PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

VI SEMESTER

ELECTIVE COURSE

BA PHILOSOPHY

(2011 Admission)

UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT

SCHOOL OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

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STUDY MATERIAL

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Aim: An understanding of “what Religion is?” with the help of the basic concepts of Religion.

Objectives: 1. To define Religion and to relate it with theology and science.
2. To explain the metaphysical theories of Religion and to introduce the concepts of belief, reason, revelation, faith and mysticism.
3. An understanding of the three proofs for the existence of God and a discussion of the problem of evil and the immortality of soul.

UNIT I

PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Objectives:-

1. To define religion
2. To describe nature of philosophy of religion
3. To identify the relation between religion and theology.
4. To analyze the relation between religion and philosophy.
5. To explain the relation between religion and science.

Religion has been dominant concern of mankind. It is very difficult to define or describe religion because it is a growing, dynamic thing, elemental, personal and broad in scope. In fact, religion especially is something which must be realized and experienced, not defined. This is true but, nevertheless, the word ‘religion’ means something and it is well to know what it means.

Religion comes from the Latin word ‘religio’ (to bind). Literally speaking, religion is a principle of unification and harmonization. Any discipline which binds us all together in a wholesome way is religion. It is not mere belief but behavior; not mere conviction but conduct; not mere faith but functioning. In religion, the whole of a human being’s personality is involved.

What however, is religion? Many different definitions have been proposed. William James defines religion as “The feeling, acts and experiences of individual men in their solitude so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine.” Hoffoding defines religion as, “the conservation of values.” Again according to Alexander “Religion is faith in deity”. To Patric “Religion is the consciousness of our practical relation to an invisible spiritual order.” “Religion”, says Whitehead, “is the vision of something which stands beyond, behind, and within, the passing flux of immediate things.” W.T Stace defined “religion as the hunger of the soul for the impossible, the unattainable, the inconceivable.” According to Kant “Religion is a matter of the will, it being understood and identified with
practical reason, that is to say certain acts ought to be done or that certain attitudes ought to be adopted.” Religion is described by Durant Drake in these words:

“This disposition of the heart and will, through which man comes to care of the highest things and to live in gentleness and inward calm above the surface aspects and accidents of life, we call, in its inner nature, spirituality; when it is embodied in outward forms and institutions, and spreads among the whole communities, we call it a religion.”

To Swami Vivekananda, religion is not in doctrines, in dogmas nor in intellectual argumentation; it is being and becoming, it is realization.

Some of the definitions are phenomenological, trying to state that which is common to all the acknowledged forms of religion. *Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines; religion is “human recognition of a superhuman controlling power and especially of a personal God or gods entitled to obedience and worship” Others are interpretative. Others are sociological – Talcott Parsons societies”. Others, again, are naturalistic – Salomon Reinach defines, religion, “a body of scruples which impede the free exercise of our faculties”. Matthew Arnold says religion as, “ethics heightened, enkindled, lit up by feeling”. Yet others are religious definitions of religion – Herbert Spencer explains, “Religion is the recognition that all things are manifestations of a Power which transcends our knowledge”, or again, “humanity’s response to the divine.”

Thus religion is the art of living, through right action, how to live our daily life in harmony within ourselves and with others and to lead a life of peace and happiness.

### Relation between Philosophy and Religion

Although different definitions are given to explain philosophy and religion, basically they do not contradict each other. Philosophy and religion are the two modes under which the lunar psyche apprehends the universe. Philosophy and religion may differ to some extend but in fact they are complementary to each other. Ultimately both philosophy and religion raise the life of man and society to a higher and nobler level. A man needs a better philosophy and a better religion. Philosophy and religion have only one purpose i.e of seeking unity through diversity. In philosophy the purpose is peace, harmony, adjustment, salvation. Philosophy and religion thus deal often with the same ideas, such as the soul, its origin and density, God and creation. At all events, we see that the relation between religion and philosophy is most intimate.

### Philosophy of Religion

The term “philosophy of religion” has persisted in our language as the name for scientific study of religion. It is an intellectual and logical interpretation of religious experience. It is an antidote to all the dogmatism, irrationalism and superstitions in religion. The philosophy of religion merges in philosophy so far as its philosophical thinking about religion is concerned. Philosophical thought is always rational and very deeply intellectual. It is a rational analysis of religious experience. All its problems – God, faith, worship, prayer, tradition, revelation and
immortality – are the determining factors of the religious experience. However, religious experience cannot be explained by intellect without the use of figures, symbols and analogies.

The truth of religion cannot be essentially different from truth as the object of philosophical inquiry. This is what Hegel really meant when he identified the *vorstellungen* (ideas, manner or less pictorial) or religion with the *Begriffe* (pure intellectual notions) of philosophy, the difference being a difference of form rather than of content.

The philosophy of religion is not an organ of religious teaching. Religious practices, rituals, worship, prayer, etc., need not be undertaken from the standpoint of philosophy of religion. All these are the activities of religion like the religious teaching, but in philosophy of religion we have to observe the philosophical aspects of all these organs of religion. Not only the theist, but the atheist and the agnostic can philosophize about religion. The philosophy of religion is not necessarily a branch of theology, the theory of religious belief, but a branch of philosophy. However, it studies the concepts, propositions and arguments of theologians.

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**Nature and Scope of Philosophy of Religion**

1. Philosophy of religion generally committed on reason and rationalism. Aristotle originally suggested that man is a rational animal and it is rationality that makes him different from animals.

2. Philosophy of religion is more than affair of head than the heart. Heart is the place for faith, emotion and feeling. But head is for knowledge, understanding and reason.

3. It is logical and rational analysis of religious phenomena. A rational religion is more philosophical in its approach than the infra-rational aspect, viz., instincts, impulse, sensation, crude emotion etc. Reason can very well help us to reject superstitions and blind belief from the religion. Thus it plays an important role in the field of philosophy of religion.

4. Philosophy of religion must be based on religious experiences. The faith, feeling and the emotional attachment of religion cannot describe its experience, because the mystical part of religion is ineffable and inexpressible. Religious experiences can be stated and verified through symbols, figures and visions. However, the religious experiences of different religions are included in the study of philosophy of religion.

5. Philosophy of religion must cover the study of some major religions such as Hinduism, Christianity, Buddhism, Jainism, Islam, Shintoism, etc. It must also study primitive religions such as animism, animatism, naturalism, etc. the philosophy of religion must find a synthesis of different religions.

6. The philosophy of religion is always based on philosophical foundations viz – way of life and the form of life which refer to prospects, position, knowledge, and creation of one’s life.
7. The philosophy of religion is based on idealism as the fundamental principle of knowledge. It emphasizes on ideas and explains the spiritual aspects of the universe.

8. Philosophy of religion involves the epistemological and ontological problems of the world. It observes the nature of religious knowledge and examines the nature of ultimate reality.

9. It seeks to analyze concepts such as God, liberation, worship, prayer, creation, eternal life, customs, beliefs. Hence we have to study the philosophical aspects of all these concepts. The different theories of God in relation to its problems of existence and its relation to the world become its scope and ground of observation.

10. In the philosophy of religion the values of man become the object of philosophical inquiry. The proper study of mankind is man. And the study of man can never be complete unless it includes the study of religion.

11. Spirituality is the core of philosophy of religion. The awakening of spiritual hunger is the very beginning of religion. But that does not include the supernatural things, nor the observation of certain external ceremonials coupled with physical austerities. The spiritual realization is the aim of philosophy of religion.

12. The idea of a philosophy of religion, the science of the facts of the inner world of man, as upheld in ancient thought, also becomes a study of philosophical and spiritual tradition. The philosophy of religion is a matter of inner experience, a coming in touch with spiritual facts, and not a matter of belief or dogma or conformity.

13. In the philosophy of religion there is not only ‘ought’ but also the ‘it’. It is both union and unity, truth and reality, restraint and release, destination and destiny. It is what makes for the advancement, growth and liberation of all.

14. Objectively speaking, philosophy of religion means those spiritual principles through which one attains perfection, illumination, God-vision or liberation. These spiritual principles are truthfulness, purity, self-control, non-violence, forbearance, detachment, equanimity, straight-forwardness, dutifulness, compassion and love of God.

15. Subjectively speaking, philosophy of religion means not a some-time, but an all-time religion in a person’s life. When religion courses through our blood, vibrates in our nerves, when it becomes the very breath of our life, religion has become true for us.

**Philosophy of Religion and theology**

Religion and theology are differing in their scope and nature. When we use the term philosophy of religion, there is no doubt about the field of study to which we refer. It is religions, as a universal phenomenon in human experience, which we are proceeding to examine. But the word theology, used to denote, the theory of religious belief. The further
query will follow: what is theology? Is it Jewish, Christian, or Mohamadeian? If it be Christian, we have still to find out whether it is Roman Catholic or Protestant. The term therefore requires qualification, are we understand definitely what is meant. In its nature a theology is an articulated system of religious beliefs or doctrines which we has been developed from historical religions. The proper office of theology is not to criticize the religious experience, out of which it grew, but rather to deal faithfully with that experience, and report what is implied in it. What is called Speculative Theology, which seeks to raise religious doctrine to a philosophical form by exercising a free criticism upon them, is better ranked with religious philosophy.

The significance of theology in relation to religion will be better appreciated if we indicate briefly the process by which it comes to birth and develops. Theology always presupposes the existence of a living religion, and religions which have advanced to a certain stage naturally produce theological doctrines. Theology is anticipated and prepared for by tendencies which exist in the early forms of religion. The centre of religion is the cults, and the primitive way of explaining the traditional acts done in the cults is to recite myths or legends about them. Primarily religious doctrines are designed to set forth the values of religious experience; but in the higher stages of culture, theology seeks to invest religious beliefs with a degree of reasonableness. It strives to become a system whose parts cohere with and mutually support each other. From the nature of the case, theology cannot be philosophy. The theologian passes beyond the original view of his office, which was to report faithfully the working conceptions and values implied in a given religion. He seeks to unfold a world-view, based on religious postulates, but for which he also claims rationality. The motives that inspired this movement are not difficult to discern: the methods of explanation used in science and philosophy could not be altogether ignored by the theologian. Hence we find theology offering expiations of the nature of God, the certain and development of the world, and the origin of the man.

Theology is enter into some kind of organic relation with a philosophy of religion, and to prove a connecting link between faith and reason, the principle of authority which it invokes should be wider and more convincing than documentary evidences. In practice, it may be granted, it will sometimes be difficult to keep theology strictly apart from a philosophy of religion. For they deal with the same materials, and the exposition of the meaning of a theological dogma passes easily into a philosophical interpretation of it.

Religion and Science

The relation between religion and science has been a subject of study since classical period. The nature of the relation between these two is addressed by philosophers, theologians, scientists, and others. Perspectives from different geographical regions, cultures and historical epochs are diverse, with some characterizing the relationship as one of conflict, others describing it as one of harmony, and others proposing little interaction. The extent to which science and religion may attempt to understand and describe similar phenomena is sometimes referred to as a part of
the demarcation problem. Science and religion generally pursue knowledge of the universe using different methodologies. Science acknowledges reason, empiricism, and evidence, while religions include revelation, faith and sacredness.

The formative impulses of science are to be found in the purposive activity of man. Science, it has been said grew out of the manual arts. Man, endowed with superior brain power to the animals, and frees to use his hands in virtue of his upright posture, set himself early to adjust means to ends in order to the better to maintain him in the struggle for existence. The aim of science is to establish continuity between the elements given in outer experience, and it achieves this by means of the principle of cause and effect. It goes on the presupposition that phenomena are really connected with one another, and that there can be noting purely accidental or arbitrary in the order of nature. Inability to state a connection in a challenge to thought and never an indication of incoherency. The so called scientific methods are methods in which the scientists interrogate nature in order to elicit the ways in which the facts are causally related one to another.

