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# UGC NET - EDUCATION

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# Unit 1: Educational Studies

## Contribution of Indian Schools of philosophy

### INTRODUCTION

We often search for answers to open-ended questions such as does God exist? Why do human beings suffer pain? Why is there so much sickness and disease? What is knowledge? What is a value? Are values eternal? And so on. These questions that seek truth are philosophical questions. Philosophy is needed for properly understanding one's relationship with the external world; to free one from fear and from the primitive instinct of self-preservation; as well as to explore and develop one's innate potential and live in peace and happiness. Great spiritual leaders of the world have tried to give us answers to these questions. In this unit, we will try to introduce you to Indian philosophy: its aims and key concepts. Then, with the help of some examples, we will try to identify some of the values that are enshrined in Indian philosophy.

### Philosophy

The word Philosophy can be traced to the ancient Greek word "philosophia" which means "love of wisdom." Philosophy is the systematic study of basic ideas such as truth, existence, reality, freedom, thought and action, the universe and the role of the individual, the fundamental reason or cause of everything, and the meaning of life. Philosophers search for answers to these fundamental questions while adopting a rational and systematic approach. Philosophy is constituted by studies in many areas like -Metaphysics: pertaining to the nature of knowledge, truth and the like, Ethics, i.e. moral philosophy, is concerned with morality and values and is of immediate concern to us for this unit. There are also other branches of philosophy such as aesthetics, logic and so on. In this unit we shall discuss philosophy only in the context of values.

In a layman's language, philosophy could be interpreted as the outlook towards life and its complexities. It may be that you believe in honesty, hard work, not hurting others, being kind to all, having respect for elders, in putting up a fight against social injustice. These values and beliefs form the philosophy of your life. Your philosophy of life is therefore closely related to your values, the traditions that you follow and are related to your religious beliefs. However, in a secular country like India it is preferable to draw values from secular sources and those that are universally accepted rather than any one particular religion.

Western philosophy has many schools of thought which have evolved over period of time and so has the Indian philosophy. In this unit we shall restrict our discussion to Indian philosophy.

## **Indian philosophy**

Indian philosophy refers to different philosophical traditions of the Indian subcontinent from about B.C.1500 and continuing into the 20th century by individuals like Sri. Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi, Dr.S.Radhakrishnan, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Vivekananda, Mother Teresa, J. Krishnamurti among others. These include Hindu philosophy, Buddhist philosophy, and Jain philosophy. At a broader level, it also includes Bhakti tradition, Sikhism, Sufism and reactions to the influence of Islam, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism.

### **Important Concepts of Indian Philosophy**

Dharma, moksha, karma, and atman are important concepts of Indian philosophy. Dharma refers to the cosmic order as a whole, for which individuals have to perform their Karma i.e. action/duties correctly. Otherwise there is a breakdown of dharma or adharma. (In Buddhism, Dharma refers to the teachings of Buddha). Atman refers to soul or self.

Karma refers to action or duty. Moksha is salvation. These concepts are to be analyzed scientifically, rationally and not accepted blindly. All these four concepts are interrelated. e.g. the indiscriminate destruction of nature by man has led to an imbalance in nature which has created problems of global warming and unusual natural disasters. Since man has not performed his/her duties (karma) in preserving nature, there is imbalance of nature and the cosmic whole (dharma) is affected. A person is reborn to make amends for the wrong done in the earlier life. This brings us to the idea of sustainable development which also takes on a spiritual dimension.

The performance of duties correctly is an important value that is integral to the Indian philosophy. How can you perform your duties correctly? The Bhagavad Gita suggests that one should do the task, however small it is, with concentration, determination, fairness, honesty, with respect for each other and always conscious of the reason for doing something in a particular way. It is believed that each action has a positive or negative aspect and the correctness or lack of correctness of the action would influence the future lives one is born into. Therefore "as you sow, so you reap". The Gita also advises detachment from the results of the action taken and thus advises carrying out duties without worrying about the results.

