



Indira Gandhi National Open University
School of Inter-disciplinary and
Trans-disciplinary Studies

BPYM-161

Block IV

**GREEK PHILOSOPHY: PRE-
SOCRATICS**

BLOCK INTRODUCTION

It is interesting to go through the history of Greek philosophy which gives us answers to many problems which arise in the life of ordinary humans. The Greeks in general were lovers of wisdom. Many early Greek philosophers criticized myths that gave importance to gods who were subjected to fate. They evolved a rational way of thinking of truth and reality. In fact, they laid the foundations for further development of western philosophy that has predominantly taken the path of rationality. The spirit of independence and the love of truth are the visible characteristics of their thought.

Unit 10 studies “Pre-Socratic Philosophers.” They enquired into the origin of things and the mysteries of universe. They were concerned about two problems: the ultimate principle of all things and the problem of substance. The second problem is related to the problem of change and permanence; the Ionian philosophers thought that, in spite of all these changes and transitions, there must be something permanent.

Unit 11 on “Socrates” demonstrates how Socrates’ opposition to the blind acceptance of tradition and authority allied him with the Sophists such as Protagoras, Gorgias and Prodicus. However, he was far more committed to know the inner person than the Sophists. Unlike the Sophists, he was in search of truth and knowledge of the universal validity of moral laws. For him this search was intimately connected with the chief problem of knowing what human is. This Unit explains the basic philosophy of Socrates: Socratic problem, Socratic method, epistemology, ethics, and Socratic schools of thought.

Unit 12 is on “Plato.” In this Unit we occupy ourselves with the Philosophical thoughts of Plato, taking into consideration his historical background. In the course of the unfolding of the unit, we will be knowing various philosophical issues such as the problem of one and many, appearance and reality, and permanence and change from the perspective of Plato.

Unit 13 is on “Aristotle”. It introduces Aristotle as one of the most important founding figures of Western philosophy. He was the first to create a comprehensive system of Western philosophy, encompassing morality and aesthetics, logic and science, politics and metaphysics. His works contain the earliest known formal study of logic. Aristotelianism had a profound influence on philosophical and theological thinking in the Islamic and Jewish traditions in the Middle Ages, and it continues to influence Christian theology, especially Eastern Orthodox

theology, and the scholastic tradition of the Roman Catholic Church. All aspects of Aristotle's philosophy continue to be the object of active academic study today.

These four units together introduces us to the origin of philosophy, that paved the way for a strong foundation for western philosophy.





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PHILOSOPHY: AN INTRODUCTION

Block IV

Greek Philosophy: Pre-Socratics

Unit 10

Pre-Socratic Philosophers

Unit 11

Socrates

Unit 12

Plato

Unit 13

Aristotle

UNIT 10 PRE-SOCRATIC PHILOSOPHERS*

Structure

10.0 Objectives

10.1 Introduction

10.2 Thales

10.3 Anaximander

10.4 Anaximanes

10.5 Pythagoras

10.6 Heraclitus

10.7 Let Us Sum Up

10.8 Key Words

10.9 Further Readings and References

10.10 Answers to Check Your Progress

10.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit we introduce the origin and development of Greek philosophy, its history and its philosophers such as Thales, Anaximander, Anaximanes, Pythagoras and Heraclitus with their philosophical insights on God, world and human beings. Most of these philosophers belonged to the Ionian School active at Miletus (hence some of them are also called Milesian thinkers). In the process we will be touching upon various issues of ordinary life, helping one to have a better view on the world experience.

By the end of this Unit you should be able to:

- Begin philosophizing with awe and wonder;
- Look at various issues of life, such as moral, social, religious and political with a philosophical bend of mind;
- Follow the style of Greek thinking; and
- Explain 'the ultimate principle' proposed by the Ancient Greek Philosophers.

* Dr. Loser Kuttikal, Prostaya Vidyapith, Kottiyam. This unit is taken from BPY-003 (Unit 1 Block 2).

10.1 INTRODUCTION

The Greeks in general were philosophers, because they were lovers of wisdom. 'Lovers of wisdom' means that those who have the real thirst for knowledge. The word 'philosophy' itself is coming from the Greek language. The Greek word "*Philo-Sophia*" means love of wisdom. Philosophy should always aim at the wisdom which spreads light on the supreme cause. This supreme cause is what is called in Greek "*arche*". This principle is not equal to the phenomena of direct experience such as water, air, and fire as they are manifested in the world of senses: rain, wind, flames, sun, day, night, etc. The sense experience appeared as wonders in their life. Behind these wonders, a cause was sought. The external nature of the universe was considered in the Ionian Period as the first great problem. The enquiry into this problem was dynamic from about 585 to the middle of the 5th century B.C. The first stage in the growth of Greek philosophy was naturalistic: its efforts were oriented to the nature, with the nature, by the nature and in the nature. They were much impressed by the fact of birth, growth, decay and death. It was a search for knowledge for its own sake. The origin of things and the mysteries of universe were the central points. It was a cosmological problem. It was concerned mainly with two problems: what is the basic substance of the universe? And from where do they originate?

10.2 THALES (624-548 BC)

The historian Herodotus, who used for the first time the Greek-term 'philo-sophia,' told that Thales was one of the seven sages: Thales, Biantes, Pittacus, Solon, Cleobule, Mison and Chilon. Aristotle has generally used this name 'sage' for philosophers and he particularly called Thales an "Initiator of Philosophy". The "sophia" of seven sages was merely a moral knowledge or practical righteousness.

Thales, who has fame as the first Ionian philosopher, flourished at Miletus a Greek colony in Asia Minor. This city is now in modern Turkey. At the time of Thales it was a Greek city. He might have done his studies with Egyptian or Babylonian teachers. Miletus had colonies at this time in Egypt.

We do not know much about the life of Thales. Even the dates of his birth and death are uncertain. He was born about 624 B.C. He travelled to Egypt, and visited great centres of Lydia, a powerful kingdom then allied with Miletus and all Ionia. He is the first philosopher of Greece. He was named as statesman, mathematician, and astronomer. It was Thales who

told the eclipse, which happened on May 28th, 585 B.C. Thales died in 548 BC.

Thales was also an important mathematician. And he was able to prove several interesting mathematical ideas. He measured the height of a pyramid by calculating the shadow of his own, when his own shadow became the same length of his height. Thales confirmed that

- A circle is bisected by its diameter
- The angles at the bases of any isosceles triangle are equal
- If two straight lines cut one another, the opposite angles are equal.
- If two triangles have two angles and a side in common, the triangles are identical.

His question was about the basic stuff of the universe. He searched for the cause of the universe. According to him, water was the original stuff. He would have been led by myth of oceans and Tethy's gods of ocean. Water has the potency to become solid, liquid and vaporous forms. Water evaporates in the heat of the sun, and according to Thales it is the transformation of water into fire. Water comes down again in the form of rain and it is transformed into earth. Water is essential to life. The reason is that nourishment, seed, and heat which are essential to life, contain moisture or wet. Hence water is the primordial principle, and all things (*physis*) were water (*arche*) and are water (*physis*). The earth is a flat disc floating on water. Water is the material cause of all things. He clearly perceived that nature was alive.

His claim involves three vital assumptions. He wanted to assert his belief that the universe is made up of One thing, i.e., water. Indeed, he brought the question of One:

- He believed that the fundamental explanation of the universe must be one in number. There can not be two realities behind the mysteries of the universe. The controlling element of the Nature should be one.
- This one reality must be a 'thing'. It ought to be a definite thing; and this thing is water which has the capacity to be present in everything.
- And this one 'thing' must have within itself the ability to move and change.

10.2.1 Metaphysical Problem and Solution

From this thinking he comes to the metaphysical problem of "the One and the many". How the multiplicity (*physis*) of beings can be explained in a unity (*arche*), a unique principle? How does Thales explain the term multiplicity? For philosophical understanding, we have to see beings as a whole. This whole is not to be understood as a sum of non-living things lacking movement, but this whole has its life as a single reality. Things have their own lives. Life is the element that brings the unity among all these multiplicity. This is an animistic vision of reality.

Therefore, Aristotle quotes of Thales in *'De Anima'*, "all things are full of gods" and hence the "*physis*" is something divine (*theion*) both in its being and in its change. What we have is only a first reflection, but that is full of philosophical implications.

He believed that 'All things are full of gods'. Perhaps, he might have thought that the universe is full with small invisible seeds for life. He saw that soon after the first rain after summer the earth began to bring new lives forth. Water may be the primordial stuff or the first cause for all lives in the earth. It can transform itself from one form to another form: solid, soft and again unseen like vapor. When he speaks that water is the '*arche*' of the universe, he does not mean that this '*arche*' is the beginning, but this is the sustaining Principle or material cause. He said already that this '*arche*' is a thing, from that we can guess that this is not god. This water is wet as ultimate reality.

10.3 ANAXIMANDER (614-540 BC)

He was a disciple of Thales lived around 614-540 B.C. He participated in political life. He travelled to Sparta to construct sundial. For the Milesian sailors in Black Sea he designed a map. He says that the earth is a cylindrical body and is in the centre of the universe. It is not supported by anything but held in the equilibrium by other bodies. These things show his interest in scientific matters.

He sought like Thales for the primary principle and the ultimate end of all things, but he decided that it could not be any particular kind of matter such as water. If change, birth, growth and decay are due to conflict, on the supposition that everything in reality is water, why not in water all other things are absorbed? Therefore, he came to an idea that the primordial stuff is indeterminate. He named this as the material cause. It is different from water or any such kind of things and which is infinite. From this indeterminate cause emerged all the heavens and the earth. It is "Ageless and Eternal"

This principle consists of and controls all elements, like the water, the earth and the fire; but it is not confused with these same elements. This primordial principle, called in Greek *apeiron*, will be divine, immobile, not generated, immutable, venerable, an absolute justice. This is the reality behind all cause and effect.

10.3.1 Merits of Teaching

1. The primordial stuff, according to Anaximander, is a derivative element from 'water' of Thales.

2. Here the thought of Anaximander has a stage of process of becoming.
3. He thinks of a primordial stuff, which is indestructible.
4. He refuses to tell the qualities of primordial stuff; because of its complexity.
5. Therefore this refusal shows the abstract mode of his thought, by proposing 'Indefinite Principle'.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for the answer.

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

1) What is the basic stuff and cause of the universe according to Thales?

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2) What is the basic philosophy of Anaximander?

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10.4 ANAXIMANES (600 BC)

The third philosopher of the Milesian school was Anaximanes. He was the disciple of Anaximander. Anaximanes comes back again to the mode of thinking like Thales. He says that the primordial stuff of the world and the heaven is air, vapour or mist. Air is the life-giving element in man. By the disappearance of the air, man stops to breath and he ends. "Just as our soul, being air, holds us together, so do breath and air encompass the whole world." Air then is the primordial stuff of the world, and out of which all things originated.

He went back to the theory of Thales that the ultimate principle of the universe is a thing. For him water was condensed form of air. Air was therefore the origin of earth, water and fire. He might have thought that earth, air, and fire were all necessary to the creation of life, but the source of all things was air or vapor. Air can also become fire by rarefaction. Air is the thing that animates all things to move. It is something sacred and eternal. The universe is a sacred sphere, with a divine eternal fire or ‘pneuma’ palpitating at the center and animating all things with a cosmic breath. From air all things arise through the process of rarefaction and condensation. This theory of condensation and rarefaction is an advanced form of scientific explanation of the emergence of elements in the universe.

10.5 PYTHAGORAS (580-497 BC)

Ionian philosophy moved into Southern Italy through the work of Pythagoras. Pythagoras of Samos (530) is the founder of Pythagorean School. He was born in Samos between 580 and 570 B.C., and immigrated to the Greek Colonies in southern Italy about the year 529. Iamblichus opined that Pythagoras was leader and father of divine philosophy. It is written by V.Capparelli that Pythagoras' philosophy is wisdom impregnated with a profound religious spirit. It is clear that there is evident dependence on the teachings of Anaximanes: the universe is a sacred sphere, with a divine eternal fire, or *pneuma* palpitating at the centre and animating all things with a cosmic breath. The Neo-Pythagoreans identified the central fire with Zeus or with the mother of gods, Olympus, castle of Zeus, etc. The fire stands here as the cause of Unity from where everything derives. He concentrated on cosmology, anthropology and ethics. Pythagorean society had a spirit of religious revival. It began to render the genuine religious teachings.

10.5.1 Ethical Association

Pythagoras founded an association for ethical, religious, and political purpose. His ideal was to develop among his followers the political virtues, to teach them to act for the good of the state, to subordinate them to the whole. Here the individual should learn to control himself or herself, to abase his or her passions, to harmonise his or her soul; he or she should have respect for the authority of elders, teachers and the state. Due to this reason, the view has been held that the Pythagoreans were political communities. But they were not essentially political but

religious or ethical. Chief orientation of his teachings was to the religious-ascetic ideas which centred round the purification and purity.

