O'Shaughnessy 1973, 1980]. If, in addition, the agent's act of leg moving is distinct from the trying,

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then, again, the moving of the leg has not been caused proximally by the intention. The truth or falsity of this third assumption is linked with a wider issue about the individuation of action that has also been the subject of elaborate discussion.

Donald Davidson [1980, essay 1], concurring with Anscombe, held that

(2) If a person Fs by Ging, then her act of Fing = her act of Ging.

In Davidson's famous example, someone alerts a burglar by illuminating a room, which he does by turning on a light, which he does in turn by flipping the appropriate switch. According to the Davidson/Anscombe thesis above, the alerting of the burglar = the illuminating of the room = the turning on of the light = the flipping of the switch. And this is so despite the fact that the alerting of the burglar was unintentional while the flipping of the switch, the turning on of the light, and the illuminating of the room were intentional. Suppose now that it is also true that the agent moved his leg by trying to move his leg in just that matter. Combined with the Davidson/Anscombe thesis about act identification, this implies that the agent's act of moving his leg = his act of trying to move that leg. So, perhaps the act of trying to move the leg doesn't cause the act of moving after all, since they are just the same.

The questions involved in these debates are potentially quite confusing. First, it is important to distinguish between phrases like

(a) the agent's turning on the light  
and gerundive phrases such as

(b) the agent's turning on of the light.

Very roughly, the expression (a) operates more like a 'that' clause, viz.

(a') that the agent turned on the light,  
while the latter phrase appears to be a definite description, i.e.,

(b') the turning on of the light [performed] by the agent.

What is more, even when this distinction has been drawn, the denotations of the gerundive phrases often remain ambiguous, especially when the verbs whose nominalizations appear in these phrases are causatives. No one denies that there is an internally complex process that is initiated by the agent's switch-flipping hand movement and that is terminated by the light's coming on as a result. This process includes, but is not identical with, the act that initiates it and the event that is its culminating upshot. Nevertheless, in a suitable conversational setting, the phrases (b) and (b') can be properly used to designate any of the three events: the act that turned on the light, the onset of illumination in the light, and whole process whereby the light has come to be turned on. [For further discussion, see Parsons 1990, Pietrofsky 2000, and Higginbotham 2000].

Now, the Davidson-Anscombe thesis plainly is concerned with the relation between the agent's act of turning on the light, his act of flipping the switch, etc. But which configuration of events, either prior to or contained within the extended causal process of turning on the light, really constitutes the agent's action? Some philosophers have favored the overt arm movement the agent performs, some favor the extended causal process he initiates, and some prefer the relevant event of trying that precedes and 'generates' the rest. It has proved difficult to argue for one choice over another without simply begging the question against competing positions. As noted before, Hornsby and other authors have pointed to the intuitive truth of

(3) The agent moved his arm by trying to move his arm,  
and they appeal to the Davidson-Anscombe thesis to argue that the act of moving the arm = the act of trying to move the arm. On this view, the act of trying — which is the act of moving — causes a movement of the arm in much the same way that an act of moving the arm causes the onset of illumination in the light. Both the onset of illumination and the overt arm movement are simply causal consequences of the act itself, the act of trying to move his arm in just this way. Further, in light of the apparent immediacy and strong first person authority of agents' judgements that they have tried to do a certain thing, it appears that acts of trying are

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intrinsically mental acts. So, a distinctive type of mental act stands as the causal source of the bodily behavior that validates various physical re-descriptions of the act.

And yet none of this seems inevitable. It is arguable that

(4) The agent tried to turn on the light  
simply means, as a first approximation at least, that

(4') The agent did something that was directed at turning on the light. Moreover, when (4) or (4') is true, then the something the agent did that was directed at turning on the light will have been some other causally prior action, the act of flipping the switch, for example. If this is true of trying to perform basic acts (e.g., moving one's own arm) as well as non-basic, instrumental acts, then trying to move one's arm may be nothing more than doing something directed at making one's arm move. In this case, the something which was done may simply consist in the contracting of the agent's muscles. Or, perhaps, if we focus on the classic case of the person whose arm, unknown to her, is paralyzed, then the trying in that case (and perhaps in all) may be nothing more than the activation of certain neural systems in the brain. Of course, most agents are not aware that they are initiating appropriate neural activity, but they are aware of doing something that is meant to make their arms move. And, in point of fact, it may well be that the something of which they are aware as a causing of the arm movement just is the neural activity in the brain. From this perspective, 'trying to F' does not name a natural kind of mental act that ordinarily sets off a train of fitting physical responses. Rather, it gives us a way of describing actions in terms of a goal aimed at in the behavior without committing us as to whether the goal was realized or not. It also carries no commitment,

concerning the intrinsic character of the behavior that was aimed at Fing, whether one or several acts were performed in the course of trying, and whether any further bodily effects of the trying were themselves additional physical actions [see Cleveland 1997].

By contrast, it is a familiar doctrine that what the agent does, in the first instance, in order to cause his arm to move is to form a distinctive mental occurrence whose intrinsic psychological nature and content is immediately available to introspection. The agent wills his arm to move or produces a volition that his arm is to move, and it is this mental willing or volition that is aimed at causing his arm to move. Just as an attempt to turn on the light may be constituted by the agent's flipping of the switch, so also, in standard cases, trying to move his arm is constituted by the agent's willing his arm to move. For traditional 'volitionalism,' willings, volitions, basic tryings are, in Brian O'Shaughnessy's apt formulation, 'primitive elements of animal consciousness.' They are elements of consciousness in which the agent has played an active role, and occurrences that normally have the power of producing the bodily movements they represent. Nevertheless, it is one thing to grant that, in trying to move one's body, there is some 'inner' activity that is meant to initiate an envisaged bodily movement. It is quite another matter to argue successfully that the initiating activity has the particular mentalistic attributes that volitionalism has characteristically ascribed to acts of willing.

It is also a further question whether there is only a single action, bodily or otherwise, that is performed along the causal route that begins with trying to move and terminates with a movement of the chosen type. One possibility, adverted to above, is that there is a whole causal chain of actions that is implicated in the performance of even the simplest physical act of moving a part of one's body. If, for example, 'action' is goal-directed behavior, then the initiating neural activity, the resulting muscle contractions, and the overt movement of the arm may all be actions on their own, with each member in the line-up causing every subsequent member, and with all of these actions causing an eventual switch flipping somewhere further down the causal chain. On this approach, there may be nothing which is the act of flipping the switch or of turning on the light, because each causal link is now an act which flipped the switch and (thereby) turned on the light [see Wilson 1989]. Nevertheless, there still will be a single overt action that made the switch

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flip, the light turn on, and the burglar become alert, i.e., the overt movement of the agent's hand and arm. In this sense, the proposal supports a modified version of the Davidson/Anscombe thesis.

However, all of this discussion suppresses a basic metaphysical mystery. In the preceding two paragraphs, it has been proposed that the neural activity, the muscle contractions, and the overt hand movements may all be actions, while the switch's flipping on, the light's coming on, and the burglar's becoming alert are simply happenings outside the agent, the mere effects of the agent's overt action. As we have seen, there is plenty of disagreement about where basic agency starts and stops, whether within the agent's body or somewhere on its surface. There is less disagreement that the effects of bodily movement beyond the body, e.g., the switch's flipping on, the onset of illumination in the room, and so on, are not, by themselves at least, purposeful actions. Still, what could conceivably rationalize any set of discriminations between action and non-action as one traces along the pertinent complex causal chains from the initial mind or brain activity, through the bodily behavior, to the occurrences produced in the agent's wider environment?

Perhaps, one wants to say, as suggested above, that the agent has a certain kind of direct (motor) control over the goal-seeking behavior of his own body. In virtue of that fundamental biological capacity, his bodily activity, both inner and overt, is governed by him and directed at relevant objectives. Inner physical activity causes and is aimed at causing the overt arm movements and, in turn, those movements cause and are aimed at causing the switch to flip, the light to go on, and the room to become illuminated. Emphasizing considerations of this sort, one might urge that they validate the restriction of action to events in or at the agent's body. And yet, the stubborn fact remains that the agent also does have a certain 'control' over what happens to the switch, the light, and even over the burglar's state of mind. It is a goal for the agent of the switch's flipping on that it turn on the light, a goal for the agent of the onset of illumination in the room that it render the room space visible, etc. Hence, the basis of any discrimination between minimal agency and



non-active consequences within the extended causal chains will have to rest on some special feature of the person's guidance: the supposed 'directness' of the motor control, the immediacy or relative certainty of the agent's expectations about actions vs. results, or facts concerning the special status of the agent's living body. The earlier remarks in this section hint at the serious difficulty of seeing how any such routes are likely to provide a rationale for grounding the requisite metaphysical distinction(s).

### Check Your Progress 1

**Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer**

**b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit**

1. What do you know the Man's being-in-feeling?

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2. Discuss the Man's being-in-action.

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## 5.4 LET US SUM UP

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"Emotion" is a term that came into use in the English language in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a translation of the French term "émotion" but did not designate "a category of mental states that might be systematically studied" until the mid-nineteenth century (Dixon 2012: 338; see also Dixon 2003; Solomon 2008). At the same time, many of the things we call emotions today have been the object of theoretical analysis since Ancient Greece, under a variety of language-specific labels such as passion, sentiment, affection, affect, disturbance, movement, perturbation, upheaval, or appetite. This makes for a long and complicated history, which has progressively led to the development of a variety of shared insights about the nature and function of emotions, but

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no consensual definition of what emotions are, either in philosophy or in affective science.

A widely shared insight is that emotions have components, and that such components are jointly instantiated in prototypical episodes of emotions. Consider an episode of intense fear due to the sudden appearance of a grizzly bear on your path while hiking. At first blush, we can distinguish in the complex event that is fear an evaluative component (e.g., appraising the bear as dangerous), a physiological component (e.g., increased heart rate and blood pressure), a phenomenological component (e.g., an unpleasant feeling), an expressive component (e.g., upper eyelids raised, jaw dropped open, lips stretched horizontally), a behavioral component (e.g., a tendency to flee), and a mental component (e.g., focusing attention).

One question that has divided emotion theorists is: Which subset of the evaluative, physiological, phenomenological, expressive, behavioral, and mental components is essential to emotion? The answer to this “problem of parts” (Prinz 2004) has changed at various times in the history of the subject, leading to a vast collection of theories of emotions both in philosophy and in affective science. Although such theories differ on multiple dimensions, they can be usefully sorted into three broad traditions, which we call the Feeling Tradition, the Evaluative Tradition and the Motivational Tradition (Scarantino 2016).

The Feeling Tradition takes the way emotions feel to be their most essential characteristic, and defines emotions as distinctive conscious experiences. The Evaluative Tradition regards the way emotions construe the world as primary, and defines emotions as being (or involving) distinctive evaluations of the eliciting circumstances. The Motivational Tradition defines emotions as distinctive motivational states.

Each tradition faces the task of articulating a prescriptive definition of emotions that is theoretically fruitful and compatible at least to some degree with ordinary linguistic usage. And although there are discipline-

specific theoretical objectives, there also is a core set of explanatory challenges that tends to be shared across disciplines:

Differentiation: How are emotions different from one another, and from things that are not emotions?

Motivation: Do emotions motivate behavior, and if so how?

Intentionality: Do emotions have object-directedness, and if so can they be appropriate or inappropriate to their objects?

Phenomenology: Do emotions always involve subjective experiences, and if so of what kind?

For example, a viable account of anger should tell us how anger differs from fear and from non-emotional states (differentiation), whether and how anger motivates aggressive behaviors (motivation), whether and how anger can be about a given state of affairs and be considered appropriate with respect to such state of affairs (intentionality), and whether and how anger involves a distinctive subjective experience (phenomenology).

We now consider some of the most prominent theories within each tradition, and assess how they fare with respect to these four theoretical challenges and others. As we shall see, each tradition seems to capture something important about what the emotions are, but none is immune from counterexamples and problem cases. As a result, the most recent trend in emotion theory is represented by theories that straddle traditions, in an attempt to combine their distinctive insights. Although we begin our investigation with William James and will occasionally mention earlier accounts, our primary focus will be on theories developed in the last 50 years.

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## 5.5 KEY WORDS

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Motivation: Motivation is the experience of desire or aversion. As such, motivation has both an objective aspect and an internal or subjective aspect.

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**Intentionality:** Intentionality is a philosophical concept defined as "the power of minds to be about, to represent, or to stand for, things, properties and states of affairs"

**Phenomenology:** Phenomenology is the philosophical study of the structures of experience and consciousness. As a philosophical movement it was founded in the early years of the 20th century by Edmund Husserl and was later expanded upon by a circle of his followers at the universities of Göttingen and Munich in Germany.

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## 5.6 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

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1. Discuss the concept of Man's being-in-feeling.
2. Discuss the concept Man's being-in-action.

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## 5.7 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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## 5.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Check Your Progress 1

1. See Section 5.2
2. See Section 5.3

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## **UNIT 6: FREEDOM**

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### **STRUCTURE**

- 6.0 Objectives
- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Definition and Kinds of Freedom
- 6.3 Historical Development
- 6.4 The Problem of Free Will
- 6.5 Existence of Freedom
- 6.6 Nature of Freedom
- 6.7 Limits of Freedom
- 6.8 Positive and Negative Freedom
- 6.9 Let us sum up
- 6.10 Key Words
- 6.11 Questions for Review
- 6.12 Suggested readings and references
- 6.13 Answers to Check Your Progress

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### **6.0 OBJECTIVES**

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In this unit we try to understand the concept of freedom in all its complexities beginning from the Greek period. The problem of Free will is the key issue examined and studied in detail, giving special emphasis to deterministic theories and explaining the position of its opponents in detail. By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- Distinguish and explain different kinds of Freedom
- The problem of Free will and various philosophical approaches and theories about it.
- Explain the nature and limits of Freedom
- Describe the difference between positive and Negative Freedom

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### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

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Human is both intelligent and free. Freedom is another title of human excellence and nobility. It represents a great window for looking in to the

mystery of human, to acquire a more correct, more complete and a more adequate comprehension of human. Both in the practical and theoretical fields freedom constituted an intricate problem from age old times. In the practical field it was the social, economic, political and cultural chains that often bound human in chains. In the theoretical field the question revolves round the problem of free will. Human distinguishes oneself above the other beings, above all precisely because one is gifted with free will.