Teachers can encourage students to apply this value of detachment in their lives. Students can be asked to identify their most important duty to themselves, their family, their teacher, school, friend, country. As students their primary duty is to study and perform well. If they concentrate in class, do their work regularly and

learn, then automatically good results will follow. There is a greater need to reflect on their effort, concentration, and performance and compete with themselves and not with others. (Cyril, 2005)

## **The Aim of Indian Philosophy**

Indian philosophy is often referred to as a 'darshana' which comes from the word 'drish' or 'to see' (Radhakrishnan, 2009). It is assumed that one, who follows it, should be able to "see" the truth. (Hamilton 2001) and lead life in accordance with the truth perceived. Some of the Indian Philosophical schools (Astik) believe in God while the Nastik schools of thought do not. Some schools of Indian philosophy are pro-Vedic like Sankhya, Yoga, Nyaya and Vaishesika, etc: The anti-Vedic schools of thought include Charvaka, Buddha and Jain philosophies. However, Indian philosophy has certain common features. For instance, its quest for spiritual progress is a predominant characteristic. Thus many Indian Philosophical schools believe in soul and the need for its enlightenment. It transcends thoughts, based on religion and those upholding merely ethics. Apart from seeking higher attainments like 'moksha', i.e. spiritual progress, Indian philosophy also seeks truth and knowledge, explains and upholds ethics. Thereby it is a source of morals and values to guide human life. Happiness is a key value and Indian philosophy offers strategies to ensure happiness.

Buddha suggested the eight fold path (Astanga Marga) as solution for all worldly troubles, pains and sorrows. It thus seeks liberation from vices, ignorance and worldly miseries. Though Indian philosophy emphasizes the need for individual (meditation) Sadhana for liberating the mind, at the same time it seeks universal Values Enshrined in Indian wellbeing. Philosophers like Shankara, Mahavira and Buddha, Gandhi, Tagore, Philosophy Sri Aurobindo, and many others were essentially social reformers.

Most of the Indian philosophies believe in the theory of karma. According to this theory, the results of actions (Karma) of this life and the past life direct the course of our life. Liberation is emancipation from the bondage of Karma. However there are exceptions. The Charvaka School does not believe in karma and rebirth. Hence, the word 'Dharma' in India has a wide connotation. Emancipation from miseries and ignorance is the common pursuit of both Darshan and Dharma. There is synergy between philosophy and religion.

## **HISTORY OF INDIAN PHILOSOPHY**

3300 years of Indian Philosophy: B.C. 1500 - 1800 A.D.

- (a) B.C.1500-B.C.500- the Vedas and Upanishads- Vedic period
- (b) B.C.600-200A.D.- the Jaina, the Buddha, the Bhagavad Gita, the Manu Smriti, the rise of the orthodox Darshanas- Epic period.
- (c) 200A.D. - Nagarjuna and the rise of Mahayana Buddhism -Sutra period.
- (d) 600 A.D. - Shankaracharya Scholastic period and the rise of Vedanta.
- (e) post-900 A.D. - rise of other Vedantic schools: Visishtadvaita, Dvaita, etc.

### **The Vedic Period**

The Vedic literature B.C.1500 - B.C.500 consists of (i) the Samhitas (ii) the Brahmanas (iii) the Aryanakas and Upanishads (Mazumdar, 1994). There are four main Samhitas or collection of hymns in praise of God-Rig Veda Samhitas, Atharva Veda Samhita, Sama Veda Samhita and Yajur Veda Samhita. The Rig Veda is a collection of 1028 hymns; the Atharva Veda is a collection of spells and charms; the Sama Veda is a collection of songs mostly from the Rig Veda and the Yajur Veda consisting of many sacrificial formulas, rituals. The word Veda means "knowledge". The Vedas developed over many centuries and was orally passed from generation to generation. Therefore the Vedas are also known as "Sruti" or 'that which is heard'. (Mazumdar, 1994)

