PHI 204
Medieval Philosophy

Course Manual

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ISBN: _

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Page layout, Instructional Design &UI Mobile Class Development by EDUTECHportal, www.edutechportal.org

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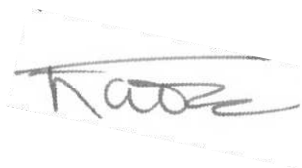
Vice-Chancellor's Message

The Distance Learning Centre is building on a solid tradition of over two decades of service in the provision of External Studies Programme and now Distance Learning Education in Nigeria and beyond. The Distance Learning mode to which we are committed is providing access to many deserving Nigerians in having access to higher education especially those who by the nature of their engagement do not have the luxury of full time education. Recently, it is contributing in no small measure to providing places for teeming Nigerian youths who for one reason or the other could not get admission into the conventional universities.

These course materials have been written by writers specially trained in ODL course delivery. The writers have made great efforts to provide up to date information, knowledge and skills in the different disciplines and ensure that the materials are user-friendly.

In addition to provision of course materials in print and e-format, a lot of Information Technology input has also gone into the deployment of course materials. Most of them can be downloaded from the DLC website and are available in audio format which you can also download into your mobile phones, IPod, MP3 among other devices to allow you listen to the audio study sessions. Some of the study session materials have been scripted and are being broadcast on the university's Diamond Radio FM 101.1, while others have been delivered and captured in audio-visual format in a classroom environment for use by our students. Detailed information on availability and access is available on the website. We will continue in our efforts to provide and review course materials for our courses.

However, for you to take advantage of these formats, you will need to improve on your I.T. skills and develop requisite distance learning Culture. It is well known that, for efficient and effective provision of Distance learning education, availability of appropriate and relevant course materials is a *sine qua non*. So also, is the availability of multiple plat form for the convenience of our students. It is in fulfillment of this, that series of course materials are being written to enable our students study at their own pace and convenience.

It is our hope that you will put these course materials to the best use.

Prof. Isaac Adewole

Vice-Chancellor

Foreword

As part of its vision of providing education for "Liberty and Development" for Nigerians and the International Community, the University of Ibadan, Distance Learning Centre has recently embarked on a vigorous repositioning agenda which aimed at embracing a holistic and all encompassing approach to the delivery of its Open Distance Learning (ODL) programmes. Thus we are committed to global best practices in distance learning provision. Apart from providing an efficient administrative and academic support for our students, we are committed to providing educational resource materials for the use of our students. We are convinced that, without an up-to-date, learner-friendly and distance learning compliant course materials, there cannot be any basis to lay claim to being a provider of distance learning education. Indeed, availability of appropriate course materials in multiple formats is the hub of any distance learning provision worldwide.

In view of the above, we are vigorously pursuing as a matter of priority, the provision of credible, learner-friendly and interactive course materials for all our courses. We commissioned the authoring of, and review of course materials to teams of experts and their outputs were subjected to rigorous peer review to ensure standard. The approach not only emphasizes cognitive knowledge, but also skills and humane values which are at the core of education, even in an ICT age.

The development of the materials which is on-going also had input from experienced editors and illustrators who have ensured that they are accurate, current and learner-friendly. They are specially written with distance learners in mind. This is very important because, distance learning involves non-residential students who can often feel isolated from the community of learners.
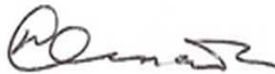
It is important to note that, for a distance learner to excel there is the need to source and read relevant materials apart from this course material. Therefore, adequate supplementary reading materials as well as other information sources are suggested in the course materials.

Apart from the responsibility for you to read this course material with others, you are also advised to seek assistance from your course facilitators especially academic advisors during your study even before the interactive session which is by design for revision. Your academic advisors will assist you using convenient technology including Google Hang Out, You Tube, Talk Fusion, etc. but you have to take advantage of these. It is also going to be of immense advantage if you complete assignments as at when due so as to have necessary feedbacks as a guide.

The implication of the above is that, a distance learner has a responsibility to develop requisite distance learning culture which includes diligent and disciplined self-study, seeking available administrative and academic support and acquisition of basic information technology skills. This is why you are encouraged to develop your computer skills by availing yourself the opportunity of training that the Centre's provide and put these into use.

In conclusion, it is envisaged that the course materials would also be useful for the regular students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria who are faced with a dearth of high quality textbooks. We are therefore, delighted to present these titles to both our distance learning students and the university's regular students. We are confident that the materials will be an invaluable resource to all.

We would like to thank all our authors, reviewers and production staff for the high quality of work. Best wishes.

Professor Bayo Okunade

Director

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Unit 1   The Development of Christian Thought

Expected duration: 1 week or 2 contact hours

Introduction

In this study, you will learn about the rise of Christianity as a significant turning point in the history of philosophy. More importantly, we shall discuss the happy coexistence between the Greeks' love of wisdom and the scriptural teachings of the Christian faith. It is common knowledge that the primary objective of philosophical knowledge is truth and that is why it is sometimes referred to as the science of truth; the Gospel also presents itself as the word of truth, regarding man, the world and God. A look at these two sources of knowledge will no doubt reveal that the philosophical potential of the Christian faith is immense.

Learning Outcomes for Unit 1

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

1.1 State two prime concerns of Christianity in the first century of its existence (SAQs 1.1, 1.2)

1.2 State two differences between the Greek tradition and the Judeo-Christian thought (SAQ 1.3)

1.3 Explain what the Christian message is all about (SAQ 1.4)

1.4 Describe why Christians felt the need for universal evangelism in the first century (SAQ 1.5)

1.1   The Early Stages

1.1.1 Differences between the Greek Tradition and Christian Thought

At the infant stage of the development of Christian thought, there exist many differences between the Greek tradition and the Judeo-Christian thought, and even between Jewish and Christian thought. In their religious belief, practices and traditions, the Greeks were mainly polytheists while, on the contrary, the Jews and the Christians believed in one supreme omnipotent and omniscient God. The Greek gods were subject to lots of limitations: in Plato, for instance, we see the Demiurge consult the pre-existing forms prior to imposing order on a pre-existing matter; although not transcendent, Aristotle's deity was immanent in the world. On the

contrary, the God of the Judeo-Christian tradition is all-powerful and transcendent; out of nothing, he created the world and rules over it according to his sovereign will.

Christianity presents itself as a revealed religion. Building on their Hebraic roots, Christians claim that God had spoken and revealed himself to us through the Old Testament prophets, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, and in the Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament. Unlike the Greeks who sought for truth and ultimate reality, the Christian message is that of truth and ultimate reality. While ancient Greeks put a premium on the *Logos* as the principle of order and reason that permeates the universe, John, in his gospel, stresses the view that the *Logos* is identical to God, who took on a human form Jesus and dwelled among us. Hence Christian thinkers conceive human history in terms of the themes of sin, grace, salvation, and eternal life – although not as series of philosophical doctrines but as moments in the individual's spiritual journey. Inasmuch as many Christian intellectuals attempted to show that their faith stand with the best of Greek philosophy, they did not share the Greeks' confidence that philosophical reason alone could solve the deep problems of human life.

In the first century of its existence, Christianity wrestled with some prime concerns, which thus left little time and energy for philosophical speculation. Christians were in earnest waiting and preparing for the second coming of Jesus. The early Christians, especially as expressed in the writings of Paul, were of the belief that Jesus' second coming was near at hand. Thus, due to the shortness of time, they gave no value to earthly possessions or engaging in long-term intellectual activities. In addition, the early Church was under serious persecution from the Romans and its major obsession was how to survive the pressure of the time. The Romans believed that religion was a concern of the state and that citizens were subject to and should make sacrifices to the gods of the state for the country to have peace and prosper. In addition to their refusal to pay homage to the pagan gods, Christians proclaimed Christ, not the emperor, as lord of all the earth. Therefore, in the Roman Empire, to be a Christian was both treason and a capital crime. Inasmuch as the intensity of the persecution was dependent on the person of the emperor at a particular point in time, it was until the reign of Constantine the Great (A.D. 305 – 337) that the Christian world knew peace. By A.D. 313, Constantine made Christianity an official religion of the empire, granting Christians the freedom to publicly profess their faith.

o Jonathan is a man who is very man who is very materialistic; he likes to own property, buy expensive cars and wear expensive clothes because, to him, that is how we can determine a person whose life is meaningful. Suppose you are to advise him in line with the basic teachings and concerns of Christianity, what would you say to him?

- Life is not all about material possession. A man who gains the whole world and owned all the material things in the world without securing the salvation of his soul would be considered to be a loser. Thus, Jonathan should place less value on earthly possessions.

1.2   Christians' Quest for Universal Evangelism and its Challenges

At this period, Christians were propelled by an urgent need for universal evangelism, the propagation of the good news of Jesus Christ and the salvation of souls by reconciling them to God. This made it impossible for them to promote a set of theoretical ideas or have interest in theoretical speculations. Another problem Christians were facing at this period was the rapid proliferation of heresies (false doctrines/teachings) and the need to fight these heresies. There were many alternative versions of Christian teaching, with each claiming to be the authentic version of Christian truth. As a matter of fact, some of these were really Greek religious philosophies that were given a Christian veneer; others were simply alternative interpretations of the New Testament theology. The result was a massive confusion that threatened to drag the new religion down with the weight of controversy.

Despite these challenges, it was apparent to Christians that they could neither reject nor ignore philosophy. With the passage of several generations, it became obvious and clear to Christians that the second coming of Jesus Christ was not imminent. Therefore, Christians began to be involved in other serious activities, especially in the Christianization of their culture. Most significant of these developments was the distancing of Christianity from its Jewish background.

As a result, there was a shift; rather than the reconciliation of Christianity with Judaism, Christianity sought reconciliation with the Greek tradition. By the end of the second century, Christianity had penetrated the upper classes and began to attract intellectuals in the Roman Empire whose minds had been nurtured in the soil of Greek philosophy. Thus Christian thinkers came to terms with the Greek ways of thinking by formulating their doctrines in the categories of

Greek philosophy and by showing that their faith was intellectually respectable. Hence the prime and original task of evangelization was supplemented by that of apologetics. "Apologetics" is a term derived from Athenian legal procedures. It refers to one's position. Because Christianity was "on trial" before the court of Greek culture and philosophy, Christian thinkers sought to make the best case possible for it, using the weapons of philosophy itself. Similarly, since many of the heresies arose out of philosophy, Christian thinkers discovered they needed to "fight fire with fire". Hence, the task of rebutting false doctrines required both logical arguments and a greater clarification of the true teachings. With the hope of supporting their positions and achieving conceptual results, Christian thinkers adopted the tools of Greek philosophy.

Activity 1.1

Take a moment to reflect on what you have read so far. Based on your learning experience, and knowing that Christianity went through different phases in its formative years of development, note down some of the key factors that led to the Christians' quest for universal century in its first century of its existence.

FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CHRISTIANS' PROPAGATION OF EVANGELISM
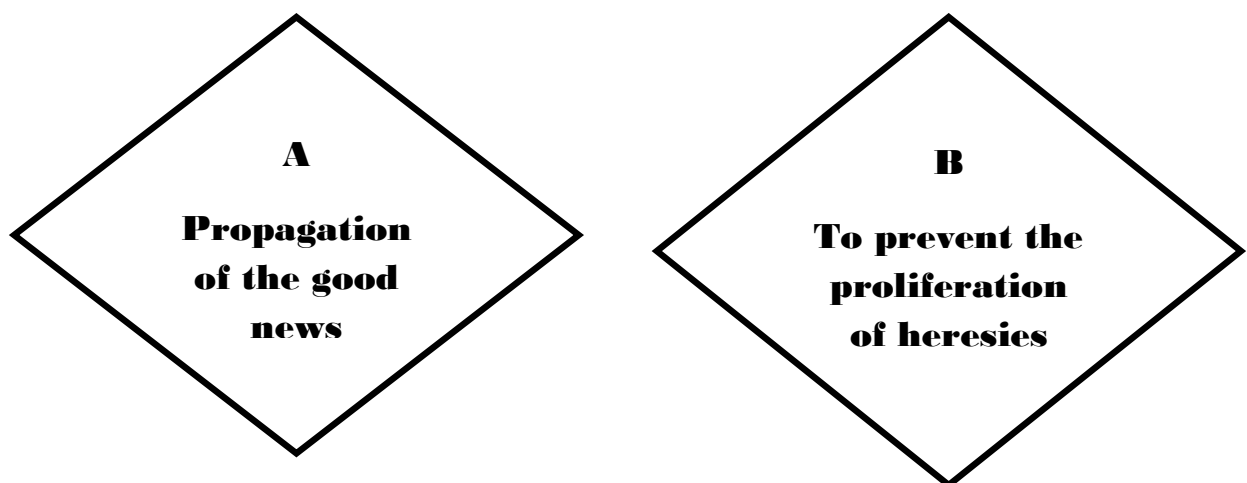
Fig 1.1

Activity 1.1 Feedback:

Take a look at figure 1.1; it describes the key factors responsible for the pursuit of universal evangelism by the early Christians.

It is important to note that although Christianity and Greek thought were like strange-bed fellows at the early part of their development, they later saw the need to complement each other in order to present a robust view of their tenets to the society. Thus, it is in this light that Christianity sought reconciliation with the Greek tradition. This is depicted in box 1.1 below.

Box 1.1: The Reconciliation of Christianity with Greek Tradition

The reconciliation of Christianity with Greek Tradition includes the following reasons:

- The attraction of Roman intellectuals by Christianity
- Christian Thinkers came to terms with the Greek ways of thinking, which was previously considered secular.
- Christian thinkers inevitably adopted the tools of philosophy in the propagation of their religious tenets.

Summary of Unit 1

In Unit 1, you have learned that:

1. The rise of Christianity is a significant turning point in the history of philosophy. Christianity has contributed immensely to world history.

2. In the first century of its existence, Christianity wrestled with some prime concerns, which thus left little time and energy for philosophical speculation. For instance, the early Church was under serious persecution from the Romans who believed that religion was a concern of the state and that citizens were subject to and should make sacrifices to the gods of the state.

3. Even in the face of numerous challenges, Christian thinkers came to terms with the Greek ways of thinking by formulating their doctrines in the categories of Greek philosophy and by showing that their faith was intellectually respectable.

Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 1

Now that you have completed this study session, you can assess how well you have achieved its Learning Outcomes by answering these questions. You can check your answers with the Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions at the end of this Module.

SAQ 1.1 (tests learning outcome 1.1)

What was the great expectation Christians had in the early development of Christianity?

SAQ 1.2 (tests learning outcome 1.2)

What kind of persecution did the early church experienced?

SAQ 1.3 (tests learning outcome 1.3)

What two differences can you identify between Greek tradition and the Judeo-Christian thought?

SAQ 1.4 (tests learning outcome 1.4)

What is the Christian message all about?

SAQ 1.5 (tests learning outcome 1.5)

What propelled Christians towards an urgent need for universal evangelism?

Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 1

SAQ 1.1: They earnestly awaited and prepared for the second coming of Jesus.

SAQ 1.2: They endured persecution from the Roman and were concerned with surviving the pressure of the time.

SAQ 1.3: The differences are as follows: The Greeks were polytheist while the Jews/Christians were monotheist and Christianity presents itself as a revealed religion while Greek thought puts premium on reason.

SAQ 1.4: The Christian message is about truth and ultimate reality.

SAQ 1.5: They were propelled by the achievement of Constantine the Great who made Christianity an official religion of the empire, granting Christians the freedom to publicly profess their faith.

Unit 2   The Problem of Faith and Reason

Expected duration: 1 week or 2 contact hours

Introduction

In this study session, you shall learn about the debate on faith and reason which is one of the prime problems that Christian scholars had to grapple with. Beyond the concerns of the early Church, this continued to be an issue of serious debate, especially in the medieval era, and continued to be a topic of serious debate in the contemporary era, especially among philosophers of religion. On the part of the Greeks, there was no problem; only one principle – philosophical reasoning – guided their thinking. Having no divine revelation in the form of sacred scriptures, most of their religious notions were transmitted through their poets and traditions. However, the importance of these religious notions were either rejected or downplayed by philosophers of the time. What little they retained from popular religion, they made to conform to the dictates of their philosophical systems. In the same vein, the Jews had no problem with distinguishing between faith and reason; they avoided the problem by adhering to only one side of the dichotomy, which in their case was faith.

Learning Outcomes for Unit 2

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

2.1 State the two sources of information open to the Christian thinkers which led to the problem of faith and reason (SAQ 2.1).

2.2 State the name of the three Christian thinkers who commented on the problem of faith and reason (SAQ 2.2).

2.3 Describe how Justin Martyr envisaged harmony between Christianity and Greek philosophy (SAQs 2.3, 2.4).

2.4 Describe how Clement of Alexandria sees philosophy (SAQ 2.5).

2.5 State why Tertullian holds that Christians should disregard philosophical speculations (SAQ 2.6).

1.1 Faith vs Reason: A Controversy between Philosophers and Christian Thinkers

Greatly influenced by the Greek thought system, Christian thinkers found themselves having to answer attacks from philosophers to satisfy the Greek thirst for a systematic worldview. They were therefore presented with two sources of information — revelation and philosophical reason. This gave rise to several questions: Is Christian belief rational? What is the relationship between faith and reason? Can one coherently embrace both routes to the truth? Should faith and reason lead to conflicting conclusions, how will the quarrel between them be resolved? Why should a person of faith dabble in the speculations of pagan philosophers?

- In this world, people hold different beliefs about various issues of interest. However, it is important to note that such beliefs or positions are sourced from various sources. Suppose Jonny is a free thinker who is only convinced about issues after his has had time to reflect on it. But Tommie, Jonnie's friend is a deeply religious man who only accepts the fact of things by faith. How would you mediate between these two friends who obviously disagree on what and how they believe?

o Well, both of them are quite justified in holding their views because there isn't just one way of knowing. Also, their disagreement is a clear depiction of the fact that there are two sources of information, namely, revelation and philosophical reason which were emphasised in the early stages of the development of Christian thought.

Due to the fact that philosophical tradition provided mixed data, the problem intensified. For Christians, so much in Greek philosophy was repugnant. Irrespective of their different conceptions of the nature of deity, other problems still lingered on: Plato believed in the individual fulfillment though the exercise of one's autonomous reasoning rather than relating to a divine creator; Plato also believed in reincarnation, a doctrine that is incompatible with the biblical account of the afterlife. On the part of Aristotle, no room is given to individual immortality; the Epicureans, on their part, held that the pursuit of pleasure rather than obedience to God was the prime goal of life. Epicureans believed that, at death, the soul disintegrates with the body, hence no afterlife. Despite these philosophies, Christians found much admiration in

Greek philosophy. Helpfully, Aristotle provided arguments for the existence of God with the stress that everything in life has a teleological dimension. Seeing the order, harmony, benevolence, and beauty composed in the cosmos, the Stoics claimed that the order must be directed towards the fulfillment of a divine purpose. Thus, they held that adjusting one's life to the will of God was the key to the good life.

In the same vein, there were mixed data provided by the biblical tradition. On the negative side, Paul's first letter to the Corinthians proclaims that the wisdom of the world is foolishness in the eyes of God and that the gospel of Christ appeared preposterous to the pagan world. He further warns "make sure no one traps you and deprives you of your freedom by some secondhand, empty, rational philosophy based on the principles of this world instead of Christ." Irrespective of these views, the biblical tradition provided a number of bridges to Greek thought. In Paul's discourse with a group of Epicureans and Stoics, he was of the view that he was providing useful knowledge of the same God that they were already worshipping. He even went as far as quoting Stoic writers in support of his theological position. Paul believed that, although the Greeks lack biblical revelation, they do have some knowledge of God and the moral law. It is of note to highlight that even the Book of Proverbs reflects praises to Wisdom in a way that Socrates would approve. The prologue to the Gospel of John speaks of the Divine *Logos* thereby providing a conceptual link with Heraclitus and the Stoics. Given this mixed data, the future of Greek philosophy within the Christian tradition hung on whether or not the difference or the similarities between the two systems would be emphasized.

1.2   The Possibility of harmonizing Greek philosophy within the Christian Tradition

So much has been said on the dissimilarities and similarities between Greek philosophy and Christian tradition. But in this aspect of our study, we want to look at the views of some scholars who have made useful contributions to this issue under consideration here. The Three Christian thinkers are: Justine Martyr, Clement and Tertullian. But how exactly did they address it?

1.2.1 Justin Martyr

Born in Samaria at about A.D. 100 to pagan parents, Justin, a passionate intellectual, journeyed throughout the Middle East and Italy searching for knowledge. Enthusiastically, he studied Stoicism, Aristotelianism, and Pythagoreanism in turn, but was not fascinated by the teachings of these philosophical persuasions. At last, he was attracted to Platonism, which made a lifelong impact on him. His encounter with philosophy gave him the opportunity to discover that not even Platonic philosophy, the spiritual highpoint of Greek thought, fell short of what the gospel of Christ had to offer. Impressed by the consistency and courage of Christians at the face of death, he became a convert and an articulate defender of the new religion. With his associates, Justin suffered martyrdom around A.D. 165.

Justin was optimistic about the harmony between Christianity and Greek philosophy by claiming that the truly holy men are those who bestow attention to philosophy. To the critics of the Christianity faith, he asserts that the Christian gospel and the best in pagan philosophy do no compete, but point to the same truth.

Justine illustrates his claim by pointing out that Plato and the Scriptures agree that our souls have special affinity to God, that we are morally responsible for our actions, and that there is a time of reckoning in the world to come. Furthermore, Justine claims that the Good in Plato's *Republic* is clearly the same as the God of the Bible. Relying on historical information, Justine assumes that Socrates and Plato had so much of the truth because they were acquainted with the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament). But, in addition to this, John's Gospel tells us that the *Logos* (Christ) gives light to all humankind. According to Justin both the Greeks and non-Greeks were able to discover fragments of God's truth apart from the Bible, because they possessed "seeds" of the Divine Reason (the "Spermatic Logos"). He holds that Socrates and Plato, along with Abraham, were "Christians before Christ," because they followed the Divine Reason within them. Hence both Greek philosophy and the Old Testament were preparatory phases that found their culmination in Christianity. Educated individuals need not choose between Christianity and their intellectual heritage, since all truth is revealed by God, be it from the mouth of the prophets or implanted in pagan philosophy by the Divine Logos.

