

Philosophy and Critical Thinking
Prof. Gyan Prakash
Department of Humanities & Social Sciences
IIT (ISM), Dhanbad
Week-01
Lecture 04: History of Western Philosophy

Welcome in lecture 4. Today we are going to talk about the History of Western Philosophy. Before that in last few classes we have talked about the philosophy, what is philosophy and the branches of philosophy. We also have discussed how philosophy is different from the other subjects. However, even today we are going to talk about how philosophy is different from theology. So that is a very important point. There are many different ways to understand the reality as I have discussed in the last class, for example, science, social science and so on. But theology is another way to understand this reality. Now, how this philosophy is different from theology we also will be discussing today in the class when we will be discussing some philosopher from medieval period. We also have discussed methodology that what kind of methodology we use in philosophy.

Now, today we are going to talk about the history of Western philosophy. History of Western philosophy you take it as a story of development of human thought. How we started this journey within a small thought and then now we have very comprehensive and complicated philosophy. The history of Western philosophy when we are going to discuss we will start from the Greek philosophy it all started from the Greek philosophy. Initially, you may take as very obvious, a very normal philosophy but you have to see those philosophers and their philosophy from their time because time was very different. Now if you see we cannot critically examine those ideas from today's perspective. So just I will give you an overview of this history of Western philosophy. History of Western philosophy can be divided in ancient period that is 625 BC to 476 AD, medieval period 476 AD to 1453, 1453, modern period 1453 to 1860 and the contemporary period 1860 to the present time. However, the timing is very controversial. I mean controversial in the sense that there are lot of thinkers have a different way to or different time to have given to the different period. This is just an idea that we will have an idea about different period. In this class we are going to talk about how the philosophy started from the ancient period and how it is taking ups and down to medieval period, modern period and contemporary period.

So, let us start then ancient period as I said it all started from Greek philosophy. Very important thing was that Greek philosopher were free thinker in the sense that they were thinking of this world, they were trying to understand this world and giving an argument for their claim. What I mean is there was no religious bias. What does it mean? As I said that this world if you want to understand this world there is many ways to understand. So first one is philosophical in the sense that through argument so there is a concept, there is an idea, and you are trying to analyze this idea through reason. The other way we can start

this all the argument from the religious perspective. Saying that there is a God or there is an X who created this world and so on. Now, when I am saying so freed from the religious bias it only means that they were not taking the help. They are not giving an argument from theology. So, when free from religious bias only means that they are giving a reason for their claim. When they are supposed, they are trying to understand this world and they are going to talk about the primary substance of this world then they are saying there is an X which is in a primary substance and then giving a proper reason then why they believe that X is the primary substance of this world. So, this is what I mean when I am saying is free from the religious bias. Again, they also called the Greek philosopher a founder of the science in the West. So, rational explanation of natural phenomena by taking resources to hypothesis which, according to them, must harmonize with facts. In beginning the Greek philosophy started about this natural world and the primary cause of this world.

Now, medieval period is remained wedded to theology. So, whatever the philosopher gave an idea and claim in the ancient period medieval philosopher what they did they explained these different facts we will be discussing with the help of theology. Now let us understand let us take example of the St. Augustine. Now there is a true way to understand the reality as I said understand and the reason and then faith right. So, St. Augustine what he did he argued that understand in order that you may believe so believe in order that you may understand. So, this is how he is talking about the knowledge but however when he is talking about the theory of knowledge, he believed that the church is the final authority in matter of faith. So, the church has been regarded as a vice-president of God on earth. In medieval period the St. Augustine he was very much occupied in this life with the nature of Trinity comprising father son and Holy Ghost. He appears to have adopted Trinitarian division in his major philosophical subject. So, this is how he gave claimed that knowledge has three states of development namely sensation, empirical knowledge, judgment, the health of idea and finally contemplation on the divine essence.