The Vedas are a rich source of values for all and especially for the teaching community. 'Om. May [He] protect us both. May [Brahman] bestow upon us both the fruit of knowledge. May we both obtain energy to acquire knowledge? May what we both study reveal the truth. May we cherish no evil feeling towards each other? Om Peace! Peace! Peace!'<sup>4</sup>. Taittiriya Aranyaka, 8.1.1. This special prayer recognizes the special bond shared by teachers and students and the values of knowledge, truth, peace and harmony. While the Vedas encourage you to respect elders, it also encourages critical thinking and analysis. Honesty is immensely valued. 'Tread on the path of truth.' (11. Yajur Veda, 7.45). Students are to be consistently made aware of the need for the protection and preservation of nature. 'Earth is my mother; I am a son of the soil.' (21. Atharva Veda, 12.1.12) Citizenship and patriotism are key values which teachers can encourage in the students. 'Serve thy motherland.' (22. Rig Veda, 10.18.10)

## Different Schools of Indian Philosophy

Classical Indian philosophy can be divided into "orthodox" or astika and "heterodox" or nastika schools.

### (A) Orthodox Schools

There are six Orthodox schools of philosophy

- (i) Nyaya, the school of logic started by Aksapada Gautama in the Nyaya Sutra in B.C. 2<sup>nd</sup> century.
- (ii) Vaisheshika, the atomist school started in the B.C. 2<sup>nd</sup> - 41<sup>st</sup> century by Uluka Kanada in the Vaisheshika Sutra.
- (iii) Samkhya, the enumeration school founded by Kapila before B.C. 2<sup>nd</sup> century.
- (iv) Yoga, the school of Patanjali in the Yoga Sutra of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.
- (v) Purva Mimamsa, the interpretation of the Vedic text with emphasis on Vedic ritual. This began with the Sutras of Jaimini in B.C. 2<sup>nd</sup> century.
- (vi) Vedanta, based on the Upanishads with emphasis on Vedic philosophy. The Vedantas form the end of the Vedas. The basic Vedanta text is Badarayana's Brahma Sutras or Vedanta Sutra written in the beginning of the Christian era.

### (B) Heterodox schools

These do not accept the authority of the Vedas and are therefore described as Nastikas. These are Buddhism, Jainism and Carvakas.

## Nyaya and Vaisheshika- Philosophy and Values

- (a) The Nyaya school of Logic introduced a method based on scientific rules of reasoning, by which certain knowledge could be arrived at regarding the object of enquiry. Therefore the skill of logic and reasoning is developed and the values of verification, fairness, caution are encouraged.

There are 5 steps of Inference by which we can arrive at this knowledge. (a) Proposition of a Statement that has to be proved (b) Reason (c) Example (d) Application (e) Conclusion.

The following example will help you understand this better. (a) Proposition: - There is a fire on the mountain. (b) Reason:-Because there is smoke above it. (c) Example:-Where there is smoke, there is fire as in the kitchen. (d)Application: - This is the case with the mountain. (e) Conclusion:-There is a fire on it. More importantly, this enquiry could only be made under certain conditions (a) An enquiry was to be undertaken only when a doubt existed, (b) there was the possibility of a certain outcome, (c) there was a proper purpose for the enquiry and (d) it must contribute to the highest good.



When there is a conflict we can use these parameters to deal with it. We can use the five steps of inference to prove a statement, both in academics and in practical life. This also shows the values of organization, purpose and clarification. Teachers are to encourage students to think critically, be non-judgemental and develop a scientific temper through different methods e.g. project work, debates, brainstorming activities.

- (b) Vaisheshika School of individual characteristics deals with physics and the basic idea that nature is atomic. Nature is made up of atoms which are separate from the soul. Therefore there is "dualism" or the existence of two separate parts-matter and soul. Substances and qualities co-exist. For instance a rose cannot exist without the quality of color; therefore 'a red rose'. Vaisheshika gives us a six-fold view of perception. (i) substance - e.g. Jumbo, the dog (ii) quality-color, shape (iii) action-barking (iv) part of a larger family: dogs (v) uniqueness-maybe it has a white patch in the centre of its forehead (vi) unification or synthesis of all these 5 features leads to recognizing Jumbo the dog. This is especially useful in the teaching of science, mathematics, geography. Values of uniqueness and individualism are recognized and a strong sense of identity develops. Through both synthesis and analysis we can understand both ourselves and the world around us.

