

ABSTRACT

Philosophers, Saints and Seers have been dealing with the problem of 'being' since ancient times. In fact, the concept of 'being' was first cast into spotlight by Parmenides, although, this is both easy and difficult to define 'being' in a definition. However, in order to define 'being', one requires a more general notion within which being can be contained. Unfortunately, no such conceptions exist simply because being encompasses all reality. Therefore, instead of a strict definition, the various definitions of being are: 'that which exists', or 'that which is', or 'that which is real'.

From Parmenides to Heidegger, metaphysicians have endeavored to understand the meaning of being throughout the long history of Western philosophy. According to Parmenides, the multiplicity of existing things, their changing forms and motions are an appearance of a single reality or Being. From this notion of being, he asserts that all claims of 'non-being' or of change are illogical. He distinguished between two concepts, Becoming and Being. He developed the notion of 'Being' instead of Heraclitan 'Becoming'. According to Heraclitus, reality is changeable, flux, and becoming. But for Parmenides, the reality is one, unchangeable, and eternal being. For him, only one is real and manyness and changes are unreal. Although this distinction is a matter of intuition, we can see that in our real lives changes and plurality of things are palpable. So, for him, we need to learn about the philosophy of the truth or 'Being' before anything else. This being is flawless, unbreakable, and comprehensible.

Later, we have seen in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, he describes various modes of being, the primary mode of being is substance. Like Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas believes that metaphysics is the study of being qua being or the study of the most basic elements of being which constitutes a being and without which being cannot exist. Thus, Being

becomes the main focus of Aquinas' philosophy. After, Aquinas, Augustine, a prominent Christian philosopher developed the concept of being in his theological and metaphysical writings. According to him, being can only come from Being, likewise good can come only from Good. For him, God is the primordial source of all beings and absolute fullness of being. Therefore, for him, God is the only thing which truly may be called Being and this being is the source of all other beings. In Modern period, the famous French Philosopher Descartes reduces all reality to two fundamental substances: mental and physical. We can say that in Descartes' philosophy being refers to certainty of one's existence as a thinking being, established through the act of thought or doubt. This thinking being or self is distinct from material body and serve as a foundational point of certainty and knowledge.

The word "Being" is the key concept in Existential philosophy. It is used in this philosophy in a very special sense. The existentialist uses Being or existence to refer specifically to human existence or human being. They are primarily concerned about the problem of existence, therefore, also the investigation of the meaning of Being. According to Kierkegaard, the human existence is the central problem of all philosophical problems. So, he tries to solve this problem by the three stages of life, Aesthetic stage, Ethical stage and Religious stage. Later, the 'question of the meaning of being' is the vitally important question for Heidegger. He criticizes traditional metaphysics because of the forgetfulness of Being which is the primary goal of philosophy. Traditional metaphysics misinterpreted the nature of being as things, or as which is merely there, or as something present at hand. So, he tries to elaborate the concept of Being in a different way.

In Being and Nothingness, Sartre's reputation as the leading representative of existential philosophy or existentialism is well known throughout the history of philosophy. He

conceived existentialism as a philosophy of radical freedom. He recognized two regions of Being: Being-for-itself, which he called consciousness or human being and Being-in-itself, which he called matter or things. For him, the In-itself is first and foremost, an obstacle to the For-itself's drive towards self-actualization as indeed are all other selves, which he called the 'Other'. From phenomenological point of view, the human being is radically "free" insofar as its relationship to objects purportedly constitutes the objective world. Sartre's notion of Being led to his history of absolute freedom for man as a means of living authentically in the world.