CONTEMPORARY

WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

VI SEMESTER

CORE COURSE

BA PHILOSOPHY

(2011 Admission)

UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT

SCHOOL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

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SCHOOL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

STUDY MATERIAL

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**Aim:** To introduce Pragmatism, Positivism, Logical positivism, Philosophy of Language, Phenomenology and Existentialism as contemporary trends in western thought.
Objectives: (1) To introduce C. S Pierce, William James and John Dewey as pragmatists.

(2) To give an account of Vienna Circle, and Verifiability principle for explaining Logical positivism, and the problems of philosophy of Language as syntax, semantics and pragmatics.

(3) To introduce phenomenology and Existentialism as recent trends, and to introduce Brentano and Husserl as phenomenologists and theistic and atheistic branches of Existentialism.

UNIT I
PRAGMATISM AND POSITIVISM

Introduction to pragmatism

Pragmatism is a philosophical movement. It has a major impact on American. Pragmatism says that ideas and theories to be tested in practice. Pragmatists claim that truth, knowledge, morality, and politics must be tested in practice. Pragmatism is critical of traditional Western philosophy, especially the absolute truths and absolute values. Pragmatism was popular for a time in France, England, and Italy. Pragmatist thinkers tried to transform all areas of philosophy, from metaphysics to ethics and political philosophy and emphasis on connecting theory to practice.

The ideas of the pragmatists were considered revolutionary when they first appeared. Some critics say pragmatism’s refusal to affirm any absolutes carried negative implications for society. They do not believe a single absolute idea of goodness or justice exists. But concepts are changeable and depend on the context in which they are being discussed. The absence of these absolutes results in a decline in moral standards. The pragmatists’ denial of absolutes challenged the foundations of religion, government, and schools of thought. Hence, pragmatism influenced developments in psychology, sociology, education, semiotics (the study of signs and symbols), and scientific method, as well as philosophy, cultural criticism, and social reform movements. Various political groups have also drawn on the assumptions of pragmatism.

Pragmatism arose during the late 19th century. The period a decline in traditional religious beliefs and values as a result of industrialization and material progress. So it is
necessary to rethink fundamental ideas about values, religion, science, community, and individuality. The most important pragmatists are American philosophers Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and John Dewey. Peirce was primarily interested in scientific method and mathematics; his objective was to infuse scientific thinking into philosophy and society, and he believed that human comprehension of reality was becoming ever greater and that human communities were becoming increasingly progressive. Peirce developed pragmatism as a theory of meaning in particular, the meaning of concepts used in science. Logical positivists, who have been influenced by Peirce, believed that truth is closed to facts. Logical positivists emphasize the importance of scientific verification, rejecting the assertion of personal subjective experience.

James moved pragmatism in directions that Peirce strongly disagreed. He generalized Peirce’s doctrines, all concepts, beliefs, and actions. He applied pragmatist ideas to truth as well as to meaning. James was primarily interested in showing how systems of morality, religion, and faith could be defended in a scientific civilization. He argued that sentiment, as well as logic is crucial to rationality and that the great issues of life morality and religious beliefs are leaps of faith.

Dewey’s philosophy can be described as a version of philosophical naturalism. He regards human experience, intelligence, and communities as ever-evolving mechanisms. Dewey believed that by using experience and intelligence human beings can solve problems, including social problems, through inquiry. For Dewey, naturalism led to the idea of a democratic society that allows all members to acquire social intelligence and progress both as individuals and as communities. Dewey held that traditional ideas about knowledge, truth, and values, in which absolutes are assumed, are incompatible with a broadly experience and intelligence Darwinian worldview in which individuals and society are progressing. In consequence, he felt that these traditional ideas must be discarded. For pragmatists,

everything people know depends on a historical context and is thus tentative rather than absolute.

The pragmatist tradition was revitalized in the 1980s by American philosopher Richard Rorty. He has faced charges of elitism for his belief in the relativism of values and his emphasis on the role of the individual in attaining knowledge. Interest has renewed in the classic pragmatists Pierce, James, and Dewey as an alternative to Rory’s interpretation of...
the tradition. In an ever changing world, pragmatism has many benefits. It defends social experimentation as a means of improving society, accepts pluralism, and rejects dead dogmas. But a philosophy that offers no final answers or absolutes and that appears vague as a result of trying to harmonize opposites may also be unsatisfactory to some.

**Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914)**

Peirce is an American philosopher, physicist, mathematician and the founder of pragmatism. He was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and educated at Harvard University. Peirce was a systematic philosopher, and his writings cover almost all fields of philosophy. Peirce published no books in his lifetime. His greatest contributions were in the field of mathematical logic in many ways. He wrote extensively on epistemology, scientific method, semiotics, metaphysics, cosmology, ontology, and mathematics, ethics, aesthetics, history, phenomenology, and religion (collected papers). These different systems deal with the same fundamental concept of philosophy

Peirce’s Pragmatism was first elaborated in a series of illustrations of the Logic of Science in the *Popular Science Monthly* in 1877–78. He argued several ways of fixing beliefs. Beliefs are essentially habits of action. It is characteristic of the method of science. Science makes ideas clear in terms first of the sensible effects of their objects, and second of habits of action adjusted to those effects. In his Harvard lectures Peirce identified pragmatism more narrowly with the logic of abduction. Even his evolutionary metaphysics of 1891–93 was a higher order working hypothesis by which the special sciences might be guided in forming their lower order hypotheses; thus, his more metaphysical writings, with their emphases on chance and continuity, were but further illustrations of the logic of science.

Peirce acknowledges pragmatism is a kind of positivism. The role of the pragmatic maxim is to reveal that almost every proposition of ontological metaphysics impossible. But the maxim is not intended to rule out metaphysics altogether, but rather to discriminate the illegitimate, the pragmatically meaningless, from scientific metaphysics, which uses the method of science, observation and reasoning. Scientific philosophy says Peirce is an observational science, differing from the other sciences not in its method but in its reliance on aspects of experience so familiar, so ubiquitous, that the difficulty is to become distinctly aware of them. Peirce denies that philosophical issues could be resolved within, and certainly never suggests that philosophy ought to be replaced by the natural sciences.
Peirce presents his own metaphysical theories. Peirce offers a theory of categories potentiality; particular existence; and generality, based both phenomenological and, like Kant’s categories, on logic. But on Peirce’s more adequate logic, capable, unlike Aristotle’s, of expressing relations. Peirce’s conception of a reformed, scientific philosophy is perhaps most directly seen in his thoroughgoing critique of Cartesian epistemology, and in the more naturalistic theory of inquiry with which he proposes to replace it. Descartes’ method, according to Peirce, is a sham, a matter of pretense of something which inevitably led to the eventual reinstatement of the beliefs supposedly doubted. There is no such faculty as the intuition on which Descartes’ criterion of clearness and distinctness relies. Reconstruction of knowledge requires and Descartes’ aspiration to certainty is misplaced, his subjective criterion of truth viciously individualistic.

Peirce suggests that knowing the meaning of an expression is exhausted by knowing its practical effects, which he characterizes as effects, direct or indirect, upon our senses. The pragmatic maxim Peirce examines the meaning of this diamond is hard. He says that it means that if you try to scratch it, you will find that it will not be scratched by many other substances. Peirce sees that he formulates practical effects in this manner. It makes little sense to describe a diamond which is in fact never scratched as being hard. The practical effects which concern pragmatism are those which would occur under certain conditions, not those which will actually occur. In pragmatic maxim we find him something very similar to what we find later in logical positivism.

The positivists’ criterion effectively restricted meaning to statements about physical objects only. Statements about that which is directly observable or verifiable. Statements about anything else metaphysics and ethics are literally meaningless. But, in further improvements to the pragmatic maxim, Peirce makes it clear that he is concerned to give a much more generous account of what is involved in understanding.

Peirce frequently claims that the pragmatic maxim captures only a part of what it is to know the meaning of an expression. In order to grasp a term, he argues, a threefold competence is required. Firstly the interpreter must be able to pick out what objects the term refers to or know the term’s denotation, secondly, give a definition of the term’s connotation, and thirdly know what to expect if hypotheses containing the term are true. He takes these three aspects of understanding to spell out completely what someone must be able to grasps a concept or knows the meaning of an expression.

Peirce arrives at the pragmatic maxim to a concept is not a definition of the concept, but rather, a pragmatic elucidation. He examines a concept through its relations with practical
endeavors. That is one route to understanding a concept, the route Peirce takes as his own contribution to debates about what it is to understand something.

Peirce says that sensory experience is all-important. A perceptual belief, he argues, is merely a belief that is compelling, surprising, impinging, involuntary, or forceful. Such beliefs need not arise from the senses. Peirce wants all hypotheses to

be exposed to the pragmatic maxim; he does not exempt formal/analytic sentences. Logical and mathematical hypotheses can meet the criterion because there is a kind of experience relevant to them.

**Truth and reality**

Peirce applies the pragmatic maxim to the debate on the nature of truth and reality. The philosopher must look to our practices and see what account of truth would be best suited for them. Peirce’s concept of truth is through belief, inquiry, and deliberation: the practices linked to truth and to the seeking of truth. Peirce suggests that we concern ourselves with propositions we have arrived at, expressed, affirmed, or believed and those we shall arrive at, express, affirm, or believe. By making this our focus will discover something about what it is at which we aim: truth. This does not mean that truth is an epistemological notion. Rather, this exemplifies one route to finding out something about truth: the route through our epistemological practices of believing, inquiring, and deliberating.

The correspondence theory, Peirce argues, can have no consequences for our practices. It holds that a true hypothesis is one which is in agreement with an unknowable thing-in-itself. Peirce sometimes states this objection to the correspondence theory by labeling it a transcendental account of truth. Such accounts regard truth as the subject of metaphysics exclusively spurious metaphysics, not pragmatically legitimate metaphysics. On the correspondence definition, truth transcends belief, experience, and inquiry.