## **Samkhya and Yoga - Philosophy and Values**

### **(a) Samkhya**

The Samkhya school of enumeration of Kapila is one of the oldest of the six darshanas and the first rational system in the world. The Samkhya Karika begins by stating, "it is because of the anguish of suffering that the desire arises to know how to overcome it". To overcome suffering, a special kind of knowledge is required which helps us to discriminate. Through analysis and discernment one overcomes suffering. Values of learning and discernment are stressed. There are 25 basic tattvas or principles of the universe and it describes the methods by which we can know and analyze these principles and their nature. Samkhya philosophy claims that the effect lies in the cause, e.g. drop a glass and it breaks into pieces. If you had not dropped it, then the glass would not have broken. From this example, it can be inferred that an individual has to take responsibility for his/her own action. The teacher has to nurture the best potential of the student. This can be achieved if the teacher uses different learning strategies to develop the multiple intelligences of the child.

According to Samkhya philosophy, our perception is limited to our five senses and learning has to take place experientially using these five senses. Learning should be open-ended, experiential, based on reason. Accordingly, teachers

should incorporate hands-on learning, projects, debates, discussion, drama, exhibitions as much as possible.

In a world of change, happiness is the result of a temporary relation to certain things which produces a favorable condition in our mind at that point of time. Once, we accept that absolute happiness is not possible; we can discipline ourselves to have fewer expectations and consequently be less disappointed. According to Samkhya philosophy, only a healthy and focused individual can attain salvation. Therefore science, arts and yoga are integral to the curriculum.

### **(b) Yoga**

The word "yoga" comes from the Sanskrit word "yuj" or 'to yoke' or 'to attach yourself to the task at hand with great discipline' (Hamilton, 2001); unite the mind and body; individual and God. The school of Yoga lays more stress on spiritual discipline or application. We are led astray by our senses; yoga helps us to attain control, calm and gain inner perception. The aim of yoga is to control the activities of the mind "citta-vritti-nirodha". (Yoga Sutra 1.1-2) The training of the yogi was divided into 8 stages in the Raja Yoga which included self control, observance, posture, pranayama or control of breath, restraint of the mind by concentration on a single object, meditation and deep meditation. Yoga is a life-long discipline and the earlier the child is introduced to it, all the better. Yoga increases self-discipline, self-control, concentration, reduces stress and enables one to control emotions.

## **Mimamsa and Vedanta: Philosophy and Values**

### **(a) Mimamsa**

By the 8th century A.D., the Mimamsa School had merged with the Vedanta.

Mimamsa philosophy (darshana) was different from all the other schools for it was a school of enquiry and not a school of salvation. Its original purpose was to explain the Vedas.

### **(b) The Vedantas**

The Vedantas form the end of the Vedas and are the most important of the six darshanas. Many features of modern Hinduism and philosophy are taken from the Vedantas and its sub-schools. In the 8<sup>th</sup> century A.D, Sankara's commentaries on Badarayana's Brahma Sutras introduced the concept of 'Advaita' non-duality or monism (i.e. allowing no second). There is only one being and that is Brahman, who is the essence of one Universe. Everything is Brahman and therefore one's self or atman is also Brahman, "atman is Brahman". There are two kinds of truths-conventional and absolute. At the everyday level of truth, the world was created by Brahman and gradually evolved. But at the

highest level, truth was that the world including the gods was unreal; an illusion, the only reality was Brahman. Ankara gives a simple example to explain this. A traveler saw a coiled rope, and thought it was a snake. The false snake seemed real to him and had a real effect on him. He probably began to sweat, his throat became dry, and his heart beat faster. He was frightened and only when he actually touched the rope, that his false idea was removed and he stopped being fearful. Therefore our ignorance causes the false idea. It is only when our ignorance is removed, that we realize the absolute truth. This desire for knowledge, the need to ask questions, seek answers is to be inculcated in the students by appropriate tools of pedagogy. Students are to be motivated to read and develop a love for books, fiction and non-fiction; analyze the information, do research in their lesson planning. Teachers are to schedule debates, discussions, critical questions, interactive sessions; enabling the students to arrive at their own conclusions and make informed decisions. In this way many prejudices and superstitions can be removed and the students will emerge as more responsible citizens.

