

**Unit-1**

# **INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY**

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## **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

Progress of human civilization is the product of education, but the answer to every educational question is ultimately influenced by our philosophy of life. Philosophy wants to understand man in relation to the whole universe nature and God. Philosophy deals with the nature of human mind and personality, and with the ways in which man and his institutions can be understood. It endeavors to understand all that comes within the bound of human experience. It aims to set fundamental understanding of things, the problem of human conduct, the assumptions that underlie religious or scientific beliefs, the tools and methods of thinking, or any issue that arises in any field of human activity. Thus philosophy seeks to provide a complete account of the man's world. It is reflective and critical in nature. It is concerned with critical examination of the fundamental notions and assumptions of any field that falls within human experience. From the above we may conclude that philosophy is a "search for a comprehensive view of nature, an attempt at universal explanation of the nature of things."

## **1.2 OBJECTIVES**

After reading this unit, you will be able to:

1. Define philosophy
2. Describe the scope of philosophy
3. Discuss the branches of philosophy
4. Analyze the relationship of education and philosophy
5. Evaluate the role of philosophy in educational policy and practice

## **1.3 DEFINITION AND SCOPE OF PHILOSOPHY**

A beginner in philosophy is perturbed to find that different philosophers have given different definitions of philosophy. While some philosophers have laid emphasis on psychological facts, others have given more importance to values. According to John Dewey, "Whenever philosophy has been taken seriously, it has always been assumed that it signified achieving a wisdom that would influence the conduct of life." On the other hand, according to Windelband, philosophy is "the critical science of universal values." However, some important definitions of philosophy are as follows:

### **1. Philosophy is a Critical Method of Approaching Experience**

Examples of this type of definitions are as follows:

1. "Philosophy is essentially a spirit or method of approaching experience rather than a body of conclusions about experience." Edgar S. Brightman
2. "It is not the specific content of the conclusions, but the spirit and method by which they are reached, which entitles them to be described as philosophical..." Clifford Barrat

3. "Were I limited to one line for my answer to it, I should say that philosophy is general theory of criticism." C. J. Ducasse

## **2. Philosophy is Comprehensive Synthetic Science**

The following definitions of philosophy emphasize its synthetic aspect:

1. "Philosophy, like science, consists of theories of insights arrived at as a result of systematic reflection." —Joseph A. Leighton
2. "Philosophy is concerned with everything as a universal science." Herbert Spencer
3. "Our subject is a collection of science, such as theory of knowledge, logic, cosmology, ethics and aesthetics, as well as a unified survey." Roy Wood Sellars
4. The above mentioned definitions of philosophy show that while some philosophers have mainly emphasized critical philosophy, others have defined it as a synthetic discipline. In fact, both these view-points are one-sided because philosophy is both critical as well as synthetic. Literally speaking, the word 'philosophy' involves two Greek words Phil meaning love and Sophia meaning knowledge. Thus literally speaking, philosophy means love of wisdom. The literal meaning of philosophy shows that the philosopher is constantly and everywhere engaged in the search for truth. He does not bother so much to arrive at final conclusions and continues with his search for truth throughout his life. His aim is the pursuit of truth rather than its possession (Sharma, 2002).

### **Scope of Philosophy**

The scope of philosophy can be divided into the following two parts:

- (1) **Field of Philosophical Sciences.** The scope of philosophy includes different philosophical sciences such as metaphysics, epistemology, logic, semantics, philosophy of science, axiology, aesthetics, ethics, philosophy of religion, political philosophy, philosophy of education, philosophy of history, economic philosophy etc. All these sciences are important parts of the field of philosophy.
- (2) **Field of Philosophy as Comprehensive Science.** Philosophy is the science of sciences, the mother of all sciences. From this point of view, its scope includes the criticism and synthesis of the postulates and conclusions of the physical and social sciences.
- (3) **Subject Matter of Philosophy.** The scope of philosophy clarifies its subject matter. Its subject matter includes the conclusions and postulates of all the physical and social sciences besides their general problems.

In the words of C.D. Broad, "The object of philosophy is to take over the result of the various sciences, add to them the result of religious and ethical experiences of mankind and then reflect upon the whole, hoping to be able to reach some general conclusions as to the nature of the universe and as to our position and prospects in it."

The above discussion makes it clear that the philosophical problems, scope and subject matter depend on philosophical sciences and the conclusions and postulates of different sciences.