The correspondence theory has an unbridgeable gap between a belief which is supported by experience and a belief that corresponds to reality. We could have the best possible evidence for a hypothesis and yet that hypothesis might fail to be true. The correspondence theory does not tell us what we can expect of a true hypothesis and so it is not capable of guiding us in our actions and inquiries. If truth is the aim of inquiry, then the correspondence theory leaves inquirers completely in the dark as to how they should conduct their investigations. The aim is not, Peirce says, readily comprehensible. Peirce’s
view of reality is connected to his view of truth in that he often says that reality is the object of true beliefs. It is what true beliefs are about.

William James

William James (1842-1910), American philosopher, a leader of the philosophical movement of Pragmatism and of the psychological movement of functionalism. William James attended private schools in the United States and Europe, the Lawrence Scientific School at Harvard University, and the Harvard Medical School. Before finishing his medical studies, he went on an exploring expedition in Brazil with Swiss American naturalist Louis Agassiz and also studied physiology in Germany. After three years of retirement due to illness, James became an instructor in physiology at Harvard in 1872. He taught psychology and philosophy at Harvard after 1880; he left Harvard in 1907 and gave highly successful lectures at Columbia University and the University of Oxford. James died in Chocorua, New Hampshire.

The chief locus of James’s pragmatism is his popular and influential work Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking. The origin of pragmatism, James always acknowledged, is found in C. S. Peirce’s essay “How to Make Our Ideas Clear,” published in 1878. This essay remained generally unnoticed until James’s 1898 lecture on pragmatism. This lecture may be taken as the beginning of pragmatism as an explicit, although never a unified, movement, but the essentials of the doctrine as developed by James are found earlier in the Principles of Psychology and even in the introduction to The Literary Remains of the Late Henry James. James rarely wrote anything, early or late, which did not at least imply pragmatism. Pragmatism may be approached as a mere method, an argumentative device which hints to either the meaning or truth of propositions or to both together; it may be taken as a theory of meaning or a theory of truth or, once again, as a theory of both meaning and truth. He wished to persuade his readers of the truth of whichever part he was recommending at the moment, and he therefore tended to stress the self-contained plausibility of elements which, if plausible at all, are so only when taken together in the total view. It is the contention of James’s sympathetic commentators that his pragmatism is plausible as nothing less than a theory of reality. It is the descriptive naturalism central to James that saves pragmatism from being merely a convenient device for settling philosophical disputes. The fundamental assumption that generates pragmatism is the assumption that knowledge, truth, and meaning, as well as any other possible object of discourse or any other possible subject matter for philosophical discussion.
The world, for James, is a plurality of temporal processes related in so many specifiable and concrete ways that it cannot be accounted for by abstract speculation alone. James believed that an individual’s personal, peculiar vision counts most in philosophy; not surprisingly, it is vision, not method, which is primary in James. Reality dictates the method by which it may be known. The gross encounter with the world is primary in the determination of what character the world will have for us. Theories of knowledge and of method, existing at a high level of abstraction, are second to the ineluctable fact of experience breaking in upon us. James applied his empirical methods of investigation to philosophical and religious issues. He explored the questions of the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, free will, and ethical values by referring to human religious and moral experience as a direct source. His views on these subjects were presented in the lectures and essays published in such books.

James’s pragmatism is an attempt to formulate metaphysics of truth and of meaning. Logically such an attempt is exactly on a par with the metaphysical treatment. By metaphysics James meant the quest for adequate general descriptions of reality as a whole or of some distinguishable part of it. The descriptions offered by metaphysics are, in principle, continuous with those offered by science, although their range and focus may differ. The distinction between science and metaphysics was not crucial for James. He found the possibility of unrestricted intercourse and cooperation exactly where later thinkers are likely to see division and competition for cognitive respectability. It is therefore helpful from James’s own point of view to regard pragmatism’s description of truth in the same light, say, as geology’s description of continental drift. Both are characterizations of natural processes, and both attempt to portray what actually happens.

The metaphysical perspective of Pragmatism is so unmistakable that the prevailing interpretation of pragmatism as a set of newly devised rules that serve a certain practical purpose seems totally unjustified. If James was right, people have always unwittingly followed the pragmatic method. A purely theoretical illumination like pragmatism will indeed clarify practice and improve it. For James no process least of all, a process where human influence intervenes is so canalized that modifications are utterly beyond hope. Metaphysics must recognize the plasticity of its subject matter as well as the limits of plasticity. Pragmatism discusses truth without falling into the epistemological frame of mind habitually assumed by professional philosophers. James’s description of actual processes rejects the usual question of what we ought to believe. If there is something we ought to believe, the authority of the ought itself to must be explained concretely. There is...
no authority which is merely formal. Pragmatism therefore becomes the justification of truth’s prestige in terms of the world’s exigencies. One factor discernible in the complex process called believing truly is the compulsion of fact or the unavoidability of a residual no plastic pole in determination of what is true. It is here that we find truth’s authority and importance.

For James truth is what we must somehow take account of if we are not to perish. Man cannot in the long run believe what is false not because truth extracts from them a categorical imperative in its own behalf. But because reality compels men in spite of themselves, and it is from this that the authority of truth is derived. Agreement with reality as a criterion of truth cannot be taken to indicate any fixed structural relation. The truth relation is characterized not by stasis but by the fluid resourcefulness of functional harmony. The character of the harmony itself may be anything that is compatible with survival. Even in the Darwinian world that James pictured, there is more than one way to survive as truth. Raw compulsion may account for the authority of truth, but truth is hardly a mute registry of bruises received from the world. Indeed, people create truth, and truth is so exclusively the result of human activity that James’s own view has been called humanism. Central to this humanism is the distinction between ideas and objects, between what takes account and what is taken account of.

Truth and falsity apply not to objects but only to our ideas of objects. Our ideas of objects are mutable in the sense that we can modify ideas or replace one idea by another. In such a situation ideas are to be judged better or worse; such judgments fall between the ideal limits of complete good and complete bad. These are the same limits usually called truth and falsity. Truth is viewed by James as one species of the good. The good is itself interpreted as a plurality of good. In this view ideas are instruments for taking account theoretically, practically, aesthetically, and so on, of reality. There are, of course, ontological relations between such inventions as maps, predictions, and propositions and what, in summary fashion, is referred to as reality. Inventions are conventional but not arbitrary. They are not arbitrary because they must somehow take account of reality. The emphasis on the truth relation as a relation within experience and totally construable in terms of positive experience is one instance of James’s general metaphysical position that all relations are within experience. Experience forms a cohesive, self-explanatory whole; it hangs together, as James liked to say, and needs no transcendental connectives or supports. Since the truth relation was taken by James’s contemporaries as transcending experience, the strategic function of pragmatism is apparent. It is an extension of radical empiricism, an attempt to
place the particularly troublesome truth relation within the total perspective of metaphorical naturalism.

James spoke of true ideas as those which work, which lead propitiously, which give various kinds of satisfaction, and which bring about various kinds of success.

He also spoke approvingly of the cash value of ideas and thought that meaningful ideas are those which make practical differences. These highly metaphorical expressions have confused many commentators. There are those who have found James vague. He intended, however, that all these metaphors should be functionally specific and indeterminate only in respect to instances. Working, leading, satisfying, and succeeding are generic terms as respectable and as precise as terms such as copying and agreeing. They are, however, functional rather than static. For those who see functions as inherently insubstantial, shadowy, and vague, any functional definition of truth will be unacceptable, but this hardly seems to be an insurmountable objection. Other commentators have seized upon the prominence of the practical in James’s account of meaning and truth. Surely, this is a difficult term in James, if for no other reason than that he used it as it is used in ordinary language that is, variously. His prevailing usage, however, cannot be equated with some narrow notion of commercial efficiency. Pragmatism is not a philosophical vindication of the businessperson’s common sense or acumen. It is especially in our theoretical and moral practice that meaningful ideas, according to James, are to make a difference. Belief divorced from action may well be morally effete, and James set forth this point, though not in its crudely athletic form; his main thesis, however, was that belief divorced from action is theoretically inexplicable. James’s quest was not for a formula that would rouse his fellows to civic virtue or efficiency of some peculiarly American sort but for criteria which would be descriptively adequate to belief. His philosophical purpose was to find out what it means to believe, what it means.

John Dewey (1859-1952)

John Dewey American philosopher, psychologist, and educator. Born in Burlington, Vermont, Dewey received a B.A. degree from the University of Vermont in 1879 and a Ph.D. degree from Johns Hopkins University in 1884. Dewey’s long and influential career in education began at the University of Michigan, where he taught from 1884 to 1888. In 1888-1889 Dewey taught at the University of Minnesota, returning to the University of Michigan from 1889 to 1894. He continued his career at the University of Chicago from
1894 to 1904 and at Columbia University from 1904 until his retirement as professor emeritus in 1931. Dewey lectured, acted as an educational consultant, and studied educational systems in China, Japan, Mexico, Turkey, and the Soviet Union.

His writings include *Psychology* (1887), *The School and Society* (1899), *Democracy and Education* (1916), *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (1920), *Human Nature and Conduct* (1922), *The Quest for Certainty* (1929), *Art as Experience* (1934), *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (1938), and *Problems of Men* (1946). Dewey became actively interested in the reform of educational theory and practice. He tested his educational principles at the famous experimental Laboratory School, the so-called Dewey School, established by the University of Chicago in 1896. He emphasized learning through varied activities and opposed authoritarian methods, which, Dewey believed, offered contemporary people no realistic preparation for life in a democratic society. Dewey found that education should not merely be a preparation for future life but a full life in itself. His work and his writings were largely responsible for the drastic change in pedagogy that began in the United States early in the 20th century as emphasis shifted from the institution to the student.

As a philosopher, Dewey emphasized the practical, striving to show how philosophical ideas can work in everyday life. His sense of logic and philosophy was ever-changing, adaptive to need and circumstance. The process of thinking, in his philosophy, is a means of planning action, of removing the obstacles between what is given and what is wanted. Truth is an idea that has worked in practical experience. Dewey followed the American philosopher and psychologist William James as a leader of the pragmatic movement in philosophy; Dewey’s own philosophy, called either instrumentalism or experimentalism, stems from the pragmatism of James.