John Locke's views on the nature of freedom of action and freedom of will have played an influential role in the philosophy of action and in moral psychology. Locke offers distinctive accounts of action and forbearance, of will and willing, of voluntary (as opposed to involuntary) actions and forbearances, and of freedom (as opposed to necessity). These positions lead him to dismiss the traditional question of free will as absurd, but also raise new questions, such as whether we are (or can be) free in respect of willing and whether we are free to will what we will, questions to which he gives divergent answers. Locke also discusses the (much misunderstood) question of what determines the will, providing one answer to it at one time, and then changing his mind upon consideration of some constructive criticism proposed by his friend, William Molyneux. In conjunction with this change of mind, Locke introduces a new doctrine (concerning the ability to suspend the fulfillment of one's desires) that has caused much consternation among his interpreters, in part because it threatens incoherence. As we will see, Locke's initial views do suffer from clear difficulties that are remedied by his later change of mind, all without introducing incoherence.

Within the category of actions, Locke distinguishes between those that are voluntary and those that are involuntary. To understand this distinction, we need to understand Locke's account of the will and his account of willing (or volition). For Locke, the will is a power (ability, faculty—see E1-5 II.xxi.20: 244) possessed by a person (or by that person's mind). Locke explains how we come by the idea of power (in Humean vein, as the result of observation of constant conjunctions—

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“like Changes [being] made, in the same things, by like Agents, and by the like ways” (E1–5 II.xxi.1: 233)), but does not offer a theory of the nature of power. What we are told is that “Powers are Relations” (E1–5 II.xxi.19: 243), relations “to Action or Change” (E1–5 II.xxi.3: 234), and that powers are either active (powers to make changes) or passive (powers to receive changes) (E1–5 II.xxi.2: 234). In this sense, the will is an active relation to actions.

Locke’s predecessors had thought of the will as intimately related to the faculty of desire or appetite. For the Scholastics (whose works Locke read as a student at Oxford), the will is the power of rational appetite. For Thomas Hobbes (by whom Locke was deeply influenced even though this was not something he could advertise, because Hobbes was a pariah in Locke’s intellectual and political circles), the will is simply the power of desire itself. Remnants of this desiderative conception of the will remain in Locke’s theory, particularly in the first edition of the *Essay*. Here, for example, is Locke’s official E1 account of the will:

This Power the Mind has to prefer the consideration of any Idea to the not considering it; or to prefer the motion of any part of the body to its rest. (E1 II.xxi.5: 236)

And here is Locke’s official E1 account of preferring:

Well, but what is this Preferring? It is nothing but the being pleased more with the one, than the other. (E1 II.xxi.28: 248)

So, in E1, the will is the mind’s power to be more pleased with the consideration of an idea than with the not considering it; or to be more pleased with the motion of a part of one’s body than with its remaining at rest. When we lack something that would deliver more pleasure than we currently experience, we become uneasy at its absence. And this kind of uneasiness (or pain: E1–5 II.vii.1: 128), is what Locke describes as desire (E1–5 II.xx.6: 230; E2–5 II.xxi.31–32: 251) (though also as “joined with”, “scarce distinguishable from”, and a “cause” of desire—see



Section 8 below). So, in E1, the will is the mind's power to desire or want the consideration of an idea more than the not considering it; or to desire or want the motion of a part of one's body more than its remaining at rest. (At E2–5 II.xxi.5: 236, Locke adds “and vice versâ”, to clarify that it can also happen, even according to the E1 account, that one prefers not considering an idea to considering it, or not moving to moving.)[1]

In keeping with this conception of the will as desire, Locke in E1 then defines an exercise of the will, which he calls “willing” or “volition”, as an “actual preferring” of one thing to another (E1 II.xxi.5: 236). For example, I have the power to prefer the upward motion of my arm to its remaining at rest by my side. This power, in E1, is one aspect of my will. When I exercise this power, I actually prefer the upward motion of my arm to its remaining at rest, i.e., I am more pleased with my arm's upward motion than I am with its continuing to rest. This is what Locke, in E1, thinks of as my willing the upward motion of my arm (or, as he sometimes puts it, my willing or volition to move my arm upward).

In E2–5, Locke explicitly gives up this conception of the will and willing, explaining why he does so, making corresponding changes in the text of the Essay, even while leaving passages that continue to suggest the desiderative conception. He writes: “[T]hough a Man would prefer flying to walking, yet who can say he ever wills it?” (E2–5 II.xxi.15: 241). The thought here is that, as Locke (rightly) recognizes, my being more pleased with flying than walking does not consist in (or even entail) my willing to fly. This is in large part because it is necessarily implied in willing motion of a certain sort that one exert dominion that one takes oneself to have (E2–5 II.xxi.15: 241), that “the mind [endeavor] to give rise...to [the motion], which it takes to be in its power” (E2–5 II.xxi.30: 250). So if I do not believe that it is in my power to fly, then it is impossible for me to will the motion of flying, even though I might be more pleased with flying than I am with any alternative. Locke concludes (with the understatement) that “Preferring which seems perhaps best to express the Act of Volition, does it not precisely” (E2–5 II.xxi.15: 240–241).

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In addition, Locke points out that it is possible for “the Will and Desire [to] run counter”. For example, as a result of being coerced or threatened, I might will to persuade someone of something, even though I desire that I not succeed in persuading her. Or, suffering from gout, I might desire to be eased of the pain in my feet, and yet at the same time, recognizing that the translation of such pain would affect my health for the worse, will that I not be eased of my foot pain. In concluding that “desiring and willing are two distinct Acts of the mind”, Locke must be assuming (reasonably) that it is not possible to will an action and its contrary at the same time (E2–5 II.xxi.30: 250).[2]

With what conception of the will and willing does Locke replace the abandoned desiderative conception? The answer is that in E2–5 Locke describes the will as a kind of directive or commanding faculty, the power to direct (or issue commands to) one’s body or mind: it is, he writes,

a Power to begin or forbear, continue or end several actions of our minds, and motions of our Bodies, barely by a thought or preference of the mind ordering, or as it were commanding the doing or not doing such or such particular action. (E2–5 II.xxi.5: 236)

Consonant with this non-desiderative, directive conception of the will, Locke claims that

Volition, or Willing, is an act of the Mind directing its thought to the production of any Action, and thereby exerting its power to produce it, (E2–5 II.xxi.28: 248)

that

Volition is nothing, but that particular determination of the mind, whereby, barely by a thought, the mind endeavours to give rise,

continuation, or stop to any Action, which it takes to be in its power.  
(E2–5 II.xxi.30: 250)

Every volition, then, is a volition to act or to forbear, where willing to act is a matter of commanding one's body to move or one's mind to think, and willing to forbear is a matter of commanding one's body to rest or one's mind not to think. Unlike a desiderative power, which is essentially passive (as involving the ability to be more pleased with one thing than another), the will in E2–5 is an intrinsically active power, the exercise of which involves the issuing of mental commands directed at one's own body and mind.

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## 6.2 DEFINITION AND KINDS OF FREEDOM

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Freedom is the right to act according to one's will without being held up by the power of others. From a philosophical point of view, it can be defined as the capacity to determine your own choices. It can be defined negatively as an absence of subordination, servitude or constraint. In general, by freedom we mean absence of constriction. Constriction can be due to various causes and accordingly there can be distinguished various forms of freedom, such as:

Physical freedom – immunity from physical constriction.

Moral freedom : absence of constrictions through the oppressive forces of moral order such as rewards, punishments, threats, etc.

Psychological freedom: it is a human capacity in choosing to do or not to do a thing when all conditions for action are already present. It is a power to make the choice fall in favour of one of various alternative possibilities.

Political freedom: Outer or political freedom, or personal liberty is the absence of outward restraints, with respect to speech, freedom of

thought, religious practice, the press and the freedom to modify one's outward circumstances.

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### 6.3 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

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It is often said that Greek philosophy was unsuccessful in giving a proper solution or even effectuating a satisfactory enquiry in to the very problem of freedom. There are three principal reasons why they didn't have a deeper enquiry in to this vital problem. a) because it considers all things as subject to fate, an absolute will, superior to humans and to gods, which consciously or unconsciously determines an action. b) according to Greek-thought human makes up part of nature and is subject to general laws that govern onself, by which one cannot behave differently. c) human is subject to the strong influence of history, which is conceived in Greek thought as a cyclical movement, in which everything repeats itself within a certain period of time. The problem of free-will was first definitely stated as a problem of Christian theology. The problem arose, in fact, from a number of different roots in Christian belief. Christianity asserts on the one hand that human does freely choose one's actions, but also asserts on the other hand statements not evidently compatible with . For example, God being omniscient knows from all eternity what actions a human will in fact perform. That is why Augustine puts this question, why has God created human free, knowing that one would abuse this gift? Aquinas makes a different question; how is it possible that human is free if God is the principle and ultimate cause of everything? In the modern period there was another shift of perspective from the centrism to anthropocentrism. Freedom is no longer a question of rapport with God but a rapport with other faculties and with the society. During the contemporary period, the phenomenon of socialization and of its consequences brings freedom into consideration above all in the social perspective. Freedom today is no longer compromised by extra-worldly or infra-human forces, but by human, social forces created by humans themselves.

#### Check Your Progress 1

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

**b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit**

1) Define freedom and explain its various kinds

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2) Why did Greek thought fail to provide proper solution to the problem of freedom?

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## **6.4 THE PROBLEM OF FREE WILL**

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In philosophy, the question of freedom often goes with the question of free will. The French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau asserted that the condition of freedom was inherent to humanity, with the implication that all social interactions subsequent to birth imply a loss of freedom. He made the famous quote: “Man is born free, but everywhere he is in chains.” Jean Paul Sartre famously claimed that humans are “condemned to be free” – because they always have a choice. But determinism claims that the future is inevitably determined by prior causes and freedom is an illusion. Do we have free will? The history of the discussion of free will is rich and remarkable. David Hume called the problem of free will “the most contentious question of metaphysics, the most contentious science.” The basic philosophical positions on the problem of free will can be divided in accordance with the answers they provide to two questions. “Are we free agents”?, “Can we be morally responsible for what we do”? Those who say ‘yes’ are the compatibilists, who hold that free will is compatible with determinism, whereas incompatibilists hold that freedom is not compatible with determinism. (Determinism is roughly defined as the view that all current and future events are causally necessitated by past events combined with the laws of nature. It holds that everything that happens is necessitated by what has already gone before, in such a way that nothing can happen otherwise than it does. Causal determinism is the thesis that future events are necessitated by

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past and present events combined with the laws of nature. Logical determinism is the notion that all propositions, whether about the past, present or future are either true or false. The problem of free will, in this context, is the problem of how choices can be free, given that what one does in the future is already determined as true or false in the present. Mythological determinism negates that man is free for mythological reasons: fate, the stars, demons, etc. which impede man from being master of his own actions. Theological determinism is the thesis that there is a God who determines all that humans will do, either by knowing their actions in advance, via omniscience or by decreeing their actions in advance. The problem of free will, in this context, is the problem of how our actions can be free, if there is a being who has determined them for us ahead of time. Sociological determinism states that all human actions are determined by the pressure exercised by society on individuals. Biological determinism is the idea that all behavior, belief, and desire are fixed by our genetic endowment. Psychological determinism affirms that the action of will is entirely determined by the intellect and its knowledge).

Compatibilism is the view that the assumption of free will and the existence of a concept of determinism are compatible with each other. They believe that to have free will, to be a free agent, to be free in choice and action is simply to be free from constraints of certain sorts. Freedom is a matter of not being physically or psychologically forced or compelled to do what one does. Thomas Hobbes claims that a person acts freely only when the person willed the act and the person could have done otherwise, if the person had decided to. He sometimes attributes such compatibilist freedom to the person and not to some abstract notion of will. David Hume writes, "this hypothetical liberty is universally allowed to belong to every one who is not a prisoner and in chains."

Incompatibilism holds that there is no way to reconcile a belief in a deterministic universe with a belief in a concept of free will beyond that of a perceived existence. Or in simple words determinism and free will can never go together. One of the traditional arguments for

incompatibilism is based on an “intuition pump.” If a person is determined in his or her choices of actions, then he or she must be like other mechanical things that are determined in their behavior such as a wind-up toy, a billiard ball, a puppet, or a robot. Because these things have no free will, then people must have no free will, if determinism is true. Another argument of incompatibilists runs along these lines. If determinism is true, then we have no control over the events of the past that determined our present state and no control over the laws of nature. Since we can have no control over these matters, we also can have no control over the consequences of them. Since our present choices and acts, under determinism, are the necessary consequences of the past and the laws of nature, then we have no control over them and hence, no free will.

Libertarianism accepts the existence of a concept of free will along with an assumption of indeterminism to some extent. Metaphysical libertarianism is one philosophical view under that of incompatibilism. Libertarianism holds on to a concept of free will that requires the individual to be able to take more than one possible course of action under a given set of circumstances.