10.5.2 Concept of Soul

Pythagoreans saw the human soul as the life spirit which endures after the death of its first body and may take it abode subsequently in another human or animal body. This theory of metempsychosis or transmigration of souls is ethically significant since it provides for the rewarding of good action and the punishment of evil in these subsequent reincarnations. He taught silence, music, and mathematics to soften the soul. We are not sure all these teachings are coming from Pythagoras or his followers, Pythagoreans. Diogenes Laertius tells us of a poem of Xenophanes, in which Pythagoras told to stop beating a dog, seeing somebody beating it, because he had recognized the voice of a friend in the yelping of that dog. It strengthens the teachings of metempsychosis. Thus, they give importance to soul not to body. That is why they give soul purification and soul training in their life. It is said that it may be due to the influence of Orphicism which was indeed a religion rather than a philosophy though it tends towards pantheism. It was also a way of life not mere cosmological speculation. In this regard Pythagoreans inherited something from Orphicism.

10.5.3 Theory of Opposites

The Pythagoreans also developed a theory of opposites in which the "limiting" and the "non-limiting" were the chief pair. They understood limit as a definite and measurable characteristic of anything, and the non-limited is that which defied attempts at definition and measurement according to Pythagoras. Their standard geometrical example of the latter was the diagonal of any rectangle: it is impossible to express its length simply in terms of the sides.

10.5.4 Ethical Principle

This is the beginning of a very important approach to ethical problems, the view that 'good' means what is rational and intelligible. Thus, in the fourth century B.C., a later Pythagorean, Archytas of Tarentum, first enunciated the principle of "right reasoning" as the key to good behaviour: "Right reckoning, when discovered, checks civil strife and increases concord...(it is) the standard and deterrent of wrong doers". It is quite possible that Aristotelian and the medieval theories of right reason (*recta ratio*) as the norm of ethical judgement are directly indebted to Pythagorean intellectualism. The life of reason (*logos*) in the classical Greek is respected very much. Aristotle's ethics is constructed on the importance

of the rationality of the human soul. With the appearance of the Pythagorean concept of good, the Homeric good was rationalised with all the qualities that this had, and it has been elevated to the degree of philosophy.

10.5.4 Concept of Number

Aristotle tells us in the *Metaphysics* that Pythagoreans are devoted to mathematics. They were the first who initiated this study. The most important teachings of Pythagoras are that all things are numbers. Number is the basis of everything and the principle of universe. He was explaining the universe with the concept of numbers. All things are countable and we can express many things numerically. So the relation between two related things may be projected in accordance with countable proportion. Just as musical harmony is dependent on number, so also harmony of universe is dependent on number. The world is not only order, beauty and system but a relation of intelligible and multiple proportions or numbers. Philolaus has well expressed it in the following words: “Everything that is known has a number; without this, nothing could be thought or known...Never does falsehood approach the number, because the number’s nature is hostile to falsehood, while truth is proper and natural to the species of number. Love, friendship, justice, virtue, health, etc., are pictured on numbers. Love and friendship are counted by the number eight, because they are harmony, and octave is harmony.”

Pythagoras regarded numbers as spatially. One is the point; two is the line; three is surface; and four is the solid. To say that all things are numbers, it would mean that all bodies are of points or units in space, which when taken together form a number. Points, lines, and surface are therefore the real units which form all material bodies in nature, and in this sense all material bodies must be considered as numbers. He believed that the things were the copies or imitations of number. The whole phenomena of the universe can be expressed under the concept of number.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for the answer.

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

1) What is the ethical principle of Pythagoras?

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2) Explain 'all things are numbers.'
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10.6 HERACLITUS (536-470 BC)

Heraclitus was born in Ephesus, the son of a noble family and flourished around 504-501 B.C. He always displayed an extreme contempt for democracy. About one hundred fragments of his writings are extant. They are mostly epigrams and cryptic remarks dealing with the cosmos and the soul. He said, "Man is called a baby by God, even as a child by man".

10.6.1 Constant Flux

Heraclitus is best known for his cosmological teaching that all things are in constant flux or change. This is the most basic principle of the nature. He gave importance to the perception on the nature. He says, "Everything flows" just like a river. Everything is moving and nothing is remaining just as in the river. He says: "One cannot enter twice into the same river, nor can one twice touch the same mortal substance in the same state" (fragment B 91). When one person steps into the river for the second time, neither the river nor the person is the same. The person would have already changed, because cells of person's body were newly produced. The person is already in the process of becoming; and since the water in the river constantly flows, the river, where the person entered into, would have already changed within seconds; because it is the flowing water what makes the river as river. Since his entire philosophical conception is dominated by a sense of realities' change, he is also known as "crying philosopher".

10.6.2 Fire and Universal Change

For him the most mobile substance of the world is fire. It is ever-living and never comes to rest, and it is named by him as vapour or breath which is the vital principle in the organism and the essence of the soul. Some interpret that this fire is only a concrete physical symbol for ceaseless activity or process, not itself a substance, but the very denial of all substance. It indicates to a principle that changes constantly or transforms into something other. Only fire can satisfy these conditions. The way of change to upward is same to the way of change to down ward. Fire changes into water, then earth, earth changes back again to water and fire. All things are exchanged for fire and fire for all things. The things we think that they are permanent, are not permanent, the thing that we do not see the movement which takes place in them. He says, "What is cold heats up, what is hot cools, the wet dries and the dry becomes wet" (fragment B126). "This order of the world is not the same for all, but it has always been and is, and will be a living fire for eternity, which at the due time lights and at the due time goes out" (fragment B 30). The world is an ever-living fire.

10.6.3 The Union of the Opposites

World is consisted of opposites. The presence of opposites makes the world as it is. The concept good and evil has its place in the order of the world. If there is no war, how can we acquire peace? The war consists of the peace. Construction is for destruction. Birth is for death. Decease demands the need of health. If there were no summer, what is the use of monsoon?

The novelty of the teaching of Heraclitus is in the conception of unity in diversity, difference in unity. He considers opposites as essential to the being of the One. As a fact the One only exists in the presence of the opposites. This presence of opposites is essential to the unity of the One. The reality for Heraclitus is one; but it is multiple at the same time. This is not accidentally but essentially. It is an essential character of the reality that it should be one and many at the same time. The teaching of Heraclitus is more near to the idea of One existing in the many. Here there is Identity in Difference. He confessed that all things are One. This unity is happening only through the conflict of opposites.

There is a principle to unite the opposites into a unity. The monistic principle of the cosmos is known in the name of Logos, which means reason. The reason of Heraclitus is a 'universal

reason,' which guides everything that exists in the universe. Among the constant complex changes this 'universal reason' takes role of unity of the cosmos. One's creation is another's destruction, and again the destruction of something is the beginning of the creation of something else. Everything is changed into their opposites. In this world remains nothing permanent in their qualities. Everything both is and is not. Therefore everything unites opposites within itself. For example, harmony in music results from the combination of high notes and low notes that mean a union of opposites. Therefore the world is the combination of opposites. "War is the father of all and the king of all"; because, war is in peace. If we do not fight, we will not get peace. Therefore the peace is included in the war and war brings peace.

10.6.4 Ethical Principle

Heraclitean fragments suggest that there is an ever-present rational pattern (logos) in this Process or 'Becoming'. Heraclitus says: "To be ethical is to live a rational life, to obey the dictates of reason, which is the same for us all, the same for the whole world." Man is entrusting himself to his senses, and he lives as if he were epileptic. The strife between opposites, such as love and hate, is to be resolved according to a measure (metron). Research on Heraclitus reveals that his moral views are of primary importance in his teaching. Morality means respect for law, self-discipline, control of the passions; to be moral is to govern oneself by rational principles. The following excerpts from his writings illustrate the lofty idealism of Heraclitus' ethics: "Character is a man's guardian divinity"; "It is hard to contend with passion; for whatever it desires to get it buys at the cost of the soul". "To me one man is ten thousand if he be the best". Man's condition is bad if we look into his mind. One more element is added here to the richness of the concept of our good. Would not this be thought a great influence for the character disposition in Aristotle's virtue theory? Aristotle says that a good action springs from a permanent state of good moral character. "The many are not worth anything, only the few are valuable" (fragment B 104). In another fragment Heraclitus affirms, "Man lights for himself a light in the night, while his eyes are shut: alive, he touches the dead with what is turned off; awake, he touches the sleeping" (fragment B 26). He is negating the sensory knowledge for the access into the truth. His ethical conception is growing from the external to the internal and from internal to the celestial. "No matter how much you travel, and even though you travel every road, you will never reach the boundaries of soul, so profound is the logos it possesses" (fragment B 45).

According to Heraclitus, man has to become a man of intelligent character. He has to reflect from the immediate concrete data to elevate oneself to a unity where empirical experience is pacified in the principle. Here the phenomenology of Heraclitus leads to the discovery of oneself. He is a philosopher of truth by which he has managed to have an intellectual intuition of intelligent character.

10.6.5 Concept of “Logos”

The word ‘logos’ of Heraclitus has a decisive philosophical meaning. The philosophical character of the ‘logos’ consists of its value in unifying the universe. The ‘logos’ brings the contraries as harmony or as the “coexistence of contraries” or equilibrium. The variety of formulas also indicates the disparity of interpretations, which can be fundamentally divided into groups: the ‘logos’ is not outside the contraries, but is their immanent law. Guthrie interprets that the harmony of contraries contains three affirmations. They are: 1) everything is *made up of contraries*; 2) the *contraries are identical*; 3) *war is their creative force* and the constituent director.

As a conclusion, in the teachings of Heraclitus, we could see that there were threefold character: linguistic, gnosiological and ontological. ‘Logos’ reveals itself, it thinks itself and it is. It will not be proper, if we see a trinity made up of god, fire and ‘logos’. Heraclitus speaks of the One as God and as wise. God is the universal Reason. It is the universal law immanent in all things and binding all things into unity and determining the constant change in accordance with universal law. Man’s reason is a moment in this universal Reason. Man, therefore, has to struggle to live according to the reign of unalterable law. Man’s reason and consciousness, which are the fiery element, are the precious element. Without pure fire body is worthless.

Check Your Progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for the answer.

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

1) Write a short note on the ethical principle of Heraclitus.

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2) Explain the concept of “Logos’ according to Heraclitus.
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10.7 LET US SUM UP

Ionian and Pythagorean Philosophy taught us to reflect on the external nature and tried to get into the essence of the universe. For every reality there should be a cause and this cause must be the ultimate one which unites, directs, guides and is present in everything. These philosophers helped us to develop a truth seeking mind. They emphasized that it is our duty to disclose the mysteries of the relevant issues in the universe where we live. All the above Ionian philosophers had their reason and logic in solving and answering the questions. All generations in all periods had their existential problems. The wise men of each period have suggested their insights and visions to solve the problems and for a better life. We must have an integral vision on the reality to propose a right view on the universe. When the Ionian philosophers were trying to highlight an aspect of the universe, for example, Change for Heraclitus, he ignored the other reality of Permanence of the universe. Since Pythagoras was a mathematician he ignored many other aspects of the truth about the universe, while stressing the concept number. However, all these philosophers laid foundation for a systematic philosophy which was developed by Plato and Aristotle.

10.8 KEY WORDS

Reality: Reality is that which exists objectively.

Existence: Existence is that which is definite in the mind or outside the mind.

Being: Being is that which is in some way or something.

Change: Change is transition or passage from one state to another.

Mind: Mind is the subjective, comprehensive structure of a rational being.

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10.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

1) According to Thales, water was the original stuff. Because, water has the potency to become solid, liquid and vaporous forms. It evaporates in the heat of the sun, and according to Thales it is the transformation of water into fire. Water comes down again in the form of

rain and it is transformed into earth. Water is essential to life. The reason is that nourishment, seed, and heat which are essential to life, contain moisture or wet. Hence water is the primordial principle, and all things (*physis*) were water (*arche*) and are water (*physis*). Water is the material cause of all things.

2) According to Anaximander, the primary principle and the ultimate end of all things is indeterminate. He named this as the material cause. It is different from any finite things. It is infinite. From this indeterminate cause emerged all the heavens and the earth. It is "Ageless and Eternal" This principle controls all elements, but it is not to be confused with these same elements. This primordial principle, called in Greek *apeiron*, will be divine, immobile, not generated, immutable, venerable, an absolute justice. This is the reality behind all cause and effect.

Check Your Progress II

1) Pythagoras taught his ethical principles to develop among his followers the political virtues, to teach them to act for the good of the state, to subordinate them to the whole. Accordingly, the individual should learn to control himself or herself, to abase his or her passions, to harmonise his or her soul; he or she should have respect for the authority of elders, teachers and the state. His ethics was centred round the purification and purity.

2) Pythagoras regarded numbers spatially. One is the point; two is the line; three is surface; and four is the solid. To say that all things are numbers, it would mean that all bodies are of points or units in space, which when taken together form a number. Points, lines, and surface are therefore the real units which form all material bodies in nature, and in this sense all material bodies must be considered as numbers. He believed that the things were the copies or imitations of number. The whole phenomena of the universe can be expressed under the concept of number.

Check Your Progress III

1) Heraclitus says: "To be ethical is to live a rational life, to obey the dictates of reason, which is the same for us all, the same for the whole world."