Dewey’s own version of pragmatism was called instrumentalism. He wished to replace the correspondence theory of truth where true statements are defined as those that correspond to reality to a new idea of the truth is what works. The proof of an idea consists in it being subject to predictable results. In other words, in Dewey’s cumbersome expression: “According to experimental inquiry, the validity of the object of thought depends upon the consequences of the operations which define the object of thought. Dewey accepted Peirce’s idea that the object of scientific inquiry is belief. Inquiry originates in doubt and there are methods for overcoming that doubt, as Peirce said. But Dewey goes further in saying that the
problem must be defined before you can reach a solution. Dewey says five steps for solving problems.

Firstly, one is to observe the main components of a problem. Secondly think further about the problem to assess its complete difficulty and appreciate the larger context it is part of. In step three make hypotheses that move toward a possible solution of it. Fourthly, includes an analysis of hypothesis in terms of past experience, choosing other potentially feasible solutions. Finally, involves putting these possible solutions into practice experimentally or inductively and checking the results against your actual experiences. Dewey says Copernicus testing the heliocentric hypothesis in this fashion, checking it against his mathematical calculations and past hypotheses in order to confirm it. The five steps combined make up our reflective thinking. His definition of truth shows its fuller meaning. Truth is a means of satisfying human needs. Truth is many things: useful, public, and objective; that is, it benefits society, not just the individual who discovers it. Pragmatists were united in the belief that practical consequences are the only valid test of truth, but it was Dewey who worked out these step-by-step procedures, starting with formulating the problem and moving toward a practical solution.

The pragmatist does not deny, Dewey insists that truth is correspondence of thought to existence, though he does deny that it is correspondence of thought to unknowable things-in-themselves. Dewey is also drawn to the idea that it might be as well to stop using the word true and to work. Like Peirce and James, Dewey repudiates the quest for certainty. He goes on to offer a psycho-sociological diagnosis of the motivation for that quest. He suggests that from the sharp dichotomy of theory versus practice, and the distaste for the practical, the changeable, and the uncertain, embodied in the slave-owning culture of ancient Greece. Dewey is suspicious of traditional philosophical dualisms; and this is reflected in his epistemological writings, which are critical of the whole tradition from Plato through Descartes to his own contemporaries, because of its reliance on the dichotomies of object and subject, fact and value, mind and body, theory and practice. They all hold that the operation of inquiry excludes any element of practical activity that enters into the construction of the object known. Dewey by contrast insists that knowing is not isolated from practice. But is itself a kind of practice to be judged, like other practices.
Dewey’s logical work is not formal, but this is not why Peirce is critical of it; Peirce’s objection is that it is too purely descriptive, amounting only to a natural history of inquiry and not a normative methodology. Dewey is clearly acknowledging that logic is normative stressing, however, that its recommendations about how inquiry should proceed can only be based on scientific study of what procedures have proven themselves to work. The cumulative effect of the shifts of emphasis from Peirce through James to Dewey is, it might be fair to say, from an essentially reformist attitude to the philosophical tradition to a potentially revolutionary one. Peirce’s theory of inquiry is behaviouristic, naturalistic and fallibility; it is thoroughly anti-Cartesian, but clearly reformist in its approach. So too is James’s, but his stress on the so-far-satisfactory in the way of belief, especially given the misleading terminology of concrete truths hints at something more revolutionary. Dewey is perhaps least misleadingly described as half-straddling the reformist revolutionary distinction. His distinction of state and content senses of belief, his insistence on a conception of experience much richer than the old sensationalist one. His aspiration to transcend the old dichotomy of rationalism versus empiricism and to acknowledge the interlocking of experience and reason are revolutionary suggestions about the making of truth, the modification of the objects of knowledge through inquiry, and the replacement of the traditional theory of knowledge by a critical scrutiny, internal to science, of the methods of inquiry science employs.

POSITIVISM

Introduction

Positivism is a system of philosophy based on experience and empirical knowledge of natural phenomena. They regarded metaphysics and theology is inadequate and imperfect systems of knowledge. The doctrine was first called positivism by the 19th-century French mathematician and philosopher Auguste Comte. But some of the positivist concepts may be traced to the British philosopher David Hume, and the German philosopher Immanuel Kant.

Comte chose the word positivism on the ground that it indicated the reality and constructive tendency that he claimed for the theoretical aspect of the doctrine. He was interested in a reorganization of social life for the good of humanity through scientific knowledge, and thus control of natural forces. The two primary components of positivism, the philosophy and the polity were later welded by Comte into a whole under
the conception of a religion, in which humanity was the object of worship. A number of Comte's disciples refused, however, to accept this religious development of his philosophy, because it seemed to contradict the original positivist philosophy. Many of Comte's doctrines were later adapted and developed by the British social philosophers John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer and by the Austrian philosopher and physicist Ernst Mach.

Auguste Comte (1798-1857)

Auguste Comte, French positivist philosopher, who was a founder of sociology. Comte was born in Montpellier on January 19, 1798. In the early period he rejected his family's Roman Catholicism and royalist political views. He was expelled for participating in a student rebellion. For several years he was secretary to the noted socialist Claude Henri de Rouvroy, whose influence is reflected in much of Comte's work. In response to the scientific, political, and industrial revolutions of his day, Comte was fundamentally concerned with an intellectual, moral, and political reorganization of the social order.

Comte argued that an empirical study of historical processes, particularly of the progress of the various interrelated sciences, reveals a law of three stages that govern human development. He analyzed these stages in his major work, the six-volume Course of Positive Philosophy (1830). Because of the nature of the human mind, each science or branch of knowledge passes through three different theoretical states: the theological or fictitious state; the metaphysical or abstract state; and, lastly, the scientific or positive state. At the theological stage, events are immaturely explained by appealing to the will of the gods or of God. At the metaphysical stage phenomena are explained by appealing to abstract philosophical categories. The final evolutionary stage, the scientific, involves relinquishing any quest for absolute explanations of causes. Attention is focused altogether on how phenomena are related, with the aim of arriving at generalizations subject to observational verification. Comte's work is considered the classical expression of the positivist attitude namely, that the empirical sciences are the only adequate source of knowledge.

Comte believed that each of the stages is correlated with certain political developments. The theological stage is reflected in such notions as the divine right of kings. The metaphysical stage involves such concepts as the social contract, the equality of persons, and popular sovereignty. The positivist stage entails a scientific or sociological. Quite critical of democratic procedures, Comte envisioned a stable society governed by scientific
elite who would use the methods of science to solve human problems and improve social conditions. Though he rejected belief in a transcendent being, Comte recognized the value of religion in contributing to social stability. In his four-volume System of Positive Polity, he proposed his religion of humanity, aimed at encouraging socially beneficial behavior. Comte's chief significance derives from his role in the historical development of positivism.

**COMTE’S THREE STAGE LAW**

The theological stage

According to Comte, in humanity's first or theological era, one can discern three sub stages, namely, fetishism, polytheism, and monotheism. Like the three master stages themselves, these three come in roughly chronological order. In all three sub stages, (a) feelings or instincts predominate over the capacity for thought; but in each one, they predominate differently. The result is that fetishistic, polytheistic, and monotheistic beliefs about both (b) what is real and (c) how the real behaves are not the same.

**Fetishism**

Comte does not actually say so, behind his explicit pronouncements about intellectual and social development is the implicit understanding both that the relations between human beings and their surroundings are most properly conceived as harmonious ones and also that practical-mindedness is the attitude most suitable to maintaining such relations. This twofold understanding quite obviously informs Comte's defense of the maturity of the scientific stage, as we will see in a moment; but perhaps not so obviously, it also informs his interpretation even of the religious ideas and activities of our most remote ancestors. In primitive human life, according to Comte, experiences of mysterious and disturbing ruptures in what are otherwise expected to be predictable and peaceful interactions with the world give rise to (a) spontaneous reactions of the feelings or instincts. Afraid or awe-struck in the presence of some apparently uncontrollable natural force (e.g., an eclipse, earthquake, or epidemic), people are excited by these feelings into thinking about (b) the actually experienced thing itself precisely in terms of its frightful or awesome countenance. And since at this point the human race possesses no theoretical repertoire, all of the resulting
conceptions tend to depict the frightful or awesome thing as (c) alive with power or energy.

According to Comte, the first sign of speculative activity, the purpose of which is to explain the mystery of some unexpected course of events. Primitive speculation utilizes the image of the human will because what is sought is the cause of the occurrence, and the only causally effective power with which the primitive mind is directly familiar is that of its own acts of choosing. Yet once these spontaneously produced, animistic theories appear, their unsatisfactory character gradually becomes evident.

Polytheism

In contrast to fetishism, polytheism focuses on general phenomenal manifestations of things. Polytheism is the true theologism. It stimulates the development of genuine theorizing by supplying all intellects with images extremely well adapted for fixing the attention habitually upon general phenomena apart from particular bodies. Moreover these phenomenal generalities function of divine wills instead of material forces. Polytheism draws the world closer to us both theoretically and practically than fetishism could. Theoretically, the world seems more accessible because the course of things is now thought to be determined by beings analogous to ourselves. Practically, the world is thus also made to seem more accessible, for unlike fetishism's mysteriously operating arbitrary powers, events controlled by the wills of gods. In relation to monotheism, polytheism may be viewed as instituting the great theoretic dualism of humanity and the world that will ultimately make genuine knowledge possible.

Monotheism

In the final analysis, Comte says monotheism (a) arises out of the feelings or instincts, but now reason struggles to gain the upper hand in responding to them by restricting the use of imagination in order to produce (b) a more logically organized and coherent account of divine causality - one that depicts the whole surrounding natural world as a cosmos (c) created by and subject to the will of a single god who acts not capriciously but in accordance with a set of universal and invariable laws. For Comte, the resulting picture of things is not very satisfying either intellectually or practically. Monotheism's accounts of how the laws work remain incurably vague and abstract, since for monotheists the real point is always simply that they are God's laws; and the god who applies these laws seems increasingly remote from human affairs. According to Comte's unflattering image,
the very point the monotheistic mind comes most to insist on namely, the essential disjunction between divine and human natures.