Free will as a combination of chance and determination. William James described a twostage model of free will. In the first stage the mind develops random alternative possibilities for

The term “free will” has emerged over the past two millennia as the canonical designator for a significant kind of control over one’s actions. Questions concerning the nature and existence of this kind of control (e.g., does it require and do we have the freedom to do otherwise or the power of self-determination?), and what its true significance is (is it necessary for moral responsibility or human dignity?) have been taken up in every period of Western philosophy and by many of the most important philosophical figures, such as Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Descartes, and Kant. (We cannot undertake here a review of related discussions in other philosophical traditions. For a start, the

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reader may consult Marchal and Wenzel 2017 and Chakrabarti 2017 for overviews of thought on free will, broadly construed, in Chinese and Indian philosophical traditions, respectively.) In this way, it should be clear that disputes about free will ineluctably involve disputes about metaphysics and ethics. In ferreting out the kind of control involved in free will, we are forced to consider questions about (among others) causation, laws of nature, time, substance, ontological reduction vs emergence, the relationship of causal and reasons-based explanations, the nature of motivation and more generally of human persons. In assessing the significance of free will, we are forced to consider questions about (among others) rightness and wrongness, good and evil, virtue and vice, blame and praise, reward and punishment, and desert. The topic of free will also gives rise to purely empirical questions that are beginning to be explored in the human sciences: do we have it, and to what degree?

### Free Will and Moral Responsibility

As should be clear from this short discussion of the history of the idea of free will, free will has traditionally been conceived of as a kind of power to control one's choices and actions. When an agent exercises free will over her choices and actions, her choices and actions are up to her. But up to her in what sense? As should be clear from our historical survey, two common (and compatible) answers are: (i) up to her in the sense that she is able to choose otherwise, or at minimum that she is able not to choose or act as she does, and (ii) up to her in the sense that she is the source of her action. However, there is widespread controversy both over whether each of these conditions is required for free will and if so, how to understand the kind or sense of freedom to do otherwise or sourcehood that is required. While some seek to resolve these controversies in part by careful articulation of our experiences of deliberation, choice, and action (Nozick 1981, ch. 4; van Inwagen 1983, ch. 1; O'Connor 2000, ch. 1), many seek to resolve these controversies by appealing to the nature of moral responsibility. The idea is that the kind of control or sense of up-to-meness involved in free will is the kind of control or sense of up-to-meness relevant to moral responsibility (Double 1992, 12; Ekstrom 2000, 7–8; Smilansky 2000, 16; Widerker and McKenna 2003, 2; Vargas 2007,



128; Nelkin 2011, 151–52; Levy 2011, 1; Pereboom 2014, 1–2). Indeed, some go so far as to define ‘free will’ as ‘the strongest control condition—whatever that turns out to be—necessary for moral responsibility’ (Wolf 1990, 3–4; Fischer 1994, 3; Mele 2006, 17). Given this connection, we can determine whether the freedom to do otherwise and the power of self-determination are constitutive of free will and, if so, in what sense, by considering what it takes to be a morally responsible agent. On these latter characterizations of free will, understanding free will is inextricably linked to, and perhaps even derivative from, understanding moral responsibility. And even those who demur from this claim regarding conceptual priority typically see a close link between these two ideas. Consequently, to appreciate the current debates surrounding the nature of free will, we need to say something about the nature of moral responsibility.

It is now widely accepted that there are different species of moral responsibility. It is common (though not uncontroversial) to distinguish moral responsibility as answerability from moral responsibility as attributability from moral responsibility as accountability (Watson 1996; Fischer and Tognazzini 2011; Shoemaker 2011. See Smith (2012) for a critique of this taxonomy). These different species of moral responsibility differ along three dimensions: (i) the kind of responses licensed toward the responsible agent, (ii) the nature of the licensing relation, and (iii) the necessary and sufficient conditions for licensing the relevant kind of responses toward the agent. For example, some argue that when an agent is morally responsible in the attributability sense, certain judgments about the agent—such as judgments concerning the virtues and vices of the agent—are fitting, and that the fittingness of such judgments does not depend on whether the agent in question possessed the freedom to do otherwise (cf. Watson 1996).

While keeping this controversy about the nature of moral responsibility firmly in mind (see the entry on moral responsibility for a more detailed discussion of these issues), we think it is fair to say that the most commonly assumed understanding of moral responsibility in the

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historical and contemporary discussion of the problem of free will is moral responsibility as accountability in something like the following sense:

An agent  $S$  is morally accountable for performing an action  $\phi$  =df.  $S$  deserves praise if  $\phi$  goes beyond what can be reasonably expected of  $S$  and  $S$  deserves blame if  $\phi$  is morally wrong.

The central notions in this definition are praise, blame, and desert. The majority of contemporary philosophers have followed Strawson (1962) in contending that praising and blaming an agent consist in experiencing (or at least being disposed to experience (cf. Wallace 1994, 70–71)) reactive attitudes or emotions directed toward the agent, such as gratitude, approbation, and pride in the case of praise, and resentment, indignation, and guilt in the case of blame. (See Sher (2006) and Scanlon (2008) for important dissensions from this trend. See the entry on blame for a more detailed discussion.) These emotions, in turn, dispose us to act in a variety of ways. For example, blame disposes us to respond with some kind of hostility toward the blameworthy agent, such as verbal rebuke or partial withdrawal of good will. But while these kinds of dispositions are essential to our blaming someone, their manifestation is not: it is possible to blame someone with very little change in attitudes or actions toward the agent. Blaming someone might be immediately followed by forgiveness as an end of the matter.

By ‘desert’, we have in mind what Derk Pereboom has called basic desert:

The desert at issue here is basic in the sense that the agent would deserve to be blamed or praised just because she has performed the action, given an understanding of its moral status, and not, for example, merely by virtue of consequentialist or contractualist considerations. (2014, 2)

As we understand desert, if an agent deserves blame, then we have a strong pro tanto reason to blame him simply in virtue of his being

accountable for doing wrong. Importantly, these reasons can be outweighed by other considerations. While an agent may deserve blame, it might, all things considered, be best to forgive him unconditionally instead.

When an agent is morally responsible for doing something wrong, he is blameworthy: he deserves hard treatment marked by resentment and indignation and the actions these emotions dispose us toward, such as censure, rebuke, and ostracism. However, it would seem unfair to treat agents in these ways unless their actions were up to them. Thus, we arrive at the core connection between free will and moral responsibility: agents deserve praise or blame only if their actions are up to them—only if they have free will. Consequently, we can assess analyses of free will by their implications for judgments of moral responsibility. We note that some might reject the claim that free will is necessary for moral responsibility (e.g., Frankfurt 1971; Stump 1988), but even for these theorists an adequate analysis of free will must specify a sufficient condition for the kind of control at play in moral responsibility.

In what follows, we focus our attention on the two most commonly cited features of free will: the freedom to do otherwise and sourcehood. While some seem to think that free will consists exclusively in either the freedom to do otherwise (van Inwagen 2008) or in sourcehood (Zagzebski 2000), we think that the majority of philosophers hold that free will involves both conditions—though philosophers often emphasize one condition over the other depending on their dialectical situation or argumentative purposes (cf. Watson 1987). In what follows, we will describe the most common characterizations of these two conditions.

### **Check Your Progress 2**

**Note:**

**a) Use the space provided for your answer**

**b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit**

1) What is determinism? What are the different types of determinism?

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2) What is the difference between compatibilism and incompatibilism?

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### **6.5 EXISTENCE OF FREEDOM**

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To prove the existence of freedom in human action, one can present many argumentations, and along the arc of the history of philosophy many of these have been adopted. Some authors call upon the testimonial of consciousness, others call on the intellectual constitution of human being, and still others point out the disastrous consequences inherent in the negation of freedom. Among the most important texts in favor of the existence of freedom are those of Origen, Thomas Aquinas, Descartes, Kant, Hegel and Sartre. Origen was one of the first authors to write a treatise on freedom. His famous work *De Principiis I* is remarkably profound and systematic work on free will. According to Origen men as well as all other rational creatures are free. Truly man is everywhere in chains, but it is his own responsibility, for the cause of his enslavement is traceable to that very freedom, which he misused. Free will constitutes the very essence itself of rational creatures, by which none of them can be constrained to act by force. Origen asserts that Divine Providence allows man's free will full scope in his cooperation with God. He says that if a believer takes away the element of free will from virtue he destroys its essence. This conviction is one of the pillars of Origen's ethics and theology.

Origen harmonized the freedom of the will with the plan of Divine Providence. In doing so, he constituted himself the defender of free will. As he expounds his theory, providence envelops free will, impels it in the

direction of good conduct, disciplines it, and heals it. The universe is cared for by God in accordance with the condition of the free will of each man, and that as far as possible it is always being led on to be better, and... that the nature of our free will is to admit various possibilities. After Origen the problem of freedom always remained at the centre of the philosophical reflection of Christian authors. Authors like St Augustine has dealt it with original approaches. He says that as the rational soul is characterized by understanding, which is oriented towards knowledge, it is also characterized by will, which is oriented towards free choice. Augustine considers Cicero's reasoning against God's foreknowledge, "If there is free will, all things do not happen according to fate; if all things do not happen according to fate, there is not a certain order of causes; and if there is not a certain order of causes, neither is there a certain order of things foreknown by God." Against this argument, Augustine maintains both human freedom of the will and divine foreknowledge of all future events. Even if there is free will and an absence of any all-encompassing deterministic fate, there can still be "for God a certain order of all causes," among which causes are our freely choosing wills. Aquinas distinguishes between the free choice of human for us, and the natural instincts of the "brute animal." He says that the "brute animal" does not have any free choice, but in place of free choice the animal has an instinct to do something. For example, when a deer sees a wolf, the deer instinctively runs away from the wolf, not by free choice, but of the natural instinct of fear for the wolf. Human does not choose of necessity. And this is because that which is possible not to be, is not of necessity. Now the reason which it is possible not to choose, or to choose, may be gathered from a twofold power in human. For human can will and not will, act and not act. Again one can will this or that and do this or that. The reason for this is seated in the very power of the reason. Descartes regards the freedom of the human will or liberty of choice to be so great that it is the respect in which we most resemble divine infinity. His initial analysis of human freedom – as our having the power of choosing to do a thing or choosing not to do it --seems ordinary enough. But then he shows us a more complicated version of his definition, it consists alone in the fact that in order to affirm or deny,

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pursue or shun those things placed before us by the understanding, we act so that we are unconscious that any outside force constrains us in doing so." He holds that the power of free will is the greatest perfection in human, through the exercise of which we become masters of our actions and thereby merit praise or blame. Kant says, we could not prove freedom to be something actual in ourselves and in human nature. We saw merely that we must presuppose it if we want to think of a being as rational." Kant also thinks that there is a sort of circle in our thinking about the relationship between freedom and morality: we assume that we are free so that we may think of ourselves as subject to moral laws," and we "think of ourselves as subject to moral laws because we have attributed to ourselves freedom of the will. He then ends with: Freedom is, therefore, only an idea of reason whose objective reality is in itself questionable.

Hegel's most renowned discussion of freedom traces the evolution of freedom in three stages of world history. In the world of the ancient Orient, people do not yet know that the Spirit – the human as such – is free. Because they do not know this, they are not free. They know only that one person is free; but for this very reason such freedom is mere arbitrariness, savagery, stupefied passion. It was among the Greeks that the consciousness of freedom first arose, and thanks to that consciousness they were free. But they, and the Romans as well, knew only that some persons are free, not the human as such. To the Romans only citizens were free, and the slaves were not. It was first the Germanic peoples, through Christianity, who came to the awareness that every human is free by virtue of being human, and that the freedom of spirit comprises our most human nature. Therefore, World history is the progress in the consciousness of freedom – a progress that we must come to know in its necessity. Hegel also adds a discussion on the freedom of the human will. He says, 'The will is free, so that freedom is both the substance of right and its goal, while the system of right is the realm of freedom made actual.' Sartre proposes an interesting view on free will when he says, "either human is wholly determined (which is inadmissible, especially because a determined consciousness - a consciousness externally motivated – becomes pure exteriority and

ceases to be consciousness) or else human is wholly free." This shows us that Sartre believes that human is free to do what one wants. He writes, "I am condemned to always exist beyond my essence, beyond the urgings and motives of my act: I am condemned to being free. This means that it is impossible to find other limits to my freedom than freedom itself or if one prefers, this means that we are not free to cease being free." Again, after telling us that human is wholly free, he tells us that since we are free we are responsible for our actions." The essential consequence of our earlier remarks is that human being condemned to be free carries the weight of the whole world on one's shoulders; one is responsible for the world and for oneself as a way of being." He says that even if one does not want to be responsible, one cannot be without being responsible for one's actions, "For I am responsible for my very desire of fleeing responsibilities. To make myself passive in the world, to refuse to act upon things and upon Others is still to choose myself, and suicide is one mode among others of being-in-the-world."

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## 6.6 NATURE OF FREEDOM

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There are three principal moments in a free act: deliberation, judgment and election. Deliberation is the phase of exploration, research and inquiry about the object or action. Judgment is the phase of evaluation. Election is the phase of decision. The free act requires that, that which is wished to be done is known. It implies an attentive examination. The free act which culminates in election is a complex action, which is the result of a dialogue between the intellect and the will. St Thomas maintains that the free act belongs substantially to the will, also depending on the intellect. Freedom is the faculty which human enjoys to determine oneself to an action and to being its cause, after having taken consciousness of the considerations that such an action carries for one's life. Human will is a faculty parallel to the intellect. While the end of intellect is still truth, not this or that truth, but the truth as such, the absolute truth; so the end of will is good, but not this or that particular good, but rather absolute universal good. It is only in absolute good that will finds its perfect satisfaction and its perfect happiness. But in reality the intellect never proposes to the will a concrete good which has all the

charisma of the absolute, universal good, but only particular and limited goods. Therefore these goods are sometimes tend to be repelled or rejected. Here resides the profound reason by which the human will is free. Human is the author of the free act. The cause of the free act is the person who fulfills it, not God or the angels or demons, stars, nature, society, the socio-political structure. Freedom is a very special gift which only human possesses, while all the other things of this world lack it.