Morality means respect for law, self-discipline, control of the passions; to be moral is to

govern oneself by rational principles.

"Character is a man's guardian divinity"; "It is hard to contend with passion; for whatever it desires to get it buys at the cost of the soul". "To me one man is ten thousand if he be the best". "Man lights for himself a light in the night, while his eyes are shut: alive, he touches the dead with what is turned off; awake, he touches the sleeping" (fragment B 26). He is negating the sensory knowledge for the access into the truth. His ethical conception is growing from the external to the internal and from internal to the celestial. "No matter how much you travel, and even though you travel every road, you will never reach the boundaries of soul, so profound is the logos it possesses" (fragment B 45).

2) The word '*logos*' of Heraclitus has a decisive philosophical meaning. The philosophical character of the '*logos*' consists of its value in unifying the universe. The '*logos*' brings the contraries as harmony or as the "coexistence of contraries" or equilibrium. The '*logos*' is not outside the contraries, but is their immanent law. Guthrie interprets that the harmony of contraries contains three affirmations. They are: 1) everything is *made up of contraries*; 2) the *contraries are identical*; 3) *war is their creative force* and the constituent director.

UNIT 11

SOCRATES*

Structure

11.0 Objectives

11.1 Introduction

11.2 Socratic Problem

11.3 Socratic Method

11.4 Epistemology

11.5 Socratic Ethics

11.6 Socratic Schools

11.7 Let Us Sum Up

11.8 Key Words

11.9 Further Readings and References

11.10 Answers to Check Your Progress

11.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit we explain the basic philosophy of Socrates: Socratic problem, Socratic Method, his epistemology and his ethics, and Socratic School such as Cynicism, Cyrenaic School, The School of Megara and the Elian and Eretrian Schools.

By the end of this Unit you should be able to:

- Heighten your critical thinking
 - Develop your own personal investigation and reasoned argument for answering life questions
 - Comprehend Socratic Method
 - Apply his ethical principles in one's life
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11.1 INTRODUCTION

Socrates was born in Athens in 469 and lived over a span of seventy years filling entirely the

* Dr. Sebastian Palamutatil, St. Joseph Pontifical Institute, Aluwa. This unit is taken from BPY-003 (Unit 4, Block 2).

second half of fifth century B.C Athens' cultural life. He died at the age of 70 in 399. He was the son of a sculptor and a midwife. He used to say that his art, like his mother's, was midwifery, the art of delivering children in the name of truth. The voice of Socrates was taken to be the voice of one's conscience. This indicates that he was considered a man of God and, to some extent, a mystic. He was also a devote citizen of Athens. He lived his adult life in Athens engaging in open philosophical discussion which often included questions of ethics, religion, and politics.

Socrates went against the traditional way of accepting the authorities of respected poets such as Homer, Hesiod and others as the proper foundations for answering question about the aforementioned topics. He insisted, instead, that personal investigation and reasoned argument alone could constitute a proper basis for answering these questions. He believed that he had been given a divine mission for acquiring knowledge by questioning every so-called wise man or in other words the authority and traditions. His divine mission of search for knowledge by questioning wise men brought him into trouble. His search for knowledge led to him to the acceptance of one supreme God, which was not consistent with the then Greek notions of God. Social authorities and considered this as destructive because, according to them, it involved subverting accepted beliefs. As a consequence he had to face trial before the popular court for the following three charges:

1. For denying the national gods
2. For setting up of new gods
3. For corrupting the youths.

Although he denied all these charges in defense, he was condemned to death in 399. The last words of this great Athenian Master were: "Now it is time that we were going, I to die and you to live, but which of us has the happier prospect is unknown to anyone but God."

11.2 SOCRATIC PROBLEM

Although his opposition to the blind acceptance of tradition and authority allied him with Sophists such as Protagoras, Gorgias and Prodicus, he was far more committed to know the inner man than the Sophists. Unlike the Sophists, he was in search for the truth and knowledge about the universal validity of the moral laws. For Socrates, this search was intimately connected with the chief problem of knowing what man is. The inscription at Delphi, "man, know thyself" haunted him constantly.

“I can’t as yet ‘know myself’, as the inscription at Delphi enjoins, and so long as that ignorance remains it seems to me ridiculous to inquire into extraneous matters. Consequently I don’t bother about such things, but accept the current beliefs about them, and direct my inquiries, as I have just said, rather to myself.” *Phaedrus* 230a.

Although for the Sophists *homo mensura* (man is the measure) was the maxim as to the acquisition of knowledge, the testimonies of Protagoras and Gorgias proved that no valid knowledge about the truth of the universal validity of moral laws was possible. Socrates was dissatisfied with this sophistic position. For Socrates knowing one’s own self implied an extensive analysis of knowledge.

This analysis aims at determining three things.

1. The universal validity of moral principle;
2. The laws of the State;
3. The nature of religious faith.

With regard to these points Socrates did not accept any previous philosophical positions, predominantly that of the Sophists. Socrates accused the Sophists that instead of giving importance to reason, they gave importance to perception. He again charged that they did not distinguish between reason and perception and reason and feeling. Consequently, Sophists ended up in skepticism and nihilism as regards epistemology and conventionalism in morality and politics. Hence, Socrates task was to present a far more universally valid knowledge as well as universally valid moral and political laws. The inquiry into the possibility of universal knowledge as well as universal moral and political laws led him to believe that that virtue is the knowledge of the good through concepts. Concepts are formed by reason which is one and the same for all people. Thus, he concludes that if virtue is the knowledge through concepts and if concepts are formed by reason which is one and same in all, then knowledge is universal; so are moral and political laws. But how do we attain this? In what follows we discuss his method of attaining universally valid knowledge.

11.3 SOCRATIC METHOD

Socrates insisted that personal investigations and reasoned arguments alone could constitute a proper basis for answering questions about the universality of knowledge as well as the universality of moral and political laws. In Socrates’ case this personal investigations and

reasoned arguments assume a conversational form i.e., a form of dialogue. This dialogue, however, was limited to ethical subject-matter alone, therefore it included the justice, virtue, knowledge, temperance etc. The principal aim of such a dialogue was to know his own self. He called it the method of “elenchus,” the Greek for ‘putting to the test’ or ‘refutation.’ This dialogue consisted in skillfully questioning others who claim to be wise men and drawing out their views with regards to virtue, justice, and so on. The objective of such dialogue was to show the inadequacies of their views which would in turn reveal that those who claimed to know really did not know. Thus, Socrates believed that by such a method he could show that he was wiser than others inasmuch as he knew that he did not know. Socratic method has two particular dimensions. First, regarding its *modus operandi*, it is dialectical; second, regarding its aim, it is *maieutiké* or midwifery method.

11.3.1 Dialectical Method

The dialectical method is an art of argument by skilful questions and answer, the aim of which is to arrive at answers with the fewest possible words which should be precise and to the point. The first stage of such a method usually started with a generally accepted statement with regard to the subject-matter. This generally accepted statement is called hypothesis. This is followed by an anti-thesis, which might show the absurd consequences of the hypothesis. At the second stage the dialectic method is supposed to lead to the contradiction of the hypothesis and its possible rejection. The rejection of one hypothesis, might lead to the acceptance of another hypothesis which contains less contradictions. Thus, by the dialectical method the investigator is led on to newer hypotheses with fewer and fewer contradictions. Socrates himself never found any absolutely correct answer to the questions about ethics and conduct of life. But it did not mean that the dialectical method was a fruitless one. For Socrates it was a passionate love of the philosopher of reaching absolute knowledge. For, according to Socrates, absolute knowledge lies in constant search and not in reaching and grasping one. Thus, it seems that the aim of the dialectical method was to show that philosophy for Socrates is a search for wisdom and not to arrive at the absolute knowledge.

11.3.2 Midwifery Method

Although he followed and advocated dialectical method, he called his method “midwifery”. Although it has allusions to his mother whose profession was midwifery, what he meant by this was his intention of getting others to produce true ideas in their mind, so that they might

do right action. “He wanted to give birth to true ideas in the clear form of definition, not for a speculative but for a practical end.”

11.4 EPISTEMOLOGY

As we have seen, Socrates was dissatisfied with all branches of previous philosophy, particularly philosophy of knowledge. For him previous conceptions of knowledge were presumptive, relative and conventional. He opposed them and directed his capabilities to proving the emptiness of the previous scheme of knowledge. As we have seen already the Socratic problem was about to find out universal valid knowledge. At the same time his philosophical enquiry was ethical in character, which aims at the discovery of his own self. Hence, one could easily conclude that by knowledge Socrates meant the knowledge of justice, virtue and eternal or religious ideas. Socrates believed that real knowledge of justice, virtue and eternal ideas are already present in man. This knowledge is dormant and waiting to be recalled by skilful questioning. How this knowledge is present in man? This question led Socrates to believe in the immortality of the soul. For, he seemed to have believed that the immortality of the soul would enable man to have real knowledge about justices, virtue and eternal ideas. Since soul is immortal it “has seen all things both here and in the other world, has learned everything that is. So we need not be surprised if it can recall the knowledge of virtue or anything else which, as we see, it once possessed.” But, how do we become aware of this already present knowledge in us? Here we find the structure of Socratic epistemology. Aristotle categorically states in *Metaphysics* that we owe two things to Socrates: “inductive reasoning and universal definition.” Here we find the structure of Socratic epistemology: knowledge is achieved through inductive reasoning and universal definition. Thus, according to Socrates, both universal definition and inductive reasoning are the means of reawakening knowledge which is dormant in all human beings.

11.4.1 Definition

We have seen that Socratic Method is conversational in which questions are put forward to get appropriate answers. When Socrates asks a question, he asks *What is*, for example justice. He is asking for a definition rather than a mere answer. To define a thing is to state what it is, its *essence*. Thus, definition leads to *essence*. Since definition leads to *essence*, knowing to

define a thing means knowing that thing. It was a new approach to knowledge, which leads one to say what things are, to discover their *essence*. Such an approach was absent among previous thinkers, namely the Sophists, although the Eleatic philosophy held it be their prime concern. “From this point originates all the fertility of Socrates’ thinking, turning toward the quest of truth, centered ...in the view point of being, from which the Sophists had turned away.” It is, thus, argued that in Socrates there is an attempt to return to study what realities really are.

11.4.2 Induction

By Socratic induction is not meant what later logicians, such as Francis Bacon and John Stuart Mill, understood as induction. As has been already seen, in contrast to the Sophists, Socrates did not depend on perception alone as source of knowledge. Perceptive knowledge may lead to relative knowledge, according Socrates. His inquiry aims at the absolute knowledge and not relative one. Since for Socrates knowledge is achieved through concept, he made sharp distinction between perception and conception. By concept is meant the universal idea of a class, for example, cowness for the class of cows. But, mere observation of a number of particular things cannot yield the conception of cowness. Then, how do we form a concept of it?

A concept is formed by a recollection or intuition of the universal which may happen quite suddenly. In Plato’s *Phaedo* Socrates seems to suggest that this recollection takes place as if re- discovering a long-forgotten thing rather suddenly. Recollection is something like an intuition of a mystic. Socrates was really a mystic and for him knowledge is to be found in mystic intuition of universals. Although, perception plays the role of the prompting agent, he warns that senses are really more of hindrance than a help in the realization of universal idea.

“Surely the soul can best reflect when it is free of all distractions such as hearing or sight or pain or pleasure of any kind- that is, when it ignores the body and becomes as far as possible independent, avoiding all contacts and associations as much as it can, in its search for reality.”

He even held that only after leaving the body, a seeker of knowledge will have wisdom in its fullness and purity. Nevertheless, in this life one can attain true knowledge provided he leads

a life of mortification of the body. Thus, Socrates even proposes a kind of asceticism for the attainment of true knowledge which enables one to conduct his life in the light of moral, religious and political laws.

11.5 SOCRATIC ETHICS

Socrates ethics is principally concerned with man. Although this concern was not new in the early Greek philosophical traditions, Socrates considered man from a different point of view. The core of Socrates' ethics is the concept of virtue. Virtue, according to Socrates, is the deepest and most basic propensity of man. This virtue is *knowledge*.

“... if there exists any good thing different, and not associated with knowledge, virtue will not necessarily be any form of knowledge. If on the other hand knowledge embraces everything that is good, we shall be right to suspect that virtue is knowledge.”

If virtue is knowledge it can be known and consequently taught. This is the meaning of the imperative “know yourself.” Know yourself means bring your inner self to light. Through knowledge man gains possession of himself whereby he becomes his own master.

11.5.1 Virtue is Knowledge

According to Socrates virtue is the highest aim and greatest good one has to seek in the life. He also insisted that if it is to be highest aim and the greatest good it must have universal consistence and be the same for all. Now, what is universally consistent and the same for all is knowledge which is obtained through concept by the use of reason which is common in all. The relation between virtue and knowledge is inseparable. For Socrates thinks that health, wealth, beauty, courage, temperance etc., which are customarily considered to be various forms of good, are good only if they are guided by wisdom; if guided by folly they could be considered forms of evil.