In general, the three stages of theology form the necessary childhood of the human race. Primitive humanity had neither theories to explain natural events nor observations from which to build such theories. Since reliable theory must be based on observation and fruitful observation must be guided by previously established theory, we would have been caught forever in a vicious circle. In the end no theological conception of our surroundings can be intellectually satisfying, since it is inevitably more dependent on feeling and imagination than on reason. Moreover, it to be a comprehensive representation of universal cosmic necessity mapped out in a system of laws explaining why everything hangs together, it is these natural laws themselves that are the important topic, not the gods' or God's employment. The mind therefore, grows increasingly unhappy with even the most ambitious and consistent supernaturalism and it turns in critical reaction toward metaphysics.

The metaphysical stage

The metaphysical stage, according to Comte, unlike the theological - has no separate, conceptually distinctive sub stages. In fact, he suggests that it is not a full-fledged stage at all but a merely transitional period between theology and science. Comte's point of these deflationary remarks has been widely misunderstood. As a result Comte's conceptions of the nature of metaphysics and the importance of the metaphysical era have been obscured and wrongly taken to be pretty by the later positivists. Mill complains that Comte considerably exaggerates the contribution made by metaphysics to the rise of science because he fails to distinguish rigorously between the mode of thought Mill calls dialectics and negative criticism and the metaphysical spirit strictly so called, which Mill defines as a propensity to explain divine actions in terms of impersonal entities, interposed between the governing deity and the phenomena. Metaphysics is for Comte precisely the logical operation of dialectics and negative criticism that Mill wants to separate from what he calls metaphysics.

Historically speaking, Mill fails to see that the metaphysical spirit's so often expressing itself ontologically is a function of its origin, not of its nature. Comte explains, critical reasoning plays an excessive role in our speculations about nature; and in its obstinate proneness to argue rather than observe, the metaphysical mind is more interested in the dissolution of theological ideas than in truly scientific work. For Comte the crucial fact about metaphysics is not that it
produces ontological theories or that it has an essentially critical character. No metaphysical system expresses any kind of experientially distinctive relationship to the world that would make it representative of a really separate post-theological stage. The uniqueness, among positivists, of Comte's interpretation of metaphysics is now evident. Both Mill and the later positivists, Comte neither writes it off as mere speculation nor assures us, with mock generosity, that the great metaphysicians were really scientists or logicians of science in the making. Instead, he insists upon the distinctiveness of metaphysical thinking and argues that the clarification and understanding of science itself depend on recognizing this distinctiveness. He sees it, metaphysics is, above all, a critical response to theology one that helps pave the way for positive knowledge by radically altering inherited theological conceptions of both the proper function of reason and the nature of explanation. For Comte, the most important thing about metaphysical thinking is that it is at once too independent to be theological and too theological to be scientific. On the one hand, metaphysical concepts differ profoundly from theological ones in their subordination of feelings and imagination to purely rational considerations.

Finally, Comte claims an important fact for contemporary philosophers to understand. His argument for this claim takes us back to one of the fundamental differences between Comtean and later positivism. As we have already seen, in contrast to everyone from Mill to Reichenbach, who all tend to assume that the age of metaphysics has already passed, Comte holds that humanity is still in the process of making the transition from the second to the third stage. For him, this means an essential part of positive philosophy's job is to explain both the transition itself and the intellectual as well as the social importance of completing it. In other words, one must begin with a historically informed defense of science and scientific thinking itself rather than plunge directly into questions of method. Viewed from this angle, the important thing about the metaphysical stage is what the mind learns by passing through it.

Comte notes that this spontaneous move toward science is largely confined to the study of objects other than ourselves. Metaphysics lacking an experiential base of its own carries forward theology's flattering sense of our species as special, superior, and centrally important. Metaphysical speculation about humanity is therefore much harder to give up than metaphysical speculation about nature because accepting the scientific alternative means considering ourselves as just one more kind of natural entity. Part of positive philosophy's job, then, is to provide the needed incentive for the extension of
observational study to humanity by exposing the bankruptcy of metaphysical concepts in the one area where we are most reluctant to give them up. Comte's descriptions of metaphysics are therefore kinder in his epistemologically oriented where speculative independence can be praised for opening the door to science The central issue is social reorganization, metaphysics is seen primarily in terms of what it is always threatening to become, namely, a prideful insurrection of the intellect against the heart. To sum up Comte's overall evaluation of stage two, he suggests that the metaphysical spirit is best regarded as a kind of chronic distemper naturally inhering in our individual and collective mental evolution between infancy and manhood.

The scientific stage

For Comte, the positive stage begins when the nominalistic and anarchistic implications of metaphysics push the mind toward subordinating itself to observation. The whole tenor of intellectual expectation that characterizes both theology and metaphysics must change. Speculation can no longer be regarded as providing absolute knowledge of what lies above, behind, or within the things we encounter. All theorizing must come to be construed not as concerned with anything absolute but as relative to the amount and quality of our observations of phenomenal events and properties that are actually present in our encounters with the world. Comte argues relativity is one of six qualities are characteristic of a truly positive philosophy. In his *Systeme*, he adds a seventh meaning, namely, sympathetic, for which he admits he cannot make much of an empirical or lexicographic case but which he argues should be included anyway in order to indicate that positive philosophy precisely as philosophy, and especially in light of its concern for the ultimately sociopolitical ends of knowledge. Comte's philosophy about science that he cites Bacon for directing philosophy toward observation; Descartes for encouraging explicit concern for method; and Galileo for pioneering a scientific way of actually discovering nature's invariable laws. He warns that the combined influence of their teachings leads from metaphysics to positive thought. Contrary the usual story, Comte's positivism neither traces all observation back to sense impressions nor subordinates reason to observation.

Comte's view is exactly what his fundamental law would lead us to expect. The scientific stage constitutes the fulfillment of the aims through a surpassing of the methods of the first two stages. In every phase of intellectual development, what is wanted is a conceptual system concerning the totality of phenomena that permits us to understand our surroundings. For a Comtean positivist it is wrong to think of a prescientific mind as essentially either theological or metaphysical. In any
scientific mind, its operations are at bottom just as much a response to experience and just as concerned with normalizing relations to our surroundings so as to meet our human needs. From Comte's viewpoint, the traditional stories about philosophy's origin are quite misleading. Theologians and metaphysicians tell us that philosophy originates in feelings of mystery or intellectual wonder, respectively; and it is a fact that both are, for a time, indispensable stimulants to speculation. In the final analysis, both theology and metaphysics are intended just as much as means to prevision and to the satisfaction of practical and social needs as is science. To complete the parallel in connection with the first two stages, Comtean science is for modern technology what theology and metaphysics are for worship and contemplation, respectively, namely, the comprehensive theoretical basis for a universal form of praxis.

Comte reconstructs current practices in terms of what they owe to theological metaphysical ones. Traditional theories may indeed be called unscientific, but only if scientific is understood, to begin with, as characterizing an orientation formulated as a response to the foundering of traditional speculation. Genuine knowledge must indeed be limited entirely to phenomena. But an informed claim asserting this limitation depends on understanding it in the first place against the background of earlier ambitious but failed attempts to know more. His conception of the third stage as a cumulative transformation of the first two is neither unconscious nor merely dogmatic; and it is not something one must hunt for between his lines and in occasional remarks. It is openly espoused, consciously defended, and specifically identified as informative of Comte's own orientation. This historic-critical use of his three-stage law, the promise and weaknesses which

will be considered marks the deepest difference between his positivism, on the one hand, and that of both Mill and the Logical Empiricists on the other.
UNIT II

LOGICAL POSITIVISM AND PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE

Introduction

A philosophical movement that flourished in the 1920s and 1930s among scientifically oriented philosophers in Europe. The movement is also called logical empiricism. The centre of the movement was the Vienna Circle, a discussion group of philosophers, scientists and mathematicians convened by Moritz Schlick (1852–1936), who held the Chair in the Philosophy of the Inductive Sciences at Vienna, a chair previously held by Mach and Ludwig Boltzmann (1844–1906). Other prominent figures associated with the movement include Reichenbach, Carnap, Otto Neurath and Carl Hempel. A number of the leading positivists immigrated to the United States. Affinities between positivism and pragmatism, these émigrés together with their students and sympathizers emerged as leading figures in American philosophy in the 1950s. With its absorption into the mainstream of Anglo-American philosophy, logical positivism ceased to be an identifiable philosophical movement. Both the refinement and the critical evaluation of ideas associated with logical positivism on the part of those most sympathetic with the movement was a prominent feature. American philosophy developed by the Vienna Circle during the 1920s and 30s, this philosophy was developed in an attempt to systematize empiricism in light of developments in math and philosophy. For logical positivists, the entire discipline of philosophy was centered one task: to clarify the meanings of concepts and ideas. According to logical positivism, there are only two sorts of statements which have meaning. The first encompassed necessary truths of logic, mathematics and ordinary language. The second encompassed empirical propositions about the world around us and which were not necessary.

The most famous doctrine of logical positivism is its verifiability principle, developed as a means for identifying the second of the above two types of statements. According to this principle, the validity and meaning of any proposition is dependent upon whether or not it can be verified. Thus, a statement which cannot be verified is held to be automatically invalid and meaningless. This became for many people a basis for attack on metaphysics, theology and religion because those systems of thought make many statements which cannot, in principle, be verified in any way.
The Vienna Circle

A philosophical and scientific movement originated in the 1920s under the leadership of Professor Moritz Schlick of the University of Vienna by a group of philosophers and scientists who shared many basic ideas. The name derived from the manifesto of the movement “The Scientific Conception of the World: The Vienna Circle,” published in 1929. Leading members of the circle included M. Schlick, R. Carnap, O. Neurath, F. Waismann, H. Feigl, and K. Gödel. Its philosophy, which is called Logical Positivism or Logical Empiricism, was introduced to English readers by A. J. Ayer’s book *Language, Truth and Logic* (1936). The Vienna Circle disintegrated after the death in 1936 of Schlick, who was shot by student. Many members emigrated to United States, England, and the Scandinavian countries, and exerted great influence in their new countries. Neurath made great effort to keep the movement going. Together with Carnap he initiated publication of a series of works at the University of Chicago under the general title *The Encyclopedia of Unified Science*. In spite of these efforts, the Vienna Circle was no longer a school.