1.2.2 Clement of Alexandria

Clement was born of pagan parents around A.D. 150. He became a Christian through the influence of his teacher Pantaenus, a converted Stoic. In his approach to Greek philosophy, Clement was familiar with the ancient texts in the history of philosophy which he frequently quoted in support of his positions. In his work *The Stromata*, he makes an impassioned argument for Christians to respect the treasures of Greek thought. Quoting Psalms 29:3, "The Lord is on many waters," Clement speculates that this includes the waters of Greek philosophy and not just those of the biblical tradition. In support of his position, he holds that all truth is one and all wisdom is from the Lord. Should we find words of wisdom in Plato, then it is from God no less than the words of the prophets. Hence fragments of God's eternal truth have found their way even into pagan philosophy. For Clement, it is foolish for Christians to reinvent the wheel. If Plato has good arguments for the immortality of the soul, then we can use his work and don't need to duplicate his efforts. He sees philosophy as a gift of divine providence and compares the Old Testament law with philosophy. The first was given to the Jews and the second to the Greeks, and God used both sources of wisdom to prepare hearts and minds for receiving the message of Jesus.

According to Clement, philosophy can even helpful tool for understating Scripture. Philosophy teaches us the skill of logic, the value of clear definitions, the analysis of language, and the ability to formulate demonstrations, all of which will lead us to truth. To diminish the impact of Paul's warning against "empty, rational philosophy," Clement emphasizes Paul's qualification that he is referring to philosophies that are "based on the principles of this world instead of Christ." Hence he concludes that was not branding all philosophy as alien to Christianity, but only those schools such as Epicureanism that abolished providence and deified pleasure. Despite his claim that Greek philosophy is a kind of divine revelation, Clement does not fail to highlight its negative precepts. In line with the views of many Christian writers, he believed the Greeks stole many ethical and theological ideas from the Hebrews. He also held that Greek philosophy gives us only fragmentary and partial truths, while revelation gives us the fuller picture. Therefore, too much attention to philosophy can entangle us in unnecessary quarrels. He pointed out, however, that philosophy pursued for its own sake can be enjoyable and profitable for the Christian. He maintained that philosophy is not the product of vice. Since

philosophy makes men virtuous; it follows, then that it is the work of God, whose work it is solely to do good. And all things given by God are given and received well.

1.2.3   Tertullian

Born around A.D. 160 to pagan parents in the North African city of Carthage, Tertullian was converted to Christianity in 193, after being impressed by the courage of Christians who were being put to death for their faith. Tertullian had a successful law career in Rome and his polemical courtroom style reflects throughout all his writings. A historian has described him as "vigorous and incisive in argument, delighting in logical tricks and with an advocate's love of a clever sophistry… a powerful writer of splendid, torrential prose."

Whereas Justin and Clement delight in the Christian truths they find in the Greeks, Tertullian only grudgingly admits that sometimes philosophers found the truth. He is of the view that although philosophers agree with the Christians that the *Logos*, the divine Word and Reason, created the universe, they become inflated with pride in their own reason, their truths are not the result of spiritual insight but rather of dumb luck, much like a sailor happening to find his way in a storm. According to him, "…we shall not deny that philosophers have sometimes thought the same things as ourselves…. It sometimes happens even in a storm, when the boundaries of sky and sea are lost in confusion that some harbor is stumbled on (by the laboring ship) by some happy chance…"

On the whole, however, Tertullian has little use of philosophy. Christ tells us, "Seek and you will find." However, rather than this sanctioning the sort of seeking that characterizes philosophy, Tertullian strongly believes that Christians should disregard philosophical speculations since heresies arise from philosophy. Tertullian describes the Apostle Paul's meeting with philosophers in Athens as an encounter with "huckstering wiseacre." He also ridiculed the revered figure of Socrates and the philosopher's famous deathbed scene.

Finally, Tertullian's most famous dismissal of the link between philosophy and Christianity is reflected in his claim that the Christian faith "desired no further belief. For this is our [victorious] faith, that there is nothing which we ought to believe besides." He maintains

that, just as Athens (the intellectual centre of philosophy) and Jerusalem (the spiritual home of Christianity) are separated by hundreds of miles geographically, so pagan philosophy and the Christian Gospel are miles apart spiritually and can never meet.

Nothing is known of Tertullian after the date of his last literary work in the year 220. However, he has made his place in history as the most forceful religious veto to the project of reconciling faith and philosophy. On a charitable note, we can understand his concern with the way that alien philosophical ideologies were muddying the waters of Christian theology. Notwithstanding, his attempts in separating the philosophical and biblical traditions failed. The importance of the writings of Justine and Clement in arguing for the importance of Greek philosophy for Christian thought cannot be underestimated. Certainly, if the medieval thinkers had not seen the value of preserving the Greek philosophical tradition, the shape of Western Christianity and intellectual history would have been different.

Activity 2.1

Take a moment to reflect on what you have read so far. Based on your learning experience, and knowing that some scholars attempted to resolve the controversy between faith and reason, can you note down the right names from the list provided below?

| (A) CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA | (C) CLEMENTINA | (E) TERTULLIAN |
| (B) JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE | (D) JUSTIN MARTYR | (F) TONY TETULA |
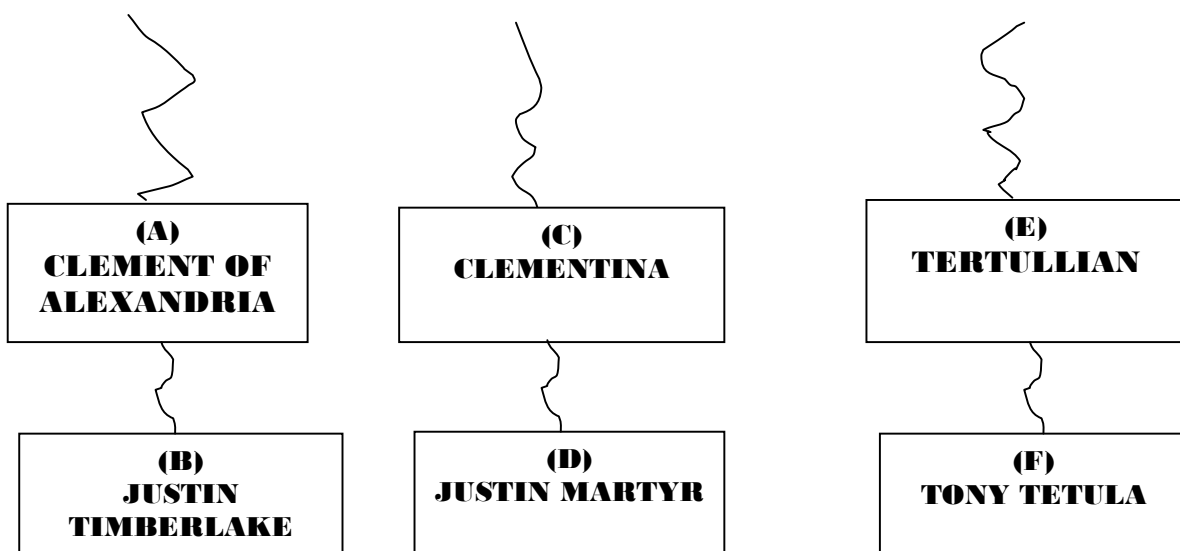
Fig. 2.1

Activity 2.1 Feedback:

Take a look at figure 2.1; it shows different names of the scholars who have attempted to resolve the controversy between faith and reason; take a pencil to circle the correct names.

It is important to elaborate further on this issue of faith and reason which ensued between Christian religious thinkers and Greek philosophical thinkers. This is represented in Box 2.1.

Box 2.1: The harmonization of Christian thought with Greek Thought

Prior to the attempt at harmonization attempt by scholars, in the early stages of civilization both Greek philosophy and Christian tradition were at logger heads but at the later stages of development, there was a need to harmonize both in order to resolve the age long debate. The reasons for harmonization include:

- Christians started seeing the beauty of philosophy.
- Some of the Early Christian scholars employed philosophy in the explanation of faith.
- The Christians discovered that some of the thoughts of early Greek thinkers attempts to prove God's existence.

Summary of Unit 2

In Unit 2, you have learned that:

1. The first centuries of Christianity Christian thinkers were at the defence of their faith from philosophical attacks.

2. The sole obsession of first centuries of Christianity Christian thinkers was protecting the Christian doctrines against heresies.

3. With the deepening of Christian thought into culture, the task of working out a Christian philosophical worldview inevitably became the next task in the development of Christian thought.

4. The thoughts of such Christian thinkers as Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian contributed to the rise of Christian philosophy.

Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 2

Now that you have completed this study session, you can assess how well you have achieved its Learning Outcomes by answering these questions. You can check your answers with the Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions at the end of this Module.

SAQ 2.1 (tests learning outcome 2.1)

What are the two sources of information that spurred the controversy between faith and reason in religious understanding?

SAQ 2.2 (tests learning outcome 2.2)

Who are the Christian thinkers who contributed immensely to the issue on the problem of faith and reason?

SAQ 2.3 (tests learning outcome 2.3)

In what way did Justin Martyr attempt to achieve harmony between Christianity and Greek philosophy?

SAQ 2.4 (tests learning outcome 2.4)

How did Justin Martyr respond to the critics of the Christian faith?

SAQ 2.5 (tests learning outcome 2.5)

In what way did Clement of Alexandria view philosophy?

SAQ 2.6 (tests learning outcome 2.6)

What is the reason for Tertullian's view that Christians should disregard philosophical speculation?

Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 1

SAQ 2.1: These are revelation and philosophical reason.

SAQ 2.2: They are Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian.

SAQ 2.3: By putting forward the view that true holy men are those who bestow attention to philosophy.

SAQ 2.4: To the critics of the Christianity faith, he asserts that both Christianity and pagan Philosophy aims at the same goal which is truth.

SAQ 2.5: He sees philosophy as a gift of divine providence which he said can be compared to the Old Testament law.

SAQ 2.6: He believes that Christians should disregard philosophical speculations because heresies arise from philosophy.

Unit 3   Early Medieval Philosophy

Expected duration: 1 week or 2 contact hours

Introduction

In this study session you will learn about the early medieval period, which extended to the 12th century. This period was marked by the barbarian invasions of the Western Roman Empire, the collapse of its civilization, and the gradual building of a new, Christian culture in Western Europe. Generally speaking, medieval philosophy designates the philosophical speculation that occurred in Western Europe during the middle ages that is, from the fall of the Roman Empire in the 4th and 5th centuries AD to the Renaissance of the 15th century. Philosophy of the medieval period was closely connected to Christian thought, particularly theology, and the chief philosophers of the period were churchmen.

Learning Outcomes for Unit 3

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

3.1 Describe the major characteristic of medieval philosophy (SAQs 3.1, SAQ 3.2)

3.2 State the specific kind of thinkers that propagated the ideas and thoughts that culminates into medieval philosophy (SAQ 3.2).