On the other hand, religion, because its point of view is more comprehensive, has bearing on the scientific interpretation of the world. For religion, like philosophy gives us a scientific interpretation of things, in so far as it is valid, must find a place within the religious world view. The two stand points are not opposed, they are related to one another as the partial to the more complete, as the causal to the teleological. The science operates throughout with the category of causality; and when they have established the existence of casual connection their task ids done. But the determinate connection which runs in the forms of a series of causes and effects inevitably raise the question, hoe the series comes to constitute a rational whole or coherent system of elements. And the answer seems to require us to transcend the category of mechanical connection in experience. That is to say, the continuity between the elements within our experienced world must rest upon the wider principle of a final cause or end which is realized through them. The narrower idea, when examined, expands into the wider and justifies itself by so doing. Now, while theoretical discussion of the notion of end belongings to philosophy, the practical use of the idea is central and essential for religion. The religious mind constantly regards the world and life in the light of final purpose, and relates the all parts of experience to a supreme end and value. The casual connection expressed through the uniformities of nature has worth for it just in so far as they are means to a divine end: the world interests the religious man, not because it reveals the reign of law, but because it reveals the pose. On this view science and religion stand in the relation of two levels of experience, the later or the higher being the realm in which we answer in practical way the problems raised in the former.

Science and religion are fundamentally opposed in spirit. Science, it is said, is rational, while religion is purely matter of faith: the one draws sober inferences from facts, the other makes a venture on trust. Though this description is not entirely wrong, but it is an exaggeration
about the relation between religion and science. Faith and reason are not to be sharply separated and opposed in this fashion; religion is not anti-rational, and science itself involves faith. We conclude, therefore that neither in its method nor is its temper science necessarily hostile to religion. Science is not anti-religious and religion is not anti-scientific. An abiding conflict between religion and science is impossible, unless, indeed, the human mind is in some inexplicable fashion at discords with itself.

Model Questions & Answers

Part B

(Each answer not to exceed 50 words each question carries 1 weightage)

1. Define religion

An. Many different definitions have been proposed. William James defines religion as “The feeling, acts and experiences of individual men in their solitude so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine.” Hoffding defines religion as, “the conservation of values.”

2. Theology

An. The word theology, used to denote, the theory of religious belief. In its nature a theology is an articulated system of religious beliefs or doctrines which we has been developed from historical religions

Part C

(Each answer not to exceed 150 words each question carries 2 weightages)

3. Explain relation between science and religion

4. Religion and Science

An. The relation between religion and science has been a subject of study since classical period. The nature of the relation with these two is addressed by philosophers, theologians, scientists, and others. Perspectives from different geographical regions, cultures and historical epochs are diverse, with some characterizing the relationship as one of conflict, others describing it as one of harmony, and others proposing little interaction. The extent to which science and religion may attempt to understand and describe similar phenomena is sometimes referred to as a part of the demarcation problem. Science and religion generally pursue knowledge of the universe using different methodologies. Science acknowledges reason, empiricism, and evidence, while religions include revelation, faith and sacredness.
Science and religion are fundamentally opposed in spirit. Science, it is said, is rational, while religion is purely matter of faith: the one draws sober inferences from facts, the other makes a venture on trust. Though this description is not entirely wrong, but it is an exaggeration about the relation between religion and science. Faith and reason are not to be sharply separated and opposed in this fashion; religion is not anti-rational, and science itself involves faith. We conclude, therefore that neither in its method nor its temper is science necessarily hostile to religion; and if science if not anti-religious neither is religion anti-scientific. An abiding conflict between religion and science is impossible, unless, indeed, the human mind is in some inexplicable fashion at discords with itself.

**Part D**

(Each answer not to exceed 300 words each question carries 4 weightages)

5. Define religion; explain the nature and scope of philosophy of religion.
UNIT II

METAPHYSICAL THEORIES OF RELIGION

Objectives:

1. To analyze the notion Deism.
2. To describe the features of pantheism.
3. To differentiate monotheism from theism.
4. To explain atheism.
5. To evaluate the notion of God in pantheism.

The concept of God or absolute is the most important, most universal and central concept of religion. God is the highest reality, the highest value and the highest end. The relation between the God and the world has been discussed from time immemorial. In such conceptions, the main question has been one of transcendence and immanence. The manner in which this significant question has been discussed has given birth to the following theories: Deism, Pantheism, Panentheism, or Theism, Atheism, Monotheism, Agnosticism and Naturalism. We shall now discuss these theories one by one.

Deism

This theory states that God is existing apart from the world. He is completely external or transcendent of the world. The term has originated from the Latin word “Deus” which means that God creates the world and after its creation denies the possibility of any relation between God and Man.

Deists believed that God is the cause sui, first cause of the universe, who created the world out of nothing, by His will at a particular time. After creation the world runs independent of Him with these secondary causes viz., wills, forces and energy. God also performs the functions of a protector and creator of the world.

God exists beyond time and space. The deistic conception of God is that the world of ours is an independent reality outside of God and that the wills of men enjoy absolute freedom. However on certain occasions world depends on Him and His interference is necessary.

Relation between God and the world is indicated by this theory on the analogy of the watchmaker and the watch he makes. The relation of the watchmaker with the watch ends when it has been finally made. Just in the same way all relations of God with his creation end when he has finished making the world.
This theory was supported by the Western philosophers i.e. John Toland, Mathew Tingal and Thomas Chubb during the 16th and 17th centuries. However, it is not a sound theory and is not accepted by all.

**Criticism**

i. It is difficult to understand the time and the purpose of creation. God created this world in a particular time according to deism. But we cannot determine the time and purpose of His creation.

ii. Deism states that God has created this universe out of nothing, which is logically inconsistent. Logic says out of nothing, nothing comes.

iii. It involves a dualism between God and the world. It is not clearly stated whether God is real or the world is real. Both cannot be real at the same time.

iv. It is logically unsound because some philosophers state that God is independent and free from the world. Again according to some it is the world which is completely independent and free.

v. It does not say the relation between God and the world. If one is infinite and real and other is finite and unreal, then how can there is relation?

vi. Further God, after creating the world, leaves it alone with the secondary causes. Thus God is external and out of the world. This creates difficulties in the religious attitude of man. It is spiritually inadequate too.

**Pantheism**

Pantheism comes from Greek terms ‘Pan’ which means all and ‘Theos’ which means God. So literally its meaning is that all is God. More commonly it means that the world is God, and God is the world. This theory is opposed to deism and it is a reaction against it. It conceives God as absolutely immanent in the world.

Pantheism regards God and the world as necessarily coexisting and immanently present in all that makes up the world; God without world being a substance without quality and world without God being an absolute nullity. Everything, every event, every mind and every mental function, all are God and nothing else. Not only that God is present in all existence, but He is the sole reality. If God is the only one and the only

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reality, and there is nothing other than God, the whole multiplicity is reduced to an unreal appearance.

According to Spinoza, God is Substance and Substance is God. This Substance is one absolute spiritual reality. Like Spinoza Hegelian form of Idealism is Pantheistic in character.
Hegel considers Reality as the Absolute mind or Will. Nothing falls outside the Absolute and everything is the Absolute. God is infinite and omnipresent. This theory is related with the Upanishadic saying “aham Brahmasmi” and “sarvam khalavidam Brahma”.

The world, like God is without beginning, limited neither by time nor by space. Hence we can observe the principle of Vishishtadvaita of Ramanuja. God is coextensive with the universe.

**Criticism**

i. If God is real and infinite then world cannot be real. When world is finite and temporary then how can we say God is the world and world is the God. World and God cannot be identical.

ii. If we believe that all is God and God is all, then there would not be the problem of evils in the world. If He is in the world then He having some evils and defects. And no one would be responsible for His acts.

iii. According to Pantheism if God is immanent and if He is within this world, then how can God be real, eternal and infinite? All these are not explained in the theory.

iv. This theory overlooks the distinction between cause and effect which is a logical mistake.

v. Pantheism says that God is real and independent. It implies that finite self has no independence and freedom. This provides a blow to morality and the nature of the self.

vi. Lastly this theory creates religious difficulties in the society. In Pantheism God is not a personal Being. So also man is not having distinct personality of his own for religious activities. Thus it is not a satisfactory and sound theory.

**Monotheism**

Monotheism (one – God – ism) is the belief that there is but one supreme Being, who is personal and moral and who seeks a total and unqualified response from human creatures. This idea first came to fully effective human consciousness in the words, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.” As these historic words indicate, the Semitic understanding of God, continued in Christianity and Islam, is emphatically monotheistic.

The Hebrew Scriptures (which also constitute the “Old Testament” in the Christian Bible) document the rise of monotheism in constant but never fully resolved struggle with polytheism and henotheism. The God of the Hebrews was originally worshiped as a tribal god, Jahweh of Israel, over against such foreign deities as Dagon of the Philistines and Chemosh of the Moabites. But the insistent, though at first incredible, message of great prophets of the eighth, seventh, and sixth centuries before the Christian era (above all, Amos, Hosea, first Isaiah, Jeremiah, and second Isaiah) was that Jahweh was not only the God of the Hebrews but the
Maker of heaven and earth and the Judge of all history and of all peoples. The Hebrew prophets taught that although God had indeed summoned their own nation to a special mission as the living medium of his revelation to the world, he was not only their God but also Lord of the gentiles or foreigners. A great biblical scholar said, “Hebrew monotheism arose through the intuitive perception that a God who is righteous first and last must be as universal as righteousness itself.” The service of such a God must involve a responsibility not only to fellow members of the same “household of faith” but to all one’s fellow creatures of every race and group.

It is a corollary of the prophets’ teaching concerning the lordship of God over all life that there is no special religious sphere set apart from the secular world but that the whole sweep of human existence stands in relation to God. Thus religion is secularized, or – to put it another way – ordinary life takes on a religious meaning. In the words of H. Richard Niebuhr:

The counterpart of this secularization, however, is the sanctification of all things. Now every day is the day that the Lord has made; every nation is a holy people called by him into existence in its place and time and to his glory; every person is sacred, made in his image and likeness; every living thing, on earth, in the heavens, and in the waters in his creation and points in its existence toward him; the whole earth is filled with his glory; the infinity of space is his temple where all creation is summoned to silence before him.

The difficulty involved in maintaining such a faith in practice, even within a culture that has been permeated for centuries by monotheistic teaching, is evidenced by the polytheistic and henotheistic elements in our own life. A religiously sensitive visitor from another planet would doubtless report that we divide our energies in the service of many deities – the god of money, of a business corporation, of success, and of power, the status gods, and (for a brief period once a week) the God of Judaic-Christian faith. When we rise above this practical polytheism, it is generally into a henotheistic devotion to the nation, or to the American way of life, in order to enjoy our solidarity with an in-group against the out-groups. In this combination of elements there is no continuity with the pure monotheism of the prophets and of the New Testament, with its vivid awareness of God as the Lord of history whose gracious purpose embracing all life renders needless the frantic struggle to amass wealth, power, and prestige at the expense of others.

Panentheism or Theism

Panentheism or theism is a reconciliatory theory of both Deism and Pantheism. It considers God as both transcendent and immanent. It is mainly associated with the name of Hegel and means that all is in God. ‘Pan’ means all; ‘en’ in; and ‘theos’ means God. So literally pan-en-theism means all is in God. According to this theory God is ever present in the every movement of the world and He is intimately connected with the world. Therefore, God is immanent in the world. Again the world follows from and is in God, but is not God. He therefore transcends the
world. Hence, God though immanent in the world, yet is also transcendent of the world. Thus God is both transcendent and immanent.

It is based upon concrete metaphysics of Hegelian Idealism which takes an organic view of the relation between the infinite and the finite, God and the world. Pan-en-theism believes that God is the highest personality, the creator, supporter and defender of the world.

The term theism is also used to mean the same thing as pan-en-theism or concrete monotheism. God is infinite and yet endowed with all qualities, the creator, protector, and sustainer, of the world. God in the immanent relation to the world includes time and space within Him, though in His transcendence He is above time and space. It may safely be said that this theory covers almost all other theories. Among the Western philosophers who have advocated this theism are Descartes, Locke, Berkeley, James Ward and Hegel, etc.

**Criticism**

i. The question arises how can God be both immanent and transcendent? Logically it is inconsistent.

ii. It covers the defects of both the theories viz., Deism and Pantheism. If all things are in God then God cannot be more than all things.

iii. This theory does not make distinction between God and the absolute, because it does not believe in absolute transcendence on the part of the Absolute.

iv. God in this theory cannot be within time and space and above time and space. This is a logical contradiction.

v. It also creates religious difficulties, considering a sense of dualism. It does not provide freedom of will nor the God is personified. Thus spiritual life is meaningless without freedom.

vi. This theory is beyond human comprehension. It is a form of mystical and irrational approach to God. This theory does not meet the requirements of rational mind.

However, the theistic conception of God, since it best corresponds to the various revealed religious traditions, has of course been of great concern to

philosophers of religion. Thus Pan-en-theism or theism appears to be the best of the three theories.

**Atheism**

Atheism means that either there is no God, or if there is, He cannot in any way affect human existence. To support this conception, evidence if offered consisting of our rational understanding and knowledge, scientific development and materialistic ideas. The atheistic conception is that the questions that formally were answered in terms of God can now be
answered in terms of scientific knowledge. They claimed that the role played by religious belief in human history has nothing to do with the actual existence of a God.

The philosophical basis of this theory provides an adequate rational comprehension of what we know about the world by means of a system containing no supernatural concepts. According to materialistic philosophers, our knowledge and experience in terms of God and the world contains nothing but material objects. No consistent or satisfactory theory of the nature of God has yet been explained by the philosophers or theist. From ancient days in the views of Epicurus, down to such twentieth-century thinkers as Bertrand Russell, A.J. Ayer, Schlick, Carnap etc. have argued that there are paradoxes and contradictions involved in the notion of God.

Arnold Toynbee states that all religions have been losing their hold on the hearts and minds of their former adherents.

Karl Marx treated religion as a tool of economic exploitation. He told that, “Man makes religion, religion dies not make man. Religion is the sign of oppressed creature, the heart of heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people.”

Psychological theories developed by Nietzsche and Freud and others suggest that religious beliefs have arisen because of certain human needs, which may not be religious but a projection of vain human wishes. Walter Kaufmann pointed out that “Gods and Ideas are potent reminders of man’s dissatisfaction with all that is given in the world.”

Besides two Christian atheists of America, Thomas J.J Altizer and William Hamilton, who spoke of the death of God, ultimately proclaimed that modern men find that they live very well without God and so do not trouble themselves about His existence.

So also Charvakans do not believe in the existence of God. God’s existence cannot be perceived. In reality they consider matter is only real. Therefore in the material world God is non-existent.

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Criticism

i. Creation of the world and God cannot be totally ignored. There must be a creator to create the universe.

ii. Although there is scientific development in the modern world, still people believe in God and its relation to the world in the core of their hearts.

iii. The world is not only matter or objects. It is also spirit and ideas according to theists and idealist philosophers.

iv. Man has different needs. A man may be having his basic needs, luxury needs, imaginary needs and his needless needs also. It is a fact that our material need may not be same as God.
However, man needs God, as there are instances of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Aurobindo, Swami Ramana, Dhruva and Prahalada, etc.

The different thinkers and philosophers have given their ideas regarding the non-existence of God. But their arguments are only partial and for the sake of arguments. They are ignoring the religious experience of the theists.

**Model Questions & Answers**

**Part B**

(Each answer not to exceed 50 words each question carries I weightage)

1. **Define Deism**

   **An.** This theory states that God is existing apart from the world. He is completely external or transcendent of the world. The term has originated from the Latin word “Deus” which means that God creates the world and after its creation denies the possibility of any relation between God and Man.

   **An.** Atheism means that either there is no God, or if there is, He cannot in any way affect human existence. The atheistic conception is that the questions that formally were answered in terms of God can now be answered in terms of scientific knowledge.

**Part C**

(Each answer not to exceed 150 words each question carries 2 weightages)

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3. **Discuss the criticisms against Theism**

   **An.**

   vii. The question arises how can God be both immanent and transcendent? Logically it is inconsistent.

   viii. It covers the defects of both the theories viz., Deism and Pantheism. If all things are in God then God cannot be more than all things.

   ix. This theory does not make distinction between God and the absolute, because it does not believe in absolute transcendence on the part of the Absolute.

   x. God in this theory cannot be within time and space and above time and space. This is a logical contradiction.
xi. It also creates religious difficulties, considering a sense of dualism. It does not provide freedom of will nor the God is personified. Thus spiritual life is meaningless without freedom.

xii. This theory is beyond human comprehension. It is a form of mystical and irrational approach to God. This theory does not meet the requirements of rational mind.

Part D

(Each answer not to exceed 300 words each question carries 4 weightages)

4. Analyze the different metaphysical positions of religion.
UNIT III

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

Objectives:-

1. To introduce the concepts like reason and revelation
2. To distinguish reason and revelation.
3. To explain mysticism and mystical experience.
4. To describe the feature of religious faith.
5. To summarize the categories of mysticism.

Basic Religious Beliefs

The distinction between basic beliefs, directly reflecting our experience, and the deeper foundational belief which they presuppose, applies also in the sphere of religion. Corresponding to the foundational belief in the reality of the physical world, of which we are aware in sense experience, is the foundational belief in the reality of the Divine, of which we are aware in religious experience. And corresponding to particular sensory beliefs, such as “I see a tree before me,” are particular beliefs reflecting moments or sequences of religious experience, such as “I am conscious in this situation of being in God’s presence.” But the distinction between basic and foundational beliefs is more important in relation to religion than to sense experience. For whereas the foundational belief in the material world can only be artificially doubted, the parallel foundational belief in a transcendent reality or realities can be, and is, seriously doubted. We will concentrate now upon the particular religious beliefs that arise under the auspices of that foundational conviction. William Alston calls these “M-beliefs” (“M” for manifestation). Some of his examples of M-beliefs include “that God is speaking to [a believer], comforting him, strengthening him, enlightening him, giving him courage, guiding him, pouring out His love or joy into him, sustaining him in being.” We may add believes reflecting the sense of God’s presents in moments of special joy, challenge, or tragedy, or mediated through the liturgy or the fellowship of the church, or through the beauty and grandeur of nature. Alston prefers to leave aside, because of their rare and exotic nature, the overwhelmingly powerful experiences of divine presence, and the striking visions and auditions, reported by the mystics. But these are nevertheless an important part of the continuous spectrum that runs from the faint and spasmodic moments of religious experience, punctuating the ordinary life of the believer, through the occasional “peak experiences” which come to many people, to the outstanding experiences of the classic mystics, and finally the paradigmatic experiences of the biblical figures (in the case of the Judaean-Christian scriptures, the prophets hearing the word of the Lord or the apostles experiencing Jesus as the Christ). This spectrum flows through the various historic streams of religious experience in which individual believers participate, by which they
are formed, to which they contribute, and by which they are encouraged and confirmed in their faith.

The religious beliefs based upon such M-experiences are basic in that they are not derived from other, evidence-stating, beliefs but directly reflect our own religious experience. Alvin Plantinga further argues that they are properly basic. That is to say, it is as rational for religious persons to hold these basic religious beliefs as it is for all of us to hold our basic perceptual beliefs. He attributes this position to the Reformers of the sixteenth century, particularly John Calvin; but, more basically, it is the biblical assumption translated into philosophical terms. That is to say, on the basis of their intense religious experiences, it was as rational for Moses and or for Jesus to believe in the reality of God as it was for them to believe in the reality of Mount Sinai or the Mount of Olives.

It is important to note that such beliefs, although not derived from other beliefs, are nevertheless not groundless. They are grounded in and justified by the experiential situation in which they have arisen. Plantinga says:

Suppose we consider perceptual beliefs, memory beliefs, and beliefs ascribing mental states to other persons, such beliefs as:

I see a tree
I had breakfast this morning, and
That person is in pain

Although beliefs of this sort are typically taken as basic, it would be a mistake to describe them as groundless. Upon having experience of a certain sort, I believe that I perceive a tree. In the typical case I do not hold this belief on the basis of other beliefs; it is nonetheless not groundless….We could say, if we wish, that this experience is what justifies me in holding [the belief; this is the ground of my justification, and, by extension, the ground of the belief itself.

Those who believe in God on the basis of their religious experience – experiences that they take to be of God’s love, forgiveness, claim, presence, and so on – are rationally justified in so believing.

**RATIONAL BELIEF WITHOUT PROOFS**

If, then, the biblical writers had also been modern epistemologists they would undoubtedly have claimed that for those who are conscious of living in the divine presence, or who experience particular events in history or in their own lives as manifestations of God’s presence, it is entirely reasonable, rational, and proper to believe wholeheartedly in the reality of God. Such a religious empiricism has been present implicitly in the literature for several centuries, and explicitly throughout the present century. This theory has recently been given detailed
reformulation in contemporary philosophical idiom, particularly by Alvin Plantinga and William Alston.

The issue is not whether it can be established as an item of indubitable public knowledge that God (or the Divine or the Transcendent) exists, or most probably exists, but whether it is rational for those who experience some of life’s moments theistically to believe that God exists and to proceed to conduct their lives on that basis.

But we must first look at rational belief in general. “Belief” can mean a proposition believed or it can be defined as an act or state of believing. The word will be used here in both ways, though it should always be obvious which meaning is intended. But when we speak of

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rational belief we always mean, or ought to mean, a rational act or state of believing. For it is not a proposition but people and their activities that can, strictly speaking, be rational or irrational. And it seems evident, indeed a tautology, that for someone rationally to believe \( p \), he or she must have adequate grounds or evidence or reasons to hold that \( p \) is true. To believe \( p \) (if \( p \) is of any importance) without basis, or for a manifestly bad reason, would not be rational. And so the nineteenth century skeptic W.K. Clifford could lie it down that “it is wrong always, everywhere, and for anyone to believe anything upon insufficient evidence.”

Clifford spoke of evidence. However, this turns out to be too narrow as a basis for rational belief. The idea of evidence normally presupposes a gap between an observed fact, or body of facts, and an inferred conclusion. Footprints are evidence that someone has passed by but actually seeing the person pass by is not evidence of this to the observer, although her report of what she saw may be evidence for someone else. Again, if I hold my hand in front of my eyes, it is appropriate, rational, and justifiable to believe that I am seeing my hand. But do I believe this on the basis of evidence? Surely not. What would be the evidence be? Is it the visual experience of a pinkish-whitish shape, of the kind that we normally call a hand, attached within my visual field to a shape of the kind we normally call an arm; and do I infer from this that I am seeing my hand? I am not conscious of making any such inference. Even if I did, or if I made it unconsciously, we could then ask for the evidence on which I believe that there is in my visual field this pinkish-whitish shape. And if the evidence for this is that I see it, we could ask – though with increasingly obvious absurdity – on what evidence I believe that I see it. At some point we have to accept that I just have the experience that I have, and that it is rational, appropriate, and justifiable to be in a belief-state reflecting that experience. Thus, seeing my hand, giving rise to the belief that I am seeing my hand, is an example of rational believing that is appropriately grounded in experience and yet not based upon evidence in any ordinary sense of the word. Nor does it involve any reasoning or argument because there is here no gap between premises and conclusion for reasoning to bridge.

And so our ordinary moment-to-moment perceptual beliefs contradict the principle that all rational believing must be based upon adequate evidence. It is not that they are based upon inadequate evidence, but rather that the model of evidence \( \rightarrow \) inference \( \rightarrow \) belief does not apply.
Ordinary perceptual beliefs arise directly out of our experience, and it is entirely appropriate, proper, and rational to form these beliefs in this way.

Perceptual beliefs are by no means the only examples of rationally held beliefs that are not based upon evidence. Other types include believing in self-evident propositions (e.g., “there is a world”), analytic truths (e.g., “2+2=4”), and uncontroversial reports of your own memory (e.g., “I had breakfast this morning”), and also the holding of incorrigible beliefs – i.e. beliefs which, when sincerely held, cannot be mistaken, such as I am now conscious” or “I feel pain in my jaw”. Such beliefs, arising in us directly and not as a result of inference, are often described as basic or foundational. They are beliefs that are rational to hold in appropriate circumstances and they are grounded in and justified by those circumstances. The idea that our belief-structures are and must be built upon such basic beliefs is called foundationalism.

We can, then, reformulate Clifford’s principle, not simply in terms of evidence, but more widely in terms of reasons: we should always have either appropriate experiential grounds or good reasons for our beliefs. Foundationalism adds that such “good reasons” will ultimately have to appeal to premises that are basic in the sense that they are not derived from further premises.

The various kinds of basic belief listed above fall into two groups. One consists of self-evident and analytic propositions. Believing these follows directly from understanding them; they can be basic for anyone. In these cases the differences between people’s experiences do not affect their status. But in the case of perceptual and incorrigible beliefs, and those based upon memory, and again of religious beliefs, the individual’s (and the community’s) experience is all-important. These beliefs reflect experience, and such experience is ultimately unique to each individual. And so for such a belief to be basic is for it to be basic for someone. For the basic of these beliefs is relative to the believer’s range of experience or, in the cybernetic sense, information. Of course our experiences often overlap: We all see the same tree and believe on the basis of our own experience that it exists. But it is still true, for this second group of beliefs, that what counts as basic for me depends upon the content of my experience. It is this second kind of basic belief, and particularly perceptual belief that primarily concerns us here, for it is this that provides the main analogies and disanalogies with religious belief.

Perceptual belief is basic, then, in that it is not derived from other beliefs but is directly grounded in our experience. But obviously not any and every experience can justify a basic belief, so that it exhibits, in Plantinga’s phrase, proper basicity. The experience must be relevant to the belief in such a way that the belief appropriately reflects and is grounded in the experience. Further, to conclude that a belief is properly basic still does not establish its truth. Sense – perception beliefs, for example, although basic and although appropriately and justifiably held, can nevertheless be mistaken; for there are hallucinations, mirages, and misperceptions. Likewise memory beliefs, however uncontroversial, can also be mistaken. Thus the question whether a particular belief is basic for someone is not identical with the question
whether it is properly basic for that person, and this in turn is not identical with the question whether the proposition believed is true.

How then might we establish that a properly basic belief – one that we are rationally justified in holding – is in fact true? How, for example, do we establish the truth of the perceptual belief that you see the hand that you hold before your eyes? The immediate answer is to check in obvious and familiar ways. You may turn your hand, move it further away, wiggle your fingers, and so on, and thus reassure yourself that it is indeed your hand. But such checking procedures all presuppose a more fundamental belief in the general reliability of our senses. For the appeal from a particular moment of experience to other confirming or disconfirming moments only helps if we assume that our sense experience is in general veridical, even though also subject to occasional errors. And so the ultimate question then arises: How do we know that the whole realm of sense experience is not delusory – that it consists of nothing but our own subjective states of consciousness? The answer seems to be that we cannot establish this in any noncircular way, but that it is nevertheless rational for us to assume it and to live on the basis of it; and indeed, more strongly, that it would be positively irrational not to. In other words, we

have come here to something that is for us truly foundational, something that we just have to accept as a basis both for judgment about the veridical or delusory character of particular perceptions and for our thought and action generally.

We are thus led to distinguish between particular perceptual beliefs (such as the belief that a person sees a tree in front of her) and our general belief in the normally veridical rather than delusory character of sense experience. This latter is equivalent to the assumption that there is real world of which we are a part and which impinges upon us through our sense organs. Thus if we describe as basic such beliefs as “I see a tree before me” (with its immediate implication that “There is tree there”), it would be useful to have a different term for the deeper foundation on which all such beliefs rest, namely our general assumption that through our senses we are interacting with a real physical environment. Let us describe this latter belief as foundational.

The foundational belief in a real environment of which we are aware in sense experience is normally an unstated presupposition of our particular perceptual beliefs. It only becomes explicit when it is questioned, such questioning being of the peculiar kind that we call philosophical. Thus, as we have seen, Descartes doubted, as a thought experiment, whether anything exists other than his own consciousness; he then proceeded to reason himself, as he supposed, out of this doubt. George Berkeley argued that the material world exists only in consciousnesses, our own and God’s: Solipsism is the theology that I alone exist and that the world and other people are modifications of my own consciousness – though it is not clear whether any sane person has ever seriously believed this. But there is, as we noted in the previous section, something peculiar about such questioning. There are no criteria of reality to which it can appeal, and further, as David Hume pointed out, we do not really have the option to disbelieve in the reality of the world in which we live, for nature “has doubtless esteemed it an affair of too great importance to
be trusted to our uncertain reasoning and speculations. We may very well ask, what causes
induce us to believe in the existence of body [i.e. matter]? But it’s vain to ask, whether there be
body or not? That is a point, which we must take for granted in all our reasoning.”

Revelation and Faith

It seems, then, that the universe is religiously ambiguous – capable of being construed both
religiously and naturalistically. This is tacitly acknowledged by the traditional term used for
human awareness of God, namely faith, as distinguished from knowledge. It is therefore to the
concept of faith, and the correlative concept of revelation, that we now turn.

Revelation is the revealing or disclosing of some form of truth or knowledge through
communication with a deity or other supernatural entity or entities. This is an act of divine or
supernatural disclosure to humans of something relating to human existence.

Faith is confidence or trust in a person or thing, deity, in the doctrines or teachings of a
religion, or view (e.g. having strong political faith) even without empirical evidence. It can also
be belief that is not based on proof or as confidence based upon varying degrees of evidential
warrant.

The propositional view of revelation and faith

Christian thought contains two very different understandings of the nature of revelation and,
as a result, two different conceptions of faith (as the human reception of revelation), of the Bible
(as a medium of revelation), and of theology (as discourse based upon revelation).

The view that dominates the medieval period and that is represented today by more
traditional forms of Roman Catholicism (and also, in a curious meeting of opposites, by
conservative Protestantism) can be called the “propositional” understanding of revelation.

According to this view, the content of revelation is a body of truths expressed in statements
or propositions. Revelation is the imparting to people of divinely authenticated truths. In the
words of the older Catholic Encyclopedia, “Revelation may be defined as the communication of
some truth by God to a rational creature through means which are beyond the ordinary course of
nature.”

Corresponding to this conception of revelation is a view of faith as people’s obedient
acceptance of these divinely revealed truths. Thus faith was defined by the Vatican Council of
1870 as “a supernatural virtue whereby, inspired and assisted by the grace of God, we believe
that the things that He has revealed are true.” Or again, a recent American Jesuit theologian
writes, “To a Catholic, the word ‘faith’ conveys the notion of an intellectual assent to the content
of revelation as true because of the witnessing authority of God the Revealer…Faith is the
Catholic’s response to an intellectual message communicated by God.”
These two independent conceptions of revelation as the divine promulgation of religious truths, and of faith as our obedient reception of these truths, are related to a view of the Bible as the place where those truths are authoritatively written down. They were first revealed through the prophets, then more fully and perfectly through Christ and the apostles, and are now recorded in the Scriptures. It is thus an essential element of this view that the Bible is not a merely human, and therefore fallible, book. The first Vatican Council formulated Roman Catholic belief for the modern period by saying of the books of the Bible that “….having been written by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, they have God for their author. “(One may compare with this the words of the Protestant evangelist, Dr. Billy Graham, ‘The Bible is a book written by God through thirty secretaries.’) It should be added, however, that in Catholic theology Scripture is set within the context of tradition. Thus, the Council of Trent (1546-1563) declared that, “….with the same devotion and reverence with which it accepts and venerates all the books of the Old and New Testament, since one God is the author of both, it also accepts and venerates traditions concerned with faith and morals as having been received orally from Christ or inspired by the Holy Spirit and continuously preserved in the Catholic Church.” Protestantism, on the other hand, recognizes no such oral tradition possessing equal authority with the Bible and claims that through the Bible God speaks directly to the Church as a whole and to the mind and conscience of individual believers.

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This same propositional conception of revelation as God’s imparting of certain truths that have been inscribed in the sacred Scriptures, and are believed by faith, leads also to a particular view of the nature and function of theology. The propositional theory of revelation has always been accompanied by the distinction between natural and revealed theology. This distinction has been almost universally accepted by Christian theologians of all traditions until the present century. Natural theology was held to consist of all those theological truths that can be worked out by the unaided human intellect. It was believed, for example, that the existence and attributes of God and the immortality of the soul can be proved by strict logical argument involving no appeal to revelation. Revealed theology, on the other hand, was held to consist of those further truths that are not accessible to human reason and that can be known to us only if they are specially revealed by God. For example, it was held that although the human mind, by right reasoning, can attain the truth that God exists, it cannot arrive in the same way at the further truth that God is three Persons in one; thus the doctrine of the Trinity was considered to be an item of revealed theology, to be accepted by faith. (The truths of natural theology were believed to have been also revealed, for the benefit of those who lack the time or the mental equipment to arrive at them for themselves.)

Many modern philosophical treatments of religion, whether attacking or defending it, presuppose this propositional view of revelation and faith. For example, Walter Kaufmann, in his lively and provocative Critique of Religion and Philosophy, assumed that the religious person who appeals to revelation is referring to theological propositions that God is supposed to have declared to humankind. Indeed, probably the majority of recent philosophical critics of
religion have had in mind a definition of faith as the believing of propositions upon insufficient evidence.

Many philosophical defenders of religion share the same assumption and propose various expedients to compensate for the lack of evidence to support their basic convictions. The most popular way of bridging the evidence to support their basic convictions. The most popular way of bridging the evidential gap is by an effort of the will. Thus, one recent religious philosopher stated that “…faith is distinguished from the entertainment of a probable proposition by the fact that the latter can be a completely theoretic affair. Faith is a ‘yes’ of self-commitment, it does not turn probabilities into certainties; only a sufficient increase in the weight of evidence could do that. But it is a volitional response which takes up out of the theoretic attitude.”

This emphasis upon the part played by the will in religious faith (an emphasis that goes back at least as far as Aquinas) has provided the basis for a number of modern theories of the nature of faith, some of which will now be discussed.

Voluntarist Theories of Faith

The classic treatments of religious faith as the acceptance of certain beliefs by a deliberate act of will are those of the seventeenth-century French thinker Blaise Pascal and the nineteenth-century American philosopher and psychologist William James.

Pascal’s “Wager” treats the question of divine existence as an enigma concerning which we can take up a position only on the basis of a calculation of risks. If we wager our lives that God exist, we stand to gain eternal salvation if we are right and to lose little if we are wrong, if, on the other hand, we wager our lives that there is no God, we stand to gain little if we are right but to lose eternal happiness if we are wrong. “Let us weigh the gain and the loss in wagering that God is. Let us estimate these two chances. If you gain, you gain all; if you lose, you lose nothing. Wager, then, without hesitation that He is.”

If we ask whether it is possible to make one believe in God, Pascal answers that this is possible – not indeed instantaneously, but by a course of treatment. “You would like to attain faith, and do not know the way; you would like to cure yourself of unbelief, and ask the remedy for it. Learn of those who have been bound like you….Follow the way by which they began; by acting as if they believed, taking the holy water, having masses said, etc. Even this will naturally make you believe, and deaden your acuteness.”

Given an anthropomorphic (and too many people, very unattractive) conception of God, Pascal’s Wager amounts to a rational form of self-insurance. It assumes that God will be pleased by such a calculating and self-regarding attitude. The assumption has seemed profoundly irreligious to many religious believers, although it has also been seriously adopted by others.

William James (1842-1910), a founder of the pragmatist school of thought, argues in his famous easy “The Will to Believe” (1897) that the existence or nonexistence of God, of which...
there can be no conclusive evidence either way, is a matter of such momentous importance that anyone who so desires has the right to stake one’s life upon the God hypothesis. Indeed, we are obliged to bet our lives upon either this or the contrary possibility. “We cannot escape the issue by remaining skeptical and waiting for more light, because, although we do avoid error in that way if religion be untrue, we lose the good, if it be true, just as certainly as if we positively chose to disbelieve.

A Non-propositional view of faith

A different view of revelation, which can be called in contrast the “nonpropositional” view (or, if a technical term is desired, the heilsgeschichtliche view), has become widespread within Protestant Christianity during the present century. This view claims to have its roots in the thought of the Reformers of the sixteenth century (Luther and Calvin and their associates) and still further back in the New Testament and the early Church.

According to this non-propositional view, the content of revelation is not a body of truths about God, but God coming within the orbit of human experience by acting in history. From this point of view, theological propositions, as such, are not revealed but present human attempts to understand the significance of revelatory events. This non-propositional conception of revelation is connected with the modern renewed emphasis upon the personal character of God and the thought that the divine-human personal relationship consists of something more than the promulgation and reception of theological truths. Certain questions at once present themselves.

If it is God’s intention to confront us with God’s presence, as personal will and purpose, why has this not been done in an unambiguous manner, by some overwhelming manifestation of divine power and glory?

The answer that is generally given runs parallel to one of the considerations that occurred in connection with the problem of evil. If one is to have the freedom necessary for a relationship of love and trust, this freedom must extend to the basic and all-important matter of one’s consciousness of God. God (as conceived in the Judaic-Christian tradition) is such that to be aware of God is, in important respects, unlike being aware of a finite person. The existence of a fellow human being can be a matter of indifference to us. The obvious exception is that consciousness of another which is love. The peculiarly self-involving awareness of love thus bears a certain analogy to our awareness of God. In love, the existence of the beloved, far from being a matter of indifference, affects one’s whole being. God, the object of the religious consciousness, is such that it is impossible for a finite creature to be aware of God and yet remain unaffected by this awareness. God, according to the Judaic-Christian tradition, is the source and ground of our being. It is by God’s will that we exist. God’s purpose for us is so indelibly written into our nature that the fulfillment of this purpose is the basic condition of our own personal self-fulfillment and happiness. We are thus totally dependent upon God as the giver not only of our existence but also of our highest good. To become conscious of God is to see oneself as a created, dependent creature receiving life and well-being from a higher source.
In relation to this higher Being, self-disclosed to us as holy love, the only appropriate attitude is one of grateful worship and obedience. Thus, the process of becoming aware of God, if it is not to destroy the frail autonomy of the human personality, must involve the individual’s own freely responding insight and assent. Therefore, it is said, God does not become known to us as a reality of the same order as ourselves, for then the finite being would be swallowed by the infinite Being. Instead, God has created space-time as a sphere in which we may exist in relative independence, as spatiotemporal creatures. Within this sphere God is self-discovered in ways that allow us the fateful freedom to recognize or fail to recognize God’s presence. Divine activity always leaves room for that uncompelled response that theology calls faith. It is this element in the awareness of God that preserves our human cognitive freedom in relation to an infinitely greater and superior reality. Faith is thus the correlate of freedom: faith is related to cognition as free will to conation. As one of the early Church Fathers wrote, “And not merely in works, but also in faith, has God preserved the will of man free and under his own control.”

In ordinary nonreligious experience, there is something epistemologically similar to this in the phenomenon of “seeing as,” which was brought to the attention of philosophers by Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889 – 1951) when he pointed out the epistemological interest of puzzle pictures. Consider, for example, the page covered with apparently random dots and lines, which, as one gazes at it, suddenly takes the form of a picture of (say) human beings standing in a grove of trees. The entire field of dots and lines is now seen as having this particular kind of significance and no longer as merely a haphazard array of marks.

We can develop this idea and suggest that in addition to such purely visual interpreting, there is also the more complex phenomenon of experiencing as, in which a whole situation is experienced as having some specific significance. A familiar example of a situation that is perceived with all the senses and has its own practical significance is that of driving an automobile along highway. To be conscious of being in this particular kind of situation is to be aware that certain reactions (and dispositions to react) are appropriate and others inappropriate; an important part of our consciousness of the situation as having the character that it has consists in our readiness to act appropriately within it. Anyone would react in characteristically different ways in the midst of a battle and on a quiet Sunday afternoon stroll; a person would do so in recognition of the differing characters of these two types of situation. Such awareness is a matter of “experiencing as.” The significance of a given situation for a given observer consists primarily of its bearing upon that person’s behavioral dispositions. Being an interpretative act, “experiencing as” can of course be mistaken, as – to mention an extreme case – when a mentally-ill person feels that everyone poses a threat, and reacts accordingly.

Sometimes two different orders or levels of significance are experienced within the same situation; this is what happens when religious mind experiences events both as occurring within human history and also as mediating the presence and activity of God. A religious significance is found superimposed upon the natural significance of the situation in the believer’s experience.
Thus, for example, the ancient Hebrew prophets saw the events of their contemporary history both as interactions between Israel and the surrounding nations and, at the same time, as God’s dealings with the people of Israel – leading, guiding, disciplining, and punishing them in order that they might be instruments of God’s purpose. In the prophetic interpretation of history embodied in the Hebrew Scriptures, events that would be described by a secular historian as the outcome of political, economic, sociological, and geographical factors are seen as incidents in a dialogue that continues through the centuries between God and Israel. It is important to realize that the prophets were not formulating a philosophy of history in the sense of a hypothesis applied retrospectively to the facts; instead, they were reporting their actual experience of the events as they happened. They were conscious of living in the midst of Heilsgeschichte, salvation-history. They saw God actively at work in the world around them. For example, a classic commentary says of the time when the Chaldean army was attacking Jerusalem, “Behind the serried ranks of the Chaldean army [Jeremiah] beheld the form of Jahweh fighting for them and through them against His own people.” The prophets experienced their contemporary situations as moments in which God was actively present.

The same epistemological pattern – the interpreting in a distinctive way of events that are in themselves capable of being constructed either naturalistically or religiously – runs through the New Testament. Here again, in the history of a man, Jesus of Nazareth, and a movement which arose in connection with him, there are ambiguous data. It is possible to see him simply as a self-appointed prophet who got mixed up in politics, clashed with the Jerusalem priesthood, and had to be eliminated. It is also possible, with the New Testament writers, to see him as the Messiah of God giving himself for the renewing of humankind. To see him in this way is to share the faith or the distinctive way of “experiencing as” which gave rise to the New Testament documents.

More broadly, religious apperception, within the Judaic-Christian tradition, experience human life as a situation in which people are at all times having to do with God and God with them. The ethic that is an inseparable aspect of this faith indicates the way in which it is appropriate to behave in such a situation.

**Mysticism**

Mysticism, a doctrine or discipline maintaining that one can gain knowledge of reality that is not accessible to sense perception or to rational, conceptual thought. Generally associated with a religious tradition, mysticism can take a theistic form, as it has in Jewish, Christian and Islamic tradition, or a non-theistic form, as it has in Buddhism and some varieties of Hinduism.

The term ‘mysticism,’ comes from the Greek mystikos meaning “to conceal.” In the Hellenistic world, ‘mystical’ referred to “secret” religious rituals. In early Christianity the term came to refer to “hidden” allegorical interpretations of Scriptures and to hidden presences, such as that of Jesus at the Eucharist. Only later did the term begin to denote “mystical theology,” that included direct experience of the divine. Typically, mystics, theistic or not, see their mystical
experience as part of a larger undertaking aimed at human transformation and not as the terminus of their efforts. Thus, in general, ‘mysticism’ would best be thought of as a constellation of distinctive practices, discourses, texts, institutions, traditions, and experiences aimed at human transformation, variously defined in different traditions.

Mystical experience

William James, who popularized the use of the term "religious experience" in his *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, influenced the understanding of mysticism as a distinctive experience which supplies knowledge of the transcendent. He considered the "personal religion" to be "more fundamental than either theology or ecclesiastics and states:

In mystic states we both become one with the Absolute and we become aware of our oneness. This is the everlasting and triumphant mystical tradition, hardly altered by differences of clime or creed. In Hinduism, in Neoplatonism, in Sufism, in Christian mysticism, in Whitmanism, we find the same recurring note, so that there is about mystical utterances an eternal unanimity which ought to make a critic stop and think, and which bring it about that the mystical classics have, as been said, neither birthday not native land.

Mystics claim that the mystical experience, the vehicle of mystical knowledge, is usually the result of spiritual training, involving some combination of prayer, meditation, fasting, bodily discipline, and renunciation of worldly concerns. Theistic varieties of mysticism describe the mystical experience as granted by God and thus not subject to the control of the mystic. Although theists claim to feel closeness to God during the mystical experience, they regard assertions of identity of the self with God as heretical. Non-theistic varieties are more apt to describe the experience as one that can be induced and controlled by the mystic and in which distinction between the self and reality, or subject and object, are revealed to be illusory. Mystics

claim that, although veridical, their experiences cannot be adequately described in language, because ordinary communication is based on sense experience and conceptual differentiation.

Categories of Mystical Experiences

Mystical and religious experiences can be classified in various ways, in addition to the built-in difference between mystical super sense-perceptual and sub sense-perceptual experiences. This section notes some common classifications.

a. Extroversive and Introversive

When any experience includes sense-perceptual, somatosensory, or introspective content, we may say it is an extroversive experience. There are, then, mystical extroversive experiences, as in one's mystical consciousness of the unity of nature overlaid onto one's sense perception of the world, as well as non-unitive numinous extroversive experiences, as when experiencing God's
presence when gazing at a snowflake. Sometimes, the term “extroversive” is reserved for experiences that pertain to a perceived character of the natural world with no added phenomenological data. When not extraversive, we may say an experience is introversive. An experience of “nothingness” or “emptiness,” in some mystical traditions, and an experience of God resulting from a disengagement from sense experience, would be examples of introversive experiences. Theistic and non-theistic

A favorite distinction of Western philosophers is between theistic experiences, which are purportedly of God, and non-theistic ones. Non-theistic experiences can be allegedly of an ultimate reality other than God or of no reality at all. Numinous theistic experiences are dualistic, where God and the subject remain clearly distinct, while theistic mysticism pertains to some sort of union or else identity with God.

**Union with God**

“Union” with God signifies a rich family of experiences rather than a single experience. “Union” involves a falling away of the separation between a person and God, short of identity. Christian mystics have variously described union with the Divine. This includes Bernard of Clairvaux describing unification as “mutuality of love,” Henry Suso likening union with God to a drop of water falling into wine, taking on the taste and color of the wine, and Jan van Ruysbroeck describing union as “iron within the fire and the fire within the iron”. Generally, medieval Christian mysticism had at least three stages, variously described, in the union-consciousness: quiet, essentially a prelude to the union with God, full union, and rapture, the latter involving a feeling of being “carried away” beyond oneself.

**Identity with God**

Theistic mystics sometimes speak as though they have a consciousness of being fully absorbed into or even identical with God. Examples are the Islamic Sufi mystic al-Husayn al-Hallaj proclaiming, “I am God” and the Jewish kabbalist, Isaac of Acre who wrote of the soul being absorbed into God “as a jug of water into a running well.” Also, the Hasidic master, R. Shneur Zalman of Liady wrote of a person as a drop of water in the ocean of the Infinite with an illusory sense of individual “drones.” And, the Christian mystic, Meister Eckhart made what looked very much like identity-declarations. It is still controversial, however, as to when such declarations are to be taken as identity assertions, with pantheistic or cosmic intentions, and when they are perhaps hyperbolic variations on descriptions of union-type experiences.
Model Questions & Answers

Part B

(Each answer not to exceed 50 words each question carries 1 weightage)

1. Revelation

An. Revelation is the revealing or disclosing of some form of truth or knowledge through communication with a deity or other supernatural entity or entities. This is an act of divine or supernatural disclosure to humans of something relating to human existence.

2. Define Faith

An. Faith is confidence or trust in a person or thing, deity, in the doctrines or teachings of a religion, or view even without empirical evidence. It can also be belief that is not based on proof or as confidence based upon varying degrees of evidential warrant.

Part C

(Each answer not to exceed 150 words each question carries 2 weightages)

3. Describe the categories of mysticism

30

An. Mystical and religious experiences can be classified in various ways, in addition to the built-in difference between mystical super sense-perceptual and sub sense-perceptual experiences. This section notes some common classifications.

b. Extroversive and Introversive

When any experience includes sense-perceptual, somatosensory, or introspective content, we may say it is an extroversive experience. There are, then, mystical extroversive experiences, as in one's mystical consciousness of the unity of nature overlaid onto one's sense perception of the world, as well as non-unitive numinous extroversive experiences, as when experiencing God's presence when gazing at a snowflake. Sometimes, the term “extroversive” is reserved for experiences that pertain to a perceived character of the natural world with no added phenomenological data. When not extroversive, we may say an experience is introversive. An experience of “nothingness” or “emptiness,” in some mystical traditions, and an experience of God resulting from a disengagement from sense experience, would be examples of introversive experiences. Theistic and non-theistic

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are to be taken as identity assertions, with pantheistic or cosmic intentions, and when they are perhaps hyperbolic variations on descriptions of union-type experiences.

**Part D**

(Each answer not to exceed 300 words each question carries 4 weightages)

4. Explain the relation between revelation and faith and discuss the different views on faith and revelation.
UNIT IV

PROOFS FOR THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

Objectives:-

1. To identify the different types of proofs for the existence of God
2. To explain the nature of teleological proof.
3. To distinguish the teleological proof from ontological proof.
4. To describe the feature of cosmological proof.
5. To discuss the key concepts related with ontological proof.

“God is Love, God is Wisdom, God is Truth.”

-Sri Aurobindo

“If one knows Him as Brahman the Non-Being, He becomes merely the non-existent. If one knows that Brahman is, then is He known as the real in existence.”

-Taittiriya Upanishad

For hundreds of years philosophers, scientists and theologians have been bringing forward arguments either to show that there is such a being as God or to deny His existence entirely. This is one of the problems in the philosophy of religion, because belief in God has always occupied a central position in religious faith and practice. We need at this point to make clear the close relation between the ideas of God, the nature of God and the types of arguments for His existence. One can have the ideas and nature of God only when one observes the relation of God and the world, religions of the world and the arguments for the existence of God.

Here we shall present certain traditional theistic arguments for the belief and existence of God.

The Design Argument or Teleological Argument

The teleological or design argument is very ancient one. It perhaps has its earliest roots in the thought of Plato, who argued that the physical universe is unintelligible apart from mind. This argument attempts to prove the existence of God by empirical means. It states that God is an intelligent designer of evolution; it is observed that there is a purpose or an end in the natural
order. This universe has a purpose which governs the world. Where there is purpose, there must be a proposer. So also where there is design there must be a designer. But who is that designer? What is the nature of that designer?

The universe is not mere aggregate of events, but is an organized whole, in which there is order, harmony and discipline. This implies that there must be a supreme intelligent and wise designer who has created the universe. That supreme cosmic designer can only be God and nothing else.

Further instances can be given: there is orderly design which prevails the entire phenomenal world. Millions of stars in the heaven behave in an orderly manner. There are thousands of nerve cells functioning properly in the complex living organism. So also there is order in the life of plants and animals. The above instances imply the existence of a wise designer of the world.

Paley’s analogy of watch conveys the essence of the argument. Suppose that while walking in desert I see a rock lying on the ground. It can convince myself that it is by the natural process that the rock is formed. But if I see a watch lying on the ground, I cannot reasonably account for it in a similar way. A watch consists of complex arrangements of wheels, cogs, axles, springs and balances, etc. all operating accurately together for the measurement of time. Thus we can very well postulate an intelligent designer who has manufactured the watch. Paley argues that the world is a complex mechanism, which is being designed by a supreme designer and that designer is God.

One of the classical statements of argument from design appears in David Hume’s “Dialogues on Natural Religion”. The central claim of the argument from design is that the world, being a great machine, runs orderly and perfectly. In case of human achievements, such as watches and houses, the cause in thought, wisdom and intelligence. Therefore, there must be some kind of intelligent deity who is the author or cause of the effects in the universe. That is God who has planned all the objects carefully.

Criticism

However, there are some objections raised against this argument:

i. The design argument conceives the relation between God and the world in the manner of the relation between a human being and a machine. Both human being and machine are objective phenomena and they are temporary, finite and limited. In the same manner if God is the designer like the watchmaker there He is also limited by the world. The watchmaker prepared the watch out of the pre-existing materials; is it applicable in the same way to God?

Kant pointed out that the design argument proves the existence of a contriver or architect of the world, not its creator and this designer is limited by the world.
To overcome these difficulties theology has been conceived as immanent and not as transcendent. It is not that God remains outside the materials supplied to him. He is not the outward contriver but the indwelling shaper of things according to some definite plan and design.

ii. This theological argument does not prove the existence of the necessary being, a first cause, or even a creator of the universe out of nothing. At best, it could only give evidence that the universe is the product of design which requires a designer; if He exists He should be called ‘GOD’. Traditionally, we give the name ‘GOD’ which creates much confusion.

iii. The word ‘order’ is not very clear. It is a relative term. The object which seems orderly to one person will not be the same to another. Nor is it clear that universe is orderly in any specific sense. In the world there are lots of disorders, disharmonies and disasters. In nature all things are not properly arranged or designed. The order or purpose is not the result of design.

Here the defender of theological argument would reply that the design or order of plants and animals is not the same as in case of watch or house. The order and design of the Divine designer is not relative but it is absolute.

iv. According to Hume we cannot repose perfect confidence in reasoning by analogy. There is a wide difference between the universes on the one hand, and the finite things like machines, houses, etc. on the other. The analogy between the world and human architect, such as watch or a house, is rather weak. The universe is not like a vast machine.

v. Even if we could validly infer a divine designer of the world, we would still not be entitled to postulate the wise God and intelligent God. Besides, from a finite world we can never infer an infinite creator.

**Cosmological Argument**

The cosmological or casual argument proceeds from the idea of the world as effect to God as its first cause. In the widest sense of the term, any theistic argument that proceeds from the world to God can be described as cosmological, including the design argument.

To Aristotle first cause argument is known as cosmological because according to him everything that happens has a cause, and this cause in turn has a cause, and so on in a series that must be infinite and that infinite cause is known as first Cause. If that first cause is God, which has no other cause than Himself, that excludes the possibility of an infinite regress.

Those who believe that God is the first cause of the universe must determine the nature of that first cause. Is God the efficient or the material cause? Perhaps He is both efficient and the material cause of the universe.
This first cause of creation is the ‘First Mover’ or the Prime Mover, according to Aristotle. It states that everything has a cause. If this is accepted as per the law of causation, then the universe itself must have a cause. That cause is God. Therefore, God exists. Hence God must be the Infinite First Cause of the Cosmos.

**Criticism**

This argument too has some limitations which are as follows:

i. It is difficult to relate God with the finite causal series. This means that God being an effect must have a cause. If He is beyond the casual chains then it is impossible to find any relation between Him and His creation.

ii. The famous British empiricist, Hume, holds that both the cause and effect are limited. If it is true, then it leads to the conclusion that God is also limited.

iii. Kant’s objection is more formidable. Causality being a category of the phenomena, cannot take us beyond the phenomena. And within the phenomena, the concept of God remains. So it implies the infinite regress.

iv. According to law of causation everything has a cause, and if that is true, then God must have a cause. And if God does not have a cause, then it is not true that everything has a cause.

v. We know that there are two causes – material and efficient – which are necessary for the production of things. In the case of pot, the potter is the efficient and the earth is the material cause, according to Aristotle. If we say that God is the efficient or instrumental cause of the universe, then it would have been impossible for Him to create without the help of the material cause or matter. If, on the contrary, the material cause be meant by First Cause, then He must have gone through all changes of evolution like the finite things of the world.

**The Ontological Argument**

The ontological argument attempts to prove the existence of God from the ideas or human experience. This argument was first put forth by St. Anselm, a mediaeval philosopher. Anselm said that we have an idea of perfect being, and that this is what we mean by God.

The argument proceeds as follows:

“God is a being than which no greater can be conceived.” Now we have the idea of such a being. If He did not exist, He would not be as great as if He did exist, and by definition He is the greatest being that can be conceived. Therefore, such a being exists.
It is clear that by ‘greater’ Anselm means more perfect, and the highest and the supreme. Instead of describing God as the most perfect being that there is, Anselm describes God as the being who is so perfect that no more perfect can even be conceived.

In the ontological argument Anselm pointed out that the most perfect conceivable being must exist in reality as well as in the mind. He said that the God is a necessary existence, so it is impossible to conceive of Him not existing. For something can be thought to exist that cannot be thought not to exist.

Descartes made some changes in this argument. He said that God must be the cause of this idea of an all perfect Being. Perfection means to him the attitudes, power, goodness, knowledge and also existence. Hence anything less than God cannot be the cause of such an idea, which according to Descartes, is an innate idea.

Criticism

i. Kant made seven criticisms to this argument. According to him we cannot reduce the reality of anything from a mere idea of it. But if a thing is to exist it must be given in experience. This ontological argument ignores the proper distinction between thought and existence. Kant points out that from the idea of one hundred dollars in my mind I cannot prove their existence in my pocket. In the same way, we have the idea of God in our mind, it does not follow that, therefore, God really exists.

ii. Gaunilon, a monk of France, claimed that Anselm’s reasoning would lead to absurd conclusions if it is applied in other fields. He set up a parallel ontological argument for the most perfect island. He spoke of the most perfect conceivable island, but his argument could be rephrased in terms of the latter idea. Given the idea of such an island, by using Anselm’s principle we can argue that unless it exists in reality it cannot be the most perfect conceivable island. Similarly, if God is not existing in reality, it cannot be conceived as the perfect Being.

iii. If existence is a ‘perfection’ and God is most perfect, then God’s existence must be granted. But existence is not an attitude or quality. In order to have an attribute a thing must exist first. But His existence cannot be proved from His perfection.

iv. Descartes’ ontological argument claims that existence must be included among the defining predicates of God, just as the fact that the internal angles are equal to two right angles, which is necessary characteristic of a triangle. But Kant replies that the subject, with its predicates actually exists. What is analytically true is that if there is a triangle, it must have three angles and if there is an infinitely perfect being the must have existence. As Kant says, “To posit a triangle, and yet to reject its three angles, is self-contradictory; but there is no self-contradiction in rejecting the triangle together with its three angles. The same holds true of the concept of an absolutely necessary being.”
v. The definition of God describes one’s concept of God, but we cannot prove the actual existence of any such being. We can utter the term like table, Rajeev, cow, house, etc. which implies all these are actually existing in the world. Similarly if we say ‘unicorn’ exists, or Gold Mountain exists, it does not ascertain its existence. Because in fact unicorn and Gold Mountain are negative existential statements so they do not exist. Similarly God is negative existential statement and does not exist.

Model Questions & Answers

Part B

(Each answer not to exceed 50 words each question carries 1 weightage)

1. Teleological argument

An. The teleological or design argument is very ancient one. It perhaps has its earliest roots in the thought of Plato, who argued that the physical universe is unintelligible apart from mind. It states that God is an intelligent designer of evolution; it is observed that there is a purpose or an end in the natural order. This universe has a purpose which governs the world. Where there is purpose, there must be a proposer. So also where

there is design there must be a designer. But who is that designer? What is the nature of that designer?

2.

An. The cosmological or casual argument proceeds from the idea of the world as effect to God as its first cause. In the widest sense of the term, any theistic argument that proceeds from the world to God can be described as cosmological, including the design argument. It states that everything has a cause. If this is accepted as per the law of causation, then the universe itself must have a cause. That cause is God. Therefore, God exists. Hence God must be the Infinite First Cause of the Cosmos.

Part C

(Each answer not to exceed 150 words each question carries 2 weightages)

3. State the criticisms against ontological argument

An.

vi. Kant made seven criticisms to this argument. According to him we cannot reduce the reality of anything from a mere idea of it. But if a thing is to exist it must be given in experience. This ontological argument ignores the proper distinction between thought and
existence. Kant points out that from the idea of one hundred dollars in my mind I cannot prove their existence in my pocket. In the same way, we have the idea of God in our mind, it does not follow that, therefore, God really exists.

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Part D

(Each answer not to exceed 300 words each question carries 4 weightages)

4. Give a detailed account on the proofs for the existence of God.
UNIT V

PROBLEM OF EVIL

Objectives:-

1. To introduce the notion, problem of evil
2. To explain the religious concept of evil.
3. To discuss concept of immortality of soul.
4. To describe the concept of immortality soul in different religions.

Throughout the ages the problem of good and evil has been discussed by philosophers and religious teachers of both the East and the West, and many and varied have been the solutions offered. The two opposing forces, evil and good, are at war with each other. We find this conflict everywhere in the universe, within us and outside us. The two forces are so intermixed that it is impossible to separate them. Man’s life is a mixture of good and evil. Good and evil are correlative facts. Therefore any attempt to understand evil by itself apart from the idea of good is an impossible matter.

What is Evil?

According to Plato, the world of pure, unchanging ideas is the world of good. The world of sense, the world of change is evil.

The Sophists held that “Man is the measure of himself”, and so each man could frame his own code of good and evil – a theory which is undoubtedly most dangerous to follow in life.

To Philo (Philip and Alexandrian) God was perfect purity and the source of all good. Matter was the source of all evil. Spinoza says that evils are due to our narrow outlook on things, that evil appears such as only because we look at things from the standpoint of a particular interest, but disappears into nothingness which we enlarge our outlook and learn to look at things from the standpoint of the whole or God. According to Hegel evils are only irrational elements tending to become good or rational, because Reality which is rational through and through must see that the irrationality or evil is rationalized. Both Spinoza and Hegel practically denied the reality of evil.

Leibniz considered evil to be due to the imperfections that are inherent in the construction of the finite elements of the universe. Bosanquet says, “There is nothing in evil which cannot be absorbed in good and contributory to it, it springs from the same source as good and value.”

The Vedanta philosophy declares that God or the Supreme Being is unaffected by evil and stands above relative good which is the correlative of evil. Both relative good and relative evil
have a common origin. They are two-fold manifestations of the same cosmic power, universal energy on the plane of phenomena.

Both good and evil are found to be very prominent in Christianity. God had created man good, but he turned to the flesh and became subject to evil and sin. The first man’s original sin was transmitted to all men – his descendants. All the forces of evil and sin came to be personified in Satan. Thus, in traditional Christianity, to begins seem to be functioning – God, the force of all good, and the Devil, the source of all evil.

**Problem of Evil**

It is believed that the world is created by God. It is natural to ask how evil entered the world if it has been created by a benevolent power. If evil was present before the world was created then God is limited by its presence. If God is all-wise and benevolent why should such a God allow evils, both physical and moral, to happen in his creation? It may be that although He is absolutely good and wise, yet He is limited in power to prevent evils. Or it may be that He is all-powerful, all-wise and all-good, yet He was instituted evils into His world only to teach mankind to be morally good by way of warning.

If God is infinitely good how shall we explain all the pain and evil, all the sin and sorrow and suffering and all the thwarted plans and disappointed hopes which are evident everywhere?

**Types of Evil**

There are three kinds of evil. They are called, (i) metaphysical evils; (ii) Physical or mental evils; and (iii) moral evils.

Metaphysical Evil: the metaphysical evil is called the natural evil. It is independent of human volition. It depends upon the operation of the laws of nature. Earthquakes, cyclones, drought, hurricanes, famine and flood, etc. are natural calamities which as treated as metaphysical evils. They bring misery and distress to mankind. All these evils are beyond our control. However, scientists are making attempts to check these evils.

Physical or Mental Evil: All physical and mental suffering and pain are included in this form of evil. One has to experience suffering and pain. Man with flesh and blood will certainly suffer due to physical and mental elements. Physical deceases and decay cannot abolish altogether from our body. Mental anxiety, sorrow, excitement, tension, uproar, etc. create mental evil in the mind of a person. Physical and mental evils are being checked and suppressed by science. Physical evils have ceased to be source of suffering and have turned into founts of fortune and felicity.

The modern spirit of adventure has changed the repulsiveness or physical sufferings, and has made them attractive sources for impetus and action as against metaphysical and physical evils.
Life is no longer conceived as unworthy of living, and a strong optimism guides the life of the modern man.

Moral Evil: Moral evils are no less real, and demand much more acute analysis at the present stage of social evolution. Moral evil is a direct consequence of man’s free will. It consists in the violation of moral laws. Moral evils are sin and wickedness, etc. The problem of moral evil is created by men and so it must by solved by men. The movement towards moral perfection is not an automatic process.

Moral life is a life struggle. It is a struggle between the actual and the ideal, the desire and the duty, the evil and the good. Man realizes his moral nature in and through every act of will which follows from his character. If there were no possibility of making error, or sin, man would have no moral life.

Solutions of the Problem

In order to solve the problem of evil we have to consider the two schools of philosophy, namely, pessimism and optimism. Both are the two sides of the same coin.

Pessimism: Pessimism is a philosophical doctrine where life is essentially evil and pain. Pessimists always see dark side of the world. Arthur Schopenhauer, a German philosopher of the nineteenth century, has propounded strong views in favour of pessimism. According to this, world is a worst possible world. Life is eternal striving, a desire for the unrealized. Hence life is full of unsatisfied longing, full of misery suffering. This is the worst possible world, for if the evil forces which prey upon us were any worse than they are, we could not survive.

Pessimism may be considered as a disease, its cause diagnosed and its cure prescribed. Leibniz considered that the world of ours is the best possible world planned by God, but the evil is inseparable from the nature of created beings. The infinite are always imperfect. But the evils are ultimately conductive to good. Swami Vivekananda said that there is no pessimism or word impossible in our life. Therefore, he said, “Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached!” Regarding good and evil he said clearly:

“Objective society will always be a mixture of good and evil. Objective life will always be followed by its shadow, death. Our very lives depend upon death of others – plants or animals or bacilli! the Progress of the world means more enjoyment and misery too. This mixture of life and death, good and evil, knowledge and ignorance, is what is called Maya, or universal phenomenon. You may go on for eternity inside this net,

seeking for happiness – you find much happiness and much evil too. To have good and no evil is childish nonsense.

Optimism: Optimism makes life bright and cheerful. It is a positive approach to life and existence. Optimism which is the opposite of pessimism takes the pleasant experience from the
highest point of view. It is necessary to bear in mind that the problem of evil can only arise within the sphere of the timid life. The universe in reality is perfectly good. Everything is good just insofar as it exists, as Augustine put it. Spinoza regarded that everything is good. Good and bad are purely subjective ideas of reflection and cannot be predicated of ultimate reality, which is the perfect whole. Spinoza says that evils are due to our narrow outlook on things, that evils appear as much only because we look at things from a standpoint of particular interest, but disappear into nothingness when we enlarge our outlook. To Hegel also evil is unreal, existing from a partial point of view but disappearing from the point of view of the whole. The world in which we live is to Leibniz “the best of all possible worlds.”

Great achievements that have been made in different spheres of human life may be traced to an optimistic view of the universe. For hopes and aspirations are great spurs to creation and construction, as despair and depression are sources of inaction and destruction.

The evils are ultimately conductive to good. Most evils serve to secure a much greater good. The universe taken as a whole is a vast artistic framework in which evils are subordinated to good. Perfections would not be perfections if there were no imperfection. The universe is out and out rational and a process in which all antagonisms and discords are ultimately resolved into a harmony. Evil is lesser good. The individual has a finite-infinite nature and hence there is discord or imperfection. This discord is a key to development. And when the harmony is attained, the discord or the evil disappears.

Most evil or sin has a justifiable place and is a step towards the development of the individual to moral excellence and perfection. Bosanquet says in his book *The world and the Individual* that “there is nothing in evil which cannot be absorbed in good and contributory to it, it springs from the same source as good and value”. The sin or moral evil has in fact a positive character of its own. It may be instrumental to the realization of the good, but its reality cannot be denied.

Monistic: In monistic theory, God is the supreme Reality of all existence. He is not vitiated by the defects of the finite and the temporal objects and is unconditioned, unlimited and self-caused or self-existent. As God is infinite and unconditioned, He is one and the only Reality. For monistic philosophy, Absolute is the highest principle. The substance of Spinoza or the Absolute of Hegel is the culmination of philosophic speculation. According to C.E.M Joad ‘evil is the necessary complement of good’. In Bhagavata it is stated that ‘Good and evil of the world of duality are unreal, are spoken of by words, and exist only in the mind’. Vedanta philosophy of Sankara holds that

Absolute or the Brahman is identical with the self. There is no difference between self and Brahman. Both are identical. Similarly, death and birth are not different, and good and evil are not contradictory. According to Vedanta philosophers, the difference between good and evil is not one of kind, but of degree, like the difference between light and darkness, which are two aspects of the same object.
Immortality of Soul

“Atman is immortal.” _Gita

In the age of science people enjoy all the pleasures of life, make the best use of everything and do not think what will happen after death. During the short span of our life on earth, some of our hopes and aspirations are unfulfilled. Again and again it has been asked, why the human beings live for some time, fulfill certain desires, perform marvelous deeds, display some wonderful power, and unexpectedly pass away being forced, as it were, to leave their plans and projects of their lives half finished and half fulfilled? No one desires his end to come early. Rather since attempts to provide long and healthy life to people. It is stated that “Art is long, Life is short’ and during the short span of life one cannot fulfill his desires. Therefore the idea of immortality has been an ever-haunting desire for humanity. Scientists, philosophers and the logicians have all put their heads together to solve the mystery of death and immortality. In other words man’s desire for immortality is a genuine one. “By immortality we mean not an existence in any form losing the personal point of view, but a personal immortality in which the present focus of consciousness is retained and the existence hereafter is a real continuation of the personality which was in the process of being shaped and molded in a definite manner on this earth.”

Ordinarily we understand the immortality of soul, which can remain forever and can enjoy material goods and experiences or it can get liberation. The existence of matter and the existence of knowledge depend upon the consciousness of the soul. If the soul continues to exist, what will become of it afterwards, and what will be its destiny? Modern science does not help us in answering this question. It is too deep, because the question of immortality is a very difficult problem for a common man. The actual meaning of the immortality of soul lies in the Bhagavad-Dita which says that Atman is eternal, divine, changeless and everlasting one. Certain arguments have been offered to justify our belief in the immortality of soul, but these cannot be considered as proofs in any sense.

Argument on the basis of science

From the standpoint of science the word immortality means deathlessness or the state which is not subject to death. Science has proved that matter as well as energy are indestructible. So every particle of matter, however minute or gross it may be, is not subject to absolute destruction or death and, in this sense, we must say that matter is immortal, energy is immortal, force is immortal, because they are not subject to either destruction or annihilation. Matter and the energy of this universe remain constant, which can either be increased or diminished. For instance, any material object when consumed by fire will exhibit an identical quantity both before and after its consumption by fire. Similarly destruction of the body does not involve destruction of the soul.
i. Argument on the basis of knowledge

Knowledge of a person depends on the feeling, willing and thinking. The intellectual life is so constituted that we can transcend the limitation of time and space. Thought is not limited like willing which can be extended to the higher spheres of comprehension. In memory, we dive deep into the remote past, and in imagination we go forward in the very distant future. Thus through our memory power we can know our previous life, and at the same time anticipate the future happenings of the self. This implies the immortality of soul and its never ending continuation. Sometimes the science of astrology can provide us sufficient materials regarding the past and future activities of the soul. No doubt our body is destroyed but soul remains immortal.

ii. Metaphysical Argument

The metaphysical arguments of soul cover both Oriental and Occidental schools of thought. Plato conceived the soul as a substantial reality which is simple in structure. As a simple substance, soul is indestructible. A composite substance is subject to dissolution, but a simple substance must be imperishable. Secondly, Plato believed that soul is of the divine essence and is therefore immortal. It is eternal in nature. Thus to Plato soul is free from dissolution and death.

Descartes advocated in the same way and stated that soul is a substance or substratum of the pure consciousness. The consciousness is imperishable and indestructible. Spinoza holds that man is immortal only insofar as he participates in the life of pure reason independent of sensibility. The physical body which consists of soul becomes immortal if it is free from passions and prejudices. That soul and is eternal immortal which gets the intellectual love of God.

Leibniz extends immortality to all persons. To him the soul is imperishable and can never die out for it will involve a break in a continuity of reality. Death, to Leibniz, is only apparent, not real.

Kant dealt with the implications of our moral life in greater details. To Kant our moral law is a categorical imperative which demands unconditional obedience from man. It is a priori and not derived from experience. It is free from empirical factors. This categorical imperative is the universal moral law which is not connected with any external ends. The summum bonum of the highest good is the nature and the end of the soul. Since the complete realization of the highest good is the destiny of the spirit, it implies the continuation of the existence of the soul for the attainment of the summum bonum. Thus, according to Kant’s metaphysical and moral doctrine, the soul is immortal.
iii. Moral argument

One of the influential contemporary moral intuitionists, G.E. Moore, maintains that all ethical propositions are based on the notion of good. Moore begins by saying that ‘good’ has no definition because it is simple and has no parts. The concept of good is unanalysable, which is similar to the concept of soul. Like ‘good’ if the ‘soul’ is simple one, it can be destroyed. Then the soul is eternal and immortal. Kant further says that if man’s rational nature implies the possibility of realizing the *summum bonum* it is possible only on the supposition of a supreme moral being of God, who is immortal like the soul.

iv. Religio-philosophical Argument

It is a universal view of the great religions of the world – Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam – which uphold the theory of immortality of soul. The followers of these three great religions believe that the souls come into existence being created for the first time out of nothing, and continue to do certain works, but they will have to enjoy or suffer all throughout eternity. If these souls exist today and will continue to exist throughout eternity, they must have existed from eternity, and there must be the re-appearance of that which existed in some form or other.

It was never given for the dead, nor for the living. The soul never was not, nor all the princes of the earth, nor shall we hereafter cease to be, and the soul in this mortal form is immortal.

The true nature of soul in Hindu religion is “Atman.” Regarding this atman (soul) Sri Krishna said to Arjuna in Gita: “the Atman is neither born nor does it die. Coming into being and ceasing to be do not take place in it; unborn, eternal, constant, and ancient, it is not killed when the body is slain.” The soul or Atman is indestructible, eternal, unborn and changeless. It is incombustible and neither is wetted nor dried. It is eternal, all-pervading, stable, immovable and everlasting.

In the Isha-upaniahad, we find also, “Oh God! Take me there where lies the source of everlasting universe, which is indestructible, where immortality reigns supreme and make me immortal.”

In Advaita-vedanta, Atman is the same as Brahman. It is pure consciousness. It is the only reality. As Brahman, the Atman is pure existence, pure consciousness and pure-bliss, all in one. Existence and consciousness are one. But ultimately Brahman or Atman is devoid of all characteristics. Thus in Advaitism, to be immortal is to be one with the absolute reality of Brahman, to realize identity between the Atman and Brahman in a state which is independent of all limitations and empirical determinations.

Similarly in Samkhya the attainment of immortality means a long process of culture and purification of the self. Thus all the religio-philosophical systems aim to lead the human mind to believe that the soul is eternal, that it continues to exist after death.
However, in the philosophy of Buddhism, nothing is permanent. Everything is becoming, change, flux. The law of change is universal. Hence the existence of a permanent soul is denied. Self is only a stream of consciousness. Buddha, thus, advocates the doctrine of No-self (Anantavada) or (Nairatmya-vada). So according to Buddhism the soul is nothing but the mind-body complex.

**Criticism**

1. The problem of immortality of soul is not studied uniformly by the Western and Eastern philosophers. The word ‘soul’ means mentality in the West. But in India it is quite different. We do not consider mental activity as a part of the true nature of the soul. We include mental powers and functions under the term of mind or ‘manas’. ‘Manas’ means all kinds of psychic activity but beyond mind there is something which the Western philosophers, perhaps, do not know. Kant, a German philosopher, tried to know it, but he said that it is beyond human conception, beyond our mind, and cannot be described. Even now we do not except anything more from the contemporary Western philosophers regarding the nature of the soul or atman.

To Indian philosophers, soul means atman. We observe the nature of soul from Gita, Upanishads. The true nature of atman is different from mental activities. It is different even from the thinking principle or ego. Thus immortality of soul is the immortality of atman, not the mind.

2. As Western scholars have understood soul in the sense of mental entity, they have considered the meaning of immortality which may not be the same as to the Eastern philosophers. Thus we observe different ideas of the immortality of the soul. Like soul, the meaning of the immortality is not clear, rather it is ambiguous.

3. Science says, immortality means deathlessness. But this is a wrong concept. Even after death one can become immortal. Science tells us that everything is subject to change and within this change we get the different activities and forms. There may be change in quality or forms but not in the quantity. If everything is being changed then there is that immortal existence? There is no such thing in the world as the absolute unchangeability.

Modern science has resolved the whole phenomena into two states, viz., matter and energy. But there comes the third thing, consciousness, which scientists have not yet been able to explain properly.

4. As regards the immortality of soul, our knowledge is not cofined to certain mental aspects, namely feeling, willing and thinking. It is something above and beyond as stated in Upanishads and Gita. Vedanta says that knowledge can be obtained only when we dispel avidya and know the Brahman. As Brahman and atman are identical, so we must have the knowledge of atman and Brahman in order to solve the problem of immortality of soul. To know Brahman means to be Brahman; “Brahmavid brahmaiva bhavati .” so if you wish to know God, you must know your true self which is immortal, divine, eternal, everlasting and one.
5. Regarding metaphysical arguments of the immortality of soul, we can observe certain limitations too. Plato considered that soul as a simple substance is indestructible and imperishable. Although the soul has a kinship to the ideas yet it is not identical with an Idea. One can very well observe that his case for the immortality of the soul is more of the nature of special pleading than of the nature of logically supported arguments.

Descartes’ arguments for the immortality of soul can never prove personal immortality. If after my death, says Leibniz, I become changed into a completely different personality without the possibility of identification, what is it to me whether I survive death or not? If I become the Prime Minister of Britain after my death and if I do not know what I was, this is tantamount to mortality. Therefore, Descarte’s argument cannot prove immortality in the real sense of the term.

Spinoza’s conception of immortality of soul is applicable only to the persons who have conquered passions and emotions. It means his immortality is confined only to the philosophers or sages.

Kant’s understanding of soul and immortality is not really successful from the standpoint of “atman” as Indian thinkers have considered it. His analysis of the immortality of soul is paralogism of rational psychology. His categorical imperative and *summum bonum* are altogether different from the immortality of atman, as we understand. However, Kant, Huxley and Ernst Haeckel have tried to discover something which is the unchangeable Reality and the absolute Truth. But have they really discovered it?

6. In the moral argument Moore’s conceptions of ‘good’ and ‘soul’ are not identical. Nothing is called good by itself, without object or facts, whereas soul is independent one. Secondly, the concept ‘good’ may be indefinable or unanalysable so far as its quality ‘goodness’ is concerned but not the term ‘good’. The question may be asked how ‘good’ is the name of simple indefinable quality?

7. Lastly, we have to study critically and comprehensively the views of different world religions regarding the immortality of soul. It is found that the nature of soul according to Hinduism is different from the one in Christianity and Islam. The popular belief among Christians is that immortality of the soul, or the immortal life, was brought into light by Jesus-Christ and before the advent of Jesus this idea was unknown to the world, and no one can attain eternal life except through Jesus. But the concept of immortality of soul was already there in the Hindu, Roman, Greek and Zoroastrian scriptures.

Under these circumstances it would be better if this problem of immortality of soul is made the subject of research for the scholars and scientist, then a definite conclusion may be established.
Conclusion

The soul is infinite and immortal. It is beyond space, time and causation. Being simple, it cannot die, nor it can take any form. Soul is not a force, neither is it thought. It is the manufacturer of thought, but not thought itself. It is not the body, nor the sensation. It is ever free and omnipresent.

The dualists believe that God, who is the creator of the universe and its ruler, is eternally separate from nature, and eternally separate from the human soul. God is eternal, nature is eternal and so also the soul. Both the dualists and the qualified nondualists admit that the soul is by its nature pure, but through its own deeds it becomes impure.

According to the Advaita philosophy, there is only one thing real in the universe, which is called Brahman. According to this philosophy, each man consists of three parts – the body, the mind and the self (Atman). The atman (soul) is the only existence in the human body which is immaterial. Because it is immaterial, it cannot be compound, and because it is not a compound, it does not obey the law of cause and effect, and so it is immortal.

God is not only instrumental but also the material cause of this universe. Cause is never different from the effect, the effect is but the cause reproduced in another form. These souls are also a part of God, one spark of that Infinite Fire. But how the absolute God can be divided into parts? This problem can be solved by taking the views of Advaita Vedanta that each soul is really not a part of the Infinite, but actually is the Infinite Brahman.

The sun reflected from millions of globules of water appears to be millions of suns, and in each globule is a miniature picture of the sun-forms, so all these are but reflections and not real. There is but one soul in the universe, not two. It neither comes nor goes. It is neither born, nor dies, nor reincarnates. It is the Atman, beyond time, space and cause, beyond the known, beyond the knowable. The soul is pure and free.

People who are under illusion find difference between you and I, man and woman, table and the wall. But if you take away these two differences of name and form, the whole universe is one. So all this universe is the reflection of that One Eternal Being, the Atman. The whole of this universe is one Unity, one Existence, physically, mentally, and spiritually. There is only one Being, one Existence, the ever-blessed, the omnipresent, the omniscient, the birthless, the deathless. Therefore know that thou art He; thou art the God of this universe, “Tat Tvam Asi” (That thou art).

All these various ideas that I am a man or a woman, or sick or healthy, or strong or weak, or that I hate or I love, - are but hallucinations. Only ignorance and delusion and nothing else can bind you. You are the Self, the pure One, the ever blessed. The self is the one Infinite Being of the universe, and that Being we are. I am That, and you are That. Not parts of It, but the whole of It. He is both subject and the object. He is the ‘I’ and the ‘You’. One is different from another because of our Samskaras or impressions.

Thus my conclusion is that all this universe is in Brahman and it is projected out of Him, and has been moving on to go back to the source from which it was projected, like the electricity which comes out of the dynamo, completes the circuit, and returns to it. The same is the case.
with the soul. The soul is projected from Brahman, it passes through all sorts of vegetable and human forms, and at last it is in man, and man is the nearest approach to Brahman.

Model Questions & Answers

Part B

(Each answer not to exceed 50 words each question carries 1 weightage)

1. **Evil**

   An. According to Plato, the world of pure, unchanging ideas is the world of good. The world of sense, the world of change is evil. Leibniz considered evil to be due to the imperfections that are inherent in the construction of the finite elements of the universe

2. **pessimism**

   An. Pessimism is a philosophical doctrine where life is essentially evil and pain. According to this, world is a worst possible world. Life is eternal striving, a desire for the unrealized. Hence life is full of unsatisfied longing, full of misery suffering. This is the worst possible world, for if the evil forces which prey upon us were any worse than they are, we could not survive.

50

Part C

(Each answer not to exceed 150 words each question carries 2 weightages)

3. **State the features of optimism**

   An. Optimism makes life bright and cheerful. It is a positive approach to life and existence. Optimism which is the opposite of pessimism takes the pleasant experience from the highest point of view. It is necessary to bear in mind that the problem of evil can only arise within the sphere of the timid life. The universe in reality is perfectly good. Everything is good just insofar as it exists, as Augustine put it. Spinoza regarded that everything is good. Good and bad are purely subjective ideas of reflection and cannot be predicated of ultimate reality, which is the perfect whole. Spinoza says that evils are due to our narrow outlook on things, that evils appear as much only because we look at things from a standpoint of particular interest, but disappear into nothingness when we enlarge our outlook. To Hegel also evil is unreal, existing from a partial point of view but disappearing from the point of view of the whole. The world in which we live is to Leibniz “the best of all possible worlds.”

Part D

(Each answer not to exceed 300 words each question carries 4 weightages)

4. **Analyze the different views regarding the notion of immortality of soul.**