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### **6.7 LIMITS OF FREEDOM**

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Human is free, but not unboundedly free. Freedom does not identify itself with the being of human, but constitutes its fundamental property like living, thinking etc. Therefore, freedom is also subject to certain limits and is controlled by certain conditions. Human is not free from being corporeal, social, sexual etc. One is not free to use language to one's pleasure. Human cannot remove oneself from a certain dependence on the world, society and history. Human freedom is also conditioned by passions. This conditioning has always been seriously taken by the philosophers in all periods of time. In the normal situations the passions exercise a strong influence over us, but at the same time we are not slaves of passions in that we can combat and reject its assaults. The theory of Freud that all human activity is determined by the libido finds fewer and fewer supporters in the recent times. The human affective dimension cannot completely be reduced to libido. The influence of the affective part of human on the rest of human is real and profound. It can sustain or impede, favor or oppose, because there exists opposite affective tendencies for everything which human does: love-hate, joy-sadness, hopefear etc. Though there is a strong affective pressure, the will in normal conditions remains free and sovereign with respect to all the other faculties of human. It is only in certain abnormal conditions that human becomes completely subject to passions.

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### **6.8 POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE FREEDOM**

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The philosopher Isaiah Berlin makes an important distinction between ‘freedom from’ (negative freedom) and ‘freedom to’ positive freedom. The positive one is the realization of one’s self in spontaneity, a freedom to develop one’s potential. The negative freedom theorists hold that freedom is essentially something negative, namely the absence of restraint or impediment to our actions. It is the freedom from oppression, needs and authority etc. Freedom as the absence of restraint means unwilling to subjugate, lacking submission or without forceful inequality. T.H Green defines positive freedom as a positive power or capacity of doing or enjoying something worth doing or enjoying and that too, something that we do or enjoy in common with others. It is more than the mere absence of impediment to our desires. The freedom to be genuine, one should be provided with full opportunity other than the interference of others. A large number of philosophers now reject the view that there are two irreducibly distinct conceptions of freedom, one positive and the other negative. According to MacCalum, there is only one concept of liberty and that is best understood as always one and the same triadic relation between a person, an intended action and a preventing condition. Freedom is always of someone, from something, to do, have or be something. The disagreement between the adherents of positive and negative freedom are often about one or the other aspect of this triad, i.e., what a person is to stand for, what an impediment is and what is to be counted as a wanted or intended action.

**Check Your Progress 3**

**Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer**

**b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit**

1) Explain the views of Origen and Hegel on free will.

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2) Is freedom limited? If so how?

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### 6.9 LET US SUM UP

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The essential character of human is that one is a homo volens. The gift of will, a most precious gift is the distinguishing mark of human beings from all other beings. In the past, the Greek mind was unaware of this. The understanding of freedom as indeterminism was foreign to the Greek consciousness. It was a static mind-set, without knowing the dynamics of human freedom. The problem of the freedom of will is not a simple issue, but it poses a great net-work of difficulties. These difficulties are not unrelated with each other; rather they are part of a great network – the center of which human as a reflective conscious being and human as part of physical nature; 11 conditioned by and acted upon by nature. Thus comes the theories of determinism, indeterminism of various kinds. If human is made a problem of nature, and if freedom of choice is completely arbitrary, as the theory of evolution wishes to do, the real freedom will always remain an illusion. Even if in the practical level every form of oppression and inequality disappears, in the philosophical plane, the freedom of will may always remain a point of discussion.

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### 6.10 KEY WORDS

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Determinism: It is the view that all current and future events are causally necessitated by past events combined with the law of nature.

Compatibilism: it is the view that the assumption of free will and the existence of a concept of determinism are compatible with each other.

Incompatibilism : is the view that there is no way to reconcile a belief in a deterministic universe with a concept of free will.

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### 6.11 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

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1. Definition and Kinds of Freedom.
2. What is the Historical Development of Freedom?
3. Discuss the Problem of Free Will.
4. Discuss about the Existence of Freedom.
5. What is the Nature of Freedom?
6. Discuss about the Limits of Freedom.
7. Discuss the Positive and Negative Freedom.

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## 6.13 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Answers to Check Your Progress 1

1. Freedom is the right to act according to one's will without being held up by the power of others. From a philosophical point of view, it can be defined as the capacity to determine your own choices. There are different kinds of freedom such as Physical freedom which is the absence of any physical force or constriction, Moral freedom which is the absence of any constriction through rewards or punishments,

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psychological freedom with the capacity to choose to do or not to do an act when all the constituents of an act is present. Political freedom is that which is assured by the government such as the freedom of speech, religion etc.

2. There are three reasons why the Greeks failed to adequately address the problem of freedom. It had a deterministic view because of which it considered all things as subject to fate, an absolute will superior to men and to gods, which consciously or unconsciously determines an action. Secondly, according to Greek thought human makes up part of nature and is subject to general laws that govern humans, by which human cannot behave differently. Therefore, human is not ultimately responsible for one's action. Thirdly, it is believed that human is subject to the strong influence of history, which is conceived as a cyclical movement, in which everything repeats itself within a certain period of time.

### **Answers to Check Your Progress 2**

1. Determinism is defined as the view that all current and future events are causally necessitated by past events combined with the laws of nature. It holds that everything that happens is necessitated by what has already gone before, in such a way that nothing can happen otherwise than it does. The different kinds of determinism are: Mythological determinism which states that human is not the controller of one's actions, because they are controlled by stars, devil or one's fate. Theological determinism assumes that God determines all that the humans will, either by knowing in advance or by decreeing actions to humans. Causal determinism states that the present state is necessitated by the past events according to the laws of nature. Logical determinism holds that all propositions about past present or future are either true or false.

2. Compatibilism is the view that the assumption of free will and the existence of a concept of determinism are compatible with each other. But incompatibilism totally disagrees with this idea. Incompatibilism holds that there is no way to reconcile a belief in a deterministic universe

with a belief in a concept of free will beyond that of a perceived existence. Or, in simple words, determinism and free will can never go together. If determinism is true then human agent would be like other mechanical things that are determined in their behavior such as a wind-up toy, a billiard ball, a puppet, or a robot.

**Answers to Check your progress 3**

1. According to Origen humans as well as all other rational creatures are free. Free will constitutes the very essence itself of rational creatures, by which none of them can be constrained to act by force. Origen asserts that Divine Providence allows human's free will with full scope in his cooperation with God. Origen harmonized the freedom of the will with the plan of Divine Providence. Providence envelops free will, impels it in the direction of good conduct, disciplines it, and heals it. The universe is cared for by God in accordance with the condition of the free will of each person, and that as far as possible it is always being led to innumerable possibilities. Hegel speaks of an evolution of freedom. The ancient orients didn't know that the spirit in human is free, therefore couldn't consider the persons also to be free. The consciousness of freedom first arose in Greeks, but they considered only them to be free and not the slaves. But through Christianity there came the awareness that every human being is free by the very virtue of being human. The freedom of spirit comprises our most human nature.

2. Human is free, but not unboundedly free. It is not the essence but only the fundamental property of human beings. Human's freedom is limited by a corporeal body, the social environments, sex, etc. Moreover human freedom is also conditioned by passions. In the normal situations the passions exercise a strong influence over human beings, but at the same time we are not slaves of passions in that we have the power to combat and reject its assaults. All the activity of human cannot be reduced to the control of libido as Freud puts it. Though the influence of passions on human is real and profound, it is not ultimate. Human is souvenir in one's own ways, only that the passions do have an influence on human occasionally.

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## **UNIT 7: DIVINE FREEDOM**

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### **STRUCTURE**

- 7.0 Objectives
- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence and the Principle of Sufficient Reason
- 7.3 Leibniz's Problem with Divine Freedom: the necessity of God's choosing what is Best.
- 7.4 Clarke's Problem with Divine Freedom: the power to choose otherwise is required for freedom.
- 7.5 Can God be Free with respect to causing his own nature?
- 7.6 Alternatives to creating the Best Possible World.
- 7.7 Let us sum up
- 7.8 Key Words
- 7.9 Questions for Review
- 7.10 Suggested readings and references
- 7.11 Answers to Check Your Progress

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### **7.0 OBJECTIVES**

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After this unit, we can able to know:

- The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence and the Principle of Sufficient Reason
- Leibniz's Problem with Divine Freedom: the necessity of God's choosing what is Best.
- Clarke's Problem with Divine Freedom: the power to choose otherwise is required for freedom.
- Can God be Free with respect to causing his own nature?
- Alternatives to creating the Best Possible World.

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### **7.1 INTRODUCTION**

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The topic of divine freedom concerns the extent to which a divine being — in particular, the supreme divine being, God — can be free. Two preliminary questions play a central role in framing the discussion of

divine freedom. I: Apart from freedom, what properties are held to be essential to God? II: What conception(s) of freedom govern the inquiry? Discussions of divine freedom typically concern the traditional conception of God as a being who is essentially omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly good, and eternal. With respect to the second question, there are two conceptions of freedom common in philosophical discussion: the compatibilist conception and the libertarian conception. The topic of divine freedom concerns the question of whether God, as traditionally conceived, can enjoy whatever sort and degree of freedom required for moral responsibility, thankfulness, and praise. But when it is asked, “Can God be Free?” it is important to specify what it is about which God might be thought to act freely. Since God is essentially omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly good, and eternal, it is clear that God is not free to weaken himself, to become ignorant, to do something evil, or to destroy himself. But it does seem important that God be free with respect to bringing about any one of a number of possible worlds, as well as free to bring about no world at all. What if, however, among possible worlds there is one that is the best? Is God then free to create any world other than the best? This question has been a center of controversy for centuries. In considering this question and others it will be helpful to consider the views of some important philosophers who have contributed significantly to the literature on the topic of divine freedom. The philosophers whose views will be considered most fully are Leibniz and Samuel Clarke. These two are particularly important because, in addition to being very able philosophers, they engaged each other in the controversy between the compatibilist's and the libertarian view of freedom. In the justly famous Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence, Leibniz championed compatibilism, while Clarke represented the libertarian cause. In addition to Leibniz and Clarke, some important 20th century contributions on this topic by Thomas Morris and Robert Adams will also be discussed.

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## **7.2 THE LEIBNIZ-CLARKE CORRESPONDENCE AND THE PRINCIPLE OF SUFFICIENT REASON**

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## Notes

In 1715 a series of written exchanges began between Gottfried Leibniz and Samuel Clarke. Halted by Leibniz's death in 1716, the series was edited and published by Clarke in 1717. (See Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence, 1956 [1717]). [References to the Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence will be incorporated in the text as L-C, followed by the appropriate page number in Alexander's edition.]

Clarke and Leibniz agreed that human reason can demonstrate that there necessarily exists an essentially omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly good being who has freely created the world. But their accounts of divine freedom were profoundly different. It is helpful, therefore, to highlight their differences over divine freedom and to consider whether either conception of divine freedom can be reconciled with the absolute perfection of the creator. The central issue is whether either conception of divine freedom can be fully reconciled with the requirement imposed by God's perfect goodness, (in Clarke's words) "the necessity of always doing what is best."

An important issue in the Leibniz-Clarke correspondence concerns the Principle of Sufficient Reason (PSR), particularly its implications for how we must understand divine and human freedom. In his second letter Leibniz advances the principle and pronounces on its implications for theology and metaphysics. "Now, by that single principle, viz. that there ought to be a sufficient reason why things should be so, and not otherwise, one may demonstrate the being of a God, and all the other parts of metaphysics or natural theology" (L-C, 16). Leibniz elsewhere expresses PSR more fully as the principle "...that no fact can be real or existent, no statement true, unless there be a sufficient reason why it is so and not otherwise,..." (1714, paragraph 32). He illustrates PSR by citing the example of Archimedes who observed that if there be a perfect balance, and if equal weights are hung on the two ends of that balance, the balance will not move. Why? Leibniz answers: "It is because no reason can be given, why one side should weigh down, rather than another" (L-C, 16). It was perhaps unfortunate for Leibniz to use this example. For it enabled Clarke to charge him with treating an agent no



differently from a balance: just as the balance cannot move without a greater weight on one side, and must move downward on the side with the greater weight, so the agent cannot choose without some motive to choose, and must choose in accordance with the strongest motive. But, Clarke argues, this is to deny the agent any power to act in the absence of a motive, and to deny the agent any power to act in opposition to the strongest motive. It is, in Clarke's view, to deny that there are any genuine agents at all. For it is the nature of an agent to have the power to act or not act. A balance has no such power; it is simply acted upon by whatever weights are placed upon it. As Clarke concludes in his fifth and final reply:

There is no similitude between a balance being moved by weights or impulse, and a mind moving itself, or acting upon the view of certain motives. The difference is, that the one is entirely passive; which is being subject to absolute necessity: the other not only is acted upon, but acts also; which is the essence of liberty (L-C, 97).

Clarke's rejection of any "similitude" between the movements of a balance and the acts of an agent is closely connected to his disagreement with Leibniz over PSR. In his response to the second letter Clarke appears to accept PSR. Thus he says: "It is very true, that nothing is, without a sufficient reason why it is, and why it is thus rather than otherwise" (L-C, 20). Clearly, if when writing "nothing is" Clarke means to include any fact or truth whatever, then he cannot consistently go on, as he does, to exempt certain facts or truths from the necessity of having a sufficient reason. Leibniz may have read Clarke's "nothing is" as encompassing any fact or truth whatever, which would approach Leibniz's own understanding of PSR. If so, this would explain why in his third letter Leibniz complains that although Clarke grants him this important principle, "he grants it only in words, and in reality denies it. Which shows that he does not fully perceive the strength of it" (L-C, 25). However, despite his statement "nothing is without a sufficient reason why it is," it is clear that Clarke cannot have intended to agree with Leibniz that every fact or truth has a sufficient reason. Nor could he have agreed that every contingent fact or truth has a sufficient reason. For he

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immediately goes on to say that “this sufficient reason is oft-times no other, than the mere will of God,” citing as an example God's volition to create this system of matter in one particular place within absolute space, rather than in some other place in absolute space. There is simply nothing to recommend one particular place in absolute space over another. Hence, in this case there can be no other reason than the mere will of God. (Presumably, Clarke would say that God had a sufficient reason to create this system of matter in some place or other in absolute space, but He did not have a sufficient reason to create it in this particular place.) In his third letter Leibniz cites this case as just the sort of thing that PSR rules out as impossible. On his understanding of PSR there can be no situations at all in which a choice has been made without a sufficient reason for making that particular choice. To think otherwise is to suppose an exception to PSR. (Leibniz does allow that there are many human acts that appear to lack a sufficient reason. There are acts for which we cannot find a sufficient motive. For example, no motive is apparent for why an agent stepped over the threshold with his left foot rather than his right. But he supposed in all such cases there is some unconscious perception or passion that provides the sufficient reason.) It is clear that Clarke allows for such exceptions.

A deeper and more important disagreement concerning PSR is also reflected in Clarke's reaction to Leibniz's analogy between the sufficient reason for the balance to move and the sufficient reason for an agent to do one thing rather than another. For Clarke agrees with Leibniz that often enough the agent has a sufficient reason for her action. So, he allows that PSR is satisfied for a vast array of human and divine acts. What he denies is that the sufficient reason for the agent doing one thing rather than another operates on the agent in the way in which the heavier weight operates on the balance. Clearly, the heavier weight on one side of the balance is a determining cause of the movement of the balance. Given the circumstances and the placement of that weight on the one side of the balance, nothing else could happen than what did happen, it was necessary that the balance move as it did. But to suppose that the reason or motive that is the sufficient reason for the agent to do one thing rather

than another is a determining cause of the agent's act is to deny any power on the agent's part to perform or not perform that particular act. It is to render the agent's act necessary and to deny the agent's freedom of will. Thus, for Clarke, a reason or motive may be the sufficient reason for the agent's action. But, unlike the weight in the balance that is the determining cause of the movement of the balance, the reason or motive is not the determining cause of the agent's act. As he puts it elsewhere:

Occasions indeed they (reasons and motives) may be, and are, upon which that substance in man, wherein the self-moving principle resides, freely exerts its active power. But it is the self-moving principle, and not at all the reason or motive, which is the physical or efficient cause of action. When we say, in vulgar speech, that motives or reason determine a man; it is not but a figure or metaphor. It is the man that freely determines himself to act (1978. IV. 723).

What we've seen is that Clarke's conception of what it is to be a free agent requires first that the agent may act in some particular way even in the absence of his having a sufficient reason to act in that particular way. Thus, there are exceptions to PSR. Second, we've seen that when the agent has a sufficient reason to do a particular act and freely does that act, the sufficient reason or motive is not a determining cause of the agent's act. At the time of the act the agent had the power not to perform that act. So, on Clarke's libertarian view there is a profound difference between the sufficient reason for the balance moving in a particular way and the sufficient reason for an agent's free act. In the first case the sufficient reason is a determining cause, in the second it is not. Leibniz, however, sees no need to suppose there are exceptions to PSR and no need to treat the motive for the agent's free act as anything other than a determining cause of that act.

### **Check Your Progress 1**

**Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer**

**b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit**

## Notes

1. The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence and the Principle of Sufficient Reason.

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2. Leibniz's Problem with Divine Freedom: the necessity of God's choosing what is Best.

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### **7.3 LEIBNIZ'S PROBLEM WITH DIVINE FREEDOM: THE NECESSITY OF GOD'S CHOOSING WHAT IS BEST.**

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With this background in place, we can now look at the problem of divine perfection and freedom and then consider the very different solutions proposed by Clarke and Leibniz to that problem. Following Leibniz, we can imagine God considering a variety of worlds he might create. One might be a world in which there are no conscious creatures at all, a world composed solely of dead matter. (Of course, given that the actual world includes everything that exists, including God, the world in question is here being considered apart from God.) Another might be a world composed (at some stage in its history) of living, conscious creatures whose lives are meaningful, morally good, and happy. If we imagine God making a choice between these two worlds, it seems evident that he would create the latter. Surely, a world with conscious creatures living morally good, satisfying lives is, other things being equal, a very good world, and better than a world consisting of nothing but dull bits of matter swirling endlessly in a void. And isn't it absolutely certain that an omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly good being would create the better world if he could? But if we pursue this line of thought, problems begin to emerge. Assume, as seems evident, that the second world is the better world. If God were limited to these two worlds, he would face three choices: creating the inferior world, creating the superior world, creating

no world at all. For God to decide to create no world over creating a world that is, all things considered, a very good world, would be for God to do less than the best that he can do. If so, it seems that God's perfect goodness would require him to create the very good world. But if God's perfect goodness requires him to create the very good world, rather than creating the inferior world or not creating a world at all, what are we to make of that part of the idea of God that declares that he created the world freely? To say that God freely created the good world seems to imply that he was free not to do so, that he could have created the inferior world, or refrained from creating either world. But if his perfect goodness requires him to create the good world, how is it possible that he was free to create the inferior world or not to create any world? This is a simple way of picturing the problem of divine perfection and divine freedom.

Initially, one may be tempted to solve this problem by viewing God's perfect goodness (which includes his absolute moral perfection) as analogous to our goodness. A morally good person may actually do the very best action available to her while being free not to do it, or free to do something bad instead. Of course, had she freely done the bad thing, she would have exhibited some sort of moral failing. But the mere fact that she was free to have done the bad thing doesn't impugn whatever degree of moral goodness she possesses. So why should God's perfect goodness preclude his being free to create a less good world, or even a bad world? Had he done that, he would have ceased being the morally perfect being he is, just as the morally good person would have diminished somewhat her moral goodness had she freely done the wrong thing.

This solution fails because, although a human person can become less good or even bad, God cannot become less than absolutely perfect. Although we may achieve a certain degree of moral virtue in our lives, we can lose it and sink back into being the morally mediocre persons we perhaps once were. This is because it is not part of our very nature to be at a certain level of goodness. According to the historically dominant view in Western religions, however, God, by his very nature, is omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good. He cannot become weak,

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ignorant, or ignoble. Just as the number two is necessarily even, God is necessarily supreme in power, goodness, and knowledge. He is not some infant deity who by earnest striving slowly acquired these perfections and, like us, can diminish his goodness by intentionally acting badly. He necessarily has these perfections from all eternity, and he cannot divest himself of them anymore than the number two can cease to be even. God's perfections are constituents of his nature, not acquired characteristics. So, while we may be free to lose our degree of goodness by using our freedom to pursue the bad, God is not free to lose his perfections by using his freedom to pursue the bad. Indeed, he is not free to pursue the bad. For if he were free to pursue the bad, then he could become less perfect than he is. And that is simply impossible.

The problem of divine perfection and freedom was particularly acute for Leibniz. Since God necessarily exists and is necessarily omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good, it seems he would necessarily be drawn to create the best. If this be so, then when God surveyed all the possible worlds, he must have chosen the best, with the result that the actual world is the best of all possible worlds. Leibniz embraced the conclusion of this reasoning: the actual world is the best of all possible worlds. But how then could God be free in choosing to create the best? As a first step in the direction of answering this question, it should be noted that two different views of divine freedom have emerged in western thought. According to the first view, God is free in creating a world or in acting within the world he has created provided nothing outside of him determines him to create the world he creates or determines him to act in a particular way in the world he has created. According to the second view, God is free in creating or acting within his creation provided it was in his power not to create what he did or not to act within his creation as he did.

The first of these two views has the advantage of establishing beyond question that God possesses freedom from external forces with respect to his selection of a world to create. For given that he is omnipotent and the creator of all things other than himself, it is evident that nothing outside of him determines him to create whatever he does create. And given that whatever he creates is within his control, it would seem that he is

completely at liberty to act as he sees fit within the world he has created. So, the fact that nothing outside of God determines him to create or act as he does clearly shows that God is an autonomous agent; he is self-determining in the sense that his actions are the result of decisions that are determined only by his own nature. But is this sufficient to establish that God is genuinely free? It is generally believed that a human being may not be free in performing a certain action even when it is clear that the person was not determined to perform that action by external forces. Perhaps the person was in the grip of some internal passion or irresistible impulse that necessitated the performance of that action, overcoming the person's judgment that the action was wrong or unwise. With respect to human beings, the defender of the first view of divine freedom can agree that the mere absence of determining external agents or forces is not sufficient for an individual's action to be free. But in the case of God, as opposed to humans, the defender can argue that it is sufficient. For in God there is no possibility of his passions overcoming the judgment of reason. As Leibniz remarks:

the Stoics said that only the wise man is free; and one's mind is indeed not free when it is possessed by a great passion, for then one cannot will as one should, i.e. with proper deliberation. It is in that way that God alone is perfectly free, and the created minds are free only in proportion as they are above passion. (1982, 175).

The chief objection to this view of divine freedom is that it doesn't sufficiently recognize the importance of agents having control over their free acts. An action was performed freely only if the agent was free to perform the action and free not to perform it. It must have been up to the agent whether to perform or not perform that act. If some external force or internal passion was beyond the control of the agent, and the agent's action was inevitable given that external force or internal passion, then the agent did not act freely in performing that action. Since God is a purely rational being and not subject to uncontrollable passions that sometimes compel human agents to act, it is tempting to conclude that God enjoys perfect freedom of action. But this will be so only if there are no other features in God that both necessitate his actions and are not within his control. Because human agents are generally thought to have

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the power to act against the counsel of reason, we credit their acts due to reason — as opposed to those acts due to irresistible impulses — as acts they perform freely. For we believe they were free to reject the counsel of reason and act otherwise. But what if God cannot reject the counsel of his reason as to what action to perform? A human agent who is morally good and rational may yet have — or previously had — the power to refrain from acting as his goodness and reason direct. But can this be true of God? And, if it cannot be, how can we then say that God acts freely? Leibniz was well aware of the problem posed by the fact that God's choice of the best is necessary, given that he is necessarily omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good. In fact, his most well-known solution to the problem of divine perfection and freedom recognizes that if God's choice of the best is absolutely necessary then God is not free with respect to creation. In his *Theodicy* and in his correspondence with Clarke, he is careful to distinguish absolute necessity, hypothetical necessity, and moral necessity, arguing that it is morally necessary but not absolutely necessary that God chose to create the best world. To determine whether Leibniz can solve the problem of divine perfection and freedom it is important to examine his distinction between moral and absolute necessity and to determine whether he succeeds in escaping the charge that on his view of things it is absolutely necessary that God chooses to create the best.

In discussing this matter it will be helpful to consider the following argument:

1. If God exists and is omnipotent, perfectly wise and good, then he chooses to create the best of all possible worlds. [That Leibniz is committed to (1) follows from (a) his view that God is determined by the best, and (b) his view that among possible worlds there is a unique best world.]
2. God exists and is omnipotent, perfectly wise, and perfectly good. [Leibniz endorses the Ontological Argument which purports to be a proof of (2).]

therefore,

3. God chooses to create the best of all possible worlds.



Leibniz must deny that (3) is absolutely necessary. For whatever is absolutely necessary cannot logically be otherwise. Hence, if (3) is absolutely necessary, it would be logically impossible for God to choose to create any world other than the best. It would not be a contingent matter that God chooses to create the best. Nor, of course, could God be free in choosing to create the best.

Leibniz contends that God's choosing to create the best is morally necessary, not absolutely necessary.

God is bound by a moral necessity, to make things in such a manner that there can be nothing better: otherwise ... he would not himself be satisfied with his work, he would blame himself for its imperfection; and that conflicts with the supreme felicity of the divine nature. (1710, 201)

What is it for it to be morally necessary for God to choose to create the best of all possible worlds? It seems clear that its meaning is such that if God were to choose to create less than the best it would logically follow that he is lacking in wisdom, goodness or power. Indeed, Leibniz says that “to do less good than one could is to be lacking in wisdom or in goodness”, that the most perfect understanding “cannot fail to act in the most perfect way, and consequently to choose the best” (1710, 201). Consider again proposition (1) in the above argument. What Leibniz says about moral necessity implies that (1) is itself absolutely necessary. For he clearly holds that from the fact that a being does less good than it could it logically follows that the being in question is lacking in wisdom or goodness. And one cannot hold this without being committed to holding that the consequent of (1) logically follows from the antecedent of (1). [Actually, the consequent of (1) logically follows from the antecedent of (1) only if it is absolutely necessary that there is a best possible world. Leibniz does think it is absolutely necessary that there is a unique best among possible worlds.] That is, Leibniz is committed to holding that (1) is a hypothetical necessity. An if — then proposition is a hypothetical necessity provided the consequent logically follows from the antecedent. Of course, the mere fact that a particular consequent logically follows from a certain antecedent — as, for example, ‘John is unmarried’ logically follows from ‘John is a bachelor’ — is insufficient to render the consequent absolutely necessary. It is not logically

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impossible for 'John is unmarried' to be false. So, although his asserting the moral necessity of God's choosing to create the best commits Leibniz to the absolute necessity of the hypothetical proposition (1), in itself this commitment still leaves him free to deny that God's choosing to create the best is absolutely necessary. Two further points show that he cannot escape the conclusion that God's choosing to create the best is absolutely necessary. First, proposition (2) [God exists and is omnipotent, perfectly wise, and perfectly good.], the antecedent of (1), is itself absolutely necessary. We've already noted that both Clarke and Leibniz are committed to the view that (2) is not a contingent truth; it is absolutely necessary. Second, it is a rule of logic that if a hypothetical proposition is itself absolutely necessary, and its antecedent is also absolutely necessary, then its consequent must be absolutely necessary as well. Thus, if both (1) and (2) are absolutely necessary, (3) must be absolutely necessary as well. Since Leibniz is committed to the view that both (1) and (2) are absolutely necessary, it appears that his view commits him to the view that (3) is absolutely necessary. [The early Leibniz toyed with denying the logical rule that what logically follows from what is absolutely necessary is itself absolutely necessary. See Adams, 1994, Ch.1.]