3.3 State the names of the two notable philosophical thinkers who contributed to the sustenance of philosophical thoughts tradition in the early medieval period (SAQ 3.3).

3.4 Describe the important role Boethius plays in the development of medieval philosophy (SAQ 3.4).

3.5 Describe John Scotus' major contribution to the development of medieval thought (SAQ 3.5).

3.1 The Birth of Medieval Philosophy

3.1.1 The Connection between Philosophy and faith

It should be emphasized that medieval philosophy was born of the confluence of Greek (and to a lesser extent of Roman) philosophy and Christianity. Plotinus's philosophy was already deeply religious, having come under the influence of Middle Eastern religions. Medieval philosophy continued to be characterized by this religious orientation. Its methods were at first those of

Plotinus and later those of Aristotle. But it developed within <u>faith</u> as a means of throwing light on the truths and mysteries of faith. Thus, religion and philosophy fruitfully cooperated in the Middle Ages. Philosophy, within this period is seen as the handmaiden of <u>theology</u>, made possible a rational understanding of faith. Faith is what inspired Christian thinkers to develop new philosophical ideas, some of which became part of the philosophical heritage of the West.

- o Imagine you were in a taxi going to school and the driver who had his radio tuned to a popular program on religion and faith. Then suddenly the speaker in the radio program started to criticize philosophy as a discipline that is anti-faith and critical of religion. With your understanding so far in this lecture, what would your response to such criticism levelled against philosophy by the speaker, if you had the opportunity?
- • You should be able to say that philosophy has played a key role in the development of the Christian religion, especially in the early medieval period and that it is through philosophy that the subtleties of faith are interpreted for easy understanding. Thus, philosophy is not anti-faith.

3.1.2 The Influence of the Church in the Medieval Period

During the six hundred years from A.D. 400 to 1000, the story of Western Europe was dominated by wars and invasions. For instance, there was a record of the many centuries invasion of the boundaries of the Roman territories by German tribes from northern Europe and the domination of Italy and Spain by the Goths. What this tells us is that violence and struggles were prevalent in this period of human civilization. However, violence and anarchy do not provide fertile grounds in which philosophy may flourish. Hence, the political instability of this time prevented any coherent culture from taking root.

In the midst of this change, turmoil and struggles, the only institution that managed to survive was the Catholic Church. While the secular empire crumbled around it, the Church retained its cohesion and preserved its character as a central organization and universal institution. Facilitating this was the fact, that by the fifth century, the Western Church took on the organizational structure of a monarchy by declaring the bishop of Rome to be the "Father of the Church" or the "Pope" (from the Latin word *papa*). It is worthy of note that the Roman Catholic Church itself is a complex institution, for which the usual diagram of a pyramid,

extending from the pope at the apex to the believers in the pew, is vastly oversimplified. Within that institution are sacred congregations, archdioceses and dioceses, provinces, religious orders and societies, seminaries and colleges, parishes and confraternities, and countless other organizations. As a world religion among world religions, Roman Catholicism encompasses features of many other world faiths; thus only the methodology of comparative religion can address them all. Furthermore, because of the influence of Plato and Aristotle on those who developed it, Roman Catholic doctrine is mostly studied philosophically in a bid to understand its theological vocabulary and other essentialities.

In the face of the cultural vacuum left by the fallen empire, the Church gained strength as the only institution strong enough to endure the changes. Thus, on its shoulders fell the responsibility of preserving the past and shaping of the future of human civilization. It took over many functions that the crumbling civil government could not handle. The Church collected taxes, looked after the food supply, repaired the city walls, maintained courts of criminal law and used its buildings for hospitals and inns. Most importantly, the Church became the centre of education, even though limited to the clergy and the monks.

3.2   Notable Thinkers in the Early Medieval Period

We have attempted to give a general outline of the architecture of knowledge within the period of Early Medieval historic development of ideas by depicting the characteristic undertones that influenced the flow of thought and pathway for enlightenment within this period. It is instructive to note the tensions that existed between competing cultural orientations at this time which culminated in the overthrow of Romanticism and the deployment of Greek philosophical traditions in driving the process of cultural reformation which arguably laid the foundation for the development of philosophical thinking within the medieval period. The level of conflict and divergence within this period has been earlier stated; it is pertinent to state that the poverty of philosophical resources in this period was brutal both in terms of the political violence and the physical conditions people faced. It was actually recorded that there was a dearth of philosophical thinkers between the time of Augustine in the fifth century and the middle of the eleventh century. However, the two notable philosophical thinkers who contributed to the

sustenance of the philosophical tradition within this period are Boethius and John Scotus Erigina, both of whom had the rare advantage of knowing the Greek language.

Boethius

Boethius (about A.D. 480-524 or 525) is commonly referred to as "the last of the Romans and the first of the Medieval Scholastics". One of the most important channels by which Greek philosophy was transmitted to the Middle Ages was through Boethius. He began to translate into Latin all the philosophical works of the Greeks, but his imprisonment and death by order of Theodoric, king of the Ostrogoths, cut short this project. He finished translating only the logical writings of Porphyry and Aristotle. These translations and his commentaries on them brought to the thinkers of the Middle Ages the rudiments of Aristotelian logic. They also raised important philosophical questions, such as those concerning the nature of *universals* (terms that can be applied to more than one *particular* thing). Do universals exist independently, or are they only mental concepts? If they exist independently, are they corporeal or incorporeal? If incorporeal, do they exist in the sensible world or apart from it? Medieval philosophers debated at length these and other problems relating to universals.

In his logical works Boethius presents the Aristotelian doctrine of universals: that they are only mental abstractions. In his *De consolatione philosophiae* (*c.* 525; *Consolation of Philosophy*), however, he adopts the Platonic notion that they are *innate ideas*, and their origin is in the remembering of knowledge from a previous existence. This book was extremely popular and influential in the Middle Ages. It contains not only a Platonic view of knowledge and reality but also a lively treatment of providence, divine foreknowledge, chance, fate, and human happiness. This book was widely read in the Middle Ages and influenced a lot of writers. The theme of this work was one he had learned from the Stoics the contemplation of abstract philosophy brings personal peace. However, the singular significance of Boethius' writings and translations was that they transmitted to the Middle Ages a great deal of the available knowledge concerning Aristotle, and they showed how philosophical categories could be applied to theology.

John Scotus Erigena

John Scotus Erigina, who lived and died from around 810 to 877, was one of the few philosophers whose work survives. He was born in Ireland and received his education at an Irish monastery. The Irish monasteries were centres of learning where knowledge of Greek was still valued even as it became virtually known in the rest of the world. From about 845, Erigena lived at the court of the West Frankish king Charles II the Bald, near Laon (now in France), first as a teacher of grammar and dialectics. He participated in theological disputes over the Eucharist and predestination and set forth his position on the latter in *De predestinatione* (851; "On Predestination"), a work condemned by church authorities. Erigena's translations of the works of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, St. Maximus the Confessor, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and St. Epiphanius, commissioned by Charles, made those Greek patristic writings accessible to Western thinkers.

As a theologian, John Scotus Erigena is regarded as a translator and commentator on several earlier authors in works centring on the integration of Greek and Neoplatonist philosophy with Christian belief. Erigena's familiarity with dialectics and with the ideas of his theological predecessors was reflected in his principal work, *De divisione naturae* (862–866; "On the Division of Nature"), an attempt to reconcile the Neoplatonic doctrine of emanation with the Christian tenet of creation. The work classifies nature into (1) that which creates and is not created; (2) that which creates and is created; (3) that which does not create and is created; and (4) that which does not create and is not created. The first and the fourth are God as beginning and end; the second and third are the dual mode of existence of created beings (the intelligible and the sensible). The return of all creatures to God begins with release from sin, physical death, and entry into the life hereafter. Man, for Erigena, is a microcosm of the universe because he has senses to perceive the world, reason to examine the intelligible natures and causes of things, and intellect to contemplate God. Through sin man's animal nature has predominated, but through redemption man becomes reunited with God.

Erigena is universally recognized as having written the first great complete system of philosophy of the Middle Ages, a particularly remarkable accomplishment given the poverty of philosophical works he had available to him. For Erigena, the goal of philosophy was simply to provide a rational interpretation of revelation: the later medieval understanding of the different tasks of philosophy and theology would not have occurred to him. Accordingly, he quotes

Augustine to support his thesis that true philosophy is true religion, and conversely, true religion is true philosophy. True to the Christian tradition, Erigena affirms that Sacred Scripture should be followed in all things. Erigena did not see himself as anything but an orthodox theologian.

Despite all of his efforts and innovative philosophical speculations, the lone voice of John Scotus Erigena did not have much impact in the Medieval period, due to a number of reasons. Some of the reasons include the tribal monarchies which arose in Europe that seeks to render the type of philosophical systems propagated by Erigena as useless, the military and counter-military interventions prevalent in Europe in the Middle Ages among others. Scholars have also attributed this negative movement of history after Erigena as the "second Dark Ages" in Europe, about 150 years from the death of Erigena to the birth of Anselm in which there was no tangible record of any significant philosophical voice.

Activity 3.1

Take a moment to reflect on what you have read so far. Based on your learning experience, and knowing that there are two major thinkers who had influences on the development of Christianity in the medieval period, in fig. 3.1 below would you be able to note down which thoughts belong to which thinker?

Fig 3.1

1. BOETHIUS **2. JOHN SCOTUS**

A — Translated unfamiliar texts into languages medieval scholars can understand

B — Made medieval philosophy prominent to the world

C — Made allusions to the connection between faith and reason

D — He reconciled Plato's doctrine with the Christian account of creation

33
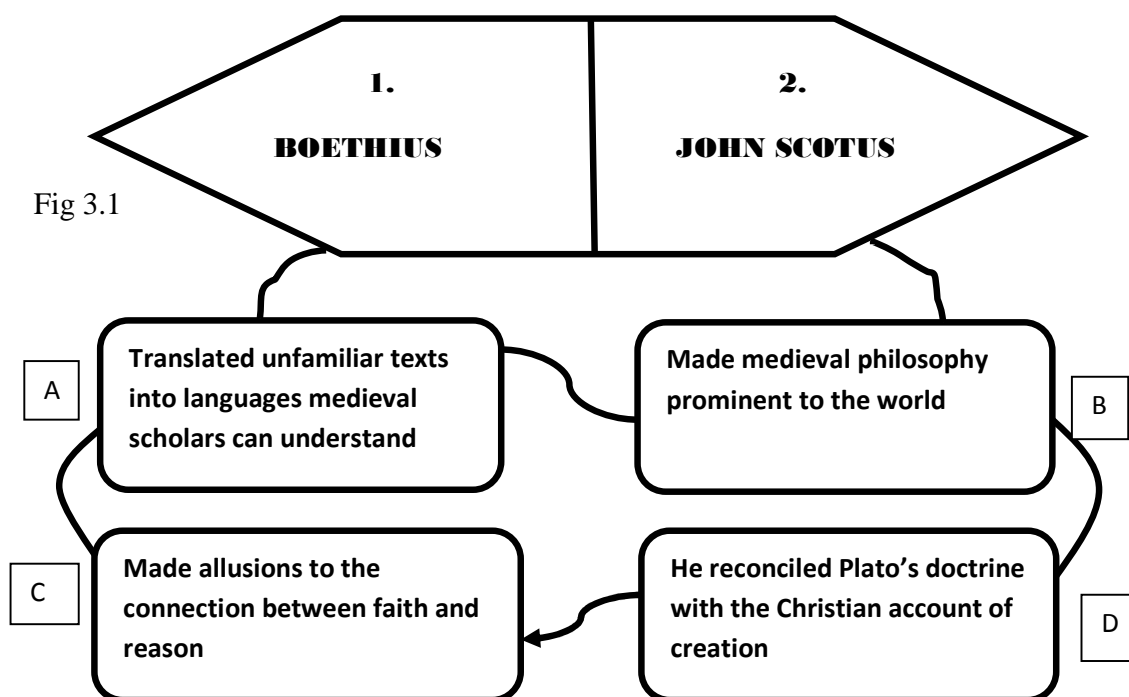
Activity 3.1 Feedback:

Take a look at figure 3.1; options A, B, C, D, describes the achievements in medieval philosophy but only two can be correctly attributed to each scholar. Your task is to determine which ideas the two correct ideas and state which one belongs to Boethius or John Scotus.

