

## **CHAPTER-6**

### **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

In the history of Western Philosophy we may find a wide range of quite opposite views as answer to the question ‘What is metaphysics?’ As a branch of philosophy, metaphysics has always been a domain of criticism. Many philosophers from ancient period to modern period said in favour of the ‘Possibility of Metaphysics’ although there are some other group of philosophers who said against the ‘Possibility of Metaphysics’. In a sense, we have also tried to find out a possible answer to the said question that is ‘What is Metaphysics?’ by searching the possibility of metaphysics in Philosophical discourses. It will not be wrong to say that metaphysics is one of the most ancient branches of Philosophy. The essence of metaphysics can be seen in the philosophy of some Cosmologist thinkers, like Thales, though at that time metaphysics was not developed as a systematic branch of Philosophy as we find it today. It is claimed that in Aristotle’s Philosophy metaphysics has first appeared as a systematic branch of philosophy. Aristotle has done metaphysics under the name of ‘First Philosophy’. For Aristotle, ‘First Philosophy’ is the study which deals with

the most basic principles or most fundamental presuppositions of all the other sciences. As for example, Physics, presupposes the 'principle of causation', but never judges the validity of that principle. In a sense it is not under its jurisdiction, but itself is based on that principle. If it tries to judge the validity of that principle then it commits either the 'fallacy of Vicious Circle' or the 'fallacy of Infinite Regresses'. So the basic principles of other departmental sciences must be judged by a discipline which needs no further justification. For Aristotle that self-justified study is 'First Philosophy'. So, for many thinkers, the essence and purpose of Aristotle's metaphysics can be found in his doctrine of 'First Philosophy.' In Aristotle's writings we find that, his metaphysical concern primarily centred in to the search for the meaning of 'Being qua-being'. In other words, we may say that his main metaphysical concern is to find out the meaning of 'existence'. So following Aristotle, we may say that metaphysics is a branch of Philosophy that deals with the most fundamental principles of life and world as it aims to explore the true nature of existence. Thus, many fundamental questions become important in the domain of metaphysics, like 'what does it mean to be free?', 'what is the meaning of life?' etc. Michael Rea has given a number of important questions that is asked and analyzed by the metaphysicians. As he says, —Metaphysics is not just about what is fundamental. Historically, the following questions have

been almost universally acknowledged as falling within the domain of metaphysics:

- Is Change really Possible? If so, what does it mean to say that something has changed?
- Can the past be changed? ...
- Are there nonphysical things? If so, could they causally interact with physical things?
- Are human beings free? Is freedom even possible?...<sup>»lxii</sup>

However, we have seen in the discussion of our previous chapters that the metaphysical doctrines have been criticized by a large number of philosophers, in different periods of the history of time. The classical Greek sceptics said that metaphysical knowledge is not possible because for them knowledge itself is not possible. So the sceptic's position is quite problematic, as we live our life by believing that we have certain knowledge about certain things which help us to sustain our life in this world.

The logical Positivist thinkers are considered as the radical critic of Metaphysics. For them, metaphysics is completely a meaningless discipline as the sentences that constitute the whole body of metaphysics is itself meaningless. The positivist thinkers like Moritz Schlick and Waismann

hold that the meaning of the metaphysical sentences are not verifiable in empirical method, thus it is meaningless. Whereas the positivist thinker like Rudolf Carnap and A.J. Ayer thinks metaphysical sentences fail to fulfil the basic criteria, i.e. the logical, grammatical rules of any meaningful sentence. They tried to see verification principle as a helping tool to find out whether a sentence fulfils the logical, grammatical rules or not. As R.W. Ashby says, —...the logical positivist may regard the verifiability principle as a decision or recommendation or prescription for the use of the expressions —cognitive meaning” and —understanding.” He may claim that this decision prevents radical confusion and helps to promote clarity in the discussion of many philosophical questions. As we shall see, Carnap took this view of the status of the verifiability requirement, and Ayer takes the same view in his most recent remarks on the subject.”<sup>lxiii</sup> Thus for a logical positivist, metaphysics deals with supernatural objects like God, soul etc. and it must be completely eliminated from the domain of Philosophy. So if we sum up the views of logical positivist against the metaphysics then we can see that the logical positivists have rejected metaphysics on the following grounds ( i)the metaphysical sentences are fail to fulfil the logic of language (ii) most of the metaphysical concepts are not verifiable through empirical means.

