

**Aspects of Western Philosophy**  
**Dr. Sreekumar Nellickappilly**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Indian Institute of Technology, Madras**

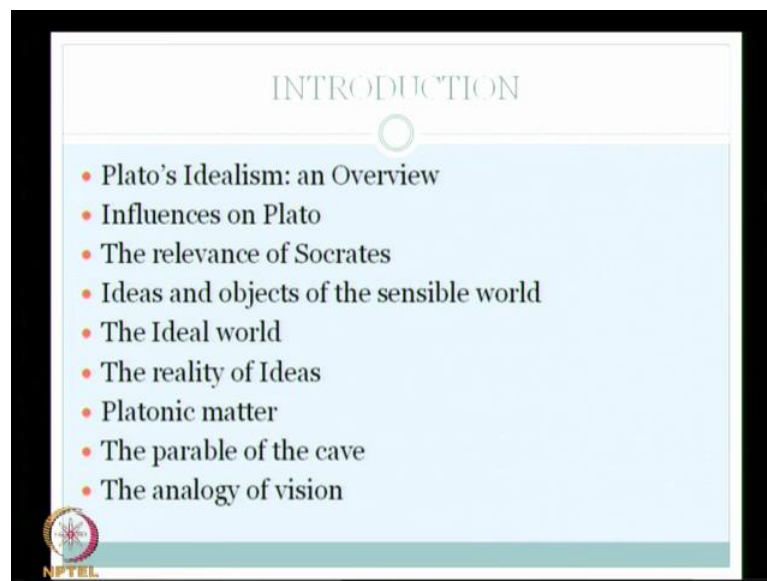
**Module – 03**

**Lecture – 03**

**Plato's Idealism: Theory of Ideas**

This lecture is on Plato's Idealism - Theory of Ideas in continuation with the previous lecture, where we have discussed the contributions of the sophist and this is in a sense of an ideal to discuss Plato because in between we will see the contributions of Socrates as well who is supposed to be the first martyr of philosophy.

(Refer Slide Time: 00:37)



This lecture will be trying to address following issues Plato's idealism an overview. So, will try to provide an overview then after that, the influences on Plato those philosophers and philosophical movements, which are influenced Plato then the relevance of Socrates in this context has to be underlined, because Plato was the disciple of Socrates and the most famous disciple of Socrates. Ideas and objects of the sensible word, so when we discuss Plato's idealism this distinction is paramount, the distinction between the ideas the sensible objects the objection the sensible word. So, this distinction is primary in Plato's idealism. So, this has to be discussed and clarified and then afterwards will see


the ideal world because Plato says that, the ideas on the one time is the monished he says that ideas alone are real. On the other hand, he believed in a plurality of ideas, he says that ideas constitute a kind of unity there are pluralities of ideas and there is a hierarchy they formed in the ideal world.

So, the ideal world needs to be discussed to understand this problem. After that the reality of ideas because according to Plato ideas alone are real and in this context we have to also mention a very important distinction, a very important dualism which Plato maintains. Plato says that matter is different from ideas or forms or essences. Ideas of forms are the only reality and matter for according to Plato is basically, unreal then to elucidate and explains these points further we will discuss a couple of parables the first one on a couple of a knowledge is, the first one is the famous parable of the cave and the second one is the analogy of vision. With all these since we are trying to understand explained Plato's idealism.

(Refer Slide Time: 02:48)

Plato

- Born in Athens in a noble family in about 427
- Educated by Cratylus, who was a disciple of Heraclitus, Euclides of Megara, who introduced him to the study of Parmenides and finally became the disciple of Socrates

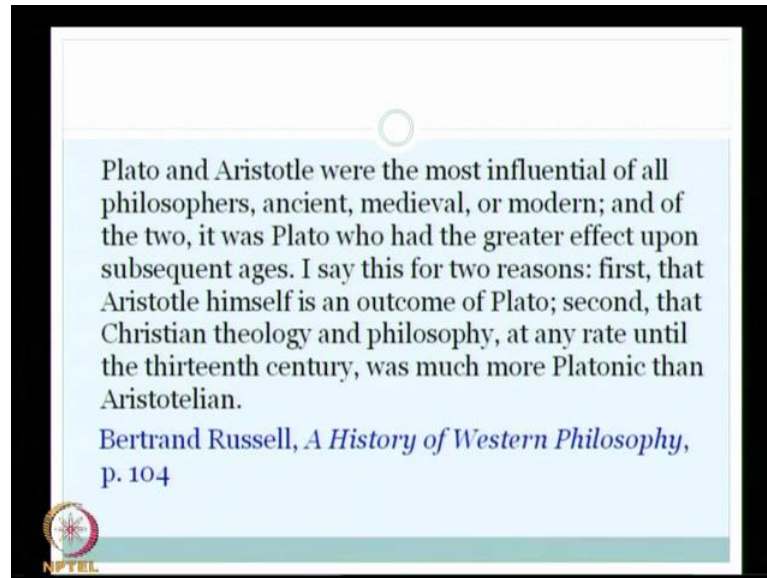


NPTL

Now, about Plato – Plato, some details about his personal life, his life and he was born in Athens in a noble family in about 427 and he was educated by Cratylus, who was the disciple of the famous philosopher Heraclitus who stated that everything in this world is under constant flux. The famous saying that you cannot step into the same river twice is attributed to Heraclitus. Earlier Plato was educated by this person called Cratylus who was himself a disciple of Heraclitus then, Euclides is another important thinker who was

a Plato's teacher once upon a time, and who at Plato had studied Parmenides the philosophy of Parmenides under the guidance of this man who later became a disciple of Socrates along with Plato.

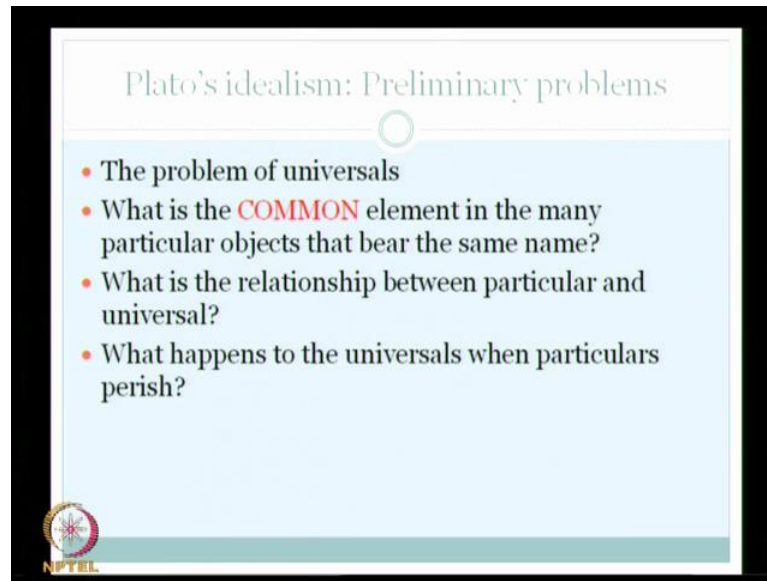
(Refer Slide Time: 03:50)



Now, let us see there is an very famous quotation from the history of western philosophy written by Bertrand Russell and this says that, Plato and Aristotle were the most influential of all philosophers ancient medieval or modern and of the two it was Plato who had the greater effect upon subsequent ages. I say this for two reasons - first, that Aristotle himself is an outcome of Plato, second that Christian theology and philosophy at any rate until the 13 century was much more Platonic than Aristotelian. So, this underlines the importance of Plato as a philosopher in the whole history of western philosophy. So, according too many other historians of philosophy Plato is supposed to be the most important philosopher in the whole of western philosophy.

Now, there are certain very preliminary problems which we come across, which we encounter when we try to understand Plato's idealism.

(Refer Slide Time: 05:01)



Plato's idealism: Preliminary problems

- The problem of universals
- What is the **COMMON** element in the many particular objects that bear the same name?
- What is the relationship between particular and universal?
- What happens to the universals when particulars perish?