As we have made obvious in our discussion thus far, both Boethius and John Scotus Erigena are not the only thinkers who made considerable impact within the historic development of medieval philosophy. In what follows, we shall look at some of these influences.

1.2.1. Other Influences in the Early Medieval Period

It should be clearly stated that it is not only the Church or Christianity that influenced the development of philosophical thinking within the early medieval period. There are other significant influences which ought to be mentioned. We are going to discuss just two of such other cultural or philosophical influences, namely the Byzantine and the Islamic. The Byzantine Empire is of the Eastern division of the Roman Empire which strove to maintain a reasonable degree of cultural and political unity throughout the Middle Ages. It inherited two great centers of learning: Athens and Alexandria which greatly facilitated its objective of being the dominant influence on the intellectual formation of the medieval period. They are historically recognized as a tradition that preserved or kept alive the study of Plato, Neo-Platonism and Aristotelian logic which deeply influenced their intellectual preoccupations. However, apart from their notable achievements in art and architecture, the Byzantines' preoccupation with theological and political disputations prevented them from making any crucial contributions to philosophy, science or literature.

The Islamic philosophers, on their own part, played an important role in the development of philosophy especially in the medieval period. By the eight century, the new religion of Islam had made its mark as a cultural and political force. The Muslims took control of Eastern, Southern, and Western shores of the Mediterranean, including Persia, Syria, Egypt, Africa and Spain. After the Muslim conquest of Syria and Egypt, there began a great work of translation of the texts that had been studied in the late Greek philosophical schools—including a number of dialogues of Plato and Neoplatonic treatises, as well as the works of Aristotle and a number of the Alexandrian Neoplatonist commentaries on them. The translations—partly from Greek, partly from Syria versions of the Greek texts—were made between about 800 and 1000. On the

basis of these translated texts an impressive development of Islāmic theology and philosophy took place, strongly influenced by Neoplatonism, though Aristotelian influence also became increasingly important. It is suffice to note that the Muslims played an important role in the development of philosophy, for they inherited Aristotle's texts and eventually passed the ancient and a rich philosophical tradition on to Western Christianity.

1.3   Periods of Darkness and Light in Early Medieval Philosophy

Despite the remnants of cultural unity preserved by the Church, the Early Middle Ages was a time when the stream of culture and philosophy was at its lowest ebb. The period running from the fall of Rome and the death of Augustine to the year 1000 is commonly called "The Dark Ages". This period was called "Dark" because the role of reasoning in human affairs was greatly de-emphasized; while emphasis was placed on political, cultural and war-like dominance of a people over another as the justification for social relevance. Philosophy in these troubled times was cultivated by late Roman thinkers such as Augustine and Boethius (*c.* 470–524), then by monks such as St. Anselm of Canterbury (*c.* 1033–1109). Meanwhile, the monasteries became the main centers of learning and education and retained their pre-eminence until the founding of the cathedral schools and universities in the 11th and 12th centuries. So when the province of Rome was overthrown by other political powers from distant cultures, it led to a Dark Age in the growth or development of human ideas.

More precisely, the sack of Rome by Alaric the Visigoth in AD 410 had enormous impact on the political structure and social climate of the Western world, for the Roman Empire had provided the basis of social cohesion for most of Europe. Although the Germanic tribes that forcibly migrated into southern and Western Europe in the 5th century were ultimately converted to Christianity, they retained many of their customs and ways of life; the changes in forms of social organization they introduced rendered centralized government and cultural unity impossible. Many of the improvements in the quality of life introduced during the Roman Empire, such as a relatively efficient agriculture, extensive road networks, water-supply systems, and shipping routes, decayed substantially, as did artistic and scholarly endeavors.

This decline which persisted throughout the period of time is what is sometimes called the "Dark Ages" (also called Late Antiquity, or the Early Middle Ages), from the fall of Rome to

about the year 1000, with a brief hiatus during the flowering of the Carolingian court established by Charlemagne. Apart from that interlude, no large kingdom or other political structure arose in Europe to provide stability. The only force capable of providing a basis for social unity was the Roman Catholic Church. This sort of explains why the term "Dark Age" is specifically referring to the time (476–800) when there was no Roman (or Holy Roman) Emperor in the West; or, more generally, to the period between about 500 and 1000, which was marked by frequent warfare and a virtual disappearance of urban life. It is now rarely used by historians because of the value judgment it implies. Though sometimes taken to derive its meaning from the fact that little was then known about the period, the terms more usual and pejorative sense is of a period of intellectual darkness and barbarity.

But then, is it really the case that everything about this period of historic transformation was Dark? Are there no records of some degree of "lightness" or intellectual enlightenment within this period? Although in brief, History shows that were at least, some noticeable trends of intellectual formation which could be regarded as some kind of light within the period of the Dark Age. The moment of light within this period of Dark Age is attributed to the activities and the productions of the Charlemagne (Charles the Great), who ruled from A.D. 768 until his death in 814. He started out as the ruler of the Frankish Kingdom but ended up uniting all Western Europe. He engineered a rare period known as the Carolingian Renaissance, in which education and the arts were promoted. Charlemagne began schools and formal education within the monasteries which attracted scholars not only form the Frankish Kingdom but from all over Europe. These schools main goal was to preserve the intellectual culture of the past which was being subsumed under the domineering entrails of the Dark Age. This school also worked assiduously to preserve the classical Christian culture which was under attack through offering reconstructive teachings and instructions, including the copying of several important texts. It is through these means that this school as able to keep the light of knowledge burning until the eleventh and twelfth centuries when philosophy flourished again.

Box 1.2: Periods of Darkness and Light in Early Medieval Philosophy

Much of what has been said so far about the characteristic features in the medieval period seems to allude to the purity of reason and the relevance of spirituality in molding human life within the society. But there is a period known as "the period of darkness" where all these aforementioned characteristics became non-existent. It is important to note that:

- This period was called "Dark" because the role of reasoning in human affairs was greatly de-emphasized.
- Emphasis, in this period, was placed on political, cultural and war-like dominance of a people over another as the justification for social relevance.

Summary of Unit 3

In Unit 3, you have learned that:

1. The Church had great influence in the medieval period,
2. Christianity influenced the development of philosophical thinking within the early medieval period.
3. Apart from the influence of Christianity, there were other significant influences that came from the Byzantine Empire and Islamic philosophers.
4. The innovative philosophical speculations of two notable thinkers of the early medieval period, namely, Boethius and Erigena largely contributed to the development of medieval philosophy.
5. In the Dark Age, there was a sort of de-emphasis on reason and spirituality as good values within the society.
6. Philosophy became the hand-maiden of theology in the medieval period.

Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 3

Now that you have completed this study session, you can assess how well you have achieved its Learning Outcomes by answering these questions. You can check your answers with the Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions at the end of this Module.

SAQ 3.1 (tests learning outcome 3.1)

What is the major character of medieval philosophy?

SAQ 3.2 (tests learning outcome 3.2)

Medieval philosophy was developed by what type of thinkers?

SAQ 3.3 (tests learning outcome 3.3)

Who are the two most notable scholars in the early period of medieval philosophy?

SAQ 3.4 (tests learning outcome 3.4)

What was the major Contribution of Boethius to Medieval philosophy?

SAQ 3.5 (tests learning outcome 3.5)

What would you consider as John Scotus' principal contribution to medieval philosophy?

Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 3

SAQ 3.1: Medieval philosophy is majorly characterized by a religious orientation.

SAQ 3.2: Christian thinkers

SAQ 3.3: Boethius and John Scotus Erigina

SAQ 3.4: He made texts written in unfamiliar languages available to medieval scholars; Boethius was one of the most important channels by which Greek philosophy was transmitted to the middle Ages.

SAQ 3.5: His attempt to reconcile the Neoplatonic doctrine of emanation with the Christian tenet of creation.

Unit 4   St. Augustine of Hippo

Expected duration: 1 week or 2 contact hours

Introduction

In this lecture, we shall look at the philosophical teachings of St. Augustine, who is no doubt one of the most renowned scholars in history. One of the founders of Christian theology, his writings commanded unquestionable authority and respect throughout the middle ages and influenced Christian theology from his time till date. He is mainly famous for his effort to bring Platonism and Neo-Platonism into agreement with the Christian doctrine. In all, we shall look at how he tried to explain the possibility of certitude in human knowledge, his argument for the existence of God, his conception of time and his ethics which will give us an insight into his idea of justice.

Learning Outcomes for Unit 4

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

4.1 Describe the type of life led by St. Augustine before his conversion (SAQ 4.1)

4.2 State what led St. Augustine to renounce worldly pleasures (SAQ 4.2)

4.3 Describe the reason why St. Augustine is regarded as one of the most renowned scholars in the medieval period (SAQ 4.3).

4.4 State the principal focus of St. Augustine's epistemology (SAQ 4.4).

4.5 Describe how St. Augustine argues for the existence of God (SAQ 4.5).

4.6 State what St. Augustine considers to be the goal of human behaviour in his thoughts on ethics (SAQ 4.6)

4.7 Describe St. Augustine's view on Justice (SAQ 4.7).

4.1 About St. Augustine

4.1.1 Some Notes on St. Augustine's Background

St. Augustine was born in Tagaste, in the African province of Numidia in 354 AD, to a pagan father, while his mother, Monica, was a devoted Christian. His intense concern over his personal destiny provided the driving force for his philosophical activities. He suffered from moral turmoil in his early youth and, consequently, this drove him to a life-long quest for true wisdom and spiritual peace. At the age of sixteen, Augustine began the study of rhetoric in Carthage. His mother had groomed him in the ways of Christian thought and behavior, but he left this religious faith and morality, taking a mistress who gave him a son. His thirst for knowledge impelled his mind to rigorous study and as such he became a successful student of rhetoric. A series of personal experiences led him to his unique approach to philosophy and at the age of nineteen he read the *Hortensius* of Cicero, which was an exhortation to achieve philosophical wisdom. This gingered his passion for learning, but he was left with the problem of where to find intellectual certainty.