Philosophy of the world has three aspects of creation out of nothing according to the ideas and God. Soul has three inseparable aspects of being knowledge and will. Now St. Augustine what he did he gave an idea that the body and the soul where soul is superior of this body. The soul uses the sense as instrument. So, when we have a sensation so what soul is doing, soul is intensifying its activity in particular sense organ and the object. St. Augustine believed that the will is an important function of soul and this is how he talked about the attention and sensation. He said that when attention is there, I mean attention he explained as an interest in action so when you are interested and there is an attention you are paying attention to an object and then this is how there is a sensation about an object or there is a sensation. For example, Red Rose. So, because of interest so there is an attention and because of this attention there is sensation. Now this is how he talked about the attention and the sensation. He also mostly talked about the God and he said that God has created this world. However, we can comprehend the God but we cannot comprehend

that what God is. He argued that the world as the creation of God depends on God but the world and God are not one in the same. It only means that in philosophy of a religion there are many different concepts. Even you will be discussing in Indian philosophy. So there is an argument that if God is cause and world is effect so can we talk about the pre-existence of effect in God, pre-existence of effect in cause. Now so when you are saying that God has created this world so is it possible to argue that whether we are different from God or we are not different from God. So if you are going to say we are different from God then according to this theory of causation God cannot create us. And when you are saying that we are God we are not different from God then again there is a no creation. So God and God. So God is what is an appeared as in this world. So God and creation is same. It's called Pantheism. So in Indian system there are argument who talked about the idea of creation based on this theory of causation. Coming back to this Saint Augustine he had argued the same saying that this world and God is not same. So God transcends this world and forms the world as the effect and one cannot fully know God through this effect.

Now here there is an important problem of evil. Here there is an important concept that is problem of evil. So what I will do I will explain you in a very general way what is the problem of evil. Then we will come back to the Saint Augustine idea of this evil. Problem of evil you may understand in a two way. First is a natural and second is moral. So moral is when we are intentionally doing something for example murder, killing someone, hurting someone for example. It's an evil. Naturally is for example Tsunami, earthquake and so on. Now let us understand what is the problem. Problem is this the existence of this evil. Now God is good and God cannot create something bad. If even you want to understand Indian framework there is a cause, there is an effect. So, cause cannot produce anything. For example, sand cannot produce oil. We have discussed in the first class that whenever you are talking about the causation and the cause and then effect. Effect it cannot be entirely different from the cause. So oil is different and sand is different. So, we can say that sand cannot produce an oil. So like for example milk and curd. So, if God is good so God cannot create something which is not good let us say. But still we have an idea of evil. Still there is an evil in this world. Now who is the cause of this evil? So, God it is not possible that God has created this idea or God has created this evil. So therefore evil is we can talk about we can argue that there is something called evil and which is powerful. It is not created by God. It is a basic idea is this idea of evil is also challenging the existence of God. There is another way it is like this. Even if God is like for example if I ask you that what is God? Can you explain the God? I mean explaining the God only means that we talk about the attributes of the God.

Now attributes of the God are he is an omniscient. He is omnipresent, he knows everything. He is very powerful. Now if he knows everything it means that he is aware of this evil and again he is very powerful. He can do anything. What does it mean? It means that he can stop this evil thing. He was aware of these things. But still, we have this idea of evil in this

world. Why God is not changing everything? Why this God is not changing the people human's mind and stop evil thing? So, St. Augustine what he did he said that he has a very different argument. He argued that evil is necessary for the enhancement of the greater good in the same manner in which the shadow in the moon enhances the beauty of full moon. So evil is not positive but for a good simply dependency of goodness. Again, he argued that not God man responsible for his moral fall.