NPTEL

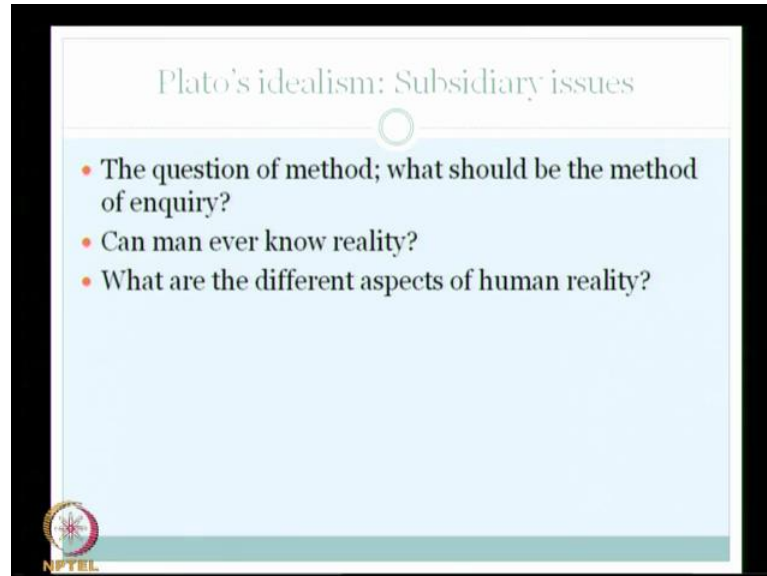
So, some of them are the problem of universals, what do you mean by a universal? See for example, you have a pen or a computer in front of you. Let us take the example of a pen there are 1000 of pens in this world, but there is only one idea of pen, the general idea of pen, what do you mean by a pen? All of us know there are different types, different colors, different makes, but there is something called a pen, what it is? So, that is a universal pen. So, he us can send about the universal and his theory of ideas slightly deals with the universals and in connection with this problem we come across another issue what is a common element in the many particular objects that bear the same name. All these objects we call pen, what is that common element by means of which by virtue of which all of them are understood as pen that is question here.

So, the common element with general features then again, what is the relationship between particular and universal. So, there is a universal penness or an essence of pen in what we the ordinary pens which we used to write are related or connected with this universal pen. Can we say that there is no universal apart from this particulars many philosophers hold that view, that is are very significant that is a very important view, but flied I would assert that it is a universal, it is a essence which is more important than the particular objects in this universe.

Next the question is what happens to the universals when particulars perish, what happens? Whether any things happen to the idea of pen if 1 or 2 pens in this universe

parish that is the question. So, these are some of the preliminary issues which Plato is concerned as far as this theory of ideas is concerned.

(Refer Slide Time: 07:01)



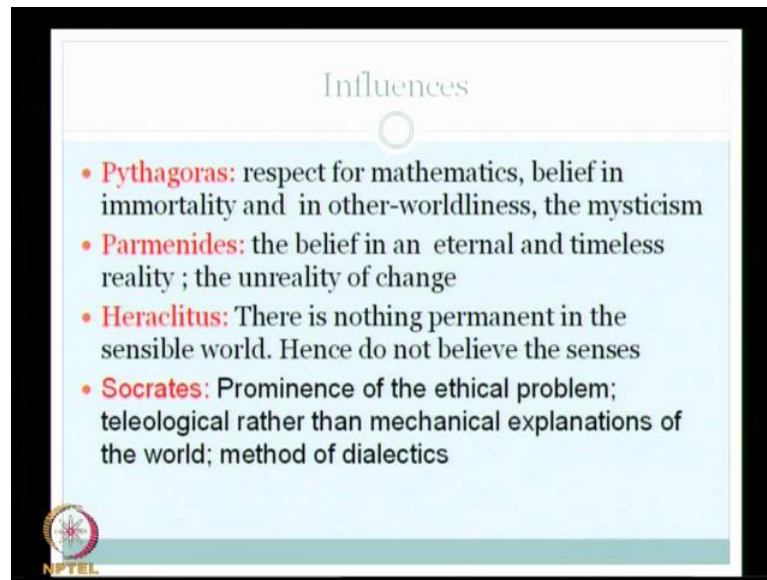
And now let us look into some of the subsidiary issues the first one is, the question of method. What should be the method of enquiry? This question, an answer to this question will consider in the next lecture, but this is a very important thing like the question is, what should be the method of enquiry, when it comes to as all of us know natural sciences employ a very peculiar method of enquiry. Natural science is will employ the method of observation the method of experimentation. So, it observes the world what happens to the world and observation relies on sense organs. And for Plato, christen of method pre supposes something else then the observation method because, he has the philosopher who has proclaimed from the very outset is disbelief in the sensible world.

He says that, the sensible word is only a copy we will see that subsequently. Can man ever know reality? That is another very important philosophical problem. Philosophers talk about reality a lot, there is a reality but can man ever know it, if man is unable to it then why do you bother about it. But if man can know it then you have to tell how man can know it the methodology has to be devised. So, these are some of the questions.

Again, what are the different aspects of human reality? Human reality can be there is a spiritual aspect of it, there is an intellectual aspect, there is a sensible aspect there are

several faces of human reality what are they? So, these are some of the issues which in general Plato is concerned about or rather we are concerned about when we discussed Plato.

(Refer Slide Time: 08:54)



Now, let us see the thinkers who have influenced Plato. The first and famous one is Pythagoras, who is a famously associated with the Pythagorean Theorem and who is a mathematician, who is a religious person, who has a very peculiar religion of his own. But Plato was influenced by Pythagoras mostly with respect to the mathematical theories ES tabula or the respect for mathematics. Belief in immortality and in other worldliness and the mysticism, mathematics is important because Plato also thought that mathematics is a very important discipline because mathematics involves abstract thinking and for Plato a philosopher, a thinker, is a person who has the capability of abstract thinking. And if you are not able to think in terms of extract objects you are not qualified to be a philosopher. So, Pythagoras is important because mathematic, he was a mathematic, he was primarily a mathematician and Plato has famously wrote it is said that in front of his academy, Plato's the school which Plato established, it was written that no man ignorant of mathematic should enter, because he considered mathematics as so important in learning process of a philosopher.

The second very important influence is from Parmenides, we have already discussed a little bit of Parmenides in one of the early lectures. Parmenides is the philosopher (Refer

Time: 10:25) philosopher pre-Socratic thinker who believed in the permanence of reality. He says that, reality must be imperishable, eternal and something which is permanent immovable, in order to move something has to be located in space and time, and if objectives conditioned by space and time it cannot be real in the philosophical sense of the term.



So, this belief in an eternal and timeless reality the unreality of change Plato moves to Parmenides a lot and interestingly the next important influence on Plato is from Heraclitus. We have already discussed Heraclitus just a few seconds ago; Heraclitus was a philosopher who says that there is nothing permanent in the sensible world, hence do not believe in senses. So, Plato derive this incite from Heraclitus, do not believe in the senses, though Heraclitus in sense never proclaimed so. And now comes the most important, the most significant contribution, the most significant influence on Plato's in intellectual life by none other than Socrates - the great philosopher who was Plato's teacher and a Plato was indebted to Socrates for making the ethical problem as the central concern of his philosophy. We can see that even in Plato, in Plato's utopia the state republic, the major issue, the most important question is; what is the justice, which is an ethical question and when it comes his metaphysics which we are going to discuss in this lecture. The idea of good is at the center it is according to Plato the some important the most important essence, the most important idea and every other ideas are under that.

So, in once sense we can say that, there is only one idea that is the idea of good, everything is a derivative of this idea. This is the very important influence from Socrates then again the teleological rather than mechanical explanations of the world which feel find even in Aristotle's philosophy as well and also most importantly the method of dialectics I have mentioned the importance of a method. The method to know truth and it just to this method Plato was indebted to Socrates the method of dialectics.

(Refer Slide Time: 12:55)

Socrates

- Philosophy in the marketplace
- Practical task of philosophy: to help man to think right in order that they may live right
- To know what is good so that one becomes good
- Questions of knowledge, truth and goodness are intimately connected

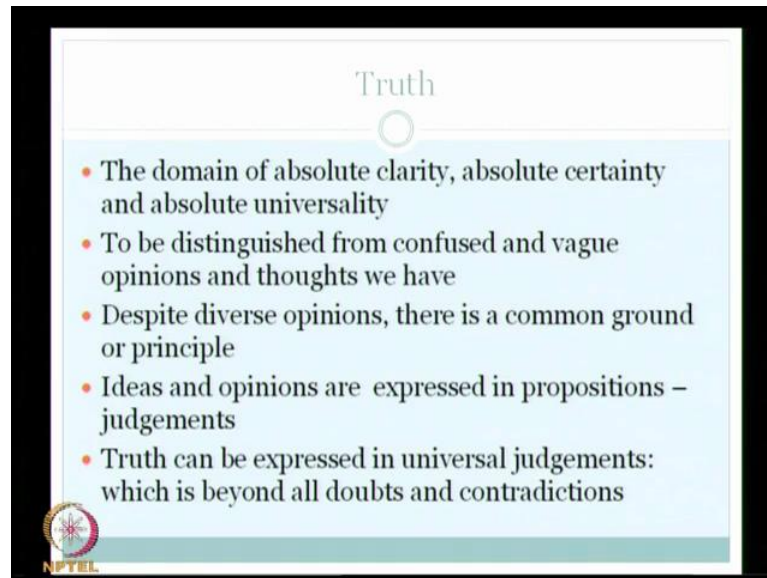


Now, a little bit of Socrates we have to mention. Socrates was person who has literally taken philosophy to the marketplace and what I mean by marketplace is taking philosophy to the common man, taking philosophy to the places where people from all ways of life come assemble to do their daily business. So, you will find Socrates in the market place, you will find him in marriage ceremony where he discussed in philosophy with his friends and allies.