Before turning to Clarke's attempt to solve the problem of divine perfection and freedom, we should note that Leibniz often insists that the act of will must be free in the sense of not being necessitated by the motives that give rise to it. His often repeated remark on this matter is that motives "incline without necessitating" (L-C, 57). This view appears to conflict with the view I have ascribed to him: that the strongest motive in the agent determines the agent to choose as he does. It suggests instead that the agent had the power to will otherwise even though the motive and circumstances be unchanged. For, as he says, the motives don't necessitate but only incline the agent to will as he does. But this seems not to be what he means by his phrase "motives incline without necessitating". On his view, motives and circumstances necessitate the act of will in the sense that it is logically or causally impossible that those motives and circumstances should obtain and the act of will not occur. Leibniz's claim that they don't necessitate the act of will means

only that the act of will itself is not thereby rendered something that is absolutely necessary. [For a more extended account of this interpretation of Leibniz's dictum, "motives incline but do not necessitate," see Parkinson, 1970, 50-53.] That is, he is simply noting that even though there be a necessary connection between the motive and the act of will, this does not mean that the act of will cannot itself be contingent. As we saw above, God's being omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good necessitates God's choice of the best. However, the fact that there is a necessary connection between his being perfect and his choice of the best does not imply that his choice of the best is itself absolutely necessary. Leibniz registers this point (in a somewhat misleading fashion) by saying that God's motives "incline without necessitating" his choice of the best. We should not be misled by this phrase into thinking that he holds that the connection between his being perfect and his choice of the best is anything less than absolutely necessary. And when we then note that God's being perfect is absolutely necessary, the logical rule dictates the conclusion that his choice of the best is itself absolutely necessary. This being so, we can conclude that God's choice to create the best is not free; it is absolutely necessary.

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## **7.4 CLARKE'S PROBLEM WITH DIVINE FREEDOM: THE POWER TO CHOOSE OTHERWISE IS REQUIRED FOR FREEDOM.**

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In contrast to Locke, who characterized freedom as the power to carry out the action that we choose (will) to do, leaving the choice (volition) itself to be causally necessitated by the agent's motives, Clarke locates freedom squarely at the level of the choice to act or not act. "... the essence of liberty consists in [a person's] having a continual power of choosing whether he shall act or whether he shall forbear acting" (1738, 101). The implication of Clarke's view is that freedom (liberty) would be impossible should a person's choices be causally necessitated by his motives or desires. For if a person's choice to act is causally necessitated by earlier states of his body or mind, then at the time of that choice it was

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not in the agent's power to choose to not act. It is for Clarke a secondary matter whether the agent is able to carry out his choice. Indeed, Clarke goes so far as to declare that a prisoner in chains is free to will to leave or will to stay. That he cannot successfully execute his choice doesn't rob him of the power to choose (Presumably, he would allow that one who knows he is in chains may well see the pointlessness of choosing to leave and, therefore, not exercise his power so to choose.) Of course, since God is omnipotent, his power to carry out the action he chooses to do is unlimited. But our question is whether God has it in his power to choose to refrain from following what he knows to be the best course of action. Should he lack that power, it follows from Clarke's conception of freedom that God does not freely choose the best course of action. In fact, it would follow for Clarke that in this instance God is totally passive and not an agent at all. It would also follow for Clarke that it would make no sense to praise or thank God for choosing the best course of action. We must now see how Clarke endeavors to avoid the absolute necessity of God's choosing in accordance with his knowledge of what is the best course of action.

Clarke's overall view is clear enough. He distinguishes between the intellect (understanding) and the will. It is the function of the understanding to determine what course of action to pursue. It is the function of the will (the power we have to will this or that) to initiate the action specified by the understanding. It is one thing, however, to arrive through deliberation at the judgment that doing a certain thing is best, and quite another thing to choose (will) to do that thing. Since such a judgment terminates the process of deliberation about what to do, Clarke and others referred to it as "the last judgment of the understanding." It is the judgment that terminates deliberation and is followed by the act of will to perform (or not perform) the action specified in the judgment. Often enough, our motives and desires are sufficiently clear and strong to causally necessitate the judgment as to what to do. No other judgment is possible in the circumstances. In short, there may be no freedom at all with respect to the judgment as to what action to perform. On Clarke's view, freedom enters only when the will chooses to act or not act in accordance with the judgment of the understanding. Thus, when there is

a best course of action for God to perform, his judgment that it is the best course to pursue is, Clarke tells us, absolutely necessary. But God's choice to act in accordance with what his understanding approves is completely free; he always has the power to choose otherwise.

God always discerns and approves what is just and good, necessarily, and cannot do otherwise: But he always acts or does what is just and good freely; that is, having at the same time a full natural or physical power of acting differently. (1978. IV, 717)

It is instructive to contrast Clarke's view of freedom with a stream of thought in Christian theology, dating back at least to Augustine, according to which the saints in heaven are perfected to the degree that they not only do not sin, they no longer are able to sin, a perfection that is found in God and the angels. In our earthly state we have the freedom to turn from the good and do evil, but in the life to come we shall have a superior sort of freedom, a freedom that does not include the ability to do evil. Thus Augustine says:

For the first freedom of will which man received when he was created upright consisted in an ability not to sin, but also in an ability to sin; whereas this last freedom of will shall be superior, inasmuch as it shall not be able to sin. This, indeed, shall not be a natural ability, but the gift of God. For it is one thing to be God, another thing to be a partaker of God. God by nature cannot sin, but the partaker of God receives this inability from God. (1948, Bk. 12, Ch. 30)

In his book, *A Philosophical Inquiry Concerning Human Liberty*, Anthony Collins had appealed to this stream of thought in support of his view that freedom does not require any power to choose or do otherwise. Clarke wrote a rather devastating response to Collins's book. In the course of his response to Collins we find the following remark:

Neither saints, nor angels, nor God himself, have in any degree the less liberty upon account of the perfection of their nature: Because between the physical power of action and the perfection of judgment which is not action (which two things this author constantly confounds) there is no connection. God judges what is right, and approves what is good, by a physical necessity of nature; in which physical necessity, all notion of action is necessarily excluded. But doing what is good is wholly owing to

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an active principle, in which is essentially included the notion of liberty. (1978. IV, 731)

Clearly, Clarke rejects this stream of thought in Christian theology. He allows that the saints in heaven no longer have any desire to sin and take no delight in it. Indeed, it may be absolutely certain that with purified desires and a perfected judgment they will always freely do what is right. (See 1738, 124) And this will be an enormous difference from life on earth where we are often tempted to sin by bad desires and faulty judgment. But what cannot be is that the saints or the angels, or God for that matter, cease to have the ability or power to choose to do other than what is right. For then they would not be free in choosing and doing what is right. To lose the power to choose otherwise is to lose the power to choose freely. And if one loses that power one ceases to be an agent at all.

We can begin to get at the difficulty in Clarke's view of divine freedom by considering God's perfections and their implications for whether he can freely choose to do evil. Clarke readily sees that were a perfectly good, omniscient being to freely choose to do some evil deed, it would thereby cease to be perfectly good. And it would cease to be perfectly good even if, as could not happen in God's case, it were prevented from carrying out the evil deed it chose to do. For the free choice to do evil is itself inconsistent with continuing to be a perfectly good, omniscient being. A being who freely chooses to do what it knows to be an evil deed thereby ceases to be a perfectly good being. So, if God were to freely choose to do an evil deed, he would cease to be perfectly good. In short, it is not logically possible for God both to freely choose to do evil and to continue to be perfectly good. Now, since Clarke holds with Leibniz that God necessarily exists and necessarily is omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good, we can advance to the simpler conclusion that it is not logically possible for God to freely chose to do evil. It is not logically possible because it is inconsistent with what is logically necessary: the existence of a being (God) who is necessarily omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good.

An essential attribute of a being is an attribute that the being necessarily possesses. Clarke holds that the moral perfections of the deity are

essential aspects of the divine nature. "... justice, goodness, and all the other moral attributes of God are as essential to the divine nature as the natural attributes of eternity, infinity, and the like" (1738, 120).

Consider now the question: Does God ever freely choose not to do evil? I think we can see that Clarke's own views commit him to a negative answer to this question. For God chooses freely not to do something only if it is in his power to choose to do that thing — choosing freely, Clarke insists, logically requires the power to choose otherwise. But it cannot be in anyone's power to make a certain choice if it is logically impossible that the person make that choice. (If there is no possible world in which a person makes a certain choice, it cannot be that the person, nevertheless, has it within his power to make that choice.) Therefore, since it is logically impossible for God to choose to do evil, it is not in God's power to choose to do evil. And since it is not in God's power to choose to do evil, it cannot be that God's choice not to do evil is a free choice. If God chooses not to do evil, he so chooses of necessity, not freely. And this being so, it makes no sense for us to thank God, or to be grateful to him, for choosing not to do evil. He could not have chosen otherwise.

Since the claim that God does not freely choose not to do evil is rather central to the examination of Clarke's views on divine perfection and freedom, it is useful to consider another argument in support of it.

1. If  $p$  logically implies  $q$ , and  $q$  is false, it is in an agent's power to bring it about that  $p$  only if it is in that agent's power to bring about that  $q$ . [For a defense of this principle see Hasker, 96-115.]
2. That God chooses to do evil logically implies that God is not perfectly good.
3. It is false that God is not perfectly good.

therefore,

4. If it is in God's power to bring it about that he chooses to do evil then it is in his power to bring it about that he is not perfectly good. (from 1, 2, and 3)
5. It is not in God's power to bring it about that he is not perfectly good.

therefore,

6. It is not in God's power to choose to do evil.

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therefore,

7. If God chooses not to do evil, God chooses not to do evil of necessity, not freely.

Before examining two attempts by Clarke to avoid any limitations on the scope of divine liberty, consider whether it is in God's power to choose contrary to what he judges to be best. Clearly, God cannot choose to do evil. But to choose contrary to what is judged to be best is evil or morally wrong only if choosing to do what is judged to be best is morally obligatory. To claim that it is morally obligatory ignores the real possibility that choosing what is best is supererogatory, beyond the call of duty. There are choices which are good to make but not required as our duty. It would be a mistake, therefore, to infer God's inability to choose to act contrary to what he judges to be best from his inability to choose to do evil. Nevertheless, it does seem to be logically impossible for perfect goodness to choose to act contrary to what is best. And this seems to be Clarke's own view of the matter. Thus he declares "that though God is a most perfectly free agent, yet he cannot but do always what is best and wisest in the whole" (1738, 120-121). To choose otherwise, he thinks, is to act contrary to perfect wisdom and goodness. How does Clarke endeavor to avoid the conclusion that God's perfect goodness precludes his being free in many of his choices? His general approach to this difficulty is to distinguish two sorts of necessities: moral and physical. If one state or event physically necessitates another state or event, then the second state or event cannot occur freely. Thus he would say that hanging a greater weight on the left end of an accurate balance physically necessitates the downward movement on the left side of the balance. Here, even if the balance were endowed with consciousness, there would be no possibility of the balance freely moving downward on the left. For the balance has no power to do other than move downwards on the left side. To illustrate the other sort of necessity, he offers the example of God's promising that on a given day he will not destroy the world. The promise morally necessitates God's refraining from destroying the world on that particular day. But, says Clarke, it would be absurd to think that God therefore lacked the physical power on that day to destroy the world.



God's performing his promise is always consequent upon his making it: Yet there is no connection between them, as between cause and effect: For, not the promise of God, but his active power, is the alone physical or efficient cause of the performance (1978. IV, 9).

God's refraining from destroying the world on that day is both morally necessary and free. For he both retains the physical power to destroy the world on that day and also cannot (morally speaking) break his promise.

The trouble with this solution is that it doesn't focus on the particular act of choosing to break his promise. If we accept, as it seems we must in God's case, that it is logically impossible for God to choose to break his solemn promise, then it follows that it is not in God's power to break his solemn promise. Indeed, for God to choose to break his solemn promise is for God to divest himself of his absolute perfection. And, clearly, it is not logically possible for God to cease to be absolutely perfect.

In a revealing passage Clarke appears to recognize that there are some choices that do not lie within God's power because they logically imply the destruction of his essential perfections. He begins the passage by noting that there are necessary relations among things, relations that God eternally knows. By this he means that some states of things are necessarily better than other states of things. (For example, there being innocent beings who do not suffer eternally is necessarily better than there being innocent beings who do suffer eternally.) By knowing these necessary relations, God knows the choices required by his perfect wisdom and goodness. Noting that God cannot but choose to act always according to this knowledge, he continues:

It being as truly impossible for such a free agent, who is absolutely incapable of being deceived or depraved, to choose, by acting contrary to these laws, to destroy its own perfections; as for necessary existence to be able to destroy its own being (1738, 122).

He then draws the obvious conclusion.

From hence it follows, that though God is both perfectly free and infinitely powerful, yet he cannot possibly do any thing that is evil. The reason of this also is evident. Because, as it is manifest infinite power cannot extend to natural contradictions, which imply a destruction of that very power by which they must be supposed to be elected; so neither can

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it extend to moral contradictions, which imply a destruction of some other attributes, as necessarily belonging to the divine nature as power. I have already shown that justice, goodness and truth are necessarily in God; even as necessarily as power, understanding, and knowledge of the nature of things. It is therefore as impossible and contradictory to suppose his will should choose to do any thing contrary to justice, goodness, or truth; as that his power should be able to do any thing inconsistent with power (1738, 122).

The conclusion implied by these remarks is that God's liberty is curtailed by his perfect goodness. If choosing to do something rules out his being perfectly good, then it is not in his power to choose to do that thing. He necessarily, not freely, chooses not to do that thing. This is the conclusion stated above. Clarke, however, rejects this conclusion, insisting instead that God's liberty is not in the least diminished.

It is no diminution of power not to be able to do things which are no object of power. And it is in like manner no diminution either of power or liberty to have such a perfect and unalterable rectitude of will as never possibly to choose to do anything inconsistent with that rectitude (1738, 122).

Our final question is whether Clarke can successfully defend this response. As is clear, the response depends on an analogy between being perfectly powerful (omnipotent) and being perfectly free. His argument can be understood as follows. There are some things God cannot do. He cannot make a square circle. Nor can he choose to do evil. In the first case, his making a square circle is impossible because the idea of a square circle is contradictory. In the second case, the contradiction is in the idea of a perfectly good being choosing to do evil. Since a contradiction is involved in each case, God's power is held to extend neither to making a square circle nor to choosing to do evil. For God's power extends only to what is not contradictory for a maximally perfect being to do. Clarke then claims that the fact that God's power does not extend to making a square circle or choosing to do evil does not imply any diminution of power. And by analogy he infers that it does not imply any diminution of liberty in God.

Suppose we agree that God's inability to choose to do evil is not a diminution of power. Can it also be true that his inability to choose to do evil is no diminution of freedom? No. For on Clarke's account of the nature of freedom, the power to choose otherwise is necessary for a choice to be free. Therefore, if it is not in God's power to choose to do evil, God does not freely choose not to do evil. And if it is not in God's power to choose to act contrary to what is best, God does not freely choose to do what is best. Perhaps Clarke can save God's omnipotence by saying that his power does not extend to acts inconsistent with any of his essential attributes. But this won't leave his perfect freedom intact. So long as he lacks the power to choose to do evil, he lacks freedom in choosing not to do evil. And so long as he lacks the power to choose contrary to what is best, he lacks freedom in choosing to do what is best. It won't matter whether this lack of power results from a deficiency in his power or from the fact that his power does not extend to such choices. Clarke might be able to patch this up by changing his account of the nature of freedom: declaring instead that one chooses freely just in case one has the power to choose otherwise provided infinite power extends to the choice to do otherwise. This move will avoid the immediate conclusion that God does not freely choose to do the best. For Clarke holds that God's infinite power does not extend to choosing contrary to what he knows to be best. But since God's choosing to do what is best is absolutely necessary for God, we are left with no reason at all to insist that his choice is really free. Nor are we left with any reason to thank God or be grateful to him for choosing and acting in accordance with his knowledge of what is best. Thus, Clarke's valiant effort to reconcile God's perfect liberty with his perfect goodness is unsuccessful. [Most of the material in sections 1-3 is taken (with permission) from my essay: "Clarke and Leibniz on Divine Perfection and Freedom," *Enlightenment and Dissent*, (Special Issue on Samuel Clarke), No. 16, 1997, 60-82.]

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## **7.5 CAN GOD BE FREE WITH RESPECT TO CAUSING HIS OWN NATURE?**

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On the assumption that God (the supremely perfect being) exists and that there is a best, creatable world, it appears that God is neither free not to

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create a world nor free to create a world less than the best creatable world. Indeed, it appears that God would of necessity create the best of the creatable worlds, leaving us with no basis for thanking him, or praising him for creating the world he does. For given that God exists and that there is a best creatable world, God's "nature" as an omnipotent, omniscient, perfectly good being would require him to create that best world. Doing less than the best he can do — create the best world — would be inconsistent with his being the perfect being he is. But what if, strange as it may seem, God is causally responsible for having the perfect nature that he has? What if God creates his nature, and, by virtue of having created it, is thereby causally responsible for his own nature? Such a view, if it were correct, might provide a way out of the problem of divine freedom. For the problem seems to rest on the plausible assumption that no being is, or can be, responsible for having the nature it has. And, given that this assumption is correct, what logically follows from God's possessing the nature (being supremely perfect) he does — i.e. his creating the best possible world — can no more be up to him, something he is responsible for, than is his nature as a supremely perfect being something that is up to him, something he is responsible for. But against this assumption, Thomas Morris (Morris, 1987) has argued that God does create his nature and, therefore, is causally responsible for his nature. Suppose Morris is right: that God is responsible for his own nature. Well then, since God is responsible for his nature, he may then be responsible for what is required by his nature. In short, God may be responsible for his creation of the best world. So, it seems to matter whether God is responsible for having the nature he has.

Of course, in the broad sense of the expression "a person's nature" someone may be responsible for his nature, or at least part of it. A person with a naturally friendly disposition toward strangers may have played a role in developing his "nature" to be friendly toward strangers, and thus may bear some responsibility for his "nature" to be friendly toward others. But no one, it seems, is responsible for being the basic sort of entity one is — a human being, for example. Thus, even God, so it is generally thought, is not causally responsible for his basic nature — his

being omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good. Of course, unlike humans, God, if he exists, does not inherit his nature from prior beings. For God is eternal and not generated by other gods. From eternity this uncreated being has been omnipotent, omniscient, and perfectly good. These properties constitute his intrinsic nature. Thus it seems that no one, including God, could be causally responsible for God's having the basic properties that are constitutive of his nature. Against this view, however, Thomas Morris has argued that there is nothing logically or metaphysically objectionable about God's creating, and thereby being causally responsible for, his own basic nature. He does, however, wish to avoid having to claim that God is the cause of himself. As he says, "the very idea of self-causation or self-creation is almost universally characterized as absurd, incoherent, or worse." What Morris means here is that although it is absurd to think that God causes himself to exist from all eternity, it is not absurd, in his judgment, to suppose that God (1) causes there to be such properties as omnipotence, omniscience, and perfect goodness, and (2) causes himself to eternally possess these properties.

In Morris's proposal, God is said to be the cause of something (his nature) that God cannot possibly exist without. But it may seem impossible for any being to be the cause of something (its nature) which that very being cannot exist without. Therefore, it may seem impossible for God to be causally responsible for his nature. Indeed, (to stress the point again) since God's nature consists of his essential properties, properties he must have in order to exist, it seems absurd to even suggest that God is causally responsible for these properties and for his possession of them. Morris responds to this objection by noting that God necessarily exists and therefore always has his essential properties. So, we should not think that God could exist without his nature and then cause the properties constituting his nature (absolute goodness, absolute power, and absolute knowledge) and cause himself to possess them. Nevertheless, Morris claims that the fact that God can exist only if his nature also exists doesn't preclude God's being causally responsible for his nature. He simply is always causally responsible for these properties

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and his essential possession of them. As Morris puts it: “It just seems to be that there is nothing logically or metaphysically objectionable about God's creating his own nature ....” (Morris, 48)

Suppose Morris is right about this issue — that God is creatively responsible for the existence of properties, relations, mathematical truths, logical truths, necessary states of affairs, possible states of affairs, etc. Nevertheless, it may still be true that God's causing of his nature was not itself up to God. For, on Morris's view, although God creates the entire framework of reality, it was not up to God whether to create the framework he did or some other framework instead, or even not to create any part of the framework he created. God never had a choice about creating this framework or any part of it for, in Morris's words, “God's creation of the framework of reality is both eternal and necessary — it never was, never will be, and could not have been, other than it is.” (Morris, 170) Clearly, if God's creation of the framework of reality never could have been other than it is, then God never had any choice about creating the framework of reality. He created it of necessity, and not freely.

Morris is very much aware of the difficulty just noted. His response to it is direct and to the point. Referring to God's creation of the framework of reality, he writes:

But there is a sense, a different sense, in which even it can be considered free. It is an activity which is conscious, intentional, and neither constrained nor compelled by anything existing independent of God and his causally efficacious power. The necessity of his creating the framework is not imposed on him from without, but rather is a feature and result of the nature of his own activity itself, which is a function of what he is. (Morris, 170-171)

Morris recognizes, apparently, that the primary sense in which an agent is free in performing an action requires that the agent either (a) could have refrained from performing that action or, at least, (b) could have refrained from causing his decision to perform that action. And it is this

sense of being free in performing an action that constitutes a necessary condition for an agent's being morally responsible for an action he performs. (Morris shares the view expressed here: that the libertarian idea of freedom is essential to moral responsibility.)

In the primary sense of 'being free in performing an action,' — the sense required for moral responsibility (according to the libertarian view of moral responsibility) — the power not to have caused the decision to act is necessary. For without such power the agent has no control over her performing an action. It is not up to the agent whether she causes or does not cause her decision and subsequent action. And without such power on God's part with respect to his "creation" of the framework of reality, it makes no sense to thank God or praise God for creating that eternal framework. Only in some Pickwickian sense could we view God as "morally responsible" for the creation of the framework of reality. This is not to deny the distinction Morris draws between God and the necessary truths constituting the framework of reality. God is causally active in a way in which a necessary truth such as Clarke's example — there being innocent beings who do not suffer eternally is necessarily better than there being innocent beings who do suffer eternally -is not. But for all Morris says about the matter, God has no choice but to form the thought that there being innocent beings who do not suffer eternally is necessarily better than there being innocent beings who do suffer eternally. And God has no choice but to acknowledge the truth of this thought. Neither of these doings on God's part — having that thought, acknowledging its truth — is any more up to God than it is up to a leaf whether or not it moves when the wind blows against it. Neither the leaf nor God has any choice in the matter.

Morris believes that God can be the cause of his own nature. By this he means that God is both the cause of the properties (omniscience, omnipotence, and perfect goodness) and the cause of God's having those properties. Indeed, Morris holds that God is the cause of all the elements constituting the framework of reality. Furthermore, Morris is well aware that God has no control over either his causing the divine properties or

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his having those properties. The primary sense in which we say that an agent is free in doing something requires that at the time he did it the agent could have avoided doing what he did or could have avoided causing his decision to do that thing. It is this sense of having control that many philosophers hold to be essential if an agent is to be morally responsible for his decision and action. [I ignore here cases of “derivative responsibility,” where an agent freely and knowingly causes himself to be in a situation where he is caused to will to do X and cannot refrain from willing to do X. In such cases the agent can be said, in a derivative sense, to be morally responsible for what he now must do, for the agent freely put himself in circumstances that he knew would necessitate his act.] And it is because God is not free (in the sense required for moral responsibility) when he performs actions necessitated by his absolute perfections that it makes no sense to thank God or praise him for doing those actions. It is true, however, as Morris points out, that God's having no choice either about creating the framework of reality or about having the properties of absolute power, knowledge, and goodness, does not result from something else imposing this framework and properties upon him. And this seems to distinguish God from the leaf that has no choice about moving when the wind blows. The necessity of the leaf's moving is imposed on it by something else (the wind). The necessity of God's doing what is best is imposed by God's nature, his being perfectly good, something that is internal to God and something that, on Morris's account, God himself causes, but had no choice about causing. So, unlike the leaf's being caused to move by something else (the wind), God, we may say, necessarily does what is best because given his perfect nature he cannot do other than the best. And although God causes his eternal possession of his perfect nature he had no choice about eternally causing himself to be perfect. Consider the question: Does God have any more of a choice about doing what is best than the leaf, were it endowed with consciousness, would have about moving when the wind blows? It is apparent that the answer must be “No.” For each necessarily does what it does as a result of factors over which neither has any control. And that being so, it may be that God is no more morally responsible for choosing to do what is best than the leaf is for moving when the wind blows. But



even if this should be so, the view Morris presents is a significant addition to the literature on the problem of divine freedom.

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## 7.6 ALTERNATIVES TO CREATING THE BEST POSSIBLE WORLD.

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In an important and influential essay, Robert Adams argues that even if there is a best creatable world, God need not create it. He supposes that the world God creates contains creatures each of whom is as happy as it is in any possible world in which it exists. Moreover, no creature in this world is so miserable that it would be better had it not existed. Adams then supposes that there is some other possible world with different creatures that exceeds this world in its degree of happiness, a world that God could have created. So, God has created a world with a lesser degree of happiness than he could have. Has God wronged anyone in creating this world? Adams argues that God cannot have wronged the creatures in the other possible world, for merely possible beings don't have rights. Nor can he have wronged the creatures in the world he has created, for their lives could not be made more happy. Adams notes that God would have done something wrong in creating this world were the following principle true.

It is wrong to bring into existence, knowingly, a being less excellent than one could have brought into existence (Adams, 1972, 329).