## **Visistadvaita and the Upanishads - Philosophy and Values**

### **(a) Visistadvaita**

In the Pancaratra system, the soul is one with God but also exists separately. This was further developed by Ramanuja, in the 11th- 12th century A.D. He developed the concept of bhakti yoga, through intense devotion, the devotee realizes that he is a part of God and surrenders himself or herself completely to God. The soul is one with God but separate as well. Therefore his system is known as the "Visistadvaita" system or "qualified monism". The relationship is between the Brahman, the God and the individual devotee. Just as a rose cannot exist without color so Brahman cannot exist without the 'selves' or the devotee who is His creation. Through the practice of Yoga - Karmayoga (yoga of work), Jnanyoga (yoga of knowledge) and Bhaktiyoga (yoga of devotion) a person can attain salvation. Vedanta is still a "living school". Among its many followers are Sri Aurobindo, Swami Vivekananda, and Dr.S.Radhakrishnan. In 1893, Vivekananda introduced the concept of Advaita Vedanta as Hinduism to the West, at the World Council of Religions in Chicago. (Hamilton 2001) and in setting up the Ramakrishna Mission.

### **(b) The Upanishads**

The Upanishads are believed to have been revealed by the Gods.

Upanishad is a Sanskrit word derived from 'Upa' which means 'near', 'ni' meaning 'down', and 'sad' meaning 'to sit'. One "sits down near" a spiritual

teacher or 'guru' as in the 'Guru-shishya tradition'. Students are to become familiar with the concept of a loving and a forgiving God. Students can be encouraged to relate to God in their own ways; maybe as a friend whom they can talk to daily and share their joys and sorrows.

Teachers may plan activities which instill all the four values while teaching. Visits to or exhibitions on historical places of worship can be organized. Students can initiate and become involved in small service activities e.g. organise a mela for 30 poor children of the locality.

### **The Heterodox Schools - Philosophy and Values**

These schools do not accept the authority of the Vedas and God and are therefore described as Nastikas. These are Buddhism, Jainism and Carvakas. Buddhism and Jainism challenged the predominance of the Brahmins in Indian society; economics and politics. These were two of the many protest movements of B.C. 6th century.

#### **Buddhism**

Buddhist philosophy is a system of beliefs based on the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, later known as the Buddha. Buddhism is a religion that stresses on religious tolerance. In Buddhist philosophy, the three features of the universe are known as 'the three marks of existence'. Yet, there is no immortal soul (dhammapada 277-9)

#### **Jainism**

Jainism is one of the world's oldest religions. The 24th Tirthankara, in B.C. 550 in Bihar in northern India, was a contemporary of Gautama Buddha. The Jain philosophy is based on the idea that one has to conquer the negative aspects of human nature in order to realize the truth. The interaction between Jiva (living) and the Ajiva (non-living such as chair, tables) is responsible for the evolution of the universe. When the soul is stripped of all its Ajiva bondage, it becomes pure and attains liberation (Mukti). Jainism stresses on self-discipline, self-control; positive thinking in its disciples. It values non-violence and gives dignity and respect even to non-living objects.

## **BHAKTI. SIKHISM. ISLAM AND SUFISM. AND CHRISTIANITY**

### **Bhakti**

The Bhakti movement in India, from 7th -13th century A.D, gave more importance to devotion and practice of values than rituals. It is very important to realize that devotion to one God did not mean that you could not worship another. In this way it encouraged tolerance and love for all religions. Famous Bhakti saints are Shankaracharya, Ramanuja, Ramananda, Kabir, Srichaitanya, and Mirabai. The bhakti movement focused on the values of love, devotion and tolerance.