Practical task of philosophy is according to Socrates to help man to think right, in order that they may live right. So, again you can see emphasize on the ethical issues what is more important is to live the right kind of life and in order to live the like kind of life you have to think in the right manner. Here again, practical task of philosophy is to help people to do that and to know what is good, so that one becomes good. And again further questions of knowledge truth and goodness are intimately connected, you cannot separate this issue, philosopher is concerned about all these problems. About the question of knowledge, truth, goodness, and in that sense logics, ethics and esthetic are all interconnected.



(Refer Slide Time: 14:18)



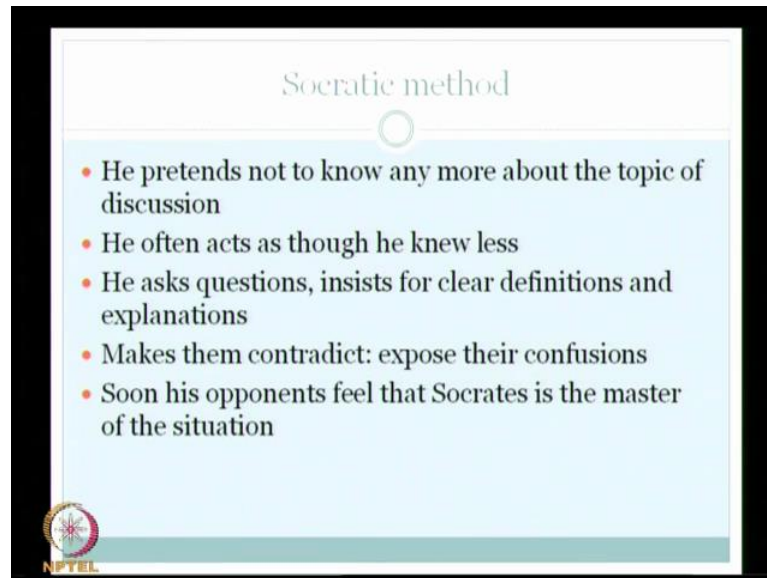
The slide is titled "Truth" and features a light blue background with a white border. At the top center, the word "Truth" is written in a serif font. Below the title, there is a list of five bullet points, each starting with a red dot. The bullet points are: "The domain of absolute clarity, absolute certainty and absolute universality", "To be distinguished from confused and vague opinions and thoughts we have", "Despite diverse opinions, there is a common ground or principle", "Ideas and opinions are expressed in propositions – judgements", and "Truth can be expressed in universal judgements: which is beyond all doubts and contradictions". In the bottom left corner, there is a circular logo with a red and white design, and the text "NPTEL" is written below it.

- The domain of absolute clarity, absolute certainty and absolute universality
- To be distinguished from confused and vague opinions and thoughts we have
- Despite diverse opinions, there is a common ground or principle
- Ideas and opinions are expressed in propositions – judgements
- Truth can be expressed in universal judgements: which is beyond all doubts and contradictions

Now the question of truth this is little more prominent, because philosophy is primarily concerned with the question of truth. And here the question of truth is a domain of absolute clarity, absolute certainty and absolute universality this is basically, Socrates approach. He always believe that the domain of truth is absolutely be clear, one should be able to understand if it all understands it, it should be understood with absolute clarity and certainty and this truth should be universal. And it should be distinguish from confused and vague opinions and thoughts we have, we have lot of vague ideas about this world what is happening in this world, but truth as far as truth is concerned it cannot be vague at all it should be absolutely certain and despite diverse opinions there is a common ground or principle people might think differently, people might have different believes and opinions, but there is only one truth and that can be attained, that can be achieved with the help of a method employed which is the dialectical method.

Ideas and opinions are expressed in propositions and judgments, truth can be expressed in the universal judgment which is beyond all doubts and contradictions. It is to arrive at these kind of judgments which, Socrates thought is primary of objective of philosophy and in all his (Refer Time: 15:46), all his (Refer Time: 15:47), all his conversations with the other philosophers and other thinkers and other people, we can see that the approach is to get a direct access to truth.

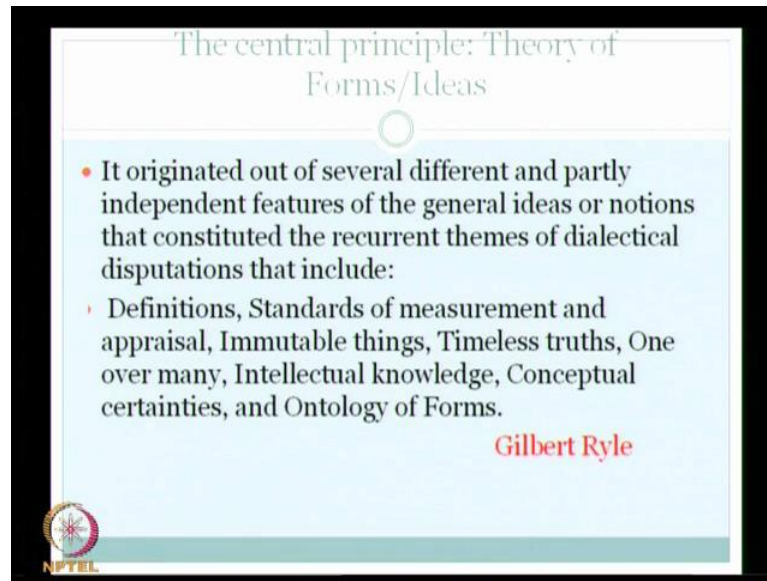
(Refer Slide Time: 16:01)



Now let us talk about a little bit about Socratic Method we will take it up in the subsequent lectures. He pretends, I mean this is the famous dialectical, the method of dialectics which we will explain in the next lecture, but primarily what happens is that he pretends not to know any more about the topic of this discussion.

So, he gets into conversation with the other people by raising questions and he pretends that he does not know anything about it, and he often acts as though he knew less than his opponents. Then he asks questions insists for clear definitions and explanations and in this way the process of dialogue proceeds, makes them contradict and this is what happens. In this process he makes his opponents or his partner in conversation to contradict himself and this contradiction will eventually and ultimately expose the confusions, his opponents have in their minds and soon his opponents feel that Socrates is the master of the situation. This is what happens in the method of dialectic.

(Refer Slide Time: 17:08)



The central principle: Theory of Forms/Ideas

- It originated out of several different and partly independent features of the general ideas or notions that constituted the recurrent themes of dialectical disputations that include:
  - Definitions, Standards of measurement and appraisal, Immutable things, Timeless truths, One over many, Intellectual knowledge, Conceptual certainties, and Ontology of Forms.

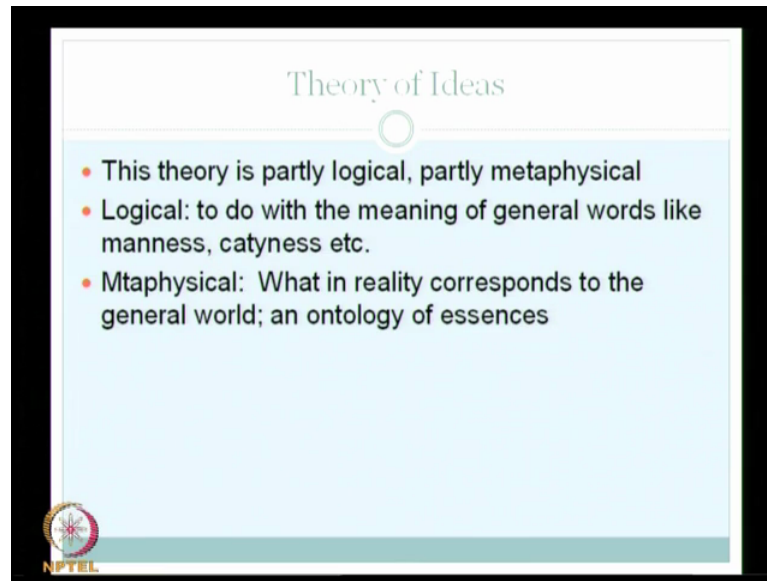
Gilbert Ryle

NPTEL

Now, we will try to see will straight away come to Plato will see the influence of Socrates further when we discuss certain other issues in Plato's philosophy, now will come to central principle the theory of ideas or theory of forms it is called. What are they? What are these forms? What are these plethoric ideas which we are talking about? So, here we will see an interesting observation from famous very famous (Refer Time: 17:37) philosopher Gilbert Ryle. He says, Gilbert Ryle says that it originated out of several different and partly independently features of the general ideas or notions, that constituted the recurrent themes of dialectical disputations that include definitions, standards of measurement and appraisal immutable things, timeless truths, one over many intellectual knowledge, conceptual certainties and ontology of forms.

So, in a sense ideas that derived from all these things, there is I have already mentioned a very straight forward approach to generalized to see the generalizations and when you take theory of ideas there is a famous observation by Bertrand Russell.