The doctrine of the logical positivists will be true if we consider that logic and empirical verification method are the highest and only absolute authentic method of doing Philosophy. But we have seen in the discussion of our fourth chapter that the methods of logical positivists are not the absolute authentic method. Moreover in this context we may specially mention the name of Heidegger who says that through logic and logical language we are not be able to grasp the whole range of human endeavour. The post-structuralist and post-modern thinkers like Derrida, and Foucault etc. have questioned the validity of reason and logic in understanding every aspect of human life, society and world. They have criticised the modernist project of ‘Enlightenment’ which considers reason and logic as the highest authority to judge the every single phenomena of this world. In defining the modernist project of Enlightenment Peter Barry says that —Thiso-called Enlightenment ‘project’ is the fostering of this belief that a break with tradition, blind habit, and slavish obedience to religious precepts and prohibitions, coupled with the application of reason and logic by the disinterested individual, can bring about a solution to the problems of society.’<sup>xxiv</sup>

The modernist thinkers try to encompass the human life into the frame of reason and logic. So whatever will not be fitted into this frame of reason and logic seems irrational, abnormal, misleading, mysterious, meaningless etc. in modernist terminology and thus must be avoided to live a meaningful

life. For Derrida and Foucault if we tend to see things through this modernist glass of reason and logic then we may leave many essential aspects, questions concerning life like justice, progress etc. behind. The absolute dependency upon the modernist project of 'Enlightenment' can make us subject to the laws of reason and logic, which ultimately makes us unable to reach into the realm which is still untouched by the reason and logic. The power of pure speculation gives human beings so many advances in life to revel in such realm, which has a tremendous effect in our life, as for example we may here mention the Platonic 'doctrine of Ideas' or 'the idea of Justice'. It is needless to say the platonic doctrine of ideas is metaphysical doctrine which can't be explained through the logical language of the logical positivist thinkers. Most of the logical positivist thinkers would at least say that Plato's doctrine of idea is a fruit of Plato's irrational speculation which can be easily proved meaningless by their method of verification. But are they able to explain the influence and impact of his 'doctrine ideas' in the work of the later philosophers or upon institutional religion like Christianity? Whenever we are just trying to ignore such doctrine as a meaningless doctrine like the logical positivist we are just leaving aside this such questions which seems important to understand our position into this world. There are so many concepts and elements exists into this world which primarily seems irrational as it is not

verifiable through logical/empirical means but have an incredible role in shaping our life.

Reason, Logic and empirical method are the most important and popular tool to understand, interpret, demonstrate any philosophical concept as well as to solve many philosophical problem. But they have their limitations too. Sometimes reason and logic fails to define the emotive aspect of human nature. Human beings are not just rational being they have emotions too. The emotional aspect of human nature often lead the life of human beings into that glorious path of life like sacrificing one's life for the sake of the greater human purpose. That nature of human psyche often also helps human beings to find the meaning of their life in writing poetry or drawing paintings. It is needless to say the creative aspects of human psyche are highly influenced by the emotive aspect of human nature. It is really hard to grasp, interpret the inner psyche through the framework of logic, empirical method. It is really hard to draw the picture of any one's emotion only through the colour of logic which is one of the key factors behind various short human endeavours. Here we are not denying the role of logic and empirical method from the domain of philosophy but we are trying to showcase that there are other factors exists besides the reason and logic which lead and guide our life in order to live a meaningful life. The existentialist philosophers have very successfully showcased the limitations

of logic in understanding the one of the most fundamental philosophical concept i.e. existence (Being).