Logical positivism and the Vienna Circle are almost synonymous. The Vienna in strength throughout the 1920s, attracting philosophers such as Rudolf Carnap, Friedrich Waismann, and Otto Neurath and mathematicians and scientists such as Gödel and Hans Hahn. It started as an intellectual club with Moritz Schlick, Professor of Philosophy at the University of Vienna, as its leading light. As the club debated and discussed problems in science, logic, and philosophy, a definite consensus emerged. The members of the Vienna Circle were bound, initially at least, by commitments, to the development of the positivistic heritage of David Hume and Ernst Mach, who argued against for metaphysics and whose focus upon empirical investigation were echoed by the Circle again and again. They held for promotion of scientific inquiry as the model for all intellectual investigations, and the conviction that physics was not simply a model for other sciences - but that all sciences, including psychological and social sciences, might one day be unified and reduced to common, fundamental physical terms. The systematic use of logical analysis to reduce complex statements to elementary propositions, so that the high level scientific statements of a given theory might be unpacked into low-level (directly verifiable) claims about observation and experience. Here the members of the Circle were inspired by the foundational work of such mathematicians as Frege and by the logical atomism of Bertrand Russell and Ludwig Wittgenstein.
Logical positivism emerged quite naturally from the philosophical preoccupation and scientific bias of the Vienna Circle. Schlick and his comrades typically believed that science delivers knowledge through careful direct observational / experimental verification. Given that the practices of the empirical sciences provide an exceptionally high, privileged status for scientific knowledge, the methods of science therefore provide the yardstick against which all other claims to knowledge must be measured. Logical positivism came to be associated with the distinctive slogan .The meaning of a statement is the method of its verification - the so-called Verification Principle, with its origins in Wittgenstein's Tractatus LogicoPhilosophicus and enthusiastically promoted by Waismann and Schlick . Questions concerning both meaning and the distinction between meaningful and meaningless statements became the chief preoccupation of logical positivists.

Many young philosophers traveled to Vienna and to various congresses to learn at first hand of ideas which appeared to challenge what they regarded as established philosophical dogma, A. J. Ayer visited Vienna, revealing his excitement in a letter to Isaiah Berlin: said philosophy is grammar, would talk about laws, they talk about rules of grammar. All philosophical questions are purely linguistical. Ayer returned to England to write the enormously influential Language, Truth and Logic, Many of Ayer's colleagues in Oxford, such as J. L. Austin, Stuart Hampshire, and Isaiah Berlin, were very much taken with the new ways of thinking at least in these early days. Other visitors to Vienna included a young

logician from the United States, Quine, who was later to challenge much that the logical positivists had to say about meaning and analysis. During the 1930s, logical positivism maintained its momentum, attracting admirers and critical interest, as well as hostile reviews

The scientist and philosopher Ernst Mach is frequently regarded as the father of logical positivism, as well as the chief architect of what might be called scientific positivism a philosophy of science which regards the possibility of observational or experimental verification as the defining characteristic of all scientific statements. His empiricist polemic reinforced the views of earlier philosophers such as Berkeley and Hume. Mach’s influence in the scientific world was far reaching. Mach claimed, in his book The Conservation of Energy, that only the objects of sense experience have any role in science, the task of physics is the discovery of the laws of the connection of sensations.

Verifiability Principle

The central idea of logical positivism is the Principle of Verification. Taking their cue from Wittgenstein and Weismann maintained that we understand a statement when we know
how it is to be verified. In order to specify the meaning of some proposition, we must spell out how the proposition would be verified or falsified. Schlick and his followers were clearly committed to the construction of a theory of meaning - a monumental task which ultimately was to prove fruitless. A. J. Ayer focused international attention upon logical positivism and the problem of verification with the publication of the first edition of *Language, Truth and Logic*. He avoided being drawn into any discussion about meaning as such by limiting himself to the general problem of verification. They found that we can pick out genuinely factual statements and distinguish them from meaningless statements with no empirical content. Ayer suggested that we might do so using a criterion of verification. Ayer argued that all metaphysical statements such as God is omnipotent are ruled out as meaningless by his criterion.

According to Ayer’s criterion, if the statement is empirically verifiable then it is meaningful. For verification to play any vital part in the positivist program, Ayer realized that the criterion had to be improved. A further problem for Ayer and for all logical positivists was how to spell out what is to count as an experiential statement. Saying that an actual or possible observational claim fits the bill only pushes the difficulty one step away. Logical positivists and their supporters tried two principle maneuvers. Some, like Schlick, took Mach’s phenomenalism as their inspiration; true experiential statements correspond in some straightforward way to the world. They are synthetic statements which express the facts with clarity and simplicity. Logic is then used to analyze the connection via analytic rules of statements in ordinary language to the statements of a more elementary language pitched at the sensory level. The task for philosophy is to articulate the rules which connect the two types of language. The rules are analytic, since they have nothing to say about the world itself, and so all can agree upon them. Hence, the approach here is underpinned by an analytic/synthetic distinction. Initially, the Vienna Circle was drawn towards the simple idea that we might build knowledge of the world from fundamental sentences which cash out our individual sensory experiences.

Neurath and Carnap became increasingly dissatisfied with its naiveté, arguing that the supposed incorrigibility of our private experience could not underwrite the intersubjective domain of scientific knowledge. They were further discouraged by developments in logic. Frege and Russell had given the logical positivists confidence that there is a single. True logic which could be used as the common foundation for all logical analysis. The development of nonstandard logical systems produced a dilemma. So
Neurath and Carnap advocated a second, more sophisticated approach in which elementary or protocol sentences as they were called. Protocol sentences are supposed to provide a precise record of a scientist's experience. These sentences are set within a given linguistic framework and their terms are given meaning by meaning postulates analytic rules connecting the terms to the synthetic observational claims made by the sentences.

**Rudolf Carnap (1891–1970)**

Rudolf Carnap, prominent figure in the philosophical movement known as logical positivism or logical empiricism. Carnap was born on May 18, 1891, in Germany. Educated at the universities of Jena and Freiburg. He specialized in mathematics, physics, and philosophy. He particularly acknowledged the influence of the German mathematician Gottlob Frege in mathematics and the British philosophers Bertrand Russell and Ludwig Wittgenstein in philosophy. Carnap became a leading member of the Vienna Circle, a group of positivist scientists and philosophers.

Carnap interpreted philosophy as logical analysis. He was primarily concerned with the analysis of the language of science, because he judged the empirical statements of science to be the only factually meaningful ones. His early effort in *The Logical Structure of the World* is to reduce all knowledge claims to the language of sense data, his developing preference for language that described behavior, his work on the syntax of scientific language is in *The Logical Syntax of Language*, and his various treatments of the verifiability, testability, or conformability of empirical statements are testimonies to his belief that the problems of philosophy are reducible to the problems of language. Carnap's principle of tolerance, or the conventionality of language forms, emphasized freedom and variety in language construction. He was particularly interested in the construction of formal, logical systems.

Carnap introduced a distinction between formal and material modes of speech. His distinction was designed to avoid any confusion between the private content of subjective experience and the public basis for intersubjective agreement about experiences. Once a scientist decides to work within a given framework, intersubjective agreement can be delivered. But at a considerable price the logical principles which provide the essential structure for the framework, and indeed the framework itself. Carnap states that on pragmatic grounds two rival groups of scientists may use two quite separate frameworks with distinct logics. They no longer aim to describe the world, at least in any straightforward manner. Instead, the judgments which they make are relative to the framework itself: what is true or false depends upon internal consistency within each separate framework.
Carnap, argued that in practice there is only one scientific system and that is the one accepted by the prevailing scientific culture. Ayer argued that each rival and incompatible system might include the proposition that it was the only acceptable system. Carnap believed that they share the same language. This, it was argued,

would provide a basis for the eventual reduction of the social and psychological sciences either to the physical sciences or to a general phenomenological science.

Carnap sketches the development of an epistemologically oriented system with an auto psychological basis. The individuals are the total momentary experiences of a person, the single undefined relation is that of recollected similarity. The order of definition in this system is to reflect epistemological priority in the application of concepts. A constitution system contains definitions for the concepts employed by the existing formal and empirical sciences. Carnap believes his auto psychological constitution system expresses the core common to various epistemological positions, capturing the insights each emphasizes. This achievement makes evident that these epistemological positions differ only in their non-rational, metaphysical assertions. So Carnap holds that his sample system captures the Kantian insight that objective knowledge requires the synthesis of something given to the form of the unity of the object. For Carnap, synthesis is not understood in terms of an ordering that a transcendental subject imposes on a given manifold in accordance with the immutably valid forms of thought, as neo-Kantians held.

PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE

Introduction

Philosophy of language is nearly synonymous with analytic philosophy. The logical positivism, ordinary language philosophy, and the early and later Wittgenstein are all different philosophical approaches to language in dealing with philosophical problems. Philosophy of language is related to linguistics or the science of language and is concerned with the underlying reality of language and its philosophical import. Traditionally semiotics is divided into syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. The philosophy of language deals with the problem of the distinction between syntax and semantics, and some pragmatic problems, for e.g., in the theory of speech acts and Grice’s theory of conversational implicative. There are different conceptions of what the
philosophy of language should be, but its central concern is with semantic questions, such as meaning, truth, reference, predication, quantification, and the nature of propositions. The major issues in this field of philosophy are the universal features of language and the relationships between language and world and between language and thought. Because of the inseparable relations between logic and language and among intentionality, understanding, thinking, and language, the philosophy of language shares many common topics with philosophical logic and the philosophy of mind. It is sometimes regarded as a part of the philosophy of mind and sometimes even as a part of the philosophy of action. An influential type of philosophy of language developed out of Chomsky’s generative grammar, which tries to uncover the structure of conceptual knowledge by revealing the linguistic structure underlying surface irregularities and variations.