Elsewhere, it is noted that Augustine lived a life of extravagant pleasure – including sexual pleasures among others – which was in direct contrast with his later monkish life. However, financial inadequacies led him to teach in Rome where he accepted a teaching post in Milan, where he showed his vast knowledge of ancient Greek philosophy, Neo-Platonism in particular. While in Milan, he was highly impressed by the eloquence and teachings of Ambrose, the bishop of Milan. Consequently, he was converted to Christianity in 386 AD. This newly found faith led him to renounce worldly pleasures, while embracing the church. Soon he founded his own monastic community in Tagaste, which lasted only for some years, as he entered and accepted the Catholic Priesthood. Augustine eventually became the bishop of Hippo in 396 AD. It must be noted that, he never left North Africa for the last thirty-nine years of his life. Rome was sacked by the Goths in 410 AD; and in 429, the Vandals crossed the North Africa from Spain and laid siege to Hippo; Augustine died in 430, at the age of seventy-five, shortly before the fall of Hippo.
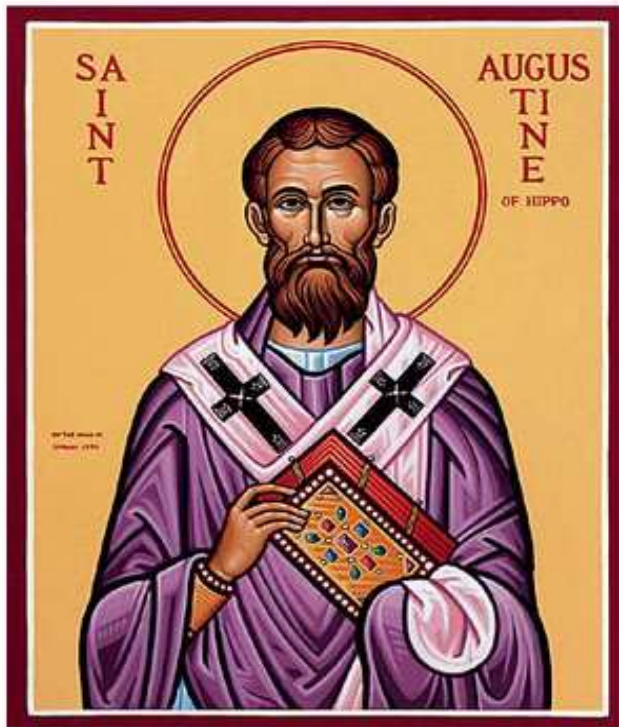
Fig 4.1: St. Augustine of Hippo

Source ©: Courtesy: St. Augustine Coptic Orthodox Church
http://www.suscopts.org/staugustineaugusta/

4.1.2. St. Augustine's contribution to medieval philosophy

There is no doubt that St. Augustine is regarded as one of the most renowned scholars in the medieval period. He is regarded as a scholar who applied his intellect principally in theology, where his importance and fame lie primarily. He was one of the founders of Christian theology and the greatest father of the church. His writings commanded unquestionable authority and respect throughout the Middle Ages, and influenced Christian theology from his time till date. Augustine was a prolific writer and his major philosophical works include: *Contra Academicos* (386), *De Libero Arbitrio* (ca 390), *The Confessions* (401), *The City of God* (426), as well as *De Trinitate* (419). He is mainly famous for his effort to bring Platonism and Neo-Platonism into agreement with the Christian doctrine. Nevertheless, in considering Augustine and his philosophy, it must be noted that he does not regard the philosophical and Christian lives as

essentially in conflict. Hence, he maintains that philosophy and religion aim at the same object, which he ultimately sees as the happy or blessed life.

4.2   St. Augustine's Philosophical Thoughts

As reasoned by Augustine, philosophy is essentially religious, and this conception permeates his thinking. He had very little problem with philosophical speculations about the natural world, while insisting that his concern was to examine only two things, two realities: God and the Soul. Furthermore, for Augustine, the view of natural scientific investigation is based on the Platonic conception of knowledge and reality. That is, what is real, and what can be known, is not found in transitory things of the natural world. If philosophy or reason cannot bring us to the blessed life on its own, it can nevertheless play vital role in that life. St. Augustine opined that blessed life must as a matter of fact begin with Christian faith, and so with belief. To believe something is not just with assent and so one may believe something without understanding it. For him, one comes to the understanding of something, only by having a rational demonstration or by being directly acquainted with that thing.

o   Philosophers are known for their various ideas and thoughts expressed at different times in the history of human civilization. Suppose you are asked about the distinguishing features of the philosophy of St. Augustine, how would you respond?

•   A good answer to such a question would be that St. Augustine developed a philosophical system that was essentially religious while drawing insights from the thoughts of Plato.

Augustine's quest for knowledge led him to join the Manichaean school, a philosophic-religious school founded by Mani in the third century A.D. Interestingly, this school claimed to have answers to the questions concerning the source of evil in the world. For St. Augustine, God, who is infinitely good, cannot be the source of evil in the world. In an attempt to explain the source of evil, the Manicheans maintain that there are two ultimate principles and sources of things that exist, namely: *Ormuzd*, which is the principle of good and *Ahriman*, the principle of evil. They hold that *Ahriman* is the source of evil, darkness and all other material things. They are of the opinion that man's soul came from *Ormuzd* (the principle of good) while the body came from *Ahriman* (the principle of evil). These two principles are in perpetual conflict with

each other, and this conflict is reflected in things that come from them. Hence, light and darkness, spirit and matter, good and evil among others are in perpetual conflict. Augustine at the first instance accepted this philosophy only to reject it later.

4.2.1 Augustine's Epistemology

In his epistemology, Augustine attacked and refuted scepticism. Some philosophers doubted the possibility of knowing anything for certain, but this is not the case for Augustine who asserts that anyone who doubts the possibility of knowing anything for certain knows at least one thing for certain, which is the fact that he doubts. As regards some philosophers who doubt the existence of anything, as well as the existence of all things, Augustine argued that the person is at least sure of his own existence and that his doubt is a confirmation of his existence or a proof of his own existence, since only human beings or existing beings doubt. Thus, Augustine points out that scepticism involves self-contradiction when he says that: "Anyone who says that nothing is certain, or that nobody can know anything for certain is contradicting himself. Is he certain of what he is saying. If he says that nobody can know anything for certain or that nobody can be sure of anything, he should be asked whether he knows what he is saying, or whether he is sure of it. If he says that he is sure of what he is saying then he is contradicting himself."

Following the Platonic philosophical tradition, Augustine is of the view that objects of true knowledge are eternal truths or ideas which are immutable and not the material things of this world that are highly mutable. But, contrary to what Plato holds that these eternal and immutable ideas are resident in the world of forms, Augustine maintains that they are in the mind of God. That is why, for him, when we acquire true knowledge, it means that our mind perceives and grasps these eternal and immaterial objects or ideas. Here, there is a seeming problem with the above notion, and that is, since the human mind is not eternal and not immutable, then the eternal truths and ideas are superior to the human mind, and if this is the case, how then is the human mind able to perceive as well as grasp the eternal realities or ideas that are in the mind of God? St. Augustine opines that the human mind is able to do so by the help of divine illumination. This divine illumination is what the human mind needs in order to grasp the eternal realities that transcend it. With this divine illumination, the human mind acquires true and certain knowledge. Also vital is the fact that in Augustine's philosophy, Plato's world of ideas,

the real world is taken to be the mind of God, while the idea of good, which illuminates all other ideas for Plato, is God himself or divine light.

Basically, at the heart of Augustine's philosophy is the belief that only through faith can wisdom be attained. Hence, philosophy and religion are geared towards the same thing, which is truth, but then, the former is inferior to the latter in search for the divine truth and wisdom. Augustine strongly holds that a philosopher without faith could never get to the ultimate truth which, for him, is beatitude, or 'enjoying of truth', and so for him, although reason alone could attain some truths, rational thought is the servant of faith.

4.2.2   Augustine on the Existence of God

In an attempt to explain God's existence, Augustine saw the universe as an effect of a cause. For him, every effect points to and reveals its cause and so from an effect one can proceed or get to the creator; thus he opined that creation points and reveals its creator. He says, for instance, that if we reflect on beautiful things, we can be led to the source of beauty itself. Also, from good things, we can be led to the source of goodness and so forth. He maintains further that by reflecting on truths – the eternal and immutable truths- we can be led to the source of truths, who is God. For all things there is, there are sources of those things and then truth and goodness have sources and can only led us to God, since God is the absolute truth and goodness, hence, his existence. In other words, "... there must be a source of these eternal and immutable truths; there must be a source of beauty which is imperfectly reflected here in things that are beautiful; there must be a source of goodness, a source of perfection; there must be a perfect and eternal standard against which we implicitly measure the degree of goodness, of beauty, and of perfection in things. This perfect and eternal standard is God."

Augustine also relied on the universal conviction of mankind that God exists. If God did not exist how would the whole human race become convinced of his existence? Human beings can grasp these truths and they are independent of our judgments. These truths have foundation which must be superior to human beings and so their basis must be the eternal and immutable Truth, which is God. According to Augustine, God created all things out of nothing. Following the two seemingly contradictory ideas of creation, that things of this world were created sequentially on the one hand, and that God created all things together on the other hand,

Augustine appeals to the doctrine of 'seminal reasons' (or causes), in a bid to deal with the above theological dilemma. He maintains that seminal reasons, which are invisible potentialities which come to realize themselves through time, were created by God at once. Therefore, all of history and development of the world were present at creation, in form of seminal reasons. This, however, implies that God included the capacity or potentiality of further development, in the course of time, in the created things at creation. That is, the things that will come into existence in future are already in the created things, just like seeds waiting for the due time.

4.1.3   Augustine on the Concept of Time

On the concept of time, Augustine says that time is an elusive concept, that is, if you want to lay hold on time, it evades or eludes your grasp. He further says that, time, in a sense, is treated with less attention, a common concept that most people know but do not bother about. Even though we talk of time, that is, the past, present and future, neither the past nor the future really exists, the past gone and the future yet to come, but even the present itself is just but a passing moment which will definitely turn to past. The issue of time becomes a puzzling concern; for if creation is from nothing, what was God doing before he created the world? Does it then make any sense to speak of absolute beginning? In response to these questions, Augustine argues that time is not independent of creation but consequent to it. He further states that independently of creation, there is no time, so the question of what happened before creation does not arise. He contends further that time is not something in which events happen; rather it is just a relation between events. According to him, "What we call the past is nothing other than the human mind as it remembers; it has no objective existence outside of this. The future is simply the human mind in its expectation; the future too has no objective existence outside of the mind."