As has been already seen, concepts are given by reason and not by perception of particular facts. Since concepts are already in human mind, they need to be enkindled by questioning. If morality is the knowledge of the idea of good through concepts, then who can obtain this? Socrates held that the Sophists did not obtain it, because they depended on perception rather reason. He believed that the seeker who follows the dictates of reason rather than perception attains it. One who follows the dictates of the reason recollects the concepts of good already present in the mind. For, as in his epistemology, the real concept of good is always

a matter of recollection by means of reflection on the idea of good.

11.5.2 Virtue is One or The Unity of Virtue

Ethics, according to Socrates, has yet another dimension. It does not stop at mere acquisition of the knowledge of the ideas of good. The knowledge of the idea of the good aims at controlling all other ideas and ultimately guides the whole man, including his will and feeling, and necessarily leads him to good actions. Hence ethical knowledge tends to culture the soul which ultimately leads the soul towards regaining its pure, pristine glory. For Socrates this is for this reason for believing that “no one does wrong knowingly” and “that knowledge is virtue.”

Socrates says that virtue or goodness is one, although practices differently in different forms of good. In Plato's *Protagoras* Socrates says that although wisdom, temperance, courage, justice and holiness are the principal forms of virtue, there is one single reality which underlies them all. Yet on another occasion, in Plato's *Meno*, we find Socrates looking for one virtue which permeates all other virtues.

Socrates explained this by means of an example of a healthy body. According to him all kinds of bodily excellence follow from one single health of the body, similarly, all kinds of virtue follow from the health of the soul. What is meant by the health of the soul? The soul has different functions. The health of the soul follows from orderly arrangement of these different functions. In Plato's *Gorgias*, we see Socrates saying that the functions of the soul are reasoning, temper, and desire. The function of reasoning aims at attaining wisdom, temper means the courage, and desire is the soberness. The health of the souls depends on the organized relation that these functions hold to each other. An orderly arrangement of these functions is something like the following. Wisdom commands and temper assists in the execution of these commands, while desire furnishes the material basis for the actualization of these commands. The aim of the oneness or unity of the virtue is the ultimate happiness of the individual. “A successful functioning of the harmonious activities under the regulation of reason yields happiness.” Thus the Socratic notion of virtue as one means “the self of a good man is an organic unity of all its functions.”

The Socratic notion of virtue as one leads us finally to conclude that there is one Idea of the Good which underlies all the ethical activities of man which are intrinsically good. Socrates speaks in the Plato's *Republic* that...in the region of the known the last thing to be

seen and hardly seen is the idea of good, and that when seen must need point us to the conclusion that this is indeed the cause for all things of all that is right and beautiful, giving birth in the visible world to light, and author of light and itself in the intelligible world being the authentic source of truth and reason, and that anyone who is to act wisely in private or public must have caught sight of this.

Check Your Progress I

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

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

1. Discuss briefly on Socratic Method.

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2. Explain the Socrates' philosophy of ethics.

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11.6 SOCRATIC SCHOOLS

Socrates' dream was to enlighten the minds of men so that they might be able to follow the dictates of their inner self through self-investigation and questioning all sources of knowledge. But he did not found any school nor did he write a single word so that his dream might be perpetuated either through institutions or through words. "But various thinkers, who had been disciples of Socrates to a greater or lesser extent, emphasized one or other point in his teachings, combining it also with elements culled from other sources" founded various schools in the name of Socrates. Although he did not found any school, he left behind a

Socratic circle, among them his famous pupil Plato, who founded the Academy. If we leave aside Plato, the members of the Socratic circle who left a succession behind them are Antisthenes, Aristippus of Cyrene, Euclides of Megara and Phaedo of Elis. They are considered respectively as the founders of Cynicism, Cyrenaic School, Megarian School, and Elian School. It is these groups that are traditionally known as the Socratic schools. In what follows, a brief sketch of each of these schools is given.

11.6.1 Cynicism

Cynicism originated in the mid-fourth century BC and it was arguably the most original and influential branch of the Socratic tradition in antiquity. Antisthenes, a pupil of Socrates, and Diogenes of Sinope were considered to be founding fathers of Cynicism. Cynicism is noted for its radical re-examination of the animal nature of the human being. Cynics, which is a nickname self-imposed on the founders of Cynicism, literally means ‘doglike’ or ‘disciples of the dog.’

Cynicism made use of innovative and influential literary tradition of satire, parody and aphorism in order to spoil the dominant ideologies of the time. It proposed a new morality mainly based on two things: first, by minimizing creaturely needs in pursuit of self-sufficiency and second, by maximizing both freedom of speech and freedom of action. The former is achieved by physical training and the later by open defiance of the well-established social taboos. They followed an anti-politics which sees existing governments as a betrayal of human nature. Cynics considered traditional culture as an obstacle to happiness. Cynics advocated an immediate relationship to nature and proposed that man is the ‘citizen of the cosmos’.

The Cynics made concerted attempt to demonstrate that happiness does not depend on society or on any other circumstances, but wholly on the autonomous self which is achieved by Cynics’ discipline based on exemplary acts and corporeal training. The Cynics defaced the value which philosophers attached to theoretical disciplines as well as the conventional value which society attached to such externals as money, status, family and political power.

If cynics had a different conception of morality and conditions for happiness, it was because they differed in their conception of the human being. Diogenes of Sinope gave a different picture of man than that had been traditionally held to be the ideal. Diogenes held an extreme version of cynicism. He believed that human beings are animals who have much to learn about

freedom and self-sufficiency from their fellow creatures. It is argued that the use of animals as examples served to illustrate the intrinsic superiority of nature to culture. Diogenes even preferred to live like dogs. It was to demonstrate that this would enable man to test the limits of his species by living like a dog and to realize the unlimitedness of freedom that animals are enjoying.

11.6.2 The Cyrenaic School

Aristippus of Cyrene founded the Cyrenaic School. He was born about 435 B.C. In Cyrene he seems to have become acquainted with the teaching of Protagoras and afterward, while he was in Athens, he was in relation with Socrates. Aristippus held that our sensation alone gives us certain knowledge. This is in sharp contrast to the Socratic notion that it is concepts of universals and not perceptions of particulars which provides us with certain knowledge. If sensation alone gives us certain knowledge, then the purpose of such knowledge should be to obtain pleasure.

Aristippus taught that sensation consists in movement. When the movement is gentle, the sensation is pleasurable; when it is rough, there is pain; when movement is imperceptible or when there is no movement at all, there is neither pleasure nor pain. The rough movement cannot be the ethical end. Ethical end cannot consist in the neutrality of the absence of movement. It consists in the gentle movement which produces pleasure. Thus, pleasure become the ethical end of human conduct.

Pleasure, then, according to Aristippus, is the end of life. What kind of pleasure constitutes the end of life? Aristippus says that positive and present pleasure is the end of life. The Cyrenaics believed that the bodily pleasure alone is the positive and present pleasure. If the Cyrenaics held that bodily pleasure alone is the end of life, then could they not be considered and pure hedonists? Indeed, as it seems from the earliest traditions, they were aware of this charge. Hence, Aristippus, admonishes his followers that “the wise man take cognizance of the future.” The wise man, in order to preserve cheerfulness and contentment, will limit his desires. This precautionary attitude of Aristippus points to the fact that although the pleasure is the ethical end of life, “wise man needs the judgment in order to enable him evaluate the different pleasures of life.”

Thus, we can find an apparent contradiction the teaching of Aristippus; a contradiction between the principle of pleasure and the principle of judgment. This contradiction led to a divergence of views among his disciples such as *Thoedorus the Atheist*, *Hegesias*, and

Anniceris. All of them held different views and different interpretations of the original teaching of their master.

11.6.3 The School of Megara

The Megarian school was founded by Euclides of Megara. He was intimate associate of Socrates, but prior to his association with Socrates he had been influenced by the Eleatic philosophy. Thus, the main doctrines of this school were both ethical and metaphysical. Their main ethical doctrine was the unity of good. Euclides held that “the good is one thing, called by many names: sometimes wisdom, sometimes god, and at other times intellect etc.” He denied the existence of its supposed opposites. It is argued that Euclides built this upon the Socratic ethical conception that virtue is one and Parmenidean “metaphysical thesis that all names, even those supposedly opposite to each other, in reality refer to a single being.”

11.6.4 The Elian and Eretrian Schools

According to reliable traditions, these schools were founded by one of Socrates’s associates, Phaedo of Elis and an Eretrian called Menedemus of Eretria. Hence the name the Elian and Eretrian School. Phaedo of Elis seems to have been influenced by the Megarian School in his use of dialectics, whereas Menedemus was primarily interested in the Socratic-Megarian ethics, holding the unity of virtue and knowledge.

For Socrates virtue is knowledge and knowledge is based of the Idea of Good. Thus, for Socrates “morality is the universal knowledge of the Good. For good is advantageous for man and contributes to his happiness.” What is happiness then? We are told that Socrates never said anything definite about Good and happiness. This ambiguity that Socrates had left behind led to various interpretations. We have already seen some of them. Yet, there are some traditions that bear remote affinity to Socrates, but in an extremely exaggerated manner. We mention two of them, namely, Stoicism and Epicureanism. The philosophers of Stoic school are intrinsically related to the earlier ethical philosophers in the Socratic tradition, especially to the Cynics. The centre of Stoic concern is man, the wise man. Epicureanism, on the other hand, is an extreme exaggeration of Socrates view of happiness as the end of ethics. They developed this notion in the hedonistic line.

Check Your Progress II

- Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. Write a short note on Cynicism.

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2. What is the basic teaching of the Cyrenaic school?

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11.6 LET US SUM UP

As we have seen, Socrates was a Classical Greek philosopher. Credited as one of the founders of Western philosophy, he is an enigmatic figure known only through the classical accounts of his students. Plato's dialogues are the most comprehensive accounts of Socrates to survive from antiquity. Through his portrayal in Plato's dialogues, Socrates has become renowned for his contribution to the field of ethics, and it is this Platonic Socrates who also lends his name to the concepts of Socratic irony and the Socratic method, or *elenchus*. The latter remains a commonly used tool in a wide range of discussions, and is a type of pedagogy in which a series of questions are asked not only to draw individual answers, but to encourage fundamental insight into the issue at hand. It is Plato's Socrates that also made important and lasting contributions to the fields of epistemology and logic, and the influence of his ideas and approach remains strong in providing a foundation for much western philosophy that followed.

11.7 KEY WORDS

Enigma: An enigma is a puzzle, something mysterious or inexplicable, or a riddle or difficult problem. The word can also be used to describe a mysterious or secretive person.

Cynicism: Cynicism originally comprised the various philosophies of a group of ancient Greeks called the Cynics, founded by Antisthenes in about the 4th century BC. The Cynics rejected all conventions, whether of religion, manners, housing, dress, or decency, advocating the pursuit of virtue in a simple and unmaterialistic lifestyle.

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11.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

1. Socratic method was called method of dialogue. He called it the method of "elenchus," the Greek for 'putting to the test' or 'refutation.' This dialogue consisted in skillfully questioning others who claim to be wise men and drawing out their views. The objective of such dialogue was to show the inadequacies of their views which would in turn reveal that those who claimed to know really did not know. It has two particular dimensions. First,

regarding its modus operandi; it is dialectical; second, regarding its aim it is Maieutiké or midwifery method.

The dialectical method is an art of argument by skilful questions and answer, the aim of which is to arrive at answers with the fewest possible words which should be precise and to the point. The first stage of such a method usually started with a generally accepted statement (hypothesis) with regard to the subject-matter. This is followed by an anti- thesis, which might show the absurd consequences of the hypothesis. At the second stage the dialectic method is supposed to lead to the contradiction of the hypothesis and its possible rejection. The rejection of one hypothesis, might lead to the acceptance of another hypothesis which contains less contradictions. Thus, by the dialectical method the investigator is led on to newer hypotheses with fewer and fewer contradictions.

2. Socrates held the universality of morality. Socrates argument is that as reason is one and the same in all, so moral laws are universally valid. Moral laws are not based on one's feeling and desires, but they are based on rational thought. Hence, there is an intrinsic connection between knowledge and ethics.

Socrates ethics is principally concerned with human. Its core is the concept of virtue. This virtue is *knowledge*. If virtue is knowledge it can be known and consequently taught. This is the meaning of the imperative "know yourself." Know yourself means bring your inner self to light. Through knowledge man gains possession of himself whereby he becomes his own master. The knowledge of the idea of the good aims at controlling all other ideas and ultimately guides the whole man, including his will and feeling, and necessarily leads him to good actions. Hence ethical knowledge tends to culture the soul which ultimately leads the soul towards regaining its pure, pristine glory.

Check Your Progress II

1. Cynicism made use of innovative and influential literary tradition of satire, parody and aphorism in order to spoil the dominant ideologies of the time. It proposed a new morality mainly based on two things: first, by minimizing creaturely needs in pursuit of self-sufficiency and second, by maximizing both freedom of speech and freedom of action. The former is achieved by physical training and the later by open defiance of the well-

established social taboos. They followed an anti-politics which sees existing governments as a betrayal of human nature. Cynics considered traditional culture as an obstacle to happiness.