### **Sikhism**

Sikhism was started by Guru Nanak. It was based on bhakti and rejected the supremacy of the Brahmins. Guru Nanak's teaching is practiced in three ways: Chanting (Naam Japna) the Holy Name and thus remembering God at all times, ceaseless devotion to God, Earning (Kirat Karo) or making a living honestly without exploitation or fraud and Sharing with others (Vand Chakko), helping those in need. Nanak believed in the oneness of God, the Muslim God, Allah and the Hindu God.

### **Islam**

When Islam was introduced in India by the Muslims in the 8th century A.D. both Hinduism and Islam had co-existed for centuries. The Mughal Emperor Akbar's 'Din-i-Ilahi' was an attempt to form a new religious policy taking the best practices of all religions. In Islam from the 8th -12th centuries A.D., two main philosophical thoughts were (a) Kalam, which dealt with Islamic theological questions, and (b) Falsafa, that was influenced by the Greek philosophy of Aristotle and Plato. In Islam washing oneself before prayers, regularity of prayers, fasting in the month of Ramzan and zakat or an obligatory payment for charitable purposes are very important. Therefore the values of cleanliness, fasting and charity are highlighted.

### **Sufism**

The highest example of Islamic philosophy is Sufism. Sufism developed in India in the 13th - 15th centuries A.D. It is the mystical aspect of Islam and was influenced by the Greek philosophy of Aristotle and Plato. Sufis believed that all religions are 'the manifestation of the desire to know the truth'. In Sufism, devotees seek divine love and knowledge through the direct personal experience of God with the help of a Pir or guru. It says that through self-control and loving devotion to God it is possible to unite with God. Some famous Sufi saints are Nizamuddin Auliya, Nasiruddin Chirag, and Khwaja Moinuddin Chisti.

## **Christianity**

Christianity in India is believed to have started as early as 52 A.D. In Christian philosophy God is the beginning and the end. There is nothing greater than God. Christians believe in the idea of the Holy Trinity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. While God has given human beings the gifts of intelligence and free will, man is living in a state of wrong doing from which s/he has to be saved or redeemed. This salvation or redemption is possible only through Jesus Christ who died on the cross to save mankind. The concept of resurrection and eternal life after death is essential to Christianity. 'Love thy neighbor as thyself', 'forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us' is an essential part of the Lord's Prayer. Therefore, honesty, forgiveness, and freedom to make choices these are some of the important values of Christianity.

## **MODERN INDIAN PHILOSOPHY**

In the 19th century AD. there were major socio-religious reform movements in India. For the first time, Indians were exposed to the liberal Western philosophy of Bentham, Mill, and Locke. A pioneer of the Bengal Renaissance, Raja Rammohan Roy set up the Brahmo Samaj. Those who contributed to Indian philosophy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century were Rabindranath Tagore, Mohammad Iqbal, Sri Aurobindo Ghosh, Mahatma Gandhi, and Dr.S.Radhakrishnan. Rabindranath Tagore placed love above knowledge and society above the state. Mahatma Gandhi firmly believed in "Truth is God" and not "God is Truth". He lived out his principle of Ahimsa or non-violence in thought, word and deed. He used it effectively in politics and in his fight against social, economical and political injustice. The values of rationalism, equality, individualism underlying western philosophy influenced modern Indian thinkers. The oneness of god, love, service, perfection, truth, non-violence are essential values of modern Indian philosophy.