Philosophy of language deals with questions that arise from our ordinary, everyday conception of language. Wittgenstein said, ‘The results of philosophy are the uncovering of one or another piece of plain nonsense and of bumps that the understanding has got by running its head up against the limits of language.’ On this conception, philosophy is about the ways in which we understand and misunderstand language, about how we come to mistake plain nonsense for something that is intelligible, and about what cannot be expressed in language. So, on this view, virtually all of philosophy is concerned with questions about language. It is true that language has loomed large in the philosophy of the last hundred years. But there is still a specific, recognizable area of the discipline that is philosophy of language. It begins from one absolutely basic fact about language, namely, that expressions of a language have meaning, and can be used to talk about objects and events in the world.

For philosophy of language, the central phenomenon to be studied is linguistic meaning. Questions about meaning are central in the philosophy of language. These questions are of two kinds. There are questions about the meanings of particular linguistic expressions such as words, phrases and whole sentences. On the other hand, there are questions about the nature of linguistic meaning itself. Questions of the first kind belong to semantics questions of the second kind belong to meta semantics. The business of semantics includes questions about the meanings of subject expressions like ‘is sitting’, ‘barks’, ‘is a spy’ and ‘is bald’. It also includes questions about the meanings of complete subject–predicate sentences, e.g., the present king of France is bald. There are important philosophical questions about the meanings of other subject terms, including pronouns (‘I’, ‘you’, ‘she’, ‘he’, ‘it’, ‘they’) and demonstratives (‘this’, ‘that’, ‘this knife’, ‘that butter’) and also about the meanings of expressions that go beyond the terms in the basic combination of subject and predicate.
The semantics versus meta-semantics divide are questions about the nature of linguistic meaning itself. Some of these questions are ontological. The answer to

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the ontological question about meanings would lead to a version of the correspondence theory of truth. Other meta-semantic questions concern the elucidation or analysis of the concept of meaning. The meaning of a linguistic expression related to its use. The everyday idea of meaning or significance is related to the idea of what is conveyed or communicated in the use of language. In recent philosophy of language, a standard assumption in meta-semantics has been that there is such a thing as the literal meaning of linguistic expressions, and that the total communicative significance of linguistic act is the product jointly of the literal meanings of the expressions used and of contextual factors. According to that meta-semantic view, semantics is the study of the literal meanings of expressions, and of the way that the literal meanings of complex expressions /phrases and sentences are determined by the literal meanings of their component words. Strictly speaking, questions about the interaction between literal meaning and contextual factors belong, not to semantics, but to pragmatics.

Carnap’s logical syntax program

Carnap’s logical syntax program was the most sophisticated attempt to combine various positivist themes into a coherent position. The program was set forth initially in The Logical Syntax of Language (1934). Carnap’s acceptance of Tarski’s semantical techniques, Carnap adhered to the program for the rest of his career. Central to the program is the notion of a linguistic framework. A linguistic framework can be described syntactically by definitions of well-formed. Carnap maintained that analyticity can be defined in logical syntactic terms so that the vague notion of linguistically secured truth can be replaced by a purely formal notion. He exhibited languages whose mathematical truths satisfy the formal

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definition of analyticity. There is any number of different linguistic frameworks. Carnap held that there is no right or wrong in the choice of a language, no language-transcendent facts that justify the choice of one language over another. This is Carnap’s principle of tolerance. It supports a sweeping relativism in logic, and it arguably enables Carnap to sidestep standard objections to conventionalism in mathematics. The scientific philosopher describes languages suitable forth formalization, the rational reconstruction, of scientific theories and investigates their formal features. Here we have an enterprise that is free from metaphysical involvements, distinct from empirical science, but informed by scientific standards of clarity and rigor. For Carnap, basic ontological issues concern
the choice of a language. The investigation of any issue is a matter of accepting or rejecting statements within a linguistic framework. For example, the question of the existence of numbers can be trivially answered by proving an arithmetic existence claim within a language. A person, who refuses to accept this answer to the question, shows that he or she is asking what Carnap calls an external question. According to Carnap, what is really at issue in external questions is the advisability of adopting a language that contains numerical terms and variables. By the principles of tolerance, there is no right or wrong in this choice. Carnap believes that ontological pseudo-questions arise as a result of the conflation of assertion of statements within a framework with advocacy of the adoption of a language.

Carnap’s logical syntax program avoids the features of Schlick’s verificationism that Neurath rejects. Under Neurath’s influence, Carnap gives up a phenomena list / observational reports and decides that observation predicates are to be characterized behaviorally in terms of observation based agreement in the application of the predicates to demonstrated items. Empirical scientific theories can be rationally reconstructed using languages that contain observation predicates. Carnap comes to realize that the theoretical vocabulary of science cannot be explicitly defined using only observation predicates. Carnap proposes a logically looser relation between theoretical and observation predicates, one compatible with a holistic view of theory testing and also intended to insure that comprehensive theories whose theoretical predicates satisfy his loose condition have a rich array of observational consequences.
UNIT-III

PHENOMENOLOGY AND EXISTENTIALISM

Introduction

Phenomenology and existentialism share a number of outlooks on reality. For example, many phenomenologists and existentialists focus on the human condition as a key to what reality is. In particular, existentialists point out that we endure all kinds of pain: physical, emotional, and psychological. We feel anxious, uncertain, and indecisive. We know what it is to dread, to feel despair, and to suffer. Daily, we face the reality of death. True, we are not always conscious of death’s imminence, but it is always with us. Anxiety, uncertainty, dread, suffering, and death all reveal something about reality, such as how contingent, fortuitous, and limited it is. Building on this insight into the human condition, phenomenologists and existentialists claim that we shall never understand reality as long as we attempt to explain life and people merely objectively from the outside, as it were.

Materialism in particular has been guilty of this failure. In reducing individuals to material entities, materialism in effect turns people into objects. The phenomenologist and the existentialist try to approach reality from the inside, by focusing on reality as it is subjectively revealed by our human condition and human consciousness. And they attempt to approach reality not by relying on theoretical presuppositions but by trying to examine and describe reality as it presents itself to our unprejudiced view. Truth about our human existence cannot be grasped and repeated by means of neat, objective statements. We experience truth, like everything else, through being; the truth is within, not without. Despite these general similarities, various points distinguish phenomenology and existentialism.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology is a 20th-century philosophical movement dedicated to describing the structures of experience as they present themselves to consciousness, without recourse to theory, deduction, or assumptions from other disciplines such as the natural sciences. The term ‘phenomenology’, invented by the German eighteenth-century mathematician J.H.Lambert, to describe the science of appearances. The word had been used by Hegel in
his work on the nature of the ‘subjective spirit’. It is clear that Hegel and Husserl are engaged indifferent forms of enquiry. In fact the thinker with the strongest claim to be the founder of the phenomenological movement was, in his own eyes, more a psychologist than a philosopher, and a psychologist who professed allegiance to methods which he called empirical. In *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* (1874), Franz Brentano (1838–

1917) embarked on an investigation of the human mind which expressly rejected the premises of idealism, and in particular the notion that the true subject matter of psychology is some universal. Psychology cannot take such abstractions as its point of departure. Like any other science, it must start from the individual case,

and that means from the first person case, which is known to the investigator directly. Brentano emphasized on the first person, did not venture very far into the realm of what we would now call empirical psychology.

Brentano reintroduced into philosophy a technicality common in the mediaeval schools: the concept of intentionality. Every mental state or event is, he argued, characterized by the reference to content, or the direction upon an object. If I believe, then there is something that I believe; if I hate, then there is something that I hate; if I see, then there is something that I see. In every such case, the content or object is characterized by certain peculiar features.

The best way to describe this phenomenon of intentionality is to make a distinction, again relying on scholastic terminology, between the material and the intentional object of a mental state. The intentional object is that which is present to consciousnesses, and it may not correspond to any material reality. This possibility of non-correspondence explains the peculiarity of the intentional object. Intentional objects are of many logical types: they can be propositions, ideas, or individuals. They can be indeterminate or determinate. In every case they have no existence independent of the mental state that refers to or is ‘directed onto’ them.

Brentano believed that this property of intentionality is peculiar to mental phenomena and common to all of them. For him a distinguishing marks of the mental. Among Husserl’s many writings, those that have attracted the most attention are the *Logical Investigations* (1900–1), *Ideas for a Pure Phenomenology* (1913) and *Cartesian Meditations* (1929). The first of these is of great interest, announcing the theme for which Husserl is known, that of a pure phenomenology.
This theme is further elaborated in the second of his major works. In these works he begins the description of what he was to call the method of phenomenological reduction. Husserl’s thought rests on two master-premises. First, he reaffirms the essence of the Cartesian position, that the immediate knowledge that I have of my own conscious mental states is the one sure foundation for an understanding of their nature, provided only that I can isolate what is intrinsic to the mental state, and separate it from all that is extraneous. Secondly, the intentionality of the mental makes meaning or reference essential to every mental act. To focus on the revealed nature of mentality is therefore also to understand the fundamental operation of meaning.

Franz Brentano

Phenomenology understood by Edmund Husserl in the *Logical Investigations* meant *descriptive psychology* (1889), and had its origins in the project of Brentano. From Brentano, Husserl took over the conviction that philosophy is a rigorous science. The view that philosophy consists in description and not causal explanation. Husserl adopted from Brentano a general appreciation of the British tradition of empiricism, especially Hume and Mill, along with an antipathy towards Kantian and Hegelian idealism. For Brentano, philosophy is the description of what is given in direct self evidence.