But this principle, Adams argues, is subject to counter-examples. Parents do no wrong, he points out, when they refrain from taking drugs that would result in an abnormal gene structure in their children, even though taking the drugs would result in children who are superhuman both in intelligence and in prospects for happiness. As opposed to the incorrect principle just cited, Adams does support the more plausible principle:

It is wrong for human beings to cause, knowingly and voluntarily, the procreation of an offspring of human parents which is notably deficient, by comparison with normal human beings, in mental and physical capacity (Adams, 1972, 330).

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From these sensible observations concerning what would be right or wrong for humans to do in producing offspring, Adams infers that God would not be doing something wrong in bringing into existence humans who are less excellent than he could have brought into existence. But before we accept this inference, we should note an important difference between God's situation in considering creating human beings and the situation of parents who are considering taking drugs in order to bring into existence children who are superhuman both in intelligence and in prospects for happiness. In the latter case there is an inherited background of existing children who are brought about in normal ways and who establish what is normal with respect to human intelligence and prospects for happiness. Against this established background both of normal ways of producing children and of what is normal in the way of intelligence and prospects of happiness, it is quite sensible to conclude that parents are under no obligation to produce non-normal children who are superhuman both in intelligence and in prospects for happiness. For we cannot help but think that they would be producing beings who would be strangely different, if not estranged, from much of the human race, the humans who are normal both in intelligence and in prospects for happiness. But in creating human creatures it is God himself who establishes what the norm of human intelligence will be and what the prospects for human happiness will be. There is no already existing norm from which God may choose to deviate either by creating beings who are subhuman or superhuman in the way of intelligence and prospects of happiness. Within the limits of what it is to be human it is up to God to set the norm for human intelligence and prospects for happiness. And if we suppose there is a lower and upper limit for human intelligence and happiness, the question is whether God would be doing something wrong in creating humans whose prospects for intelligence and happiness are rather low, or in the middle, given that he could have created other humans with prospects for a considerably higher level of intelligence and happiness. We grant that God may not have wronged the humans he did create, since, as Adams supposes, they could not have been created with any greater prospects for a good and happy life. But it remains difficult to see how God would be justified in creating creatures whose prospects

for a good life are known by him to be mediocre in comparison with other creatures of the same species whose prospects for a good life are known by him to be much greater — given that this knowledge is all that is relevant to God's decision about which creatures to create. In my judgment, Adams's analogy fails to address this more serious question and, by implication, fails to address the serious question of whether God would be obligated to create the best world.

Suppose, however, that we set aside whatever disagreements we may have with Adams on these points and accept the conclusion of his reasoning. Suppose, that is, that we agree with Adams that God is not morally obligated to create the best world that he can, that it would be morally permissible for God to create the best world he can, but also morally permissible for God to create any of a number of other good worlds of the sort Adams describes. If so, can't we conclude that there is no unresolvable conflict between God's being essentially morally perfect and his enjoying a significant degree of genuine freedom? For it now appears that God's moral perfection does not require him to create the best world. In short, he is free to create (or not create) any of a number of good worlds.

As forceful and persuasive as Adams's arguments may be, I don't think they yield the conclusion that God's perfect goodness leaves God free to create less than the best world that he can create. What Adams's arguments show, at best, is that God's moral perfection imposes no moral obligation on God to create the best world he can. His arguments establish, at best, that God need not be doing anything morally wrong in creating some world other than the best world. But this isn't quite the same thing as showing that God's perfect goodness does not render it necessary that he create the best world he can. For, even conceding the points Adams makes, there still may be an inconsistency in a morally perfect being creating some world other than the best world he can create. The point here is this. One being may be morally better than another even though it is not better by virtue of the performance of some obligation that the other failed to perform. It may be morally better by

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virtue of performing some supererogatory act — a good act beyond the call of duty — that the other being could have but did not perform. Analogously, a being who creates a better world than another being may be morally better, even though the being who creates the inferior world does not thereby do anything wrong. Following Philip Quinn, I'm inclined to think that if an all-powerful, all-knowing being creates some world other than the best world it can create, then it is possible there should exist a being morally better than it is. Quinn remarks: "An omnipotent moral agent can actualize any actualizable world. If he actualizes one than which there is a morally better, he does not do the best he can, morally speaking, and so it is possible that there is an agent morally better than he is, namely an omnipotent moral agent who actualizes one of those morally better worlds" (Quinn, 213). (We should note that my version of Quinn's principle is presented in terms of the overall goodness of a world, not just its moral goodness. Thus, my version of the principle states that if an omniscient being creates a world when there is a better world it could create, then it would be possible for there to be a being morally better than it. I do not, as Quinn does, focus solely on the moral status of a world. For some good states of affairs include nonmoral goods such as happiness, as well as moral goods such as the exercise of virtue. It could be, however, that the difference is merely terminological, for Quinn may hold that the moral status of a world depends on both the moral and nonmoral good the world contains.) For it would be possible for there to be an omnipotent being who creates the best world that the first being could create but did not. Shouldn't we then conclude that if an essentially all-powerful, all-knowing, perfectly good being creates any world at all, it must create the best world it can? For although a being may do no wrong in creating less than the best it can create, a being whose nature is to be perfectly good is not such that it is possible for there to be a being morally better than it. If, however, a being were to create a world when there is a better world it could create, then it would be possible for there to be a being morally better than it.

The heart of Adams's essay, however, proposes a reason for rejecting the view we have just stated: that if a being were to create a world when

there is a better world it could create, then it would be possible for there to be a being morally better than it. For that view implies, in Adams's words, that "the creator's choice of an inferior world must manifest a defect of character." And his response to this objection is that "God's choice of a less excellent world could be accounted for in terms of His grace, which is considered a virtue rather than a defect of character in Judeo-Christian ethics" (Adams, 1972, 318-319). It is Adams's understanding of the Judeo-Christian view of grace that lies at the core of his objection to the Leibnizian view that the most perfect being "cannot fail to act in the most perfect way, and consequently to choose the best." So, any answer to Adams's view that God need not choose to create the best world must take into account his view that the Judeo-Christian view of grace implies that God may create a world less than the best.

Adams's defines the concept of grace as "a disposition to love which is not dependent on the merit of the person loved" (Adams, 1972, 324). Given this definition and given two worlds, W1 and W2, that differ in that the persons in W1 are happier and more disposed to behave morally than are the persons in W2, with the result, let us suppose, that W1 is a better world than W2, it is clear that a gracious God would not love the persons in W1 more than the persons in W2. Or, at the very least, it is clear that were God to love the persons in W1 more than the persons in W2 it would not be because they are morally better and/or happier. As Adams remarks: "The gracious person loves without worrying about whether the person he loves is worthy of his love" (Adams, 1972, 324). So, by virtue of his grace, either God would love all persons to an equal degree or the fact that he might love one person more than another would have nothing to do with the fact that the one has a greater degree of merit or excellence than another. As Adams puts it: "the gracious person sees what is valuable in the person he loves, and does not worry about whether it is more or less valuable than what could be found in someone else he might have loved" (Adams, 1972, 324). And he tells us that in the Judeo-Christian tradition grace is held to be "a virtue which God does have and men ought to have" (Adams, 1972, 324).

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Given that grace is as Adams has defined it and that grace is a virtue God possesses, what may we infer about the world God creates? Can we infer with Leibniz that if there is a best world God must create that world? It is difficult to know what to say here. All that we've learned from Adams thus far is that it would be something other than love that would motivate God to choose the best world, or any other world for that matter. For since grace is a disposition to love without regard to merit, God will be unable to select one world over another if all he has to go on is his grace. His grace (love toward creatures independent of their degree of merit) will leave him free to create any world that has creatures able to do moral good or evil, regardless of how good or bad they may be in that world. So, if God has a reason to choose one creaturely world over another — rather than blindly picking one out of the hat, so to speak — that reason will have little or nothing to do with his grace. For given the doctrine of grace, God's love for creatures is not based on the quality (moral, religious, etc.) of the lives they lead; and it is difficult to see what else about their lives it could be based on. In fact, the implication of the Judeo-Christian doctrine of grace for God's selection of a world to create seems to be entirely negative — rather than giving a reason why he might select a particular creaturely world, or rule out other creaturely worlds, it simply tells us that if God creates a world with creatures, his love of the creatures in that world cannot be his reason for creating it. For his love for creatures is entirely independent of who they are and the kind of lives they lead. To base his love on who they are and the kinds of lives they lead would be to take those persons and their lives as more deserving of his love than other persons and their lives.

What we've seen thus far is that God's grace — his love of creatures without respect to their merit — cannot provide God with a reason to create the best world, or any particular world less than the best. And what this means is that whatever reason God has for choosing to create one creaturely world over another cannot be found in his gracious love for creatures (For further argument in support of this point see Thomas, 1996.) In what then, given that God has a reason for creating one world over another, would that reason reside? It would reside not in God's

gracious love but, I suggest, in his desire to create the very best state of affairs that he can. Having such a desire, I believe, does not preclude gracious love. It does not imply that God cannot or does not equally love the worse creatures along with the best creatures. Let me explain by using an analogy of my own. Loving parents may be disposed to love fully any child that is born to them, regardless of whatever talents that child is capable of developing. But such love is consistent with a preference for a child who will be born whole, without mental or physical impairment, a child who will develop his or her capacities for kindness toward others, who will develop his or her tastes for music, good literature, etc. And in like manner, God will graciously love any creature he might choose to create, not just the best possible creatures. But that does not rule out God's having a preference for creating creatures who will strive as creatures not only to have a good life but also to lead a good life, creatures who will in their own way freely develop themselves into "children of God." Indeed, although God's gracious love extends to every possible creature, it would be odd to suggest that he, therefore, could have no preference for creating a world with such creatures over a world in which creatures use their freedom to abuse others, use their talents to turn good into evil, and devote their lives to selfish ends. Surely, God's graciously loving all possible creatures is not inconsistent with his having a preference to create a world with creatures who will use their freedom to pursue the best kind of human life. How could he not have such a preference? Furthermore, as I've suggested, if God had no such preference, his gracious love for creatures would give him no reason to select any particular possible world for creation. For his gracious love for each and every creature fails to provide a reason to create one creature rather than another, or to create the creatures in one possible world rather than those in another. So, if God is not reduced to playing dice with respect to selecting a world to create, there must be some basis for his selection over and beyond his gracious love for all creatures, regardless of merit. And that basis, given God's nature as an absolutely perfect being, can only be, as Leibniz and Clarke maintained, to do always what is "best and wisest" to be done. And surely the best and wisest for God to do is to create the best world he can. Moreover,

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doing so seems to be entirely consistent with God's gracious love of all creatures, regardless of their merit.

Adams, however, flatly rejects the view just described, a view that sees God's gracious love of creatures without respect to merit as entirely consistent with his having an all things considered preference to create the best world he can. After noting that divine grace is love which is not dependent on the merit of the person loved, Adams proceeds to draw the conclusion that although God would be free to create the best creatures, he cannot have as his reason for choosing to create them the fact that they are the best possible creatures.

God's graciousness in creating does not imply that the creatures He has chosen to create must be less excellent than the best possible. It implies, rather, that even if they are the best possible creatures, that is not the ground for His choosing them. And it implies that there is nothing in God's nature or character which would require Him to act on the principle of choosing the best possible creatures to be the object of His creative powers (Adams, 1972, 324).

### Check Your Progress 2

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer

**b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit**

3. Discuss Clarke's Problem with Divine Freedom: the power to choose otherwise is required for freedom.

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4. Can God be Free with respect to causing his own nature?

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5. Discuss the Alternatives to creating the Best Possible World.



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## 7.7 LET US SUM UP

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By my lights, God's disposition to love independent of the merit of the persons loved carries no implication as to what God's reason for creating a particular world may be, other than that his reason cannot be that he loves the beings in this world more (or less) than the beings in other worlds. Moreover, having an all-things considered preference for creating the best world need not be rooted in a greater love for beings who are better than other beings. For, owing to the Principle of Organic Unities (see Moore, pp. 187ff.) the best whole may have some parts that are not the best. Therefore, the best world may contain some human beings who are not better than, or even as good as, their replacements in the closest world to the best world. And God may select creatures to create who will choose to grow morally and spiritually, rather than creatures who will choose not to grow morally and spiritually, and select them for that very reason without his thereby loving the former persons more than the latter, or loving them because of their greater merit. God's grace does rule out choosing to create the best world because he loves its inhabitants more than the inhabitants of some lesser world. But it does not rule out God's choosing to create the best world because he prefers to create the best persons, so long as he does not love them more than he loves the inhabitants of lesser worlds. Adams, of course, must be supposing that if God's reason for creating one world rather than another is the fact that the creatures in the first world are much better than the creatures in the second world, it somehow logically follows that God must love the creatures in the first world more than he loves the creatures in the second. But there is nothing in his presentation of the view that God's love for creatures is independent of their merit that yields this result. It seems, then, that there is no good reason to think that the Judeo-Christian concept of grace rules out the view of Leibniz and Clarke that God must create the best world, provided there is a best world.

## Notes

Finally, it should be noted that there may be no best possible world. Instead, it may be that for any world there is a better world. Or perhaps there are several equally good worlds than which no world is better. Still another seeming possibility is that there are incommensurate worlds, worlds such that no comparison in terms of better than is possible. Each of these possibilities has implications for the question of divine freedom with respect to creation.

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## 7.8 KEY WORDS

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Philosophical: relating or devoted to the study of the fundamental nature of knowledge, reality, and existence.

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## 7.9 QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW

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1. Write about the Alternative methods to creating the Best Possible World.

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## 7.10 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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## 7.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Check Your Progress 1

1. See Section 7.2
2. See Section 7.3

### Check Your Progress 1

1. See Section 7.4
2. See Section 7.5