## Contribution of Western schools of thoughts

### Idealism

The philosophical doctrine that stems from the category of thought associated with ideas is 'idealism'. Generally derived from the Greek word 'idein' meaning 'to see'. The notion that reality of everything lies in ideas, thought, & mind not in material thing. Idealists are understood to represent the world as it might or should be, unlike pragmatists, who focus on the world as it presently is. In the arts, similarly, idealism affirms imagination and attempts to realize a mental conception of beauty, a standard of perfection, juxtaposed to aesthetic naturalism and realism. Idealism originates with Plato, the third-century BC thinker, who believed that there is an objective truth, expressed through the unchanging world of the 'Forms'. Plato's thinking has significant implications for ideas about education and knowledge. According to Plato, to be morally good is to possess true knowledge. But the process of acquiring true knowledge is painful, because most of us are chained to the world of the senses, unable to look beyond. Clear-sightedness and knowledge involves overcoming prejudice and ignorance after rigorous mental and ideological training (Republic Bk VII). From that time until now, idealism has been a dominant philosophical influence to our society. Even though idealism is not as strong as it was before, it is still alive in certain areas such as contemporary religious studies and certain aspects of moral philosophy.

Idealism is the philosophical theory that maintains that the ultimate nature of reality is based on mind or ideas. It holds that the so-called external or real world is inseparable from mind, consciousness, or perception. Idealism is any philosophy which argues that the only things knowable are consciousness or the contents of consciousness; not anything in the outside world, if such a place actually exists. Indeed, idealism often takes the form of arguing that the only real things are mental entities, not physical things and argues that reality is somehow dependent upon the mind rather than independent of it. Some narrow versions of idealism argue that our understanding of reality reflects the workings of our mind, first and foremost, that the properties of objects have no standing independent of minds perceiving them.

Besides, the nature and identity of the mind in idealism upon which reality is dependent is one issue that has divided idealists of various sorts. Some argue that there is some objective mind outside of nature; some argue that it is simply the common power of reason or rationality; some argue that it is the collective mental faculties of society; and some focus simply on the minds of individual human beings. In short, the main tenant of idealism is that ideas and knowledge are the truest reality. Many things in the world change, but ideas and knowledge are enduring.

Idealism was often referred to as idea-ism. Idealists believe that ideas can change lives. The most important part of a person is the mind. It is to be nourished and developed.

To achieve an adequate understanding of idealism, it is necessary to examine the works of selected outstanding philosophers usually associated with this philosophy. No two philosophers ever agree on every point, so to understand idealism or any other school of properly, it is wise to examine the various approaches of individual philosophers. This will be accomplished by an exploration of three areas: Platonic idealism, religious idealism, and modern idealism and its characteristics.

- Platonic idealism - there exists a perfect realm of form and ideas and our world merely contains shadows of that realm; only ideas can be known or have any reality;
- Religious idealism - this theory argues that all knowledge originates in perceived phenomena which have been organized by categories.
- Modern idealism - all objects are identical with some idea and the ideal knowledge is itself the system of ideas.

### **Platonic Idealism**

Plato was a Greek philosopher during the 3rd century B.C.E. - a student of Socrates and teacher of Aristotle. Platonism is an ancient school of philosophy founded by Plato. At the beginning, this school had a physical existence at a site just outside the walls of Athens called the Academy, as well as the intellectual unity of a shared approach to philosophizing. Platonic idealism usually refers to Plato's theory of forms or doctrine of ideas, the exact philosophical meaning of which is perhaps one of the most disputed questions in higher academic philosophy. Plato held the realm of ideas to be absolute reality. Plato's method was the dialectic method - all thinking begins with a thesis; as exemplified in the Socratic dialogues. Its main doctrine is that the objects of our thoughts constitute the ultimate and eternal reality. The reality is physically perceived is but a shadow of that. Plato's argument that the real world is the same as the world of ideas played a great role in the later development of western religion. Some critics hold Plato argued that truth is an abstraction. In other words, we are urged to believe that Plato's theory of ideas is an abstraction, divorced from the so-called external world, of modern European philosophy; despite the fact Plato taught that ideas are ultimately real and different from non-ideal things.