4.1.4   Augustine's Ethics

Augustine asserts that moral theory was not just some special or isolated subject and that everything culminates in morality, in clarifying for humanity the sure path to happiness. He therefore sees happiness as the goal of human behavior. The above is so because Augustine believes that the human being has a natural desire for happiness. He further expresses this opinion in his *Confessions* when he says: "oh God Thou hast created us for Thyself so that our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee." Augustine notes further that no transitory

and imperfect happiness can satisfy this human desire, because the happiness which the human heart is seeking is a perfect one, eternal and immutable happiness. Thus, God alone and no other can satisfy this natural desire of the human heart, and it is only by turning to God that man can attain the happiness that his heart seeks. Augustine maintains that humanity's moral quest is the inevitable outcome of a specific and concrete condition, and the condition is that humanity is made in such a way that one has no other option than to seek happiness.

The ancient Greeks had considered happiness as the culmination of good life, but Augustine's theory provided an estimate of what constitutes happiness, and how it could be achieved. Whereas, Aristotle opined that happiness is achieved when a person fulfils natural functions through a well-balanced life, Augustine asserts that happiness required that a person should go beyond the natural to the supernatural. He believes that there is no purely natural person, since nature did not produce or create people, but God who is supernatural did, and so, to get or attain happiness, one must go beyond the natural to the supernatural.

Human beings have a free will to either seek this happiness or not and since this will is free, it can choose to turn to God or to turn away from God, to do good or to do evil. God, from the time of creation has impressed the moral law on the human heart, so that, nobody is ignorant of the fundamental moral principles. Hence, the human intellect is illuminated by the divine light to perceive and grasp theoretical truth and also illuminated to perceive the basic practical truths; the fundamental principles of morality. However, Augustine acknowledges that man is morally weak and that man's will has been weakened by original sin, and so, man is unable to do any good without the help of God, which is manifested in his grace. Therefore, man's will need the divine grace to enable it to observe the moral law, to do good and avoid evil. The fact of good and evil in the world leads us to Augustine's two cities. In Augustine's thoughts, there are two cities: the city of God and the city of man; every human being is either a citizen of one or the other. The citizens of the city of God are those motivated by love of God, those who observe the moral laws, those who do good, while those who do evil and are motivated by self love, and flout the moral laws, thereby turning away from God are citizens of the city of man. Augustine states that the whole of human history is the outcome of the interplay between these two basic motivating principles: the love of God and self love, and this has divided human beings into two camps: citizens of the city of God and citizens of the city of man.

Having discussed the love of God and self-love, Augustine further looks at the role of love and maintains that it is inevitable for human beings to love, and to love is to go beyond oneself and to put one's affection upon an object of love. Nevertheless, the incomplete nature of human beings makes it inevitable for people to love, so as to gain some sort of happiness and satisfaction. There are objects that people can choose to love and these reflect the varieties of ways in which people are incomplete and this varies from person to person. He holds that some people can love physical objects, while others love persons and some others have love of oneself. He holds further that everything in the world is good because all things come from God alone, who himself is goodness in full. Based on the above, all things are objects of love and so nothing is evil in itself; for him, therefore, evil is not a positive thing but the absence of good.

The fact that human beings are not totally physical, that is to say that, there is a spiritual dimension of the human being, and this readily brings to mind that our needs are not all physical in that primary sense. Human beings were made to love God; a person's nature was made so that only God, the infinite, can give the person ultimate satisfaction or happiness, and so man must love God because to live well is nothing other than to love God. To love God is the ultimate requirement for happiness, because only God can satisfy this need. And so, if one expects ultimate happiness and satisfaction from other things instead of God alone he or she displays or shows disordered love towards the thing other than God, that he or she expects ultimate happiness and satisfaction from. On this, Augustine says: "all people confidently expect that they can achieve true happiness by loving objects, other persons, and themselves. While these are all legitimate objects of love, people's love of them is disordered when these are loved for the sake of ultimate happiness. Disordered love consists in expecting more from an object of love than it is capable of providing. Disordered love produces all forms of pathology in human behavior. Normal self-love becomes pride, and pride is the cardinal sin that affects all aspect of people's conduct. The essence of pride is the assumption of self-sufficiency."

Regrettably, this assumption of self-sufficiency leads to pride, which turns people away from God and leads them to many forms of evil, and when this is the case, the soul is disfigured and thus this disordered love produces a disordered person within the shortest possible time and the disordered persons in turn produce a disordered community. Augustine believes that to reconstruct the disordered community, the disordered persons must first be reconstructed and this

reconstruction or salvation of the human being is only possible by reconstructing or reordering the person's love, by loving the proper things properly. We can only love a person properly by loving God first and when we love God first, we will not expect to derive from human love what can only be derived from love of God.

Evil emanates because of disordered love, and so Augustine did not agree with Plato who holds that the cause of evil is simply ignorance, but believes that free will, that is, the human will is the cause or source of evil in the world. Even though God created the world, as well as the human being, that evil exists in the world cannot be attributed in any way to God's activity. Even the natural evils like earthquakes, birth defects among others, for Augustine make for diversity in creation and so are ultimately parts of the best possible world. Since evil is the consequence of the rejection of God, he believes that evil is not a positive fact in creation, if it were, it would necessarily have to be attributed to God, the maker of all things, and so evil is a simple lack, a privation of good, it is simply the lack of correct order or harmony in the human will.

4.4.5   Augustine on Justice

According to Augustine, there is a single source of truth and all human beings recognize this truth and know it for the purposes of conduct, as natural law or natural justice. Augustine sees natural law as humans' intellectual sharing in God's truth, or God's eternal law. He says further that eternal law is the divine reason and the will of God which commands the maintenance or observance of the natural order of things and which forbids the disturbance of it. Therefore, since eternal law is God's reason which commands orderliness, a person's intellectual grasp of the eternal principle is called natural law. Therefore, when a political state makes laws, such temporal laws must be in concurrence with the principles of natural law, which in turn is derived from the eternal law. Moreso, since justice is a standard which precedes the state, Augustine argues that in making laws, the state must follow the requirements of justice. Principally, he holds that justice is a virtue, distributing to everyone his due, while discarding the notion of conventionality of justice.

Augustine relates justice to moral law and argues that justice is not limited merely to the relations between people, but the primary relationship in justice is between a person and God. Moreover, collective justice is impossible apart from individual justice and so Augustine says "if justice is not found in one man, no more then can it be found in a whole multitude of such like men. Therefore, amongst such there is not that consent of law which makes a multitude of people."

Activity 4.1

Take a moment to reflect on what you have read so far. Based on your learning experience, and knowing that St. Augustine's philosophical thoughts is quite broad, in what follows, can you identify some of the areas where St. Augustine did not contribute to?
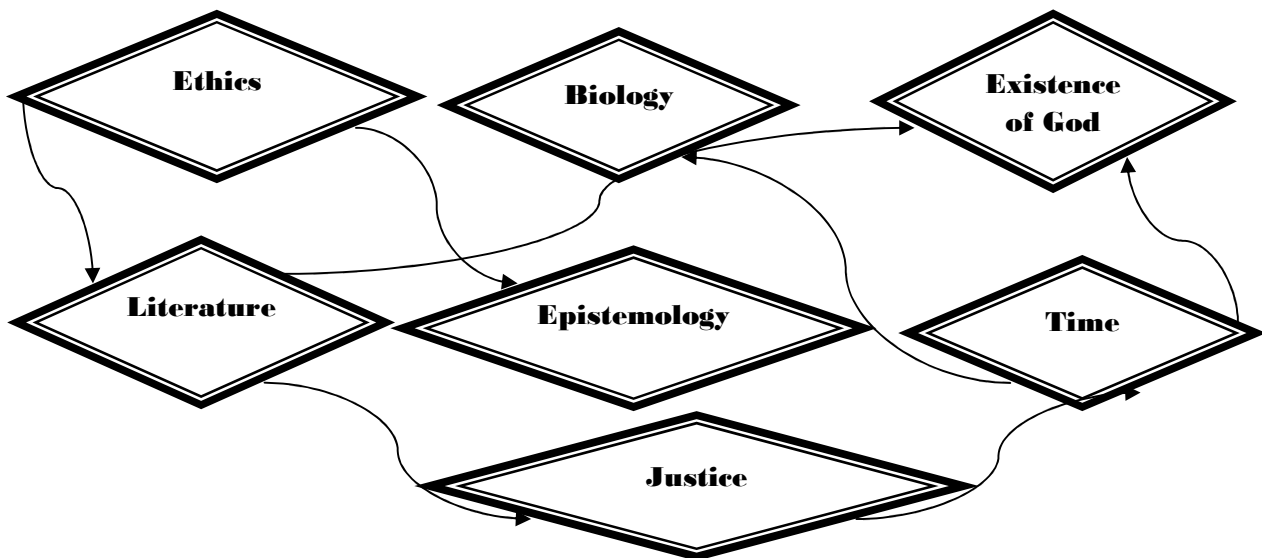
Fig. 4.2: Showing boxes of ideas/thoughts that are partly that of St. Augustine.

For as much as we discuss about Augustine in this lecture, it is important to note some essential aspects of his thoughts, especially those bordering on the theme of Love. This is represented in the box below:

Box 4.1: St. Augustine on the subject of Love

Augustine says that each object of love is different and because of this, the consequences of loving each will be different as well. This made him to assert that:

- The human needs which prompt the act of love are equally different.
- But then, there is some sort of correlation between various human needs and the objects that can satisfy them.
- Love is therefore, the act that harmonizes these needs and their objects.
- The range of human needs includes not only objects, other persons, and themselves, but chiefly, and most of all is God.

Summary of Unit 4

In Unit 4, you have learned that:

1. St. Augustine is a medieval scholar who made great contributions to philosophy and theology.
2. St. Augustine worked from within a Neo-Platonist framework and succeeded in marrying the philosophy of the ancient world to Christianity.
3. The contributions of St. Augustine to medieval philosophy span through Epistemology, Ethics, Concept of Time, and the idea of justice.
4. St. Augustine held the view that objects of true knowledge are ideas that are immutable.

Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 4

Now that you have completed this study session, you can assess how well you have achieved its Learning Outcomes by answering these questions. You can check your answers with the Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions at the end of this Module.

SAQ 4.1 (tests learning outcome 4.1)

How did St. Augustine lived his life before his conversion to the Christian faith?

SAQ 4.2 (tests learning outcome 4.2)

What experience made St. Augustine to forsake earthly pleasures?

SAQ 4.3 (tests learning outcome 4.3)

Why is St. Augustine regarded as one of the most influential scholars in the medieval period?

SAQ 4.4 (tests learning outcome 4.4)

What is the main focus of St. Augustine's epistemology?

SAQ 4.5 (tests learning outcome 4.5)

In what way did St. Augustine describe the existence of God?

SAQ 4.6 (tests learning outcome 4.6)

Ethically speaking, what did St. Augustine consider to be the goal of human behavior?

SAQ 4.7 (tests learning outcome 4.7)

How did St. Augustine conceive of the idea of justice?

Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 4

SAQ 4.1: St. Augustine lived a life of extravagant sexual pleasure.

SAQ 4.2: His conversion to Christianity in 386 AD made him to embrace a newly found faith which made him to reject the pleasures of the world.

SAQ 4.3: He is regarded as a scholar who made important contributions to the growth of Christian theology.

SAQ 4.4: St. Augustine's epistemology was focused at refuting scepticism and providing a foundation for the certainty of human knowledge.