2. Aristippus held that our sensation alone gives us certain knowledge. If sensation alone gives us certain knowledge, then the purpose of such knowledge should be to obtain pleasure. Pleasure is the end of life. Positive and present pleasure is the end of life. The Cyrenaics believed that the bodily pleasure alone is the positive and present pleasure. Hence, Aristippus, admonishes his followers that although the pleasure is the ethical end of life, “wise man needs the judgment in order to enable him evaluate the different pleasures of life.”



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UNIT 12

PLATO*

Structure

12.0 Objectives

12.1 Introduction

12.2 Plato's Life and Writings

12.3 Philosophy of Plato

12.4 Let Us Sum Up

12.5 Key Words

12.6 Further Readings and References

12.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

12.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit we explain the Philosophical thoughts of Plato, taking into consideration the historical background. In the course of time, we too will be touching various philosophical problems of one and many, appearance and reality, permanence and change, etc. from the perspective of Plato.

By the end of this Unit you should be able to:

- understand ethics, politics, metaphysics or epistemology in historical and political context;
- comprehend the necessary relation between ethics and politics;
- move from ethical to metaphysical and gnosophical problems; and
- understand his theory of knowledge, ideas, man, state, justice, etc.

12.1 INTRODUCTION

The philosophic spirit of Socrates lived among his disciples, most of whom remain unknown, some remembered, but only Plato apotheosised him. To him the words of Socrates to Crito were a plan of life: "Do you then be reasonable, Crito, and do not mind whether the teachers of philosophy are good or bad, but think only of philosophy herself. Try and examine her well and truly, and if she be evil seek to turn away all men from her, and not your sons only:

* Dr. Josh Alampaseri, Satyanilayam, Chennai. This unit is taken from BPY-003 (Unit 1, Block 3).

but if she be what I believe that she is, then follow her and serve her, you and your house, as the saying is, and be of good cheer.” Though more than two thousand years have passed since Plato lifted the intellectual life in Greece to new heights and drew all eyes toward the new Olympus of his academy, the character of any philosophy is still identified by the relation it has to that of Plato

12.2 PLATO’S LIFE AND WRITINGS

During the fourth or fifth year of Peloponnesian war (428/27 B.C), Plato was born in Athens. By birth he was an aristocrat. He was originally called Aristocles, and only later he was given the name Plato (broad). Whether this was because of his wide forehead, robust physique, or breath of literary expression is not known. At the age of twenty he came into contact with Socrates, and this was decisive in his life. After Socrates’ death he went to Megara, where he studied Eliatic philosophy under Euclid. Later he returned to Athens, where he wrote his first works. Between 390 and 388 B.C., he travelled extensively to acquaint himself with the principle schools and to broaden his outlook. While visiting the court of Dionysius-I of Syracuse he outspokenly criticised the tyrant and was sold into slavery. Rescued from the market of Aegina by Anniceris, a stranger from Cyrene, he returned to Athens. About 387 B.C., he founded his famous school in the grove of Academus (whence the name “Academy”) where he taught mathematics and philosophy by both lectures and dialogue. In 367 and 361 B.C., Plato interrupted his work in the Academy for further visits to Syracuse, presumably to assist in the realisation of his ideal state. After these frustrating attempts in practical statecraft, i.e., trying to establish his ideal state, Plato returned to Athens and devoted all his attention to philosophising, teaching and writing in the Academy. He died in 348/7 B.C. when he was 80/1 years old, and was buried in the grounds of the Academy. But his philosophy would live on and together with that of his own pupil Aristotle would lay foundations for all that would be called philosophy later. In a rather loose sense, everyone who thinks about philosophy at all either is a “Platonist” or an “Aristotelian.” Not without cause did Alfred North Whitehead wrote that “the safest general characterisation of the European philosophical tradition is that it consists in a series of footnotes to Plato.”

12.2.1 Plato’s Writings

The traditional Platonic canon, arranged in tetralogies by Tharasyllus, a contemporary of

the Emperor Tiberius contains thirty-five dialogues and thirteen letters, which as a single group bring the total to thirty six works. The authenticity of some of these works is disputed.

12.2.1.1 Chronological development of his thought

Initial Socratic Period (399-388/7 B.C)

These dialogues recreate the spirit and mission of Socratic inquiry concerning *arte`* or ethico- political virtue and his analysis of moral concepts. As a group these writings are notably anti- sophistic and, in a manner characteristic of Socrates' "non-knowing" most of them emphasise the need for seeking further enlightenment by ending without reaching a definite conclusion.

- 2 Apology: Socrates' trial and defence.
- 3 Critio: Socrates' refusal to escape after the trial, and his adherence to principles.
- 4 Euthyphro: On the nature of piety and impiety, of which Socrates was accused.
- 5 Laches: On courage.
- 6 Ion: Against poets and rhapsodists.
- 7 Protagoras: The sophist's theory that *arte* can be taught Vs the Socratic *paideia* or theory that all virtue is one and cannot be taught.
- 8 Charmides: On temperance and moderation.
- 9 Lysis: On friendship.

Transitional Period (387-380 B.C.)

With the advancement of his intellectual and literary powers, Plato not only intensified his polemics against the Sophists, but built the Socratic concept into a metaphysical theory of ideas. Where the earlier dialogues had been limited to one face of virtue, the dialogues of this constructive stage broaden and deepen the speculation concerning the more important questions of knowledge and the good life. This is the beginning of his systematic philosophy.

- 10 Georgias: On Justice, and against the rhetoric and power politics of the sophists in the city-state.
- 11 Meno: On the question of "virtue-knowledge" by *anamnesis* or recollection.
- 12 Etydemus: On Wisdom that brings happiness, and against the fallacies of later sophists.

- 13 Lesser Hippias: Comparison between those who err voluntarily and involuntarily.
- 14 Greater Hippias: On the beautiful, and a theory of language.
- 15 Cratylus: On language, and on the difference between immutable and nonsensical realities and mutable, sensible phenomenon.
- 16 Menexenus: Parody on rhetoric in a funeral oratio

Period of Maturity (380-361)

At the height of his genius, Plato fully evolved his own ontological theory of Ideas and expressed the ramifications of this doctrine in epistemology, psychology, ethics, politics, and aesthetics. Hence, the third group is made up of dialogues which either supply the speculative insights to new fields or subject them to new facts and difficulties that are raised from other points of view.

- 17 Symposium (or Banquet): On inspiration by Eros (love) of the soul; its ascent from shadowy to the true beauty.
- 18 Phaedo: Clearer revelation of the theory of Ideas; the immortality and destiny of the soul - discussions set against Socrates' last days.
- 19 Republic: On ideal state, the primacy of Good, the four grades of cognition and the tripartition of the soul.
- 20 Phaedrus: Philosophic rhetoric, the soul, its transmigration, vision of Ideas in pre-existence, anamnesis and the structure of the world of Ideas.
- 21 Theaetetus: The relation of knowledge to unchanging objects and to other cognitional experiences, such as sense-perception and right opinion.
- 22 Parmenides: defence of the theory of ideas and introduction of mathematical and axiological concepts; the problem of one and many.
- 23 Sophist: Critical consideration of Ideas and of change, life, soul, intellection, analytic search for a definition of Sophist.

Period of Old Age

In the later period of philosophic maturity, as his dramatic powers declined and his critical acumen increased, Plato was moved by reflection upon new problems and socio-political changes to refine his philosophy. With brilliant intellectual apperception, he critically elaborated on his logic, and found new interest in the questions of the cosmos,

- 24 Statesman (or Politicus): Definition of a statesman by the method of division;

importance of knowledge in the true ruler.

25 Philebus: Development of Plato's ethical doctrine by attention to concrete conditions of pleasure to good; enhancement of the theory of Ideas by further study of unity and multiplicity.

26 Timaeus: Cosmological discourse on the origin of the physical world and the role of the Demiurge.

27 Critias: Contrast of the ideal state to Atlantis with its imperialist sea power.

28 Laws: Modification of the Republic's ideal state according to concrete conditions of life.

29 Epinomis: Continuation of the Laws; on the wisdom of the ruler and divine cult.

30 Letters VII and VIII: Politics and the relevance of Ideas.

12.2.2 The Platonic Encounter

From the question of Thales to the time of Plato different problems had risen in philosophical speculation. Such as:

- 30.0. The problem of one and many
- 30.1. The problem of appearance and reality
- 30.2. The problem of permanence and change
- 30.3. The mysticism and mathematics of Pythagoreans
- 30.4. Physis and nomos
- 30.5. The scepticism of the sophists.

Politically too changes had taken place such as;

- 30.6. Decline of Athens
- 30.7. Corruption and nepotism
- 30.8. The emergence of democracy and
- 30.9. Condemnation of Socrates.

Plato realises that there is some truth in all the positions held by his predecessors; all of them had valid intuition to the nature of reality.

12.2.3 Situation

Plato encountered problems of human, the world, and the divine within the ethico-political context of the Greek city-states. “When I was young,” Plato wrote in his mid-seventies in the manifesto to the Friends and Associates of Dion, “my experience was the same as that of many others. I thought that as soon as I became my own master I would immediately enter into public life. But it happened that fateful change occurred in the political situation.” Plato went on to describe the state of affairs: the tyranny of the Thirty, the unjust condemnation of Socrates by the “democrats,” the abandonment of “the principles of our forefathers,” the increase of “corruption in legislation and custom” in fine, “everything disintegrating around me.” Struck by this all- inclusive decline of Athens and the other city states, “I came to the conclusion that one and all they are badly governed.”

12.2.4 Transition from Ethical to Metaphysical and Gnoseological Problem

Plato saw that no real reform of the fundamentals of politics could take place without a corresponding reform of man’s conceptions about nature and reality itself.

Do absolute justice or courage, infect, exist, or only individual just and courageous acts exist? What is really good, beautiful etc.? What is reality?

He was deeply impressed by the mathematical proportion and harmony in the universe.

Check your progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

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

1. In short describe the life of Plato and enumerate his important works.

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2. What were the concerns that gave rise to Plato's philosophical thinking?

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12.3 PHILOSOPHY OF PLATO

12.3.1 Theory of Knowledge

Plato, first of all, argues negatively that knowledge cannot be mere sensation for even the dog, which has sensation, would have knowledge then. His positive theory of knowledge is given in the famous allegory of the cave. (The Republic, Book V, ch. XXV)

12.3.1.1 The Allegory of the Cave

Plato begins his presentation by describing a scenario in which what people take to be real would in fact be an illusion. He asks Glaucon to imagine a cave inhabited by prisoners who have been chained and held immobile since childhood: not only are their arms and legs held in place, but their heads are also fixed, compelled to gaze at a wall in front of them. Behind the prisoners is a fire, and between the fire and the prisoners is a raised walkway, along which puppets of various animals, plants and other things are moved. The puppets cast shadows on the wall, and the prisoners see these shadows. They hear echoes off the wall from the noise produced from the walkway. It is reasonable to think that the prisoners would take the shadows to be real things and the echoes to be real sounds.

Suppose that a prisoner is freed and sees the things that had cast the shadows, he would not recognize them; he would believe the shadows on the wall to be more real than what he sees. Suppose further that the men were compelled to look at the fire, he would be struck blind and try to turn his gaze back toward the shadows, as toward what he can see clearly and hold to be real. Suppose someone forcibly dragged such a man upward all the way out into the sunlight, he be distressed and unable to see anything at all. Slowly he could see reflection of stars etc., in a pool of water in front of him. After some time on the surface, however, the

freed prisoner would acclimate. He would see more and more things around him, until he could look upon the sun. He would understand that the sun is the "source of the seasons and the years, and is the steward of all things in the visible place, and is in a certain way the cause of all those things he and his companions had been seeing".

12.3.1.2 The Meaning of the Allegory

The allegory of the cave symbolises four grades of knowledge through which the mind can ascend to the Ideas, each level being represented by the particular state of men inside and outside the cave.

Men in chains: Conjecture

This is the first level of knowledge. The shadows and echoes are only reflections of other things. People in this situation are subjected to prejudices, passions, and sophistry, grasping even the fleeting shadows in an inadequate manner. Chained and without desire to escape they cling on to their distorted visions.

The men unbound in the cave: Belief

The men unbound but remaining in the cave symbolise the second stage of knowledge - belief. When the prisoners turn toward the fire, a visible figure of the sun, and see physical bodies along the way, they recognise that the shadows are merely for dreamers.

Men out of cave: Reasoning

When one leaves the realm of cave he finds the third degree of knowledge - reasoning. The objects of reasoning, symbolised in the reflections on water of the stars and sun are primarily geometric and arithmetic entities.

Men fully liberated -Understanding

Men who fully free their minds from the bonds of changing sensibilities and of particular intelligible ascend to the highest grade of knowledge -*noesis* or understanding.

The Four grades of cognition

Men fully liberated

Knowledge (*Noesis*): understanding without images- dialectic
Ideas (universals)

Sun: Good

Men beyond Cave

Knowledge (*Dianoesis*): reasoning with images – Mathematics
Mathematics (particulars)

~~-(Dividing Wall)~~ ————— Entrance to the cave ~~-(Dividing Wall)~~ —————

Men Unbounded in Cave

Opinion

Fire: Sensible sun

Images of Ideas (natural and artificial things)

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Men in chains

Conjectures: Shadow – sensation
Opinion – Reflections of images
(Shadows and echoes)

Plato puts forward the theory that knowledge is nothing but remembering of what we have contemplated before our birth.

12.3.1.3 The Process of Remembrance

We pass through four basic steps and eventually arrive at perfect knowledge: full remembrance - an explanation which Plato develops by way of the simile of the line, also in the Republic. At first our knowledge of things are but vague, shadowy and blurred. Then we gradually pass from inferior knowledge through our “imagination” to clearer, more direct experience of objects. This is the level of firm assent of faith. Next is the stage where our faculty of reasoning comes into play, as we begin to argue and make comparisons. Finally, the highest level of knowledge, the realm of pure intellectual activity, where we contemplate the Ideas and their interconnections. In all this process, it is love which provides the essential dynamism and impulse in our ascent to the contemplation of the beautiful. This latter idea is

constructed in the *Symposium*.

12.3.1.4 The Theory of Ideas

The basic inspiration for this celebrated theory was Plato's observation that there are various individuals who share a common form of basic nature. Thus there are various individuals men, horses, plants, minerals. He also got the idea from watching artisans at work following a model or 'type' that each individual was fashioned after an ideal type or pattern or model which some 'demiurge or active spirit made use of in fashioning the world around us.

Where later thinkers would give these "forms" a mere existence, Plato conceived of them as really existing somewhere, in another mysterious world of "shining light" Each ideal form is ideal in every sense of the term: that is, it is perfect, and all we see in the world around us are but poor imitations or "shadows" of it, as he preferred to say. For some time, Plato seemed to hesitate to say that there existed an "ideal form" of everything in this world, including such mundane realities as dirt and mud. Finally, he accepted the logical demands of that theory and admitted that these too had their place in the ideal World of Forms.

As he went deeper into this theory, Plato began to remark that the ideas in themselves are not completely unrelated and unconnected. Thus for instance, the idea of dog would participate (literally "take part of" or "have part") in the idea of mammal, the idea of sparrow in the idea of a bird and both in turn in the idea of animal. Ultimately all the ideas participate in the Supreme Idea of Form that of the Good. The artists are copiers of copies. Plato would banish them from his ideal state.

Check your progress II

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

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

1. Describe in your own words the allegory of the cave.

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2. Describe Plato's theory of Ideas.

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12.3.2 Philosophy of Human

12.3.2.1 Pre-Existence of Souls

Before birth, the souls of humans used to contemplate the pure and perfect forms in the ideal world. Due to some mysterious fault (fall?) they are born here, imprisoned in the body and prevented from soaring up to the contemplation of those ideas. Knowledge is when we are able to triumph over forgetfulness and recall - be it ever so dimly - those forms we had once contemplated.

12.3.2.1.1 The Two Horses

Plato noticed the evident fact of conflict within the depths of human beings. And in *Phaedrus* he gives his classic comparison of the charioteer who struggles to control two troublesome steeds who tend to pull in different ways. The character is the rational element in man which struggles to bring about a harmony between opposing pulls of the spiritual and appetitive elements in man, the two horses. The spiritual element is really a good horse: it is docile and is obedient to reason and would lead straight up to the Good. But appetitive element is unbridled and unruly and can only be driven by the whip.

12.3.2.2 The After Life

If the body is the prison of the soul, then death is the moment of its joyful release. It is the moment when the soul is set free at last from the body. The immortality of the soul is argued from the fact that it is, unlike the body not made of parts. In the myth of *Er* in the *Republic* Plato presents his eschatology. He believed in the transmigration of souls and finally settles for an ultimate and irrevocable retribution where the good enter a kind of

paradise and the recalcitrant are consigned to the torments of Tartarus.

12.3.2.3 Philosophy of God

The world is becoming and that must have a cause, thus he argues to a demiurge. The demiurge, makes things after the model of the eternal ideas. Plato speaks of the highest form, the Form of Good and Beautiful. He does not explicitly call this form God.

12.3.3 Philosophy of Morals and Politics

From Socrates, Plato inherited the great problem of determining the foundation of ethical life. Was it nature (*physis*) or convention (*nomos*)? In earlier days they were considered to be of nature, they were supposed to have divine origin, but the all too human gods could no more provide it. The Sophists had suggested that laws were made by men and might as easily be unmade. Slowly these ideas gained momentum. The storms of social unrest that arose in its wake undermined the stable moral traditions on which the orderly development of the city-state largely depended. As the influence of the anthropomorphic gods declined, the regeneration of the city-state required some new transcendental principles as a basis for the order of its political structure and the validations of its laws.

12.3.3.1 The Nature of Love

In *The Symposium* Plato describes the nature of Love. He asks the question; who is a lover? A lover is someone who lacks that which will make him or her happy. What will make the lover happy is to possess the beautiful and the good forever. And the lover is resourceful (Love is the son of Poverty and Resource) in seeking what he or she lacks. It is the resourcefulness propelled by longing that moves the lover up the ladder of love. At each stage the lover is only partially satisfied and is therefore powerfully motivated to discover whether there might be something still more satisfying. Being in the world one starts with the beauty that he or she sees in the world. A beautiful girl or boy falls in love. But discovers that this beauty is not unique. Slowly the lover moves to the more beautiful soul, character, the beauty of laws and institutions and finally the idea of Good itself.

12.3.3.2 Justice

In his philosophy Plato gives a prominent place to the idea of justice. Plato was highly dissatisfied with the prevailing degenerating conditions in Athens. The Athenian

democracy was on the verge of ruin and was ultimately responsible for Socrates' death. Sophistic teaching of the ethics of self-satisfaction resulted in the excessive individualism also induced the citizens to capture the office of the State for their own selfish purposes. According to the Sophists rules of justice are mere conventions. Ideal justice according to them is 'high-minded foolishness'. What is just is what is advantageous to the self, most profitable to one's life seems to be the view held by many. Plato however holds the view that there is an ideal of Justice which we should try to appropriate. The condemnation of Socrates though legal was not just according to him. In the myth of the Ring of Gyges the shepherd boy who went to the underworld and found a ring on a corpse which would make him invisible when turned towards himself and visible when turned outside had adultery with the wife of the King, killed the King and later took over the kingdom. The shepherd boy was not just; he had no control over his desires. The ideal society according to Plato is one in which "Justice" reigned supreme. The nature of justice as propounded by Plato is the fundamental principle of a well-ordered society. According to Plato justice is a 'human virtue' that makes a person self-consistent and good; socially, justice is a social consciousness that makes a society internally harmonious and good.

12.3.3.3 The State

Plato's philosophical views had many societal implications, especially on the idea of an ideal state or government. Some of the most famous doctrines are contained in the *Republic* as well as in the *Laws* and the *Statesman*. Plato asserts that societies have a tripartite class structure corresponding to the appetite/spirit/reason structure of the individual soul. People differ in their abilities and capacities. They can be grouped into three classes:

- a. Some best suited to be labourers, carpenters, farmers etc. In them the appetite dominates.
- b. Others who are adventurous, strong, brave and in love with danger, these form the protective part of the state, in them spirit dominates.
- c. Some who are intelligent, rational, self-controlled, in love with wisdom, the governing part, rational part of the soul.

According to this model, the principles of Athenian democracy (as it existed in his day) are rejected as only a few are fit to rule. Instead of rhetoric and persuasion, Plato says reason and wisdom should govern. As Plato puts it:

Until philosophers rule as kings or those who are now called kings and leading men genuinely and adequately philosophize, that is, until political power and philosophy entirely coincide, while the many natures who at present pursue either one exclusively are forcibly prevented from doing so, cities will have no rest from evils,... nor, I think, will the human race. (*Republic* 473c-d)

12.3.3.4 Plato's Criticism of Democracy

The rulers in democracy are not chosen because of their character, but because of their manners, voice, handsome appearance etc. They are like cooks who claim to know what the best food is needed for a patient, whereas a physician must be the one to decide it.

However Placing supreme power in the hands of a specially trained elite would be desirable only (1) there were irreducible difference in men's intellectual capacities, (2) if these differences could be discovered early in life, (3) if there is a truth about politics that can infallibly be known; and (4) the elite, knowing what is good for all, would act on its knowledge. As we know there is very little chance of this and Plato's ideal state will always remain a utopia whose ideal is questionable.

12.3.4 Philosophy of Art

The theory of art is also determined by the theory of forms. A thing is beautiful to the extent it participates in the form of beauty. Order anywhere in the universe for him was beautiful.

The artist who glorifies the imitation is like the cook and the rhetorician, who by tickling men's fancy palms off inadequate imitations on an unsuspecting public. The paintings that we prize as works of art are but shadows of shadows.

12.4 LET US SUM UP

- Augustine based his philosophy on Plato.
- Aquinas took Augustine's philosophy and combined with Aristotle, which in turn became the official philosophy of the Church.
- Augustine's *Two Cities*, Thomas Compenellas's *City of the Sun*, Thomas More's *Utopia* and even *The Manifesto* of Karl Marx show the influence of Plato.

Whitehead's statement that "the European philosophical tradition is ... a series of footnotes

to Plato” is a delightful hyperbole. It would be more exact to say that every page of the history of European philosophy reflects the undiminishing brilliance of Platonic thought. Platonism is the image of Plato the philosopher and the extension of his personality. Whatever be one’s personal appraisal of Plato’s reflections, it can hardly be doubted that *the Dialogues* contain one of the most exalted philosophies envisioned by the human mind. Nor can it be questioned that Plato himself is one of the most noble embodiments of the philosophical ideal. He unites the thoughts of his predecessors in one profound mind, and their myriad concepts in one supreme harmony.

For Emerson, it is so true that “Plato is philosophy, and philosophy is Plato”. He said of the Republic: “Burn the libraries, for their value is in this book.”

12.5 KEY WORDS

Ideal (Platonic): Ideal means the universals that exist independently of particulars in a world of its own.

Universal: A universal is anything that can be predicated of a particular.

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12.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) Plato was born around 428/27 B.C., in Athens. At the age of twenty he came into contact with Socrates, and this was decisive in his life. After Socrates' death he studied Eliatic philosophy in Megara. Later returning to Athens, he wrote his first works. Between 390 and 388 B.C., he travelled extensively to acquaint himself with the principle schools. He was sold into slavery by Dionysius-I of Syracuse for criticising him. Rescued from the market of Aegina by Anniceris, he returned to Athens. About 387 B.C., he founded his school in Academus (whence the name "Academy") and taught mathematics and philosophy. In 367 and 361 B.C., he interrupted his teaching and visited Syracuse, presumably to assist in the realisation of his ideal state. After these frustrating attempts he returned to Athens and devoted himself to philosophising, teaching and writing in the Academy. He died in 348/7 B.C. when he was 80/1 years old.

Some of his works are Apology, Critio, Euthyphro, Laches, Ion, Protagoras, Charmides, Lysis, Georgias, Meno, Ethydemus, Lesser Hippias, Greater Hippias, Cratylus, Menexenus, Symposium (or Banquet, Phaedo, Republic, Phaedrus, Theaetetus, Parmenides, Sophist, Statesman, Philebus, Timaeus, Critias, Laws, Epinomis ,and LettersVII and VIII.

- 2) The philosophical concerns that gave rise to Plato's philosophical thinking are the followings:

The problem of one and many

The problem of appearance and reality
The problem of permanence and change

The mysticism and mathematics of Pythagoreans
Physis and nomos

The scepticism of the sophists.

The political concern that gave rise to Plato's philosophical thinking are the followings: Decline of Athens
Corruption and nepotism
The emergence of democracy and
Condemnation of Socrates.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) The cave is inhabited by prisoners whose hands and legs are chained and their heads are fixed, compelled to gaze at a wall in front of them. Behind the prisoners is a fire, and between the fire and the prisoners is a raised walkway, along which puppets are moved. The puppets cast shadows on the wall, and the prisoners see these shadows, hear the noise from the echoes of the wall and take the shadows to be real things and the echoes to be real sounds. Suppose a prisoner is freed and sees the things that caused the shadows, he would not recognize them; he would believe the shadows to be more real than what he sees.

- 2) According to Plato, various individuals share a common form of basic nature. Each individual is fashioned after an ideal type or form by some 'demiurge or active spirit. These "forms" really exist somewhere, in another mysterious world. They are perfect, and all we see in the world around us are but poor imitations or "shadows" of it. The ideas in themselves are not completely unrelated and unconnected. Thus for instance, the idea of dog would participate (literally "take part of" or "have part") in the idea of mammal, the idea of sparrow in the idea of a bird and both in turn in the idea of animal. Ultimately all the ideas participate in the Supreme Idea of Form that of the Good.

UNIT 13

ARISTOTLE*

Structure

- 13.0 Objectives
- 13.1 Introduction
- 13.2 Life
- 13.3 Works
- 13.4 Aristotle and Plato
- 13.5 Aristotle's Philosophy: Logic
- 13.6 Philosophy of the World
- 13.7 First Philosophy
- 13.8 Philosophy of God
- 13.9 Philosophy of Human
- 13.10 Ethics
- 13.11 Art and Literature
- 13.12 Slavery
- 13.13 Let Us Sum Up
- 13.14 Key Words
- 13.15 Further Readings and References
- 13.16 Answers to Check Your Progress

13.0 OBJECTIVES

In this Unit we will be dealing with one of the greatest founding fathers of Western Philosophy, Aristotle. We will explain his philosophy, encompassing morality and aesthetics, logic and science, politics and metaphysics. The study of Aristotle's philosophy is important because Aristotelianism had a profound influence on philosophical and theological thinking in the Islamic and Jewish traditions in the Middle Ages, and it continues to influence Christian theology, especially Eastern Orthodox theology, and the scholastic tradition of the Roman Catholic Church.

* Dr. Josh Alampasari, Satyanilayam, Chennai. This unit is taken from BPY-003 (Unit 2, Block 3).

By the end of this Unit you should be able to:

- i. understand Aristotelian logic, systematisation and definition;
- ii. comprehend his philosophy of the world; and
- iii. clarify his metaphysical and ethical position.

13.1 INTRODUCTION

Together with Plato and Socrates, Aristotle is one of the most important founding figures in Western philosophy. He was the first to create a comprehensive system of Western philosophy, encompassing morality and aesthetics, logic and science, politics and metaphysics. His works contain the earliest known formal study of logic, which were incorporated in the late nineteenth century into modern formal logic. In metaphysics, Aristotelianism had a profound influence on philosophical and theological thinking in the Islamic and Jewish traditions in the Middle Ages, and it continues to influence Christian theology, especially Eastern Orthodox theology, and the scholastic tradition of the Roman Catholic Church. All aspects of Aristotle's philosophy continue to be the object of active academic study today.

13.2 LIFE

The year was 384 B.C. Socrates has been dead for fifteen years; Plato had begun his Academy three years earlier. In northern Thrace, not far from the border of Athens at Stageira, a child born to a physician in the royal court of Macedonia. This child named Aristotle was destined to be the second father of Western philosophy. His father Nicomachus was both a doctor and advisor to Amyntas III king of Macedonia, but the date of his father's death and, consequently, the extent of Aristotle's stay at court are not certain. At the age of eighteen Aristotle was sent for advanced study to Plato's Academy at Athens. He spent twenty years (367-347) there imbibing the spirit of Platonic philosophy. As the death of Socrates has been the catalyst for Plato's development as an independent thinker, so the death of Plato signalled the beginning for Aristotle of a second and more independent period (347-336). He started his own academy at Assos in Mysia. He traveled with Xenocrates to the court of his friend Hermias of Atarneus in Asia Minor. While in Asia, Aristotle traveled with Theophrastus to the island of Lesbos, where together they researched the botany and zoology

of the island. Aristotle married Hermias's adoptive daughter (or niece). She bore him a daughter, whom they named Pythias. Soon after Hermias' death, Aristotle was invited by Philip of Macedon to become tutor to Alexander the Great in 343 B.C. Alexander succeeded to the throne in 335/4 B.C. Inspired by Plato and seasoned by his own teaching experience, Aristotle returned to Athens for third and culminating period of his life (335-332). He founded the Lyceum. The members of the Lyceum came to be called the peripatetic, from the peripatos, of covered walk, in which they gathered.

Aristotle not only studied almost every subject possible at the time, but made significant contributions to most of them. In physical science, Aristotle studied anatomy, astronomy, economics, embryology, geography, geology, meteorology, physics and zoology. In philosophy, he wrote on aesthetics, ethics, government, metaphysics, politics, psychology, rhetoric and theology. He also studied education, foreign customs, literature and poetry. His combined works constitute a virtual encyclopedia of Greek knowledge. It has been suggested that Aristotle was probably the last person to know everything there was to be known in his own time.

13.3 WORKS

The prodigious dimensions of Aristotle's works are eloquently manifested by more than two hundred known titles.

1. Dialogues

- a) Brief works: On Rhetoric, On the Soul, and Exhortation to Philosophy etc.
- b) Quasi Treatises: On wealth, on Prayer, On Good Birth, On Pleasure, On Friendship, On Kingship, Alexander (On colonists).
- c) Works of more than one book: Politics, On Poets, On Justice, On the Good, On Ideas, and On Philosophy.
- d) On Other philosophers: On Democritus, On the Pythagoreans, and On the Philosophy of Archytas
- e) From Other Philosophers: From Plato's Laws, From the Republic.
- f) *Treatises*

2. Logic (The "Organon"): Categories, On Interpretation, Prior Analysis, Topics, On Sophisticated Refutation.

3. Natural Philosophy

- d. The physical world: physics, On the Heavens, On Generation and Corruption, Meteorology
- e. The Living: On the Soul
The history of Animals, Movement of Animals. Progression of Animals and Generation of Animals.

4. Metaphysics

5. Ethics: Eudemian Ethics, Nicomachian Ethics, Politics, and Magna Moralia.

6. Poetics: Rhetoric and Poetics.

7. Collection of Facts

During his stay at the Lyceum, Aristotle directed extensive projects of group research, collecting data in widely diverse fields and wrote the following:

The history of Animals.

The History of Plants.

The Politics,

Collection of lists of the names of the winners in the Pythian and Olympic games and collections of the History of Literature.

13.4 ARISTOTLE AND PLATO

Plato was born to an aristocratic family with a long history of participation in political life. Aristotle's father was a doctor.

Otherworldliness: For Plato all that is perfect belong to the otherworld but Aristotle is satisfied with this world.

The objects of knowledge: Plato is a rationalist and a mystic. Mathematics seems to be the ideal science yet reason is not sufficient to grasp reality so he uses myths and mysticism. Aristotle is much more down to earth and for him language is quite sufficient to express the

truth of things.

Human Nature: For Plato the real person is the soul. For Aristotle the human person is the rational animal.

Relativism and Scepticism: Plato's main concern was to refute scepticism. The problem does not seem to worry Aristotle. For him the problem is to analyse the process by which we attain knowledge and to set out the basic features of the realities disclosed.

Ethics: Plato wants and thinks we can get the same kind of certainty in rules of behaviour that we have in mathematics. Dialectic, reasoning about the Forms can lead us to moral truths. For Aristotle in matters of practical decision we cannot get mathematical certainty. Each case has to be dealt with separately.

13.5 ARISTOTLE'S PHILOSOPHY: LOGIC

The Sophist claim to teach pupils "to make the weaker arguments appear stronger" has been satirized by Aristophanes, scorned by Socrates, and repudiated by Plato. But until Aristotle does his work on Logic, no one gives a good answer to the question, just what makes an argument weaker or stronger?

We regard those among us the wisest who know not only what something is but also why it is so. Wisdom, then, either is or at least involves knowledge. And knowledge involves both statements (that something is so) and reasons (statements why something is so). Furthermore, for the possession of such statements to qualify as wisdom, they must be true. As Plato pointed out falsehood cannot make up knowledge. It is Aristotle's intention to clarify all this, to sort it out, put it in order, and show how it works. So he has to do several things. He has to (1) explain the nature of statements how, for instance, they are put together out of simpler units called terms;

(2) explain how statements can be related to each other so that someone can give "the reason why" for others; and (3) give an account of what makes statements true or false. These make up the logic.

Aristotle is a real pioneer in the field of logic. Even today his logic is followed. Logic

according to Aristotle is the art of right thinking and thereby attaining truth. As such it does not have any special object as do other disciplines, but is their instrument and tool.

13.5.1 Systematisation

Aristotle did a lot of systematisation in Logic. He was one the first to notice that the mind has a certain basic structure and method and tried to detail what those were and how it functioned. The ultimate elements of the working of the mind were three: concept, judgement and reasoning.

He defined concept as that “into which the premise is resolved, i.e., both the predicate and that of which it is predicated.” He then went on to reduce the concept to its 10 categories or different types. Thus a concept may be predicated of a subject so as to indicate its essence, or quantity, quality, relation, place, time, situation, “habitus”, action or passion.

Substance - man or horse

Quantity - two feet long, three feet

long Quality - white or literate

Relationship - double, half, or greater.

Place - in the Lyceum, in the market

place Time - yesterday, last year.

Posture - reclining at table, sitting down. (situation)

State - having shoes on, being in armour (habitus)

Doing something - cutting, burning (action)

Undergoing something - being cut, being burnt (passion)

He carefully examined what happens when we make a judgement, observed that it alone is the source of the true or false. Then he investigated their quality (affirmative and negative) quantity (universal, particular, and singular) and modality (factual, necessity and possibility) He also studied the convertibility of judgements. As to reasoning, he reduced the syllogisms to their basic types and exposed the commonest fallacies and reasoning. Finally he sought to explain how universal premises are formed and how scientific knowledge may be further developed through induction, dialectic, demonstration and solution of *aprioris* or difficulties.

13.5.2 Definitions

Confusion of meaning of terms is one of the factors that had been responsible for disagreements etc. Aristotle drew up rules for a good definition, and even gave us some very good examples of this.

Motion: “the fulfilment of what exists potentially, in so far as it exists potentially, is motion.”

Time is “measurement of movement according to before and after.”

13.6 PHILOSOPHY OF THE WORLD

Aristotle advances several arguments against the theory of subsisting ideas of Plato. According to Plato’s theory there must be forms of negations and relations. According to Aristotle the theory of Ideas is useless. It is an impossible theory that the substance and that of which it is the substance must exist separately.

13.6.1 Substance and Accidents

This is a distinction we make without looking into the metaphysical roots. A substance is that “which is not predicated of a subject, but of which everything is predicated.” Or to put it another way, it is “that which is primarily and to which all the other categories of being are referred.”

Accidents are whatever “attaches to something and can truly be asserted, either of necessity or usually.”

13.6.2 The Theory of Act and Potency

This theory provides the profound metaphysical basis to answer the difficulties raised by Parmenides against movement and multiplicity. Parmenides and others would speak of being and non-being, allowing of no other category and implying that a thing, to exist must, be either pure and simple being or non-being. Basically, the theory is founded on the situation that a thing can “be” in two ways: it can be able to be such and such (potency) or it can be such and such. Every change implies, first, that the subject of that change had potency as regards that change. Finally, a change implies the actualization of the potency in question. Potency, then, is a capacity with regard to actualization (or act), whereas act (or actualization) is a perfection or quality of some sort. A potency can be passive, e.g., a sound is capable of

being heard, i.e., the passive potency of being heard. An active potency is a power or capacity to act. (E.g. The ear has an active potency of hearing). It should be noticed, however, that even a passive potency implies, in some way, a pre-disposition on the part of the thing concerned.

For example, a sound has a passive potency of being heard, whereas colour has not. This theory of act and potency has many implications in Aristotelian philosophy.

A being can be pure act, it has no potency yet to be realized; it is perfection itself. Such a being would be God. At the other end of the spectrum you have mere potency - prime matter. In between come the mixed acts the beings of our daily experience. These have some perfections actually realized, but there are also many potencies in them - capacities to acquire or lose perfections. This is the way out of the difficulties raised by Parmenides and his school against motion and multiplicity.

13.6.3 THE FOUR CAUSES

The study of the causes involves another application of the theory of act and potency. He feels that humans can be satisfied only when they have acquired knowledge about a thing when they can understand “why”. He then points out that everything we observe has four principles or causes which influence it. First there are two intrinsic causes, so called because they are inadequately distinct from the effect. These are the material cause (that out of which some thing is made, e.g. wood of a table) and the formal cause (that which makes a thing to be what it is, e.g. the form of wood makes wood to be wood). Then there are two extrinsic causes distinct from their effect. The efficient cause (the one who makes or initiates the effect, e.g., the carpenter with regard to the table) and the final cause (the reason for which the effect is produced) the carpenter to get money with regard to the table. Aristotle showed how that material cause is in potency with regard to the formal cause, as mater and form.

13.7 FIRST PHILOSOPHY

“It is from a feeling of wonder that men start now, and did start in the earliest times, to practice philosophy.”

Practising philosophy is not the basic activity of human beings. It is for the satisfaction of the wonderment that one feels. Familiar as we are with the world of nature, we wonder whether that is all there is. If there is no other substance apart from those that have come together by

nature, natural science will be the first science. But if there is a substance that is immovable, the science that studies it is prior to natural science and is the first philosophy. It is the business of this science to study *being qua being*, and to find out what it is and what are its attributes qua being. So first philosophy, also called metaphysics, looks for the ultimate principles and causes of all things. What are they?

The forms are supposed to be what many individuals of the same kind have in common. Yet they are supposed to be individual realities on their own. But says Aristotle, these requirements conflict, if the Forms are indeed individual substances, it makes no sense to think of them as being shared out among other individual substances. Finally, there is no way to understand how the Forms, eternally unchanging, account for changes. They are supposed to be the first principles and causes of whatever happens in the world.

The most convincing arguments for the forms seem to be mathematical in nature. Is mathematics dealing with square in itself, triangle in itself? There is no argument, Aristotle holds, from mathematics to the reality of Platonic Forms independent of the world of nature. Mathematics is a science, like natural science, has the world of nature as its only subject. But it does not study it as nature; it studies only certain abstractions from natural things, without supposing that such abstractions are themselves things. What happens in mathematics or geometry is conceptually separating attributes for the sake of understanding.

Substance is *what is* in the basic, fundamental, primary sense. What is it that makes a given object a substance? Natural things are composed of **matter and form**. Could it be matter that makes an object a substance? No. Matter, considered apart from form, is merely potentially something. Prime matter cannot be anything at all on its own. It cannot have an independent existence, it exists as formed. So it cannot be matter what makes a thing what it is. Could it be the form? According to Aristotle it is.

The form responsible for the substantiality of substances he calls the **essence** of the thing. Essences are expressed by **definitions** telling us what things are. So form is the substance of things. But substance is what can exist independently and as an individual entity. This raises a very interesting possibility. Might there be substances that are no compounds of matter and form? Might there be substances that are pure form? All of nature is made up of material substances in which matter is made into something definite by the presence of form within it.

13.8 PHILOSOPHY OF GOD

In the world of nature, the best things would be those that come closest to these ideals. Aristotle believes these are the heavenly bodies that move eternally in great circles. But even such eternal motion is not self-explanatory. In *Metaphysics* Aristotle says that there is something that is always being moved in an incessant movement, and this movement is circular...and so the first heaven will be eternal. There must then, be something that moves it. But since that is moved, as well as moving things, is intermediate, there must be something that moves without being moved, will be something eternal, it will be a substance, and it will be an actuality.

In the world of nature, containing the eternal movements of the heavenly bodies is there an eternal and ultimate mover? There must be, Aristotle argues, otherwise we could not account for the movement of anything at all. Not all movers can be “intermediate” movers. If they were, that series would go on to infinity, but there cannot be any actually existing collection of infinitely many things. There must, then, be ‘something that moves things without being moved.’

Moreover, we can know certain facts about it. It must itself be eternal, since it must account for the eternal movement of the heavenly bodies and so cannot be less extensive than they. It must be a substance, for what other substances depend on cannot be less basic than they. And, of course, it must be fully actual; otherwise, its being what it is would cry out for further explanation - for a mover for it. For Aristotle, this mover is the final cause. This conclusion is driven home by an analogy.

Now, the object of desire and the object of thought moves things in this way: they move things without being moved. The ultimate cause of all things is a final cause; it is what all other things love. Their love for it puts them in motion. As the final cause and the object of the “desire” in all things it must be the best. So God must enjoy this life in the highest degree. God then, is an eternally existing, living being who lives a life of perfect thought.

Aristotle called his first mover God. In his view there is no divine providence. He does not create the universe, for it is eternal. It is true that he cause motion, but only as a beautiful picture might cause a man to purchase it. For Aristotle God is a metaphysical necessity, but not an object of worship.

Check Your Progress I

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

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

1. Discuss the contribution of Aristotle to Logic.

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2. How does Aristotle establish the necessity of a first cause?

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13.9 PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN

Aristotle seems to have started with Plato's ideas concerning human beings. There are three types of psyche:

2. The nutritive psyche
3. The sensitive psyche
4. The rational psyche

The soul of animals is characterised by two faculties (a) the faculty of discrimination which is the work of thought and sense, and (b) the faculty of originating local movement.

(1) Mind is that which calculates means to an end, i.e. mind practical (it differs from mind speculative in the character of its end);

(2) appetite is in every form of it, relative to an end; for that which is the object of appetite is the stimulant of the mind practical; and that which is last to the process of thinking is the beginning of the action,

- Objects are experienced by animals not simply as neutral but also as good and bad, as

objects of avoidance or pursuit.

- The motion in lower animals by a sense object is relatively stereotypic.
- For the lower animals the good is identical with pleasure, the bad with pain. For them there is no consideration other than present satisfaction.
- For the animal there is usually, in any given situation, only one thing to do.
- Humans usually perceive alternatives. They must make choices and that means that they should make use of some criteria for choices.

13.10 ETHICS

Ethics is the science of conduct (what are the criteria for the good life? corresponding to logic (what are the criteria for correct thinking?) It is not a mere science of knowing but also practical. It deals not merely with ‘What is the good?’ but also ‘How can I be good?’ But ethics is not psychology though connected with it. Ethics grows out of the need of choosing among the multiple courses of behaviour that the human soul perceives as options at any given time. The good, whatever it is, is the good for man and therefore can be ascribed only by discovering what man is. The study of psychology is valuable in pedagogy and especially in the learning of good behaviour and attitudes.

For Aristotle there is one end for man, happiness. Happiness is something everyone chooses for its own sake; **it** is not a means to something else. Happiness then is something final and self-sufficient; it is the end of action. Happiness is the name for that longer-range, more complete, more stable satisfaction that reason gives men the possibility of achieving, but whose achievement it at the same time is more difficult because of the alternatives men have. This possibility is undreamed by the relatively simple sensitive souls. The possibility of more ignominious failure than any animal is capable of is the risk the rational soul must run for the possibility of much greater fulfilment.

13.10.1 Contemplation is Perfect Happiness

Happiness, then, is what we experience when we are living at our best and fullest, when we are functioning in accordance with our nature, whenever end is realising itself without impediment, when our form is being actualised. And since man’s activities are many, the best and highest activity, that is, the activity that most completely, expresses and realises human nature is the activity of contemplation. In contemplation - in the cognition of the supreme

truths about the universe - lies the greatest happiness of which man is capable.

13.10.2 Transition from Ethics to Politics

No one is sufficient to oneself; humans cannot live well without community. Thus human beings live in communities, cities. In his work on ethics, Aristotle addressed the individual; in *Politics* he deals with life in the City. Aristotle's conception of the city is organic, and he is considered one of the first to conceive of the city in this manner. Aristotle considered the city to be a natural community. Moreover, he considered the city to be prior to the family which in turn is prior to the individual, i.e., last in the order of becoming, but first in the order of being. He is also famous for his statement that "man is by nature a political animal." Aristotle conceived of politics as being like an organism rather than like a machine, and as a collection of parts none of which can exist without the others.

13.10.3 Virtues

Aristotle speaks of intellectual and moral virtues. The intellectual virtues are those that help us to attain truth, ultimately the highest of all truths, the Truth - God. However, to reach this sublime Goal, we must cultivate the moral virtues. These help us in this and in so far as they, by keeping in check our passions, enable us to perform right actions. In this context it is clear how Aristotle came to the conclusion that a moral virtue is "a mean between two vices that which depends on excess and which depends on defect".

13.11 ART AND LITERATURE

In his *Poetics*, Aristotle answered, in effect, Plato's criticism of tragedy and his desire to outlaw poets from his republic, on the grounds that they would disturb and weaken the will-power and moral strength of the statesmen and warriors preying on their emotions. Aristotle made use of the famous theory of **catharsis** to show that through the emotions of pity and fear (aroused by tragedy), the soul and its passions would be replaced and purified. This would bring about a certain feeling of pleasure and peace.

13.12 SLAVERY

According to Aristotle every state is a community of some kind, and every community is

established with a view to some good; for mankind always act in order to obtain that which they think good. But, if all communities aim at some good, the state or political community, which is the highest of all, and which embraces all the rest, aims at good in a greater degree than any other, and at the highest good. The state is made up of households and households are made of master and slave, husband and wife, father and children. Some hold that the rule of a master over slaves is contrary to nature, and that the distinction between slave and freeman exists by law only, and not by nature; and being an interference with nature is therefore unjust. Aristotle argues that property is a part of the household and a slave is a living possession, an instrument which takes precedence of all other instruments. The master is only the master of the slave, he does not belong to him, whereas the slave is not only the slave of his master, but wholly belongs to him. And a possession may be defined as an instrument of action, separable from the possessor.

But is there any one intended by nature to be a slave, and for whom such condition is expedient and right, or rather is not all slavery a violation of nature? In living creatures the soul rules over the body, the body appears to rule over the soul in corrupt ones. Again, male is by nature superior, and the female inferior, and the one rules, and the other is ruled in principle, of necessity, extends to all mankind. Where there is such a difference as that between soul and body, or between men and animals. Slaves are those whose business is to use their body, because they can do nothing better, the lowest sort are by nature slaves and it is better for them as for all inferiors that they should be under the rule of a master. For he who can be, therefore is, another's, and he who participates in rational principle enough to apprehend, but not to have such a principle, is a slave by nature.

13.13 LET US SUM UP

Twenty-three hundred years after his death, Aristotle remains one of the most influential people who ever lived. He was the founder of formal logic, pioneered the study of zoology, and left every future scientist and philosopher in his debt through his contributions to the scientific method. Despite these accolades, many of Aristotle's errors held back science considerably. Bertrand Russell notes that "almost every serious intellectual advance has had to begin with an attack on some Aristotelian doctrine". Russell also refers to Aristotle's ethics as "repulsive", and calls his logic "as definitely antiquated as Ptolemaic astronomy". Russell notes that these errors make it difficult to do historical justice to Aristotle, until one remembers how large of an advance he made upon all of his predecessors.

Aristotle is referred to as "The Philosopher" by Scholastic thinkers such as Thomas Aquinas. See *Summa Theologica*. These thinkers blended Aristotelian philosophy with Christianity, bringing the thought of Ancient Greece into the Middle Ages. It required a repudiation of some Aristotelian principles for the sciences and the arts to free themselves for the discovery of modern scientific laws and empirical methods.

The Italian poet Dante says of Aristotle in the first circles of hell,

*I saw the Master there of those who
know, Amid the philosophic family,*

*By all admired, and by all revered;
There Plato too I saw, and Socrates,*

*Who stood beside him closer than the
rest.*

Aristotle was a product of his time. We cannot accept his justification of slavery nor the inferior position he assigns to women. Martin Heidegger elaborated a new interpretation of Aristotle, intended to warrant his deconstruction of scholastic and philosophical tradition. More recently, Alasdair MacIntyre has attempted to reform what he calls the Aristotelian tradition in a way that is anti-elitist and capable of disputing the claims of both liberals and Nietzscheans. Ayn Rand considered Aristotle to be her only significant influence. According to Whitehead everyone is either, by temperament a Platonist (the mystical, contemplative type) or an Aristotelian (the scientific, active type).

Check Your Progress II

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

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

1. Explain Aristotle's philosophy of human beings.

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2. Discuss the ethical philosophy of Aristotle.

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13.14 KEY WORDS

Pedagogy: Pedagogy is the art or science of being a teacher. The term generally refers to strategies of instruction, or a style of instruction. Pedagogy is also sometimes referred to as the correct use of teaching strategies.

Syllogism: A syllogism is a kind of logical argument in which one proposition (the conclusion) is inferred from the two others (the premises) of a certain form.

13.15 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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13.16 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

1. Logic according to Aristotle is the art of right thinking and thereby attaining truth. Wisdom at least involves knowledge. And knowledge involves both statements (that something is so) and reasons (statements why something is so). Furthermore, for the possession of such statements to qualify as wisdom, they must be true. To clarify all this, he has to (1) explain the nature of statements how, for instance, they are put together out of simpler units called terms; (2) explain how statements can be related to each other so that someone can give “the reason why” for others; and (3) give an account of what makes statements true or false. These make up the logic.

2. Aristotle believes these are the heavenly bodies that move eternally in great circles. There must then, be something that moves it. But since that is moved, as well as moving things, is intermediate, there must be something that moves without being moved, will be something eternal, it will be a substance, and it will be an actuality.

In the world of nature, containing the eternal movements of the heavenly bodies is there an eternal and ultimate mover? There must be, Aristotle argues, otherwise we could not account for the movement of anything at all. Not all movers can be “intermediate” movers. If they were, that series would go on to infinity, but there cannot be any actually existing collection of infinitely many things. There must, then, be ‘something that moves things without being moved.’”

Check Your Progress II

1. According to Aristotle there are three types of psyche: The nutritive psyche, the sensitive psyche, and the rational psyche. The soul of animals is characterised by two faculties (a) the faculty of discrimination which is the work of thought and sense, and (b) the faculty of originating local movement.

Objects are experienced by animals not simply as neutral but also as good and bad, as objects of avoidance or pursuit. The motion in lower animals by a sense object is relatively stereotypic. For the lower animals the good is identical with pleasure, the bad with pain. For them there is no consideration other than present satisfaction. For the animal there is usually, in any given situation, only one thing to do. Humans usually perceive alternatives. They must make choices and that means that they should make use of some criteria for choices.

1. Ethics is the science of conduct (what are the criteria for the good life? corresponding to logic (what are the criteria for correct thinking?) It is not a mere science of knowing but also practical. It deals not merely with 'What is the good?' but also 'How can I be good?' For Aristotle there is one end for man, happiness. But the achievement it is more difficult because of the alternatives men have. In contemplation - in the cognition of the supreme truths about the universe - lies the greatest happiness of which man is capable.