(Refer Slide Time: 18:32)

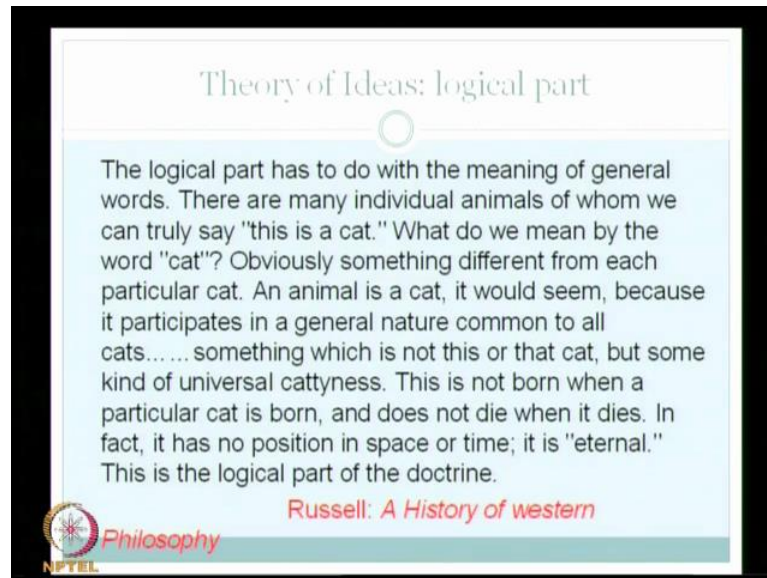


Russell says that, the theory of ideas is partly logical and partly metaphysical. What do you mean by logical? Logical here according to Russell, it has to do with the meaning of general words like manness, catyness, penness, bookness whatever, wherever you have general terms. What do you mean by that? What do you mean by catyness, you know what a cat is, but what do you mean by catyness? Again when it comes to the metaphysical aspect what in reality corresponds to the general world. Here ontology of essences is being envisaged.

So, when I say cat I know that what a cat is, when I say pen I know what a pen is, but when I say penness or catyness to what this word correspond, that is a question. What is that corresponding objects? So, this corresponding objects cannot be a particular object because particular objects are when I talk about a pen which is there in my pocket, I am talking about a particular pen, but when I talk about penness it is not there in my pocket it is not there in this world, it is somewhere in my mind I can say it to some extent.

So, but what sort of an entity it is? If it is there in the mind what is its status, is it just an image, shadow. So, these are questions which try to deals with and Plato would say that they are absolute realities, will see that.

(Refer Slide Time: 20:01)



The logical part has to do with the meaning of general words. There are many individual animals of whom we can truly say "this is a cat." What do we mean by the word "cat"? Obviously something different from each particular cat. An animal is a cat, it would seem, because it participates in a general nature common to all cats..... something which is not this or that cat, but some kind of universal cattyness. This is not born when a particular cat is born, and does not die when it dies. In fact, it has no position in space or time; it is "eternal." This is the logical part of the doctrine.

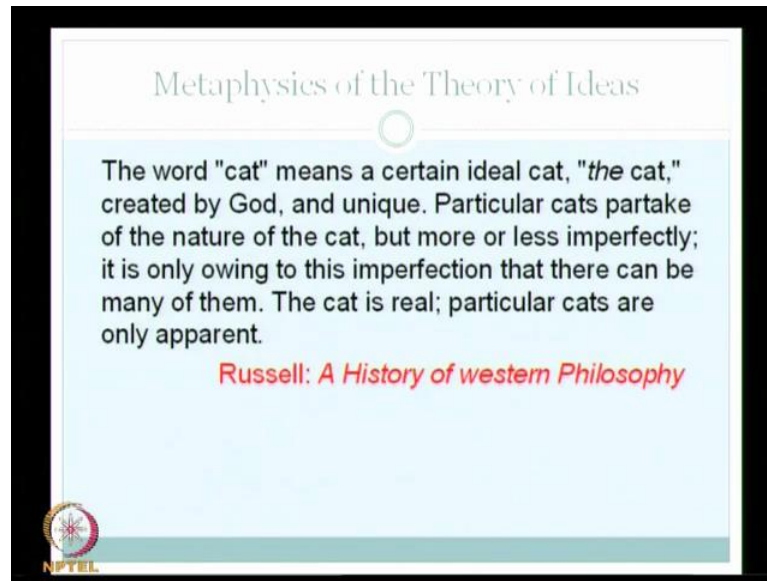
*Russell: A History of western*  
*Philosophy*

NPTEL

This is a quote again from Russell a history of western philosophy it says that, a logical part has to do with the meaning of general words. There are many individual names of whom we can truly say this is a cat what do you mean by a word cat; obviously, something different from each particular cat. An animal is a cat it would seem because it participates in a general nature common to all cats.

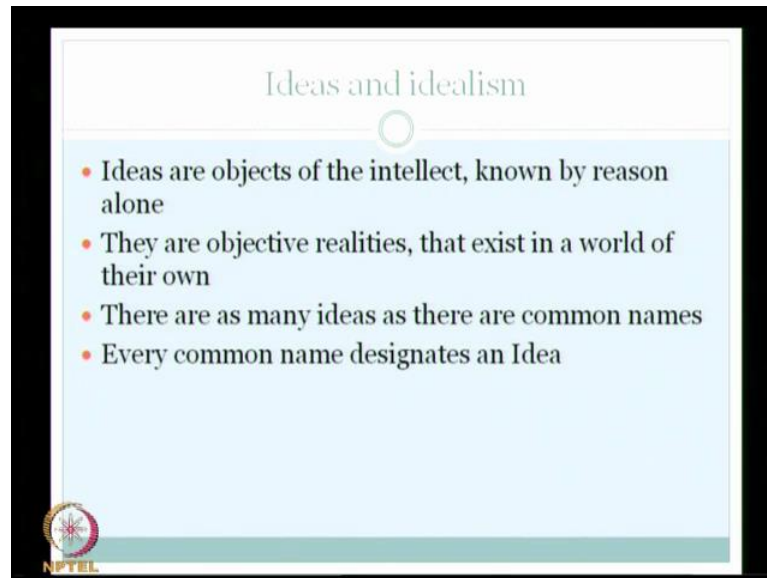
So, this is a center, this is a crux of it. An animal is a cat, it would seem, because it participates in a general nature common to all cats. So, this all concept of participation is very important. Again I start reading, something which is not this or that cat, but some kind of universal cattyness this is not born when a particular cat is born and does not die when it dies. In fact, it is no position in space or time it is eternal this is a logical part of the doctrine.

(Refer Slide Time: 21:05)



And now when we come to the metaphysical part of the doctrine, it says again from Russell; the word "cat" means a certain ideal cat, "the cat," created by god and unique. Particular cats partake of the nature of the cat, but more or less imperfectly; it is only owing to this imperfection that there can be many of them. The cat is real; particular cats are only apparent. So, here you can see the problem of one and many appear in reality; what appear the many cats, what appears is a reality which is reality of particularities, but what is real? Reality is always something which is unique there is only one categories and again when you talk about ideas and idealism. Ideas are objects of the intellect known by reason alone Plato as a categorically a forms that they are objects; they are objects not of course of this world, but of the intellect known by reason alone. They cannot be known to observation, through sense experience, they can be known only through reason, there comes the relevance of mathematics. Mathematics is another discipline where we employ reason not observation.

(Refer Slide Time: 22:27)



Ideas and idealism

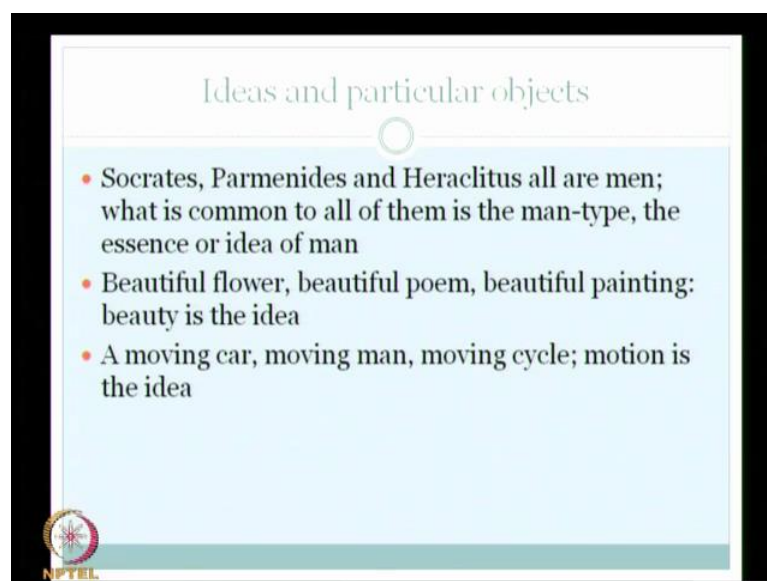
- Ideas are objects of the intellect, known by reason alone
- They are objective realities, that exist in a world of their own
- There are as many ideas as there are common names
- Every common name designates an Idea

NPTEL

And again they are objective realities that exist in a world of their own. They are not just their in the human mind, but they have a world of they are own; the objective realities. There are as many ideas as there are common names and every common name designates an idea. So, wherever you find a common name camera or a telephone, computer all these are common names.

So, corresponding to all these there are ideas.

(Refer Slide Time: 22:59)



Ideas and particular objects

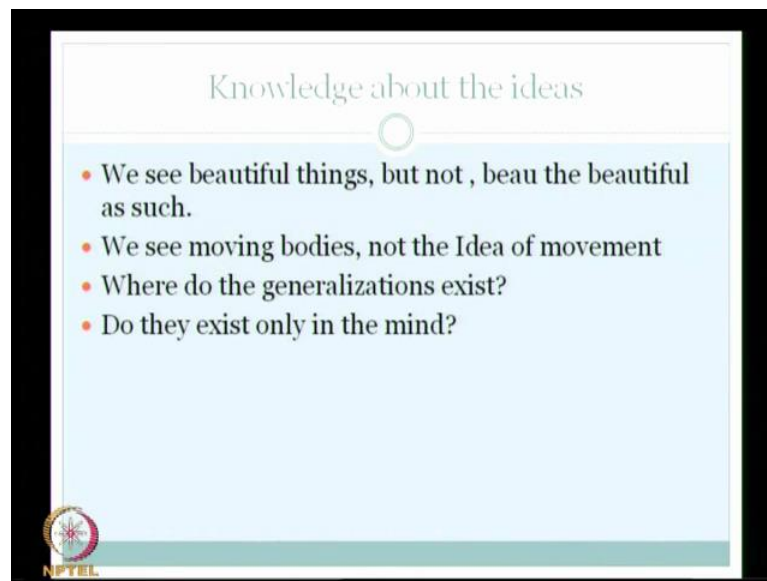
- Socrates, Parmenides and Heraclitus all are men; what is common to all of them is the man-type, the essence or idea of man
- Beautiful flower, beautiful poem, beautiful painting; beauty is the idea
- A moving car, moving man, moving cycle; motion is the idea

NPTEL



But now we have problem, in what sense these ideas are related to particular objects, in what sense the idea of cat is related to cats in this world. The idea of computer is related to different types of computers in this world. So, here Socrates, Parmenides and Heraclitus are all men; what is common to all of them is the man-type, the essence or idea of man. Beautiful flower, beautiful poem, beautiful painting and in all these cases what is common: beauty, the idea of beauty. Then again a moving car, a moving man, a moving cycle; motion is the idea, so common to all these things.

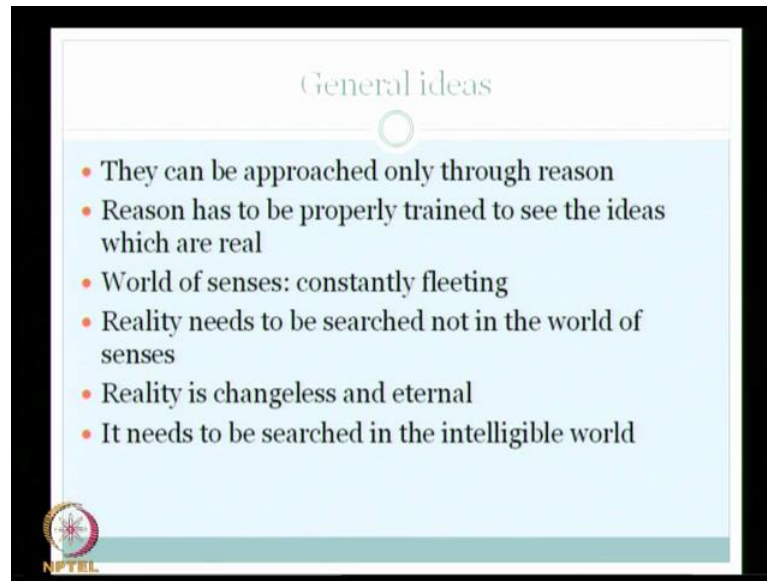
(Refer Slide Time: 23:50)



Now, when we talk about the knowledge about these ideas we see beautiful things, we can say that it is a beautiful flower, a beautiful mountain, a beautiful house; all these are beautiful things and lot of beautiful flowers around me. But what about beautiful as such, where is beauty, the essence of beauty. So, Plato's philosopher is a person of wisdom who is not bothered about particular beautiful objects in this world, but we is concerned about beauty as such the essence of beauty. We see moving bodies, not the idea of movement where do the generalizations exist? Do they exist only in the human minds; these are some of the questions.



(Refer Slide Time: 24:34)



General ideas

- They can be approached only through reason
- Reason has to be properly trained to see the ideas which are real
- World of senses: constantly fleeting
- Reality needs to be searched not in the world of senses
- Reality is changeless and eternal
- It needs to be searched in the intelligible world

NPTEL

And when it comes to general ideas, they can be approached only through reason I have already mentioned this. This cannot be a subject matter of observation that can be understood only by the employment of the intellect by reason. Reason has to be properly trained to see the ideas which are real. Every one of us all human beings are rational. In fact, one of the defining features of humanness is rationality, possesses of rationality, if that is the case then why is it that everyone is not a philosopher. According to Plato through reason with the employment of reason you can graduate, you can understand the essences the world of essences and thus you can became a philosopher. But everyone is not able to do that, why the reason for that is that reason has to be properly trained to see the ideas which are real.

And when you contrast this world of ideas with the world of senses, we can see that the world of senses are constantly fleeting and reality needs to be searched not in the world of senses because the world of senses is the world of change, it is a world of distraction. It is the world which is never the same the next movement, it keeps on change, so in a world of complete change nothing is real, reality is changeless and eternal. So, one has to search for the eternally changeless reality, it needs to be searched in the intelligible world in the intellect.

(Refer Slide Time: 26:14)

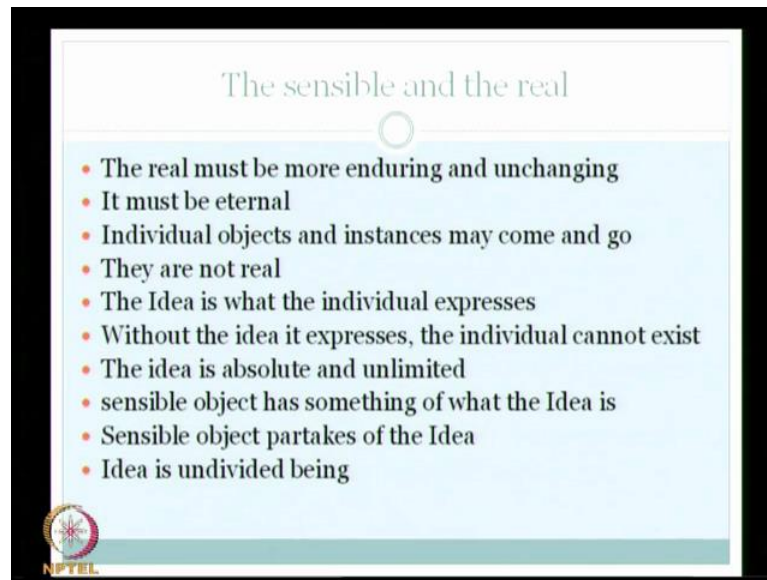
The slide is titled "Sense objects and general Ideas" and is divided into two columns. The left column is titled "Common view" and lists four bullet points: "They are mental copies of the sensible objects", "They depend on the objects", "They are not real but exist only in the individual's mind", and "They cannot be communicated completely". The right column is titled "Plato's Idealism" and lists four bullet points: "Ideas are the models or the originals", "Individual objects are the copies", "Both our thoughts and the eternal objects of these thoughts", and "Thoughts of God, which nohuman intelligence can wholly reproduce". An NPTEL logo is visible in the bottom left corner of the slide.

And here we can see we will just contrast the sense object and general ideas. The common sense view is that; they are mental copies of the sensible objects. As well as general ideas are concerned, the commonsensically we understand general ideas of copies of sensible objects, we seen different objects. We see a computer for example; computer is a relatively new invention. So, this has not existed from (Refer Time: 26:42) memorial. So, it is a new invention and now all of us have an image of computer in our mind, so we can logically conclude that, the image of computer is being derived from the computer which came into exist only recently, but Plato would disagree with that. They depend on the objects this is the commonsensical view. They are not real, but exist only in the individual mind and they cannot be communicated completely because since it exist only in my mind the ideas in my mind cannot be communicated to you to another person a complete sense of the term.

Because to some extend it is my, and Plato's idealism presence an entirely different view says that, ideas are the models or the originals. They are not copies of sensible objects, but they are the most original models of reality and the individual objects are the copies it is other way around, for commonsensical view the objects the ideas are copies of objects, but here for Plato individual objects are copies. And both are thoughts and the eternal objects of these thoughts are part of the ideas and thoughts of god, which know no-human intelligence, can wholly reproduce.

So, these are the differences, main different ways in which Plato understands the ideas from the commonsensical perspective. So, the most important point is that for Plato their absolute realities and the world of objects are copies of these absolute realities.

(Refer Slide Time: 28:32)



The slide is titled "The sensible and the real" in a light blue font. Below the title is a small white circle. The main content is a list of ten bullet points in red text on a light blue background. At the bottom left of the slide is the NPTEL logo, which consists of a circular emblem with a star and the text "NPTEL" below it.

- The real must be more enduring and unchanging
- It must be eternal
- Individual objects and instances may come and go
- They are not real
- The Idea is what the individual expresses
- Without the idea it expresses, the individual cannot exist
- The idea is absolute and unlimited
- sensible object has something of what the Idea is
- Sensible object partakes of the Idea
- Idea is undivided being

Now, when it comes to the question of the sensible and the real, the real according to Plato and according to the general philosophical assumption, it must be more enduring and unchanging it cannot be something which changes quite frequently it has to be more enduring and unchanging. And again it must be eternal; something which perishes cannot be treated as real or in other words, the reality of perishable objects as a minimal reality. They do have only a relative reality not absolute reality, individual objects and instances may come and go like individual human beings Plato, Aristotle all these people have come and they have gone all of us will go one day, but manness exist. They are not real, what the individual objects are not real. The individual pens and cats and mountains and human beings and whatever things in this world they are not real because they come and go they perished they are subjective to change.

The idea is what the individual expresses, but this is what from here he is trying to bring out one important aspect, one important thing about the relationship between the objects and the ideas. The idea is what the individual expresses. So, when you have a computer in front of you, individual computer are in or a particular computer or a particular pen these objects express the ideas. For instance, the pen the particular pen expresses the

universal idea of penness and the particular computer expresses the universal idea of computer, without the idea it expresses the individual cannot exist.

So, Plato puts the relationships the other way round the individual owes its existence to the universal idea. It is the universal, it is by virtue of its participating in the universal and individual acquires its name and status. We call an object a pen because it partakes because it participates in the universal idea of penness. We call him man, we call objective a man or entity a man because, that entity that object partakes and participates in the idea of universal manness. The idea is absolute and an unlimited, sensible object has something of what the idea is. Sensible object I repeat, sensible object has something of what the idea is. So, this is that partaking relationship that participation and sensible object partakes of the idea, idea is undivided being, it cannot be divided, it is simple in that sense.

(Refer Slide Time: 31:37)



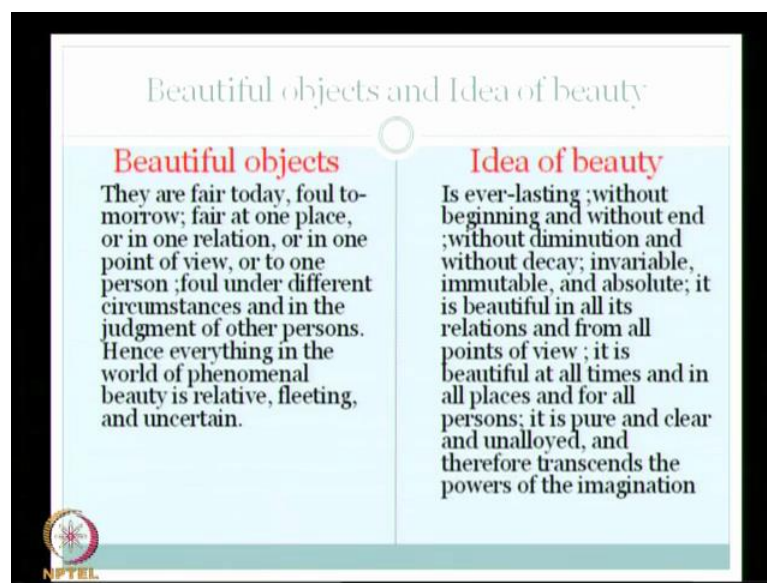
In contrast the objects of the phenomenal world everything is subject to change and destruction fleeting and uncertain I have already mentioned it, nothing is permanent in this world.

One cannot step into the same river twice because both the river as well as the person who is stepping down in the river will change. So, everything is a fleeting reality no absolute reality, so the question of absolutely reality never comes into picture at all as far as the object of phenomenal world is concerned. We have small and big it is a big

mountain a small mountain, but all these are relative terms, a big a tall man is tall in relation with a short man a man who shorter than him, but another taller man in front a taller man this tall man becomes short.

So, all these expressions small, big, beautiful, ugly good and bad something which is good today might be a bad tomorrow, something which is beautiful today might be treated as ugly tomorrow. So, there has the world of objects the world of sensible objects are that is subjective to constant change and they are relative they cannot be absolute.

(Refer Slide Time: 32:53)



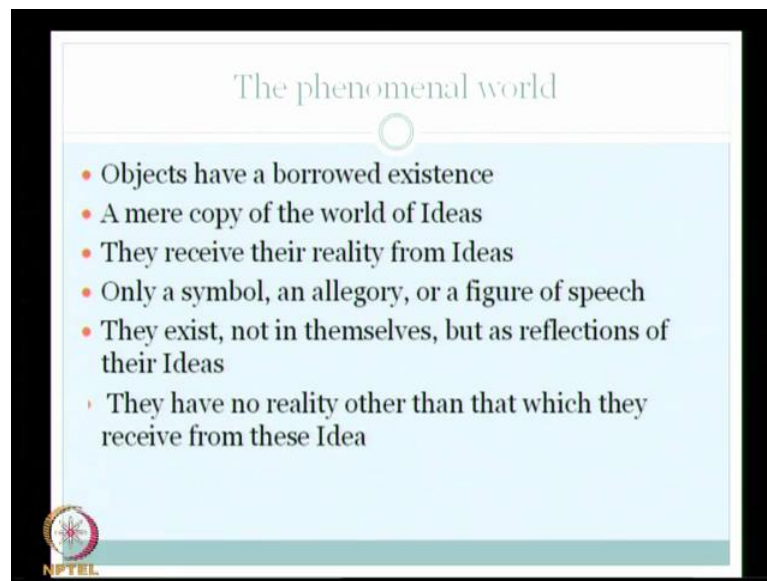
Now when it comes to I mean, I am taking another more conflict example here the example of beautiful object because this is one reason is that, Plato is also pre-occupied with the question of beauty there are very repeatedly very frequently takes up this example of beautiful objects. So, there are beautiful objects in this world and idea of beauty.

So, about beautiful objects this is from a Weber's book which is referred in the end of this lecture. As Weber says, they are fair today fall tomorrow, fair at one place or in one relation or in point of view or to one person fall under different circumstances and in the judgment of other persons. Hence, everything in the world of phenomenal beauty is relative fleeting and uncertain. It reminds me a Shakespeare's famous statement, "fair is foul and foul is fair in his Macbeth everything fair is foul and foul is fair". So, the world is completely uncertain this world of uncertainty is we are leaving, but when you enter

the domain of ideal beauty, it is ever lasting without beginning and without end; without diminution and without decay; invariable, immutable and absolute; it is beautiful in all its relations and from all points of view; it is beautiful at all times and in all places and for all persons; it is pure and pure and unalloyed, and therefore transcends the power of imagination.

So, you can see the contrast the oneness is a domain of unrealities, relative entities the other one is, everlasting absolute entities. Now proper ideas, what do you mean by ideas? As Plato says, ideas are real beings; they are the only real beings and they are more; they are definitely more real than the objects of senses; they only true realities, they are the only true realities and they alone are real. They are the eternal patterns after which the things of sense are made and on the other hand the phenomenal world is constituted that of objects which have only a borrowed existence, they are mere copies of their world of ideas they receive their reality from the ideas I have already mentioned all these things.

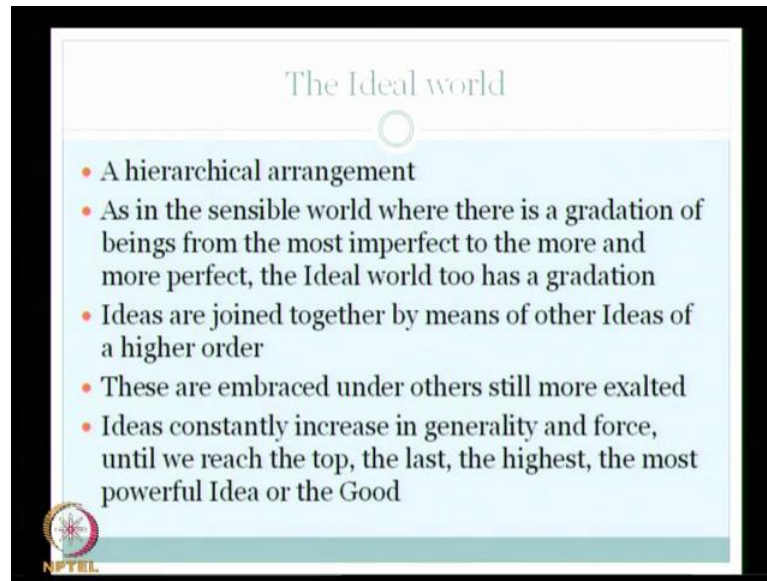
(Refer Slide Time: 35:30)



Only a symbol, an allegory or a figure of speech they exist not in themselves, but as reflections of their ideas they do not have independent existence at all, they are mere copies, they are shadows, they have no reality other than that which they receive from these ideas.



(Refer Slide Time: 35:49)



And when you talk about the ideal world, this is a very important point to be understood, what is this real world Plato is talking about, what is it constitute. I have already mentioned that, it is constituted as ideas and there are as many ideas are as there are general terms in this world. So, we keep on inventing or rather invention is not the right world we keep on discovering new ideas with the discovery of new objects computer were not there earlier, but with the discovery of computer we are actually also discovering the idea of computer which eternally exist and Plato says that, the domain the world of ideas, the world of abstract essences or forms of ideas constitute a hierarchical arrangement, they form an a hierarchy.

So, what sort of a hierarchy? As in the sensible world where there is a gradation of beings from the most imperfect to the more and more perfect, the ideal world too has a gradation. So, here come some Plato encounter some difficulties here, because it recognizes the plurality of ideas there are a number of ideas plurality of ideas, how do they relate themselves with each other. So, he says that there is a hierarchy and once you say that they are relational one idea related to another, both of them become relative then they cannot be absolute in the philosophical sense of the term.

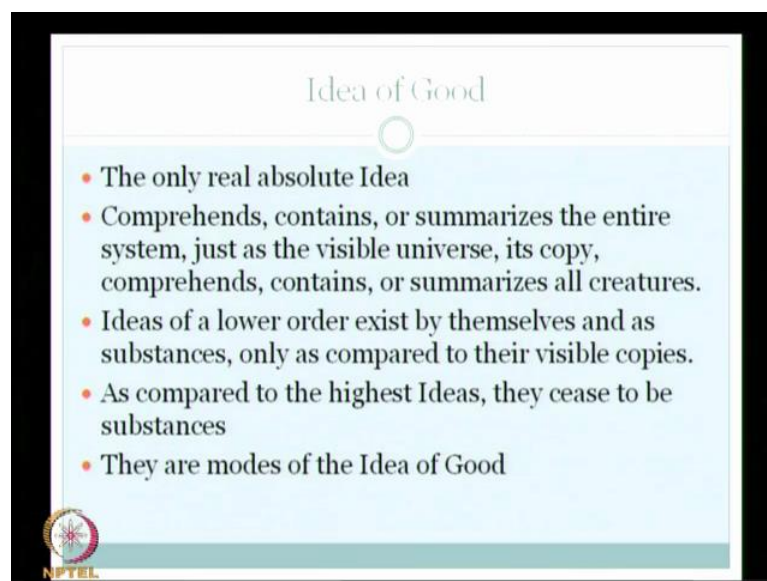
So, and also once you say that there is I mean they are hierarchical, there is an idea which is more real than other ideas or there is a gradation the more real on the top and then you come across lesser realities lesser real ideas. So, in that case it seems that the

ideas are losing their individuality; they are not individual ideas there. So, once you accept that they lose their individuality then, how can you claim, how can you assert their absolute status this is the question.

The ideas are joined together by means of other ideas of higher order this is what Plato says, these are embraced under others still more exalted ideas and ideas constantly increase in generality and force until we reach the top. So, there is a supreme idea there is an idea someone (Refer Time: 38:19), the objective of all ideas the goal of all ideas in the sense we can say, the top the last the highest the most powerful ideas which according to Plato is the idea of good. So, somewhere you can see that Plato takes us to the question to the ethical question and answer to the ethical question which you raised in the begging of his philosophy.

So, that ethical question is what is that ultimate objective of life? What is that ultimate objective of philosophical thinking? Philosophical thinking aims a truth, what is that truth and here Plato says that truth and knowledge are identical with good. So, truth consists or knowledge consists in knowing the goodness the idea of good, which is the last idea, what is that idea of good, the only real absolute idea that is only real absolute idea.

(Refer Slide Time: 39:10)



Idea of Good

- The only real absolute Idea
- Comprehends, contains, or summarizes the entire system, just as the visible universe, its copy, comprehends, contains, or summarizes all creatures.
- Ideas of a lower order exist by themselves and as substances, only as compared to their visible copies.
- As compared to the highest Ideas, they cease to be substances
- They are modes of the Idea of Good

NPTEL

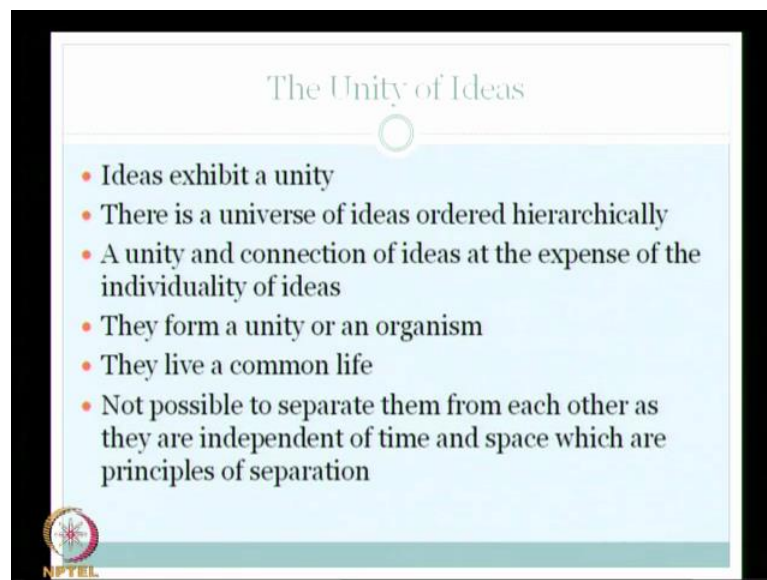
It comprehends contains or summarizes the entire system of ideas, entire system of reality just as the visible universe it is copy comprehends, contains or summarizes all



say, creatures in this world. Ideas of a lower order exist by themselves and as substances only as compared to their visible copies.

So, you can compare the absolute status of other ideas say for example, the idea of pen the absolute status of this the idea of motion, the idea of beauty any of these ideas you take they have a kind of substantial existence only when you compare them with the objects which are their copies. But the higher I mean, when you compare them with the highest ideas the idea of good they cease to have substantial existence, they cease to have substances, they are modes of the idea of good.

(Refer Slide Time: 40:21)

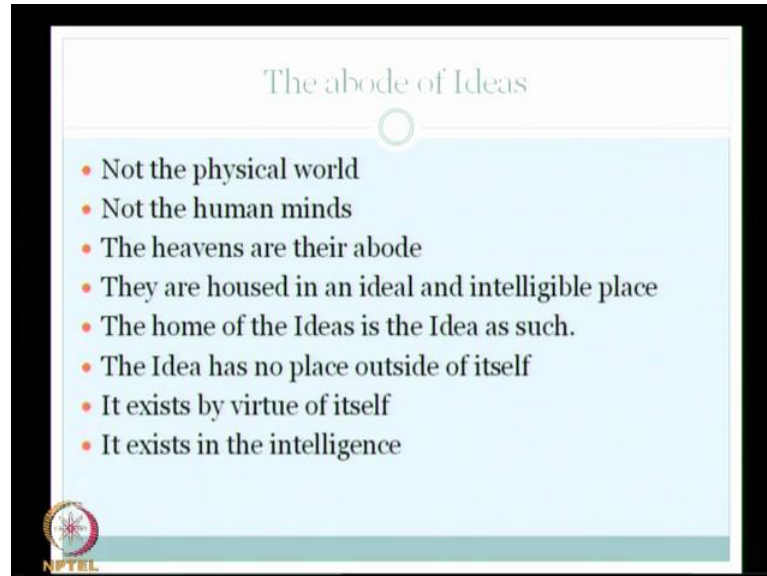


And here again to substantiate this view the hierarchy the (Refer Time: 40:24) hierarchical orderly of ideas Plato says that, the ideas or the ideas in the ideal world exhibit a unity, there is a universe of ideas ordered hierarchically, a unity and connection of ideas at the expense of the individuality of ideas, this is what I have mentioned. It is always done the unity established always at the expense of the individuality of these individual ideas, they form of a unity or an organism this is for Plato says.

So, they live a common life these ideas of a common life and it is not possible to separate them from each other as they are independent of time and space which are principles of separation. So, this is again very interesting to separate one thing from another you need space and time, separations happens at a time and two places, but ideas are independent

of space and time. So, no separation can be envisaged as per as ideas are concerned now the important question is the abode of ideas where do they exist.

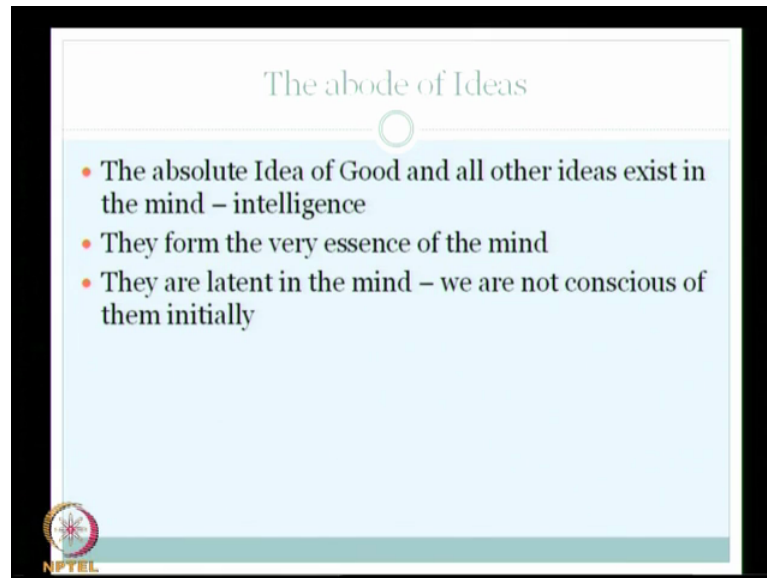
(Refer Slide Time: 41:38)



They do not exist in the physical world they do exist in the mind, but not in the individual mind as a subjective idea. They, the heavens are their abode this is what Plato says heaven of course, is a symbolic term here and he says that they are housed in an ideal and intelligible place.

So, you need an ideal and intelligible what is it? It is the abode of intellect the human mind of course, but not the subjective domain of human mind, but the domain which houses the universal rational intellectual aspects the home of ideas is the idea as such, it is not it cannot housed somewhere else because, it is self subsistent. So, the home of idea must be idea as such the idea has no place outside of itself it exist by virtue of itself, it exists in the intelligence and it can be known through the intelligence alone.

(Refer Slide Time: 42:39)



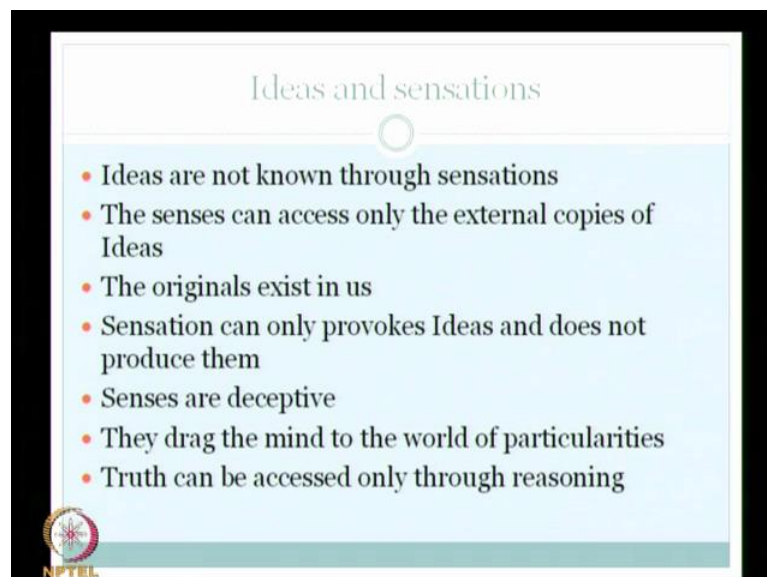
The abode of Ideas

- The absolute Idea of Good and all other ideas exist in the mind – intelligence
- They form the very essence of the mind
- They are latent in the mind – we are not conscious of them initially

NPTEL

Again the absolute idea of good and all other ideas exist in the mind which is the abode of the intelligence and they form the very essence of the mind. So, what is the human mind after all Plato would say that, the essence of human mind is constituted of these ideas, they are latent in the mind we are not conscious of them probably we are not conscious of them but they are there.

(Refer Slide Time: 43:03)



Ideas and sensations

- Ideas are not known through sensations
- The senses can access only the external copies of Ideas
- The originals exist in us
- Sensation can only provoke Ideas and does not produce them
- Senses are deceptive
- They drag the mind to the world of particularities
- Truth can be accessed only through reasoning

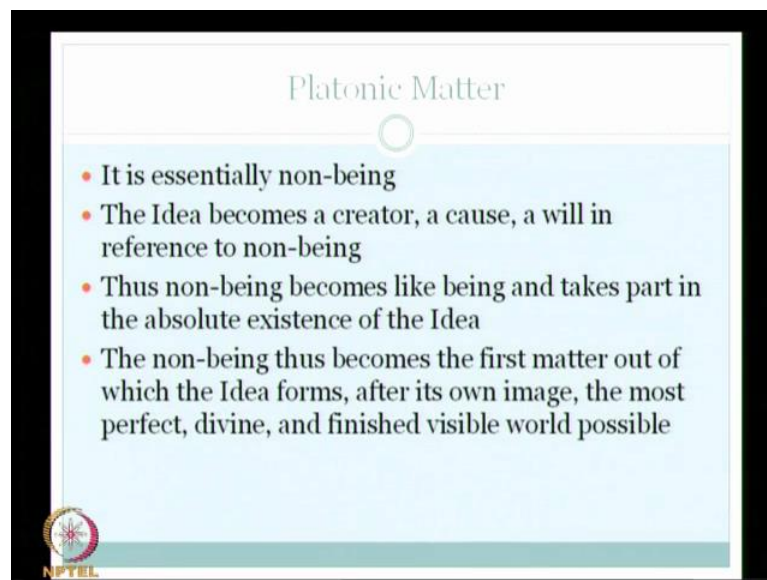
NPTEL

And when you try to understand the relationship between ideas and sensations Plato would say that, ideas are not known through sensations you cannot know them to

sensations. The senses can access only the external copies of ideas, only the images, only the shadows can be captured by the senses, but the original exist in us, he says. It is there in the intelligence, it is already there in the human mind only thing is you have to discover it or rediscover it. Sensation in an only provokes ideas and does not produce them, when you see individual pen, it can only provoke the idea, but it cannot perceive the idea. What it perceives the individual pen, but it provokes the universal idea. Senses are deceptive, this is the very basic principle in Platonic approach to philosophy the highly a suspicious about the abilities of senses to depart knowledge they drag the mind into the world of particularities.

So, this is something which we will examine when we discuss the cave analogy of Plato because the beautiful analogy brings out, how Plato's idealism, the theory of Plato's idealism with the help of certain analogies parables and all that. Truth can be accessed only through reasoning; this is the ultimate confusion of Plato's idealism can only being involved through reasoning and, whatever you talk about the material world it is essentially non-being.

(Refer Slide Time: 44:37)



The slide is titled "Platonic Matter" and contains a bulleted list of four points. The text is as follows:

- It is essentially non-being
- The Idea becomes a creator, a cause, a will in reference to non-being
- Thus non-being becomes like being and takes part in the absolute existence of the Idea
- The non-being thus becomes the first matter out of which the Idea forms, after its own image, the most perfect, divine, and finished visible world possible

The slide also features the NPTEL logo in the bottom left corner.

So, Plato calls that matrices essentially a non-entity, the idea becomes a creator this cause a will in reference to non-being and thus non-being becomes like being and takes part in the absolute existence of the idea. The non-being thus becomes the first matter out

of which the forms after it is own image the most perfect divine and finished visible world possible.

Now there are two things to be discussed which will reserve for the lecture. The most important thing is the parable of the cave and also the analogy of vision which we were planning to discuss in this lecture, which will reserve to the next lecture. And what is interesting is that, this conception about the previous slide we have discussed ideas and sensations where Plato denies the value of sensation and (Refer Time: 45:38) the important of ideas. As per as ides concerned, they can be known only through reason and here Plato envisages a method, the method is called as I already mentioned the method of dialectic. Which is derives it, develops it, derives the basic insides of this method to develop this method from the approaches of Socrates, but later on he develops a lot on this and develops a very consistent philosophical method very influential philosophical method which depends a lot on dialogue conversation which consider other people as important.

So, all these things we will reserve for the next lecture, now we have discuss in this lecture we have summarized, we have given a very basic understanding of what theory of ideas are. The points to be remembered as number one, ideas are absolutely realities they are not images. Number two, the world of objects the world of particular objects or this particular objects are all copies of the ideal objects, they are imitations of the ideal objects, they are imperfect imitations of the ideal objects because all copies and all imitations are bound to be imperfect. Number three, you can never know ideas through sensations or sense observations you can know ideas, only with the employment of reasoning only with the employment of intelligence. Number four, the world of senses have to be suspected which is contained in point number three.

So, these are some of the points to be noted, but the most important one is, the ideas themselves constitute a unity, they themselves constitute a universe where the ideas are hierarchically arranged hierarchically organized. On top of all these ideas you will find the idea of good which is the (Refer Time: 47:36) to which all other ideas are subjected to. So, in once sense Platonic idealism or Plato's theory of ideas announces the importance of goodness in human life and he says that goodness is the (Refer Time: 47:51) the most important idea and all other ideas are substitute under that. So, in one sense Plato's theory of ideas, is a theory of idea of goodness.

Thank you.