If we concentrate upon the history of western Philosophy then we can see that the importance of metaphysical discourse has been always felt by the western philosopher's right from the pre-Socratic philosophers. Yes it is true that often metaphysics has been defined and understood wrongly by the Western thinkers. The body of metaphysics has been contaminated when it defined as the study of supernatural beings by the logical positivist. Indeed metaphysics does not concern with any such super natural phenomena. Metaphysics tries to explore the base, foundation of certain important phenomena related to life and world, like truth, meaning of life etc.

In history of western philosophy such metaphysical questions have continuously been asked and discussed by many philosophers like, Descartes, Leibnitz, Kant, Heidegger, Sartre etc. Descartes is well known for his metaphysical discourse. If we look back into the history of Modern Western Philosophy, we may see that the father of modern philosophy Rene Descartes meditates upon the Aristotelian conception of First Philosophy in order to establish philosophy as mathematics. He does not think that metaphysics is meaningless discourse. Rather he thinks that the true spirit of Philosophy can only be attained by analysing things metaphysically. It

will not be wrong if we say that it is Descartes who has raised some fundamental metaphysical questions like ‘mind-body problem’ in the beginning of modern era of western philosophy. In later times many philosophers like Spinoza, Leibnitz and Malebranche etc. have found the relevance of asking and continuing the discussion of the same metaphysical questions which is raised by Descartes, in his philosophy.

Often the name of David Hume and Immanuel Kant are considered as the opponents of metaphysics. It is generally believed that Hume and Kant have rejected metaphysics as a meaningless discourse. But if we go through their work properly then we may realise that they hold quite a different position concerning the nature of metaphysics. In a sense we may say that they have tried to make reform in the body of metaphysics rather to eliminate it as a meaningless discourse within the domain of Philosophy. The empiricist philosopher like David Hume also criticised metaphysics. He made a distinction between two kinds of metaphysics, namely, ‘true metaphysics’ and ‘false metaphysics’. Hume’s criticism was mainly against the ‘false metaphysics’. For him, false metaphysics is concerned with supernatural entities which have no factual basis. As experience is the only source of knowledge, whatever we consider as knowledge can be verified in empirical terms. The subject matter of false metaphysics cannot be verified empirically, thus it has no basis at all, and must be rejected as a

philosophical discourse. But at the same time, Hume shows his doubt in the power and capacity of our senses and intellect. He believes that it may be possible that our mind fail to grasp the meaning of certain experiences. Thus, there is always a scope regarding the discussion of certain non-empirical phenomena, which are truly essential to lead a meaningful life. In this way, Hume leaves the room for metaphysical discourse (true metaphysical discourse) in the domain of Philosophy. The famous German philosopher Immanuel Kant has also judge the possibility of metaphysics. For Immanuel Kant, metaphysics is not possible as a science. That means metaphysical sentences are not like scientific sentences that can be verified in scientific manner. For Immanuel Kant, metaphysics is possible as natural disposition.

Thus by following the philosophies of these great thinkers it does not seem that the metaphysical questions are worthless and do not serve any purpose to human beings. As a self-conscious being we spontaneously asked so many metaphysical questions like, ‘\_what is the relation between mind and body?’, ‘\_is there any absolute creator exists?’ etc. and also longing for the answer to these questions. In that sense the metaphysics is a spontaneous outcome of our inner quest. And the study and discussion of metaphysics indeed is an attempt to fulfil that inner quest. So we will be failed to grasp

the essence of metaphysics if we tend to understand it solely based upon the means of reason, logic and empirical method etc.

Thus by following the great work of many renowned philosophers especially Aristotle, we may say that metaphysics does not deal with supernatural objects. Rather it deals with many primary questions concerning life and world in order to explore its true nature. Such discussion seems necessary to live a meaningful life. Thus it has been centre of attraction since ancient Greek times to the present era. The continuous flow of metaphysical discourse shows implicitly or explicitly the possibility of metaphysics in future philosophical discourse.