Husserl’s phenomenology has its first anticipation in Brentano’s attempt to rethink the nature of psychology as a science. Brentano had proposed a form of descriptive psychology which would concentrate on illuminating the nature of inner self-aware acts of cognition without appealing to causal or genetic explanation. Brentano was proposing a kind of philosophical psychology, or philosophy of mind. In his *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* (1874), Brentano sets out to do empirical psychology. Brentano contrasts empirical psychology with ‘genetic psychology’. *Genetic psychology* studies the material substrate of psychic acts the nature of the sense organs, the patterns of the nerves, and is essentially committed to causal explanation. Empirical psychology is to be a descriptive, classificatory science, offering taxonomy of mental acts. In his lectures on *Descriptive Psychology* Brentano employed the phrase ‘descriptive psychology or descriptive phenomenology’ to differentiate this science from genetic or physiological psychology. Descriptive psychology is conceived of as an a priori science of the laws of the mental, identifying universal laws on the basis of insight into individual instances. Following Descartes, Brentano believed in the self-evidence of our grasp of inner mental life inner perception as opposed to the fallible nature of outer perception. It must be stressed that Brentano thought of inner perception as quite distinct from introspection or
what he called inner observation. We are not able to observe our mental acts while occupying them but we can reflectively grasp them as they occur. There is no act without an object; an empty act cannot be conscious of itself. Given the presence of the intentional content or object awakening the intentional act, then the act is directed primarily on the object.

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**Brentano’s Intentional Psychology**

Intentionality is the doctrine that every mental act is related to some object. Brentano understood the mind’s awareness of an object, or content, in terms of the traditional Scholastic doctrine of intentionality. He speaks of the *intentional object* or the *intentional relation*. In *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint*, Brentano states that every mental phenomenon is characterized by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional (or mental) reference to a content, direction towards an object. Every mental phenomenon includes something as object within itself, although they do not all do so in the same way. In presentation something is presented, in judgment something is affirmed or denied, in love loved, in hate hated, in desire desired and so on. Brentano emphasized that it was possible to be intentionally related to all kinds of objects, imagined, possible, impossible, and so on. Roughly, Brentano frequently expresses intentionality in terms of the intentional inexistence of the object.

By inexistence Brentano does seem to intend that the object of an act of consciousness is something immanent in consciousness, whether or not there is also a real object or reality outside of consciousness. As a follower of Descartes and Aristotle, Brentano believes there is something in the mind when it thinks, and, furthermore, what the mind thinks about may or may not have any actual existence outside the mind. It may be a real or something unreal. In Brentano’s interpretation of intentionality, he understood the intentional object to be a mentally immanent object and the intentional relation to be an imminent relation between the mind and its contents, and he did not distinguish between the characteristic of directedness towards an object.

**Meinong, Alexius (1853-1928)**

**Introduction**
Meinong, Austrian philosopher was originally a disciple of Brentano, who rejected many of Meinong's later contentions. He claimed to have discovered a new a priori science, the theory of objects (to be distinguished from metaphysics which is an empirical science concerning reality, but was never worked out by Meinong). Anything intended by thought is an object. Objects may either exist (such as physical objects) or subsist (such as facts which Meinong unfortunately termed objectives, or mathematical entities), they may either be possible or impossible and they may belong either to a lower or to a higher level. In the theory of objects, the existence of objects is abstracted from (or as Husserl later said it may be bracketed) and their essence alone has to be considered. Objects are apprehended either by self-evident judgments or by assumptions, i.e., by imaginary judgments. In the field of emotions there is an analogous division since there are also imaginary emotions. Much of Meinong's work was of a psychological rather than of a metaphysical or epistemological character. The main works are On the Theory of Objects and Psychology (1904), and On Possibility and Probability (1915).

MEINONG'S THEORY OF OBJECTS

The two basic views of Meinong's theory of objects are (a) there are objects that do not exist and (b) every object that does not exist is yet constituted in some way or other and thus may be made the subject of true predication. Traditional metaphysics treats of objects that exist as well as of those that merely. According to Meinong, there is need for a more general theory of objects. Everything is an object, whether or not it is thinkable and whether or not it exists or has any other kind of being. Every object has the characteristics it has whether or not it has any kind of being. The character of every object is independent of its being. Some exist and others (for e.g., golden mountains) do not exist. If existence is thought of as implying a spatio-temporal locus, then there are certain subsistent objects that do not exist. Among these are the being of various objects and the nonbeing of various other objects. Since there are horses, there is also the being of horses, the being of the being of horses, the nonbeing of the nonbeing of horses, and the being of the nonbeing of horses.

Meinong's theory must be distinguished from both Platonic realism and this term is ordinarily interpreted concretism. Meinong pointed out that objects as the round square have no type of being at all; they are homeless objects, to be found not even in Plato's heaven. Bertrand Russell objected that if we say round squares are objects, we violate the law of contradiction. Meinong replied that the law of contradiction holds only for what is real and can hardly be expected to hold for any object, such as a round square. Russell's theory of descriptions is thought to constitute a refutation of the doctrine of actually; however, his theory merely
presupposes that Meinong's doctrine is false. According to Meinong, the two statements the round square is round and the mountain I am thinking of is golden are true statements about nonexistent objects. Russell's theory of descriptions presupposes that every statement is either a being statement or the negation of a being statement.

Meinong accepted Brentano's thesis of the intentionality of the mental but modified it in a realistic direction, distinguishing between the content and object of a mental act. Unlike Husserl, Meinong regarded it as necessary that a mental act of whatever kind always have an object as well as content, and in those cases where nothing exists which is targeted by the act. Meinong derives the term 'theory of objects' which he preferred as 'metaphysics' and 'ontology'. Both of these, and especially the former, suffered from a prejudice, rampant among materialists and nominalists, but present to some degree in most philosophers, the 'prejudice in favor of the actual', i.e., an unsupported preference for the spatiotemporally situated or real object. Ontological questions always interested Meinong from his early preoccupation with universals, especially relations, through his interest in Gestalt or higher-order objects and complexes. But object theory as a distinct discipline and forming the nucleus of his philosophical endeavor.

The property of objectives corresponding to the truth of judgments Meinong calls factuality, the property corresponding to falsity unfactuality. He reserves true for objectives which are both factual and apprehended by someone; false is similarly restricted. For an objective, to be factual is to subsist, to be unfactual is to not subsist: there is an existential distinction between them. Objectives about an object do not have that entity as part, for an objective can at best subsist, whereas many objects can also be spatiotemporally actual or real.

**Husserl’s Phenomenology**

**Introduction**

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), German philosopher, founder of phenomenology.

The phenomenological movement is dedicated to the description of phenomena as they present themselves through perception to the conscious mind. He studied science, philosophy, and mathematics at the universities of Leipzig, Berlin, and Vienna and wrote his doctoral thesis on the calculus of variations. He became interested in the psychological basis of mathematics and, shortly after becoming a lecturer in philosophy at the University of Halle. Husserl argued against his early position, which he called
psychologism, in his work *Logical Investigations* (1900). He believed that the philosopher's task is to contemplate the essences of things, and that the essence of an object can be arrived at by systematically varying that object in the imagination. Husserl says that consciousness is always directed toward something. He called it as intentionality and argued that consciousness contains ideal, unchanging structures called meanings, which determine what object the mind is directed toward at any given time.

In Husserl work, *Ideas: A General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* (1913), he introduced the term phenomenological reduction for his method of reflection on the meanings the mind employs when it contemplates an object. This method concentrates on meanings that are in the mind, whether or not the object present to consciousness actually exists. Husserl said the method as bracketing existence, i.e., setting aside the question of the real existence of the contemplated object. Husserl proceeded to give detailed analyses of the mental structures involved in perceiving particular types of objects. According to Husserl, phenomenology is devoted to describing the things themselves. Phenomenology had been criticized as an essentially solipsistic method, confining the philosopher to the contemplation of private meanings. But Husserl attempted to show how the individual consciousness can be directed toward other minds, society, and history. Husserl's phenomenology had a great influence on a younger colleague at Freiburg, Martin Heidegger, who developed existential phenomenology, and Jean-Paul Sartre and French existentialism.

**Transcendental Phenomenology**

Husserl as a transcendental philosopher differences from Kant. Most importantly, he rejected the Kantian distinction between phenomena and noumena. His transcendental philosophy is known as transcendental phenomenology, the methodological procedure called reduction or *epoché*, of which there are three varieties: the eidetic, the phenomenological and the transcendental. The first is eidetic reduction, brackets the question of existence and attempts to focus on the essence (of a class of entities under investigation or of an individual) by using a procedure which Husserl called eidetic or imaginative variation. The secondly, phenomenological reduction, brackets the existence (or nonexistence) of the object of an intentional experience, and focuses upon the experience itself with its correlative *noema*. Thirdly is transcendental reduction or the *epoché*, brackets,
suspends and neutralizes (i.e. does not make any theoretical use of) the belief in the world, including all interpretations of it, interpretations handed down by the sciences, religions, or metaphysical systems.

The resulting purified consciousness to be the origin of all objectivities that are constituted. What are said to be constituted are not things which are constituted in consciousness. These experiences alone make it meaningfully. In Freiburg Husserl developed genetic phenomenology where meanings were traced back, through a process of intentional. Critics like Derrida think that this distinguish between the mundane history and transcendental history, meaning by the latter history of consciousness, which includes history of constitution of meanings. Husserl realized that transcendental philosophy must be able to recover the full sense of the idea world-in-itself. This task requires transcending the purified experience of any one person, the reflecting ego, and recovering the sense other ego and so the sense of intersubjectivity.

The conception of a transcendental ego as the totality of the subjective life and recovered after the *epoché* as the constitutive source of all meanings. The pure ego was recognized as only one component of the transcendental ego. The transcendental ego was often represented as a Leibnizian monad but with windows and a history of its own. The full transcendental ego is not, however, an entity numerically distinct from the empirical ego; it is rather the same ego, only now stripped of the naturalistic interpretations to which we subject it.

**Existentialism**

Existentialism is a philosophical movement/tendency that refuses to define and emphasizing individual existence, freedom, subjectivity and choice, that influenced many diverse writers in the 19th and 20th centuries. Though the thinkers differ they share certain themes common to all existentialist thinkers. All the thinkers suggest major themes such as stress on concrete individual existence, on subjectivity, individual freedom, and choice. Most philosophers since Plato have held that the highest ethical good is the same for everyone; insofar as one approaches moral perfection, one resembles other morally perfect individuals. The 19th-century Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard generally regarded as the founder of modern existentialism, reacted against the systematic absolute idealism of the 19th-century German philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, who claimed to have worked out a total rational understanding of humanity and history who was the first to call himself existential, reacted against this tradition by insisting that the highest good for the individual is to find his or her own
unique vocation. Against the traditional view that moral choice involves an objective judgment of right and wrong, existentialists have argued that no objective, rational basis can be found for moral decisions.

All existentialists have followed Kierkegaard in stressing the importance of individual action in deciding questions of both morality and truth. They have insisted that personal experience and acting on one's own convictions are essential in arriving at the truth. They have held that rational clarity is desirable, but that the

most important questions in life are not accessible to reason or science. They have argued that even science is not as rational as is commonly supposed. The most prominent theme in existentialist writing is that of choice. Humanity's primary distinction, in the view of most existentialists, is the freedom to choose. Existentialists have held that human beings do not have a fixed nature, or essence, as other animals and plants do; each human being makes choices that create his or her own nature. The 20th-century French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre says that existence precedes essence. Choice is therefore central to human existence, and it is inescapable; even the refusal to choose is a choice. Freedom of choice entails commitment and responsibility. Because individuals are free to choose their own path, existentialists have argued, they must accept the risk and responsibility of following their commitment wherever it leads. Anxiety has a similarly crucial role in the work of the 20th-century German philosopher Martin Heidegger; anxiety leads to the individual's confrontation with nothingness and with the impossibility of finding ultimate justification for the choices he or she must make. In the philosophy of Sartre, the word nausea is used for the individual's recognition of the pure contingency of the universe, and the word anguish is used for the recognition of the total freedom of choice that confronts the individual at every moment. Existentialism as a distinct philosophical and literary movement belongs to the 19th and 20th centuries, but elements of existentialism can be found in the thought and life of Socrates, in the Bible, and in the work of many pre-modern philosophers and writers.

One of the most controversial works of 19th-century philosophy, Thus Spake Zarathustra (1883-1885) articulated German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche's theory of the Superman. The Superman was an individual who overcame what Nietzsche termed the slave morality of traditional values, and lived according to his own morality. Nietzsche also advanced his idea that God is dead, or that traditional morality was no longer relevant in people's lives. Nietzsche, who was not acquainted with the work of Kierkegaard, influenced subsequent existentialist thought through his criticism of traditional
metaphysical and moral assumptions. The modern philosophy movements of phenomenology and existentialism have been greatly influenced by the thought of German philosopher Martin Heidegger. According to Heidegger, humankind has fallen into a crisis by taking a narrow, technological approach to the world and by ignoring the larger question of existence. People, if they wish to live authentically, must broaden their perspectives. Instead of taking their existence for granted, people should view themselves as part of Being.

In *Being and Time*, Heidegger has good reason for beginning with human beings as *Dasein*. According to Heidegger, *Dasein* even in its deepest moods and emotions, is always engaged with the world and with entities in it. *Dasein* (being there) is Heidegger's way of referring both to the human being and to the type of being that humans have. Scientific theories, even the truths of logic and mathematics, are ways of *Dasein's* being of its being in the world. Heidegger, like Pascal and Kierkegaard, reacted against an attempt to put philosophy on a conclusive rationalistic basis. Heidegger argued that humanity finds itself in an incomprehensible, indifferent world. Human beings can never hope to understand why they are here; instead, each individual must choose a goal and follow it with passionate conviction, aware of the certainty of death and the ultimate meaninglessness of one's life. Heidegger contributed to existentialist thought an original emphasis on being and ontology as well as on language.

**Atheistic Existentialism**

Jean-Paul Sartre helped to develop existential philosophy through his writings, (*Being and Nothingness*) novels, and plays. Much of Sartre’s work focuses on the dilemma of choice faced by free individuals and on the challenge of creating meaning by acting responsibly in an indifferent world. In stating that man is condemned to be free, Sartre reminds us of the responsibility that accompanies human decisions. Sartre first gave the term existentialism general by using it for his own philosophy and by becoming the leading figure of a distinct movement in France that became internationally influential after World War II. Sartre's philosophy is explicitly atheistic and pessimistic. He declared that human beings require a rational basis for their lives but are unable to achieve one, and, and he strongly emphasized human freedom, choice, and responsibility. He eventually tried to reconcile these existentialist concepts with a Marxist analysis of society and history.

Although existentialist thought encompasses the uncompromising atheism of Nietzsche and Sartre and the agnosticism of Heidegger, its origin in the intensely religious philosophies of Pascal and Kierkegaard foreshadowed its profound influence on 20th-century theology. The 20th-century German philosopher Karl Jaspers, although he
rejected explicit religious doctrines, influenced contemporary theology through his preoccupation with transcendence and the limits of human experience. The German Protestant theologians Paul Tillich and Rudolf Bultmann, the French Roman Catholic theologian Gabriel Marcel, the Russian Orthodox philosopher Nikolay Berdyaev, and the German Jewish philosopher Martin Buber inherited many of Kierkegaard’s concerns, especially that a personal sense of authenticity and commitment is essential to religious faith. Albert Camus Twentieth-century writer and philosopher Albert Camus examined what he considered the tragic inability of human beings to understand and transcend their intolerable conditions. In his work Camus presented an absurd and seemingly unreasonable world in which some people futilely struggle to find meaning and rationality while others simply refuse to care. A number of existentialist philosophers used literary forms to convey their thought, and existentialism has been as vital and as extensive a movement in literature as in philosophy.

The philosophical literature collectively described as religious existentialism is vast. There are at least fifteen major thinkers, all of them prolific, who are properly understood as developing twentieth-century existentialism from a theistic, rather than an atheistic point of view. In fact, even among the atheists, who today are better remembered, the questions addressed by existentialism look suspiciously akin to religious questions. The three great existentialists, Kierkegaard, Dostoevsky, and Nietzsche, the first two were profoundly religious thinkers, and the third understood his thinking as a response to our culture’s loss of God. Gabriel Marcel, one of the great religious existentialists, who coined the term existentialist, refused the label Christian existentialist as nonsensical because he thought the questions of existentialism and the questions of religion were ultimately inseparable. The work of the religious existentialists has been helpfully described as apples from the tree of Kierkegaard have startling different views of God, the individual, and the possibility and nature of redemption. They are all post-World War II thinkers, and they share the suspicion of the rationalist Enlightenment project that the devastating wars of the twentieth century aroused in so many minds, religious.

The sketches of Kierkegaard, Jaspers and Marcel should have made it clear that the theistic existentialist philosophies have certain traits in common. For e.g., none of them arrive at the affirmation of God as the result of cosmological speculation, for each of them God is discovered or encountered by the individual in the movement towards the free realization and appropriation of his true self rather than as the term of impersonal objective argument. Marcel would not admit that cosmological proof and an irrational
leap are alternatives which exhaust the possibilities of a positive approach to God. In his eyes exploration of the significance of those forms of experience which involve one as a person leads us to God. We are already in the sphere of Being, and, according to him, we cannot here legitimately dissociate idea. Though Sartre’ existentialist thinking is atheistic, Martine Heidegger’s thinking is neither theistic nor atheistic existentialism.

Question and Answers

1 What is positivism?

Positivism is associated with the doctrine of Auguste Comte that the highest form of knowledge is simple description presumably of sensory phenomena. The doctrine was based on an evolutionary law of three stages, believed by Comte. The three stages were the theological, in which anthropomorphic wills were resorted to to explain natural events, the metaphysical, in which these wills were depersonalized and became forces and essences, and finally the positive.

2 What is pragmatism?

Pragmatism adopted in 1905 by Charles S. Peirce (1893-1914). Peirce's definition was as follows: "In order to ascertain the meaning of an intellectual conception one should consider what practical consequences might conceivably result by necessity from the truth of that conception, and the sum of these consequences will constitute the entire meaning of the conception". According to Peirce, W. James had interpreted pragmatism to mean "that the end of man is action", whereas Peirce intended his doctrine as "a theory of logical analysis, or true definition," and held that "its merits are greatest in its application to the highest metaphysical conceptions".

3 Explain phenomenology

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) was the first to apply the name *Phänomenologie* to a whole philosophy. He has largely determined the senses commonly attached to it and cognate words in the Twentieth Century. Husserl to the view that material as well as logically formal universals or essences are themselves observable, though non-individual, objects. Further analyses showed that awareness of an essence as itself presented might be based on either a clear experiencing. In either case, the evidence of the essence or eidos involves evidence of some example as ideally possible but not as actual. Consequently, a science like pure logic, whose theme includes nothing but essences and essential
possibilities, -- in Husserl's later terminology, an *eidetic* science -- involves no assertion of actual existence. Husserl used these views to redefine phenomenology itself.

4  Explain Vienna Circle

The *Vienna Circle*, founded by M. Schlick in 1924, ending with his death in 1936. Among its members: G. Bergmann, R. Carnap, H. Feigl, Frank Neurath, F Waismann. The views developed in the Vienna Circle has been called *Logical Positivism*. Many members now prefer the term *Logical Empiricism*. Among the characteristic features: emphasis on scientific attitude and on co-operation, emphasis on intersubjective language and unity of science. It held that every knowledge that is factual is connected with experiences in such a way that verification or direct or indirect confirmation is possible.

5  Discuss the philosophy of existentialism

Existentialism is a philosophical movement/tendency that refuses to define and emphasizing individual existence, freedom, subjectivity and choice, that influenced many diverse writers in the 19th and 20th centuries. Though the thinkers differ they share certain themes common to y all existentialist thinkers. All the thinkers suggest major themes such as stress on concrete individual existence, on subjectivity, individual freedom, and choice. Most philosophers since Plato have held that the highest ethical good is the same for everyone; insofar as one approaches moral perfection, one resembles other morally perfect individuals. The 19th-century Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard generally regarded as the founder of modern existentialism. The main thinkers are Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Sartre, Camu, Ponty and Nietzsche.

**Reference Books**


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