Now there are another philosopher from medieval period is St. Thomas and St. Thomas have argued about the philosophy and theology right difference between the philosophy and theology and he said that faith is not opposed to reason but higher than reason. Now let's understand what is a faith and a reason. As I have been saying that philosophy what we do we use lot of reasoning right. So if you are claiming there is an X we are giving a proper reason for X. Now suppose we are trying to understand this world from philosophical point of view. So, we started discussing we started thinking of an object created thing or there is an object which is there in the world started from there thinking applying proper reason and argument and finally concluded that the God is there is something called God who has created this world. Now theology, he will always start with the idea of God and then this world right. So I hope I am clear what I mean is that philosophy what we do that we can have a similar conclusion as in theology but we will start from X and then finally we will through the reason for the argument we may claim that there is T but in theology what they do they start with the idea of T and then explain the X. So for example we are like trying to understand this world and realized through argument this is everything in this world is in chain of this cause and effect right. So, there is X so the cause of X is T the cause of T is Y and so on. So, we are going like that but we have to stop somewhere right or it is an important for us to take something some object as a primary cause. Then we will be able to explain this world is reality and through argument we may argue that the primary cause is something which is infinite or finite which is God right. Now God has created this world and so on but in theology what they will do they will start from the idea of God. So, when we are saying this, it talks about our faith right. So, there is a faith and there is a reason. This is how a difference between this faith and a reason. Now the argument is which one is the best right faith and the reason. Now what St. Thomas is saying that see the faith is not opposed to the reason but is higher than the reason. He argued that reason may be implied to defend faith by destroying objections against the articles of faith. Reason working by itself may not fully understand the deep things of the religion and even what they understand may be mixed with error. St. Thomas took revelation to be higher than reason and made a demarcation between the field of reason and revelation. He argued the philosophy comes under the domain of natural light of reason whereas theology dealing with Christian faith rests on revelation. So philosophy being constituted by human reason starts its inquiry with created things which are effects due to God as their cause.

In contrast the theologian has his starting point in revealed truth and he deduced the world of things from this revealed truth. Thomas argued that the philosophy is a reason and theology faith do not oppose one another. The objects against revealed truth and their defense are carried out by philosophy. On the other hand, philosophical knowledge of early thing is supplemented by the deeper knowledge of higher spiritual things. So, St. Thomas theological teachings are not contrary to reason. Further theology based on revelation is higher than philosophy. So, this is what I have told you that we will be discussing how the philosophy is different from the theology and that is why from the medieval period, I purposely talked about this two philosopher St. Thomas and St. Augustine. However their philosophy and their have much they have talked a lot about the idea of God and the world and then nature of man and so on but we are not going to discuss this philosophers in well in detail. My intention to bring this philosopher was just to give you an idea about the medieval period and again the argument from the medieval period about the philosophy in the theology.

Now the modern period it started with the criticizing the medieval period. Modern period was critical of the past. Now in medieval period if you see the ancient time where the philosopher was talking about the reality with reason. So, they are giving a proper argument and claiming that there is X. When it came to this medieval period they started believing that faith is in a higher position. So reason or argument is just was taking a second position. But in coming back to the when the modern period they started again talking about the human capacity. So, the idea was that is it possible for a human to know everything through reason. In the modern period what they argued the philosopher they argued that everything it is possible to know through the reason. So they are giving importance to a reason not the faith. So this is how the philosopher they argued. Then there appeared in a natural existent place of supernatural ones. However, it was not possible to reject all the concept the idea. All the idea was were discussed in the medieval period. So the idea of God remain to be their center of the moderners. Again, in modern period the rationalism was had taken an important place where they are giving importance to the clearance of knowledge like the demonstrativeness of mathematics led to the far-reaching consequences in the history of modern philosophy. So, the emphasis on reason and on the new method of discovery led to inquiry into the limit nature and the function of knowledge. So, epistemology is the special contribution of the moderners. So modern philosophy begins with the immense faith in the human capacity to know everything. It has this faith which made this period most productive and typical in the history of thought.

Now the contemporary period which started in 1860 to present time contemporary philosophy started with a rise of analytic and the continental philosophy. So the philosophical method is now based on the analysis of language via modern logic and continental philosophy begin with the development of new philosophical method of phenomenology. The continental philosophy begins with the development of new

philosophical method of phenomenology. So, in contemporary period we are not going to talk about the analytical philosophy and continental philosophy which is not part of this course. However for the idea that in contemporary period they started believing that they may understand the concept to the new philosophical method which is based on the analysis of language. Now continental philosophy has an again a different way of different philosophical method. So this was then contemporary period. However, in our course, we will be discussing the ancient time and a philosopher from the pre-Socratic philosopher Socrates, later Aristotle. Medieval period we are not going to discuss. Modern philosophers we will be discussing which is in a part of our course. Contemporary period any philosophers contemporary period we are not going to discuss in this course.

So, thank you so much for your kind attention. This lecture was mostly based on these two books which is in a Y. Masih critical history of western philosophy and Frank Thilly's book history of philosophy. Thank you so much for your kind attention.