According to Platonic idealism, there exists a perfect realm of form and ideas and our world merely contains shadows of that realm. Plato was a follower of Socrates, a truly innovative thinker of his time, who did not record his ideas, but shared them orally through a question and answer approach. Plato presented his ideas in two



works: The Republic and Laws. He believed in the importance of searching for truth because truth was perfect eternal. He wrote about separating the world of ideas from the world of matter. Ideas are constant, but in the world of matter, information and ideas are constantly changing because of their sensory nature. Therefore Plato's idealism suggested moving from opinion to true knowledge in the form of critical discussions, or the dialectic. Since at the end of the discussion, the ideas or opinions will begin to synthesize as they work closer to truth. Knowledge is a process of discovery that can be attained through skilful questioning. For example, a particular tree, with a branch or two missing, possibly alive, possibly dead, and with the initials of two lovers carved into its bark, is distinct from the abstract form of tree-ness. A tree is the ideal that each of us holds that allows us to identify the imperfect reflections of trees all around us.

Platonism is considered to be in mathematics departments all over the world, regarding the predominant philosophy of mathematics as the foundations of mathematics. One statement of this philosophy is the thesis that mathematics is not created but discovered. The absence in this thesis is of clear distinction between mathematical and non-mathematical creation that leaves open the inference that it applies to supposedly creative endeavors in art, music, and literature. Plato held Pythagoras together with the Pythagorean theorem in high regard, where Pythagoras as well as his followers in the movement known as Pythagoreanism claimed the world was literally built up from numbers; an abstract and absolute form. Plato believed in the importance of state involvement in education and in moving individuals from concrete to abstract thinking. He believed that individual differences exist and that outstanding people should be rewarded for their knowledge. With this thinking came the view that girls and boys should have equal opportunities for education. In Plato's utopian society there were three social classes of education: workers, military personnel, and rulers. He believed that the ruler or king would be a good person with much wisdom because it was only ignorance that led to evil.

## **Religious Idealism**

Religion and idealism are closely attached. Judaism, the originator of Christianity, and Christianity were influenced by many of the Greek philosophers that hold idealism strongly. Saint Augustine of Hippo, a bishop, a confessor, a doctor of the church, and one of the great thinkers of the Catholic Church discussed the universe as being divided into the City of God and the City of Man. The City of God was governed by truth and goodness whereas The City of Man was governed by the senses. This parallels Plato's scheme of the world of ideas and the world of matter. Religious thinkers believed that man did not create knowledge, but discovered it.

Augustine, like Plato did not believe that one person could teach another. Instead, they must be led to understanding through skilful questioning. Religious idealists see individuals as creations of God who have souls and contain elements of godliness that need to be developed.

Augustine was connected the philosophy of Platonists and Neo-Platonist with Christianity. For instance, he saw the World of Ideas as the City of God and the World of Matter as the City of Man. He interpreted the pagan idea of the Good as God and matter as man: evil. Plato believed in absolute truth based on science and reason whereas Augustine believed in irrational faith in God. Augustine also saw parallels with the ideas of rediscovery of knowledge - the fall of Adam, the origin of knowledge - God created it, and educational philosophy: worldly knowledge was wrong, faith over reason. He believed that faith based knowledge is determined by the church and all true knowledge came from God.

According to Ozmon & Craver, 2008 today one can see the tremendous influence religious idealism has had on American education. Early Christians implemented the idea of systematic teaching, which was used consistently throughout new and established schools. Many Greek and Jewish ideas about the nature of humanity were taught. For centuries, the Christian church educated generations with Idealist philosophy. In addition, idealism and the Judeo-Christian religion were unified in European culture by the Middle Ages and thereafter. Augustine was also very influential in the history of education where he introduced the theory of three different types of students and instructed teachers to adapt their teaching styles to each student's individual learning style. The three different kinds of students are:

- (a) The student who has been well-educated by knowledgeable teachers;
- (b) The student who has had no education; and
- (c) The student who has had a poor education, but believes himself to be well educated.

If a student has been well educated in a wide variety of subjects, the teacher must be careful not to repeat what they have already learned, but to challenge the student with material which they do not yet know thoroughly. With the student who has had no education, the teacher must be patient, willing to repeat things until the student understands and sympathetic. Perhaps the most difficult student, however, is the one with an inferior education who believes he understands something when he does not. Augustine stressed the importance of showing this type of student the difference between having words and having understanding and of helping the student to remain humble with his acquisition of knowledge.