## 1.4 BRANCHES OF PHILOSOPHY

While studying the philosophical thoughts of a philosopher, we study his thinking in different branches of philosophy. These branches of philosophy are as follows:

- (1) **Epistemology.** Philosophy is the search for knowledge. This search is critical. Hence, the first problem which arises before a philosopher is about the nature of knowledge and its limitations. Therefore, epistemology is the most fundamental branch of philosophy. It discusses philosophically truth, falsehood, validity of knowledge, limits of knowledge and nature of knowledge, knower and known etc.
- (2) **Metaphysics.** This is the study of existence, reality or essence. Its main branches are as follows:
  - (i) **Cosmogony.** This is a study of creation. Is the world created, or is it eternal? How was world created? Why was it created? Who created the world? What is the purpose in creation? All these are the problems of cosmogony.
  - (ii) **Cosmology.** The main problems of cosmology are: Is the world one or it many, or is it both one and many?
  - (iii) **Ontology.** Ontology is the study of ultimate reality. Is the reality one or is it many or is it both one and many? If reality is many, what is the relation between these many elements? All these are ontological questions.
  - (iv) **Philosophy of self.** This is mainly concerned with the philosophical analysis of self. What is self? What is its relation with the body? Is it free of does it depend on the body? Is it one or many? All these are problems of philosophy of self.
  - (v) **Eschatology.** The discussion of the condition of soul after death, the nature of the other world, etc., form the subject matter of this branch of philosophy.
- (3) **Axiology.** This branch of philosophy philosophically studies value. It has been divided into the following three branches:
  - (i) **Ethics.** Ethics discusses the criteria of right and good.
  - (ii) **Aesthetics.** Aesthetics discusses the nature and criteria of beauty.
  - (iii) **Logic studies truth.** The subject matter of logic includes the methods of judgment, types of proposition, hypothesis, definition, comparison, division, classification and fundamental laws of thoughts, etc.
- (4) **Philosophy of Sciences.** This branch of philosophy is concerned with the philosophical examination of the postulates and conclusions of different sciences.
- (5) **Philosophies of Social Science.** The philosophical problems in different social sciences give birth to different branches of philosophy of which the main are as follows:
  - (i) **Philosophies of Education.** This is concerned with the aim of education and the basic philosophical problems arising in the field of education.
  - (ii) **Social Philosophy.** This branch of philosophy discusses the philosophical basis of social processes and social institutions.
  - (iii) **Political Philosophy.** This branch of philosophy is concerned with the forms of government, forms of state and other basic problems arising in the political field.

- (iv) **Philosophy of History.** The subject matter of this branch of philosophy is the nature of historical process, its purpose and its relations with the cosmic process.
- (v) **Philosophy of Economics.** This branch of philosophy studies the aim of man's economic activities and the fundamental problems arising in the economic field.

Besides the above mentioned branches of philosophy based on sciences, there may be certain comparatively lesser branches of philosophy such as philosophy of physics, philosophy of commerce, philosophy of physical education, philosophy of marriage, philosophy of family etc. These, however, are not sufficient to form independent branches of philosophy.

- (6) **Semantics.** The most important branch of philosophy, according to the contemporary school of Logical Positivism, is semantics which is concerned with the determination of the meanings of different words used in different languages (Shivendra, 2006).

## 1.5 RELATIONSHIP OF EDUCATION AND PHILOSOPHY

Educational thinking, like every other branch of knowledge, started in the philosophical deliberation of the ancient Greek philosophers. Thus the meaning of education in west is initially available in the works of Plato. It is interesting to note that thousands of years ago Plato gave a meaning to education which is even now followed in the West with slight changes here and there.

Plato defined education as a life-long process starting, "from the first years of childhood and lasting to the very end of the life." He used the term education in a very wide sense, "which makes a man eagerly pursue the ideal perfection of citizenship and teaches him how rightly to rule and how to obey."

Education not only provides knowledge and skills but also inculcates values, training of instincts, fostering right attitude and habits. In (Republic), Plato points out, that "true education, whatever that may be, will have the greatest tendency to civilize and humanize them in their relation to one another and to those who are under their protection." This humanist definition of education propounded by Plato is still the most widely accepted meaning of education in the West. Education everywhere has been taken as a process of inculcating values. As Plato said, "Now I mean by education that training which is given by suitable habits to the first instincts of virtue in children."

These views of Plato have been universally accepted in West as well as in the East. Education has been defined differently by the idealists, the pragmatists, the naturalists and the realist philosophers. However, its meaning has been generally idealistic. Without some sort of idealism there can be no education worth the name.

In the words of Robert R. Rusk, "We may accept the aim of education is the enhancement or enrichment of personality, the differentiating feature of which is the embodiment of universal values."

The Western educational philosophers have generally agreed that the growth of the human child is the essence of education. In the words of A.G. Hughes, "The essence of discipline is, thus not forced subordination to the will of hated tyrants, but submission to the example of admired superiors".

In the Middle Ages Comenius declared education to be a process whereby an individual developed quality relating to religion, knowledge and morality, and thereby established his claim to be called a human being. "The fundamental principles of education", according to Froebel, "instruction and teaching should be passive and protective not directive and interfering."

The principle of liberty has found most eloquent expression in the definition of education given by Rousseau when he said, "Let us obey the call of Nature. We shall see that her yoke is easy and that when we give heed to her voice we find the joy in the answer of a good conscience."

Other has laid emphasis upon the social meaning of education whereby it aims at making an individual fit in the society. It was in this sense that Aldous Huxley said, "A perfect education is one which trains up every human being to fit into the place he or she is to occupy in the social hierarchy, but without, in the process, destroying his or her individuality."

All the foregoing definitions have stated that education is the process of development. It, therefore, becomes necessary to discover what is implied in this development. Although the ability to learn depends upon development, but development is not synonymous with education. Development means the gradual and continuous progress of mind and body. Through this development the child acquires the following elements:

1. Knowledge of the environment by which he is surrounded.
2. The necessary motor control to fulfill his individual needs.
3. Linguistic abilities to enable him to converse.
4. Some knowledge of individual and collective relationship. The development of all these elements begins at home itself.

The educator's task is to continue this process and to encourage it while the child is at school.

In fact, this process of development continues right through an individual's life time. Consequently, it is accepted that education in its general sense continues throughout a man's natural span of life, Even the successful teacher or educator himself remains a student throughout his life. On the one hand, he teaches certain things to some people but at the same time he learns something from them. All successful educators experience that

the development undergone by their thoughts, personalities and abilities would have been impossible otherwise. In much the same way, people other than the educator, teach and learn simultaneously (Shrivastava, 2003).

## **1.6 ROLE OF PHILOSOPHY IN EDUCATION POLICY AND PRACTICE**

Both philosophy and education are integrally and interdependently related to each other. We are discussing below this interdependency in some greater details. Education is dependent of Philosophy due to following reasons:

- (1) Philosophy Determines the Real Destination towards Which Education has to Go Education is a conscious dynamic process which needs proper guidance and supervision. Without proper guidance and supervision, it cannot achieve its goal. Philosophy determines the goal of life and also provides suitable and effective guidance and supervision for education to achieve that goal. Without the help of philosopher, education cannot be a successful process of development and achievement. Spencer has rightly remarked—"True education is practicable only by a true philosophy".
- (2) Philosophy Determines the Various Aspects of Education Some scholars believe that philosophy is concerned with abstract items and conceptions only, while education deals with practical, concrete things and processes. Hence, the two are different and there exists no relation between them. But this is a wrong belief. Both philosophy and education are intimately and integrally connected with each other. Separation between the two is not possible on any account. It is the philosophy, we must know, that has been influencing all aspects of education since the very beginning and will go on influencing education for all times to come. Once again it will be better to recollect the saying of Ross that "Philosophy and education are like the sides of the same coin, present different views of the same thing, and that one is implied by the other."
- (3) Great Philosophers have been Great Educationists Also History bears eloquent testimony to the fact that great philosophers have been great educationists also of their times. Plato, Socrates, Locke, Comenius, Rousseau, Froebel, Dewey, and others who were great philosophers of their times have also talked about education. Their philosophical treatises have been important guide books for educational planning and determination of educational aims for children of the world. In other words, all great philosophers have employed education as a means to translate their philosophical ideas into practice for the people to follow and develop themselves. Philosophy is dependent on education due to following reasons:
  - (i) **Education is the Dynamic Side of Philosophy.** Two things are essential for completing any task (1) Thought or plan and (2) Application or practicability. Philosophy is the thought or plan side and education is the application or practical side. Philosophy determines the aim of life and by analysis lays down the principles to be followed for achieving the set aims. Education translates these principles and ideas into practice, because the purpose of education is to mould human behaviour. Thus, Adams has rightly said "Education is the dynamic side of philosophy."

- (ii) **Education is a Means to Achieve the Goal.** As said above it is philosophy which determines the aims of life. Through analysis and classification these are divided into goals to be achieved by the process of education. Herbart holds the same opinion—"Education has no time to make holiday till all the philosophical questions are once for all cleared up." At times educationists and educators put before philosophers such problems which face them and defy solutions. In this way, education contributes to new thinking and new philosophy may born out of his thinking and analyzing. So close are these two, the philosophy and the education, that it will be better to discuss this relation in greater details as Philosophy and Aims of Education, Philosophy and Curriculum, Philosophy and Methods of teaching, Philosophy and Disciplines, Philosophy and Textbooks and so on.

### 1.6.1 Philosophy and Aims of Education

The answer to every educational question is ultimately influenced by our philosophy of life. Although few formulate it, every system of education must have an aim, and the aim of education is relative to the aim of life. Philosophy formulates what it conceives to be the end of life; education offers suggestions how this end is to be achieved.

Philosophy acquaints us with values in life and education tells us how these values can be realized. That is why so much emphasis is placed on value in life while considering the nature of the school curriculum, the method of school discipline, and techniques of instruction and school organization.

These values are nothing but a philosophy of education which in the ultimate analysis is a philosophy of life. Philosophy gives meaning to all that is done in an educational process. Philosophy is the main guide towards which we have to look at points of conflicts in the educational endeavor.

We must have an aim of education for giving direction to various educative efforts. The aim of education is related with the aim of life, and the aim of life is always dependent on the philosophy that the individual has at a particular time. Thus we cannot do without a philosophical foundation of education. In the following lines more light is being thrown on this close relationship as borne by history:

- (1) **Ancient Period.** First of all, let us take the example of Sparta state in ancient Greece. It should be remembered that Sparta was under a constant attack by the enemies. Hence, the state needed resolute commanders and brave soldiers to defend its freedom and integrity. Hence, the aim of philosophy of ancient Sparta came to be a constant struggle against the enemy. To achieve this aim, the system of education tried to inculcate in children virtues of patriotism, courage, fearlessness, bodily power, strict discipline and a spirit of self-sacrifice at the call of the state. Weakness of body was condemned as vice and death in the service of the state was considered as the highest virtue. After Sparta; let us come to Rome, Athens and India. Romans were very conscious of their rights and duties and as such Roman education catered to the needs of fullest development of children in all spheres of



human activity. In Athens, the aim of life was to have beauty of physique, beauty of character and a sense of appreciation for the objects of beauty. Hence, the aim of education was the development of wholesome character and inculcation of qualities which enable children to lead their lives comfortably.

Thus, children were given full freedom and ample opportunities to develop themselves physically, mentally and emotionally. One can note here that with a change in the philosophy of life aims of education in Athens were quite different to those of Rome and Sparta, In ancient India, religion was regarded as most essential. The aim of life was to perform all worldly duties and then achieve salvation from worldly ties of rebirth. Hence, education, during those days, was organized to attain happiness, bliss and in the end salvation.

(2) **Medieval Period.** Philosophy of life during medieval times saw great ups and downs. Aims of life changed from time to time and so the aims of education also changed accordingly. In these days Islam and Christianity were busy with proselytization programmes in a very aggressive manner. Hence, religion entered the precincts of education also. The chief aims of Muslim education in India were:

1. Propagation of Islam,
2. Spread of education among Muslims,
3. Extension of Islamic kingdoms,
4. Development of morality,
5. Achievement of material wellbeing,
6. Propagation of Shariyat, and
7. Building of character.

In Europe Reformation and Renaissance criticized the infallibility of Catholicism. People asserted their right to know the truth themselves and did not believe blindly in the rituals and ceremonies. Thus, aims of education changed again. Education was to develop critical insight and reasonableness in all beliefs and activities. It was expected of education to demolish all blind beliefs and mechanical rituals.

(3) **Modern Period.** Philosophy of life again changed in modern period. As a result, revolutionary changes began transforming education also. Philosophy of Locke fell from prominence and it came to be argued that education should develop the inherent qualities, aptitudes and capacities of children Psychological tendency began to influence education very powerfully. Education became child-centered and according to famous educationist Pestalozzi the aim of education was declared to develop the personality of the child to the fullest extent. Herbart advocated the aim of education to be the formation of character. As times went by, aims of life changed again. The industrial revolution had its impact on education. As a result, one of the aims of education, namely, development of vocational efficiency came to the forefront. At present, all nations of the world are organizing their educational systems according to their needs and ideologies. In countries where the sentiment of democracy is strong, the aims of education are the inculcation of democratic values and promotion of democratic principles. On the contrary, countries where communism, fascism or other kinds of despotism prevails as political ideology,

education is so organized as to promote absolute obedience, blind beliefs and rigid discipline in children.

In England and America where democratic values prevail, aims of education inculcate democratic ideals and values. The chief aim is to develop fully the individuality of the child. In America the philosophy of pragmatism is in vogue. This has influenced education to be really practical useful and purposive. Utility is the motto of all activities and experiences. On the contrary Russia and China exploit education as an instrument of indoctrination of enforced obedience and rigid discipline. During the British rule in India the purpose of education was to prepare native clerks to run the administrative machinery efficiently. After the attainment of independence in 1947, we have declared our country as a Republic and Socialistic welfare State. As such, the prime aim of our education is to develop dynamic citizens devoted to the service of the nation. Thus, we see that changing philosophy of nation always brings about corresponding changes in the aims of education. Thus J.S. Ross rightly says:

"Philosophy and education are like the two sides of the same coin; the one is implied by the other; the former is the contemplative side of life, while the latter is the active side."

### **1.6.2 Philosophy and the Curriculum**

Nowhere is this dependence of education on philosophy more marked than in the question of the curriculum. In the first chapter of his work on Education Spencer asserts that in the determination of the curriculum "our first step must obviously be to classify, in the order of their importance, the leading kinds of activity which constitute human life."

To this principle there can be but little objection. But immediately we seek to fix the relative value of subjects, to classify them "in the order of their importance," differences of aim and of philosophy emerge and confuse the issues.

Smith, Stanley and Shores speak of moral authority as one of the chief guides of curriculum building. They say that 'moral authority is derived from fundamental principles of right and wrong. Evidently, the problem is philosophical.

According to Spencer, the building of a curriculum should be based on the main human activities. He fixes the relative value of subjects in order of their importance; e.g., he gives first place to subjects that relate to self-preservation.

According to the naturalists, the present experiences, activities and interests should be the guiding factor. The idealists, the child's present and future activities are not important at all in the curriculum construction. The experiences of the human race as epitome in sciences and humanities should provide the primary consideration in deciding a curriculum.

The idealist does not emphasize one subject in preference to another. In fact, he attaches great importance to the quality of personal greatness which some subjects have in abundance. The idealist's point of view is subjective, as opposed to merely objective values.

The pragmatists emphasize the principle of utility as the main criteria for determining the nature of curriculum. Lodge in "Philosophy of Education" writes:

"All subjects on the curriculum will be used to develop mastery over techniques in order to solve new problems rather than to train memory capable of flawless reproduction of systematic contents."

The realists think that a bookish, abstract or sophisticated curriculum is useless. They want to concentrate on realities of life. They emphasize the importance of subjects that fall within the range of natural science.

The surprising and welcome interest and activity recently manifested in the problem of the curriculum is at present arrested for the want of a philosophical criterion. Thus Bode in "Modern Educational Theories", remarks that unless we have some sort of guiding philosophy in the determination of objectives we get nowhere at all.

Briggs in discussing Curriculum Problems says: "It is just here that education seriously needs leaders—leaders who hold a sound comprehensive philosophy of which they can convince others, and who can direct its consistent application to the formulation of appropriate curricula."

The philosopher, on the one hand, looking at life from the idealistic standpoint believes that work can, and ought to, be humanized, that man should be able to find satisfaction in his labour, that "we have somehow to discover there a theatergoer the attainment if not of the highest, certainly of genuine spiritual values." The educationist, on the other hand, has assumed a principle of 'compensation'.

It is not without significance that almost the best plea ever made for practical work in schools was penned by one of the most idealistic of educational philosophers, namely, Frobel.

The above discussion indicates that the problem of curriculum construction is philosophical in terms of the philosophical beliefs held by a group of people.

### **1.6.3 Philosophy and Teacher**

Philosophy has a great influence on the teacher both in the area of thinking and behaving. Really speaking, a teacher is not a teacher alone. He is a philosopher also. In other words, a teacher himself has a philosophy of his own and he influences children accordingly. As such, his philosophy of life should be such which develops the individuality of children to the fullest extent. For this, the teacher should know full well the needs of children and

the demands of society and then plan his methods of teaching. He must keep in mind that his own beliefs, ideology and principles of behaviour have a powerful impact on the development of children. Hence, he must possess a good understanding of all the philosophies of life and choose good and wholesome elements from them to form his own philosophy. Further, he must be imbued with high ideals and possess moral and spiritual values which go to form his character and shape his conduct. He must also be well-conscious of national needs in all spheres and plan his teaching activities to fulfill those needs. Only such teachers imbued with high ideals, moral and spiritual values together with a sense of national responsibility for national prosperity and honour can create patriotic, dynamic, resourceful and enterprising citizens devoted to national service and international goodwill.

#### **1.6.4 Philosophy and Method of Teaching**

As with curriculum, so with method. The outstanding problem in educational method at the present time is the extent to which, if at all, the teacher should intervene in the educative process, and this raises philosophical issues. Non-intervention is justified for two quite different reasons, either because of the nature of the pupil's endowment or because of his environment. Rousseau, Fichte, and Froebel all assume that the child's nature is good, and any interventionism consequently harmful, hence the 'negative' or preventive education of Rousseau and the 'passive' education of Froebel. Montessori takes the environmentalist standpoint, and assumes that as the environment, comprising the didactic apparatus, etc., which she has prepared for the child, is ideal and perfectly adapted to evoke only the right type of response and the good impulses of the child, the teacher's intervention is unnecessary and unjustified. The choice of methods of teaching depends on a philosophy. Kilpatrick's use of the term "Philosophy of Method" shows that there is a close relation between educational method and philosophy. Method is a means by which a contact is developed between the student and the subject matter. But in absence of a definite aim of education or an adequate philosophy of life, the method of teaching employed by the teacher may repel the student from the subject. Teachers who think that they can do without a philosophy of life render their methods of teaching ineffective, because thereby the students are not able to see a relation between their life ideals and what they read. Evidently, there is a need of a philosophical foundation of education. Teachers, who assume that they can afford to ignore philosophy, pay the penalty of their neglect, for their efforts, lacking a coordinating principle, are thereby rendered ineffective (Sharma, 2002).

#### **1.7 FOUR GENERAL PHILOSOPHIES**

The term metaphysics literally means "beyond the physical." This area of philosophy focuses on the nature of reality<sup>1</sup>. Metaphysics attempts to find unity across the domains of experience and thought. At the metaphysical level, there are four\* broad philosophical schools of thought that apply to education today. They are idealism, realism, pragmatism (sometimes called experientialism), and existentialism. Each will be explained shortly. These four general frameworks provide the root or base from which the various educational philosophies are derived.

Two of these general or world philosophies, **idealism** and **realism**, are derived from the ancient Greek philosophers, Plato and Aristotle. Two are more contemporary, **pragmatism** and **existentialism**. However, educators who share one of these distinct sets of beliefs about the nature of reality presently apply each of these world philosophies in successful classrooms. Let us explore each of these metaphysical schools of thought.

### 1.7.1 Idealism

Idealism is a philosophical approach that has as its central tenet that ideas are the only true reality, the only thing worth knowing. In a search for truth, beauty, and justice that is enduring and everlasting; the focus is on conscious reasoning in the mind. Plato, father of Idealism, espoused this view about 400 years BC, in his famous book, *The Republic*. Plato believed that there are two worlds. The first is the spiritual or mental world, which is eternal, permanent, orderly, regular, and universal. There is also the world of appearance, the world experienced through sight, touch, smell, taste, and sound, which is changing, imperfect, and disorderly. This division is often referred to as the duality of mind and body<sup>ii</sup>. Reacting against what he perceived as too much of a focus on the immediacy of the physical and sensory world, Plato described a utopian society in which "education to body and soul all the beauty and perfection of which they are capable" as an ideal. In his allegory of the cave, the shadows of the sensory world must be overcome with the light of reason or universal truth. To understand truth, one must pursue knowledge and identify with the Absolute Mind. Plato also believed that the soul is fully formed prior to birth and is perfect and at one with the Universal Being. The birth process checks this perfection, so education requires bringing latent ideas (fully formed concepts) to consciousness.

In idealism, the aim of education is to discover and develop each individual's abilities and full moral excellence in order to better serve society. The curricular emphasis is subject matter of mind: literature, history, philosophy, and religion. Teaching methods focus on handling ideas through lecture, discussion, and Socratic dialogue (a method of teaching that uses questioning to help students discover and clarify knowledge). Introspection, intuition, insight, and whole-part logic (The **fallacy of composition** arises when one infers that something is true of the *whole* from the fact that it is true of some *part* of the whole) are used to bring to consciousness the forms or concepts which are latent in the mind. Character is developed through imitating examples and heroes.

### 1.7.2 Realism

Realists believe that reality exists independent of the human mind. The ultimate reality is the world of physical objects. The focus is on the body/objects. Truth is objective-what can be observed. Aristotle, a student of Plato who broke with his mentor's idealist philosophy, is called the father of both Realism and the scientific method. In this metaphysical view, the aim is to understand objective reality through "the diligent and unsparring scrutiny of all observable data." Aristotle believed that to understand an object, its ultimate form had to be understood, which does not change. For example, a rose exists whether or not a person is aware of it. A rose can exist in the mind without being physically present, but ultimately, the rose shares properties with all other roses and

flowers (its form), although one rose may be red and another peach colored. Aristotle also was the first to teach logic as a formal discipline in order to be able to reason about physical events and aspects. The exercise of rational thought is viewed as the ultimate purpose for humankind. The Realist curriculum emphasizes the subject matter of the physical world, particularly science and mathematics. The teacher organizes and presents content systematically within a discipline, demonstrating use of criteria in making decisions. Teaching methods focus on mastery of facts and basic skills through demonstration and recitation. Students must also demonstrate the ability to think critically and scientifically, using observation and experimentation. Curriculum should be scientifically approached, standardized, and distinct-discipline based. Character is developed through training in the rules of conduct.

### **1.7.3 Pragmatism**

For pragmatists, only those things that are experienced or observed are real. In this late 19th century American philosophy, the focus is on the reality of experience. Unlike the Realists and Rationalists, Pragmatists believe that reality is constantly changing and that we learn best through applying our experiences and thoughts to problems, as they arise. The universe is dynamic and evolving, a "becoming" view of the world. There is no absolute and unchanging truth, but rather, truth is what works. Pragmatism is derived from the teaching of Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914), who believed that thought must produce action, rather than linger in the mind and lead to indecisiveness.

John Dewey (1859-1952) applied pragmatist philosophy in his progressive approaches. He believed that learners must adapt to each other and to their environment. Schools should emphasize the subject matter of social experience. All learning is dependent on the context of place, time, and circumstance. Different cultural and ethnic groups learn to work cooperatively and contribute to a democratic society. The ultimate purpose is the creation of a new social order. Character development is based on making group decisions in light of consequences.

For Pragmatists, teaching methods focus on hands-on problem solving, experimenting, and projects, often having students work in groups. Curriculum should bring the disciplines together to focus on solving problems in an interdisciplinary way. Rather than passing down organized bodies of knowledge to new learners, Pragmatists believe that learners should apply their knowledge to real situations through experimental inquiry. This prepares students for citizenship, daily living, and future careers.

### **1.7.4 Existentialism**

The nature of reality for Existentialists is subjective, and lies within the individual. The physical world has no inherent meaning outside of human existence. Individual choice and individual standards rather than external standards are central. Existence comes before any definition of what we are. We define ourselves in relationship to that existence by the choices we make. We should not accept anyone else's predetermined philosophical system; rather, we must take responsibility for deciding who we are. The focus is on freedom, the development of authentic individuals, as we make meaning of our lives.

There are several different orientations within the existentialist philosophy. Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), a Danish minister and philosopher, is considered to be the founder of existentialism. His was a Christian orientation. Another group of existentialists, largely European, believes that we must recognize the finiteness of our lives on this small and fragile planet, rather than believing in salvation through God. Our existence is not guaranteed in an afterlife, so there is tension about life and the certainty of death, of hope or despair. Unlike the more austere European approaches where the universe is seen as meaningless when faced with the certainty of the end of existence, American existentialists have focused more on human potential and the quest for personal meaning. Values clarification is an outgrowth of this movement. Following the bleak period of World War II, the French philosopher, Jean Paul Sartre, suggested that for youth, the existential moment arises when young people realize for the first time that choice is theirs, that they are responsible for themselves. Their question becomes "Who am I and what should I do? Related to education, the subject matter of existentialist classrooms should be a matter of personal choice. Teachers view the individual as an entity within a social context in which the learner must confront others' views to clarify his or her own. Character development emphasizes individual responsibility for decisions. Real answers come from within the individual, not from outside authority. Examining life through authentic thinking involves students in genuine learning experiences. Existentialists are opposed to thinking about students as objects to be measured, tracked, or standardized. Such educators want the educational experience to focus on creating opportunities for self-direction and self-actualization. They start with the student, rather than on curriculum content.

## **1.8 EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHIES**

Within the epistemological frame that focuses on the nature of knowledge and how we come to know, there are four major educational philosophies, each related to one or more of the general or world philosophies just discussed. These educational philosophical approaches are currently used in classrooms the world over. They are Perennialism, Essentialism, Progressivism, and Reconstructionism. These educational philosophies focus heavily on WHAT we should teach the curriculum aspect.

### **1.8.1 Perennialism**

For Perennialists, the aim of education is to ensure that students acquire understandings about the great ideas of Western civilization. These ideas have the potential for solving problems in any era. The focus is to teach ideas that are everlasting, to seek enduring truths which are constant, not changing, as the natural and human worlds at their most essential level, do not change. Teaching these unchanging principles is critical. Humans are rational beings, and their minds need to be developed. Thus, cultivation of the intellect is the highest priority in a worthwhile education. The demanding curriculum focuses on attaining cultural literacy, stressing students' growth in enduring disciplines. The loftiest accomplishments of humankind are emphasized— the great works of literature and art, the laws or principles of science. Advocates of this educational philosophy are Robert Maynard Hutchins who developed a Great Books program in 1963 and Mortimer

Adler, who further developed this curriculum based on 100 great books of western civilization.

### **1.8.2 Essentialism**

Essentialists believe that there is a common core of knowledge that needs to be transmitted to students in a systematic, disciplined way. The emphasis in this conservative perspective is on intellectual and moral standards that schools should teach. The core of the curriculum is essential knowledge and skills and academic rigor. Although this educational philosophy is similar in some ways to Perennialism, Essentialists accept the idea that this core curriculum may change. Schooling should be practical, preparing students to become valuable members of society. It should focus on facts--the objective reality out there--and "the basics," training students to read, write, speak, and compute clearly and logically. Schools should not try to set or influence policies. Students should be taught hard work, respect for authority, and discipline. Teachers are to help students keep their non-productive instincts in check, such as aggression or mindlessness. This approach was in reaction to progressivist approaches prevalent in the 1920s and 30s. William Bagley took progressivist approaches to task in the journal he formed in 1934. Other proponents of Essentialism are: James D. Koerner (1959), H. G. Rickover (1959), Paul Copperman (1978), and TheodoreSizer (1985).

### **1.8.3 Progressivism**

Progressivists believe that education should focus on the whole child, rather than on the content or the teacher. This educational philosophy stresses that students should test ideas by active experimentation. Learning is rooted in the questions of learners that arise through experiencing the world. It is active, not passive. The learner is a problem solver and thinker who make meaning through his or her individual experience in the physical and cultural context. Effective teachers provide experiences so that students can learn by doing. Curriculum content is derived from student interests and questions. The scientific method is used by progressivist educators so that students can study matter and events systematically and first hand. The emphasis is on process--how one comes to know. The Progressive education philosophy was established in America from the mid 1920s through the mid 1950s. John Dewey was its foremost proponent. One of his tenets was that the school should improve the way of life of our citizens through experiencing freedom and democracy in schools. Shared decision making, planning of teachers with students, student-selected topics are all aspects. Books are tools, rather than authority.

### **1.8.4 Reconstructionism/Critical Theory**

Social Reconstructionism is a philosophy that emphasizes the addressing of social questions and a quest to create a better society and worldwide democracy. Reconstructionist educators focus on a curriculum that highlights social reform as the aim of education. Theodore Brameld (1904-1987) was the founder of social Reconstructionism, in reaction against the realities of World War II. He recognized the potential for either human annihilation through technology and human cruelty or the capacity to create a beneficent society using technology and human compassion. George



Counts (1889-1974) recognized that education was the means of preparing people for creating this new social order.

Critical theorists, like social reconstructionists, believe that systems must be changed to overcome oppression and improve human conditions. Paulo Freire (1921-1997) was a Brazilian whose experiences living in poverty led him to champion education and literacy as the vehicle for social change. In his view, humans must learn to resist oppression and not become its victims, nor oppress others. To do so requires dialog and critical consciousness, the development of awareness to overcome domination and oppression. Rather than "teaching as banking," in which the educator deposits information into students' heads, Freire saw teaching and learning as a process of inquiry in which the child must invent and reinvent the world.

For social reconstructionists and critical theorists, curriculum focuses on student experience and taking social action on real problems, such as violence, hunger, international terrorism, inflation, and inequality. Strategies for dealing with controversial issues (particularly in social studies and literature), inquiry, dialogue, and multiple perspectives are the focus. Community-based learning and bringing the world into the classroom are also strategies (Cohn, 1999).

### **1.9 SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS**

1. Define philosophy.
2. Describe branches of philosophy.
3. Discuss the role of philosophy in curriculum development.
4. Compare philosophy of idealism with philosophy of realism.
5. Analyze any two educational philosophies.
6. How philosophies influence teaching learning process? Explain.
7. Evaluate the role of progressivism in modern education.
8. Which one philosophy is dominant in our curriculum? Explain.

### **1.10 ACTIVITIES**

1. Analyze the objectives of any textbook for class 10<sup>th</sup> in the perspective of idealism and prepare a report on it.
2. Make a list of teaching methods being used in our classrooms. Identify their relationship with educational philosophies.

### **1.11 BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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