SAQ 4.5: St. Augustine's argument for the existence of God is drawn from his knowledge of the universe. He saw the universe as an effect of a cause. For him, every effect points to and reveals its cause and so from an effect – so everything created in the universe points to the existence of God as its creator.

SAQ 4.6: St. Augustine believes that the *happiness* is the goal of human behavior.

SAQ 4.7: St. Augustine sees justice as virtue which denotes the primary relationship between a person and God.

Unit 5   Saint Anselm of Canterbury

Expected duration: 1 week or 2 contact hours

Introduction

In this lecture, you will learn about St. Anselm. Despite clashes between dialecticians and conservatives, the eleventh century produced one thinker who was both an original philosopher in his own right and a theologian sufficiently orthodox to be canonized: St Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109) and also whose originality and subtlety earned him the title of "Father of Scholasticism." Best known in the modern era for his "Ontological Argument," designed to prove God's existence, Anselm made significant contributions to metaphysics, ethics, and philosophy of language.

Learning Outcomes for Unit 5

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

5.1 Describe how St. Anselm used the term "good" to explain his metaphysical thoughts (SAQ 5.1).

5.2 State the focus of St. Anselm's method of inquiry (SAQ5.2).

5.3 Describe what Anselm considers to be the most significant metaphysical truth (SAQ5.3).

5.4 State why St. Anselm's view on freedom is different from the traditional account (SAQ 5.4).

5.5 Describe why St. Anselm considers philosophy of language as a doctrine of signs (SAQ 5.5).

5.1   The Philosophical Thoughts of St. Anselm

5.1.1   Anselm's Method of Philosophical Inquiry

Most of Anselm's work systematically reflects on the content of Christian doctrine: Trinity, Incarnation, the procession of the Holy Spirit, original sin, the fall of Lucifer, redemption and atonement, virgin conception, grace and foreknowledge, the divine attributes, and the nature of sin. He called this reflective activity "meditation" and also, in a famous phrase, "faith in search of understanding" (*fides quaerens intellectum*). His search for understanding is of interest to philosophers for three reasons. First, he often addresses arguments to those who do not share his dogmatic commitments—that is, he offers proofs based only on natural reason. He begins the

Monologion, for example, with the claim that a person who does not (initially) believe that there is a God with the traditional divine attributes "can at least persuade himself of most of these things by reason alone if he has even moderate ability." Likewise, the "Ontological Argument" of the *Proslogion*, and indeed the treatise as a whole, is addressed to the Biblical Fool, who denies the existence of God. This approach, later known as "natural theology," may be given in support of but does not depend upon particular points of doctrine.

Second, even when Anselm assumes certain dogmatic theses, his analysis is often directed to specifically philosophical issues in the case at hand, and thereby has broader implications. While discussing Lucifer's sin and subsequent fall in his *De casu Diaboli*, for instance, Anselm formulates a series of general theses about responsibility and motivation that hold not only of Lucifer's primal sin (or Adam's original sin), but which apply to ordinary cases of choice. Elsewhere he offers a defense of metaphysical realism (*De incarnatione Verbi*), a reconciliation of foreknowledge with the freedom of the will (*De concordia*), an account of sentential truth-conditions (*De veritate*), and so on.

Third, even when pursuing his doctrinal agenda, Anselm is always a philosopher's philosopher: Distinctions are drawn and defended, theories proposed, examples given to support theses, and tightly constructed arguments are the means by which he meditates on Christian themes. He uses the selfsame method when nondoctrinal commitment is at stake, as in the semantic analysis of the *De grammatico*, the account of power and ability in his fragmentary notes, or the analysis of freedom of choice in *De libertate arbitrii*. For Anselm, understanding—the very understanding for which faith is searching—is a philosophical enterprise, and his treatment of even the knottiest doctrinal difficulties is clearly philosophical in character. Intellectual integrity, he held, demands it. (He further held that although a philosophical approach to matters of faith is necessary, it is not sufficient; hence, in addition to systematic treatises, Anselm also composed prayers and devotional works.)

Fig 5.1: An Image of St. Anselm in his habits

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5.1.2 Anselm's Metaphysics

Following Augustine, Anselm is, broadly speaking, a Platonist in metaphysics. A thing has a feature in virtue of its relation to something paradigmatically exhibiting that feature. Anselm begins the *Monologion*, for example, by noting the diversity of good things in the world, and argues that we should hold that "there is some one thing through which all goods whatsoever are good" and that that one thing "is itself a great good … and indeed supremely good". He reasons that we can judge that some things are better or worse than others only if there is something, namely goodness, which is the same in each, though in different degrees—a claim sometimes dubbed "the Platonic Principle" for Plato's use of it in the case of equal sticks and stones in his *Phaedo*. To establish the uniqueness of this one thing, Anselm applies the Platonic Principle again and rules out an infinite regress.

Furthermore, since the goodness of good things is derivative, and things might be good in any degree imaginable, it follows that the one thing through which all good things are good must

be supremely good; it can be neither equaled nor excelled by the goodness of any good thing that is good through it. Note that the Supreme Good does not strictly speaking "have" goodness but rather *is* goodness itself, a quasi-substantial entity whose nature is goodness.

- o There are some philosophers who construct their thoughts upon the philosophical ideas of other scholars. There's no doubt that St. Anselm is one of such. Suppose Jumoke asks you o explain how, what would you say?
- • You should tell Jumoke that St. Anselm's notion of the good was built upon Plato's thought on the good. For Plato, the perfect state or the source of all good lies in the world of forms only that St. Anselm attributed the source to God.

Much of Anselm's metaphysics is a sustained study of such relations of dependence and independence: things may be the way they are "through themselves" (*per se*) or "through another" (*per aliud*), Anselm holds, and roughly the same reasoning can be applied to features other than goodness. The later medieval tradition called such features "pure perfections," and their defining characteristic is that it is unqualifiedly better to have them than not.

Just as the presence of goodness in things leads to the conclusion that there is some one thing that is paradigmatically good, through which all good things have their goodness, Anselm argues that so too the bare fact of their existence leads to the conclusion that there is some one thing through which everything else exists. Moreover, this one thing "paradigmatically" exists, namely, it exists through itself and of necessity: it is existence itself, something whose nature is existence (chaps. 3–4). Anselm drops from the Platonic Principle the requirement that things having a certain feature exhibit it in varying degrees; rather, the possession of the same feature by itself licenses the inference that there is something each thing has, something exemplifying the feature itself.

Likewise, the key move in his argument that there is only one such thing that exists through itself, rather than a plurality of independent things each equally existing through itself, is to apply the Platonic Principle to the feature of *self-existence* itself; this entails that there is a unique self-existent nature. Furthermore, since it is better to exist through oneself than through another (independence is better than dependence), the Supreme Good must exist through itself, and hence is identical with the self-existent nature, the source of the existence and goodness of all

else there is. Anselm concludes that "there is accordingly a certain nature (or substance or essence) that through itself is good and great, and through itself is what it is, and through which anything that exists is genuinely either good or great or anything at all". In short order Anselm shows that this being is appropriately called "God," and the remainder of the *Monologion* is devoted to establishing that God has the full range of divine attributes: simplicity, unchangeableness, eternality, triune nature of persons, and the like.

5.1.3 Anselm on Ethics

Anselm's positive ethical theory is grounded on his theory of the will and free choice, one of his most striking and original contributions. The traditional account of free will holds that an agent is free when there are genuine alternatives open to her, so that she can do one or another of them as she pleases. This traditional account is sometimes called "bilateral" since the agent must have at least two possible courses of action in order to act freely. In his *De libertate arbitrii*, by contrast, Anselm defends a unilateral normative conception of freedom, according to which an agent is free when two conditions are jointly satisfied: (a) she has the ability to perform a given action; and (b) that action is the one she ought to perform, that is, it is objectively the right action and hence the one she ought to want to perform—roughly, that an agent is free when she can act as she ought, regardless of alternatives. (Anselm, like all medieval philosophers, holds that what an agent ought to do is an objective matter.)

Note that Anselm is careful to say that an agent is free when she *can* act as she ought, not that she *does* so act; we commit wrongdoing freely when the right course of action is open to us but we fail to pursue it. The crucial issue, of course, is when an agent has the ability to perform a given action. Anselm devotes most of his fragmentary notes on ability and power to investigating this issue. His analysis tracks connections among ascriptions of ability, responsibility, and the cause of an action, much in the spirit of contemporary philosophical reflections on tort law. Very roughly, Anselm thinks there are a variety of freedom-canceling conditions; some of these, such as compulsion, are extremely sensitive to the kind of ability at stake.

A ballerina (a female ballet dancer) tied to a chair cannot dance but still has the ability to do so. More exactly, she does not have the opportunity to exercise the ability, though she retains the ability; were the constraint removed, she could exercise her ability at will. Anselm argues that

the ballerina's ability to dance is what matters to her free choice, according to (a), not whether she currently has the opportunity to exercise her ability. Now suppose that the ballerina, no longer tied to a chair, has through excessive dancing injured her legs so badly that she can dance only if a doctor operates on her legs. Here too, Anselm maintains, she has not lost the ability to dance but only the opportunity to exercise her ability, and can regain the opportunity only if a doctor helps her to do so. This is the situation in which Anselm finds the human race. Through the (wrongful) exercise of our free choice in original sin, we have lost the opportunity to freely do what is right, and can only recover it through the actions of another (namely through God's grace).We can legitimately be faulted for not doing what is right even now, despite the fact that we cannot do what is right at will, by our unaided efforts; we have the ability, and we lost the opportunity to exercise it through its improper use, but these facts do not stand in the way of our being free to act rightly; hence our culpability for failing to do so. Whether we agree with Anselm or not, his analysis is subtle and provocative, and represents a new level of sophistication in the analysis of free choice.

Anselm puts forward a famous thought-experiment in which God creates an angel with free will, but without any motive for action whatsoever—a free being with no ends at all. He argues that such a being would never act, since any action is motivated by pursuit of an end, and by hypothesis the angel has no ends. (Nor is an angel ever prompted by biological needs, and this is the point of using an angel rather than a human being in the example.) From this case Anselm and later philosophers drew the moral that at least some ultimate end has to be given to agents in order for there to be action at all, and hence the possibility of moral action. An agent must therefore have at least one ultimate end, an end she does not choose. Yet one end is not enough for moral agency. Anselm argues that there must be two ultimate and incommensurable ends to make sense of moral choices, and specifically of moral dilemmas. He reasons as follows. If an agent had only a single end, she would always act in pursuit of that end, unless deceived or misled through ignorance. There would be no moral conflict; her motives and reasons for action would be transparently in the service of her single ultimate end.. Nevertheless, our actions are free because of the pull between these ends, even if we consistently take one side or the other. Human fulfillment for Anselm thus turns out to be surprisingly paradoxical. We do not deserve to be happy unless we are prepared on principle to forgo happiness for justice. Indeed, only by

pursuing justice for its own sake can we attain the self-interested happiness we have scorned. The price of moral agency is that happiness is the reward for those who do not pursue it.

5.2   Anselm on the Existence of God

The existence of God is therefore the most fundamental metaphysical truth. Anselm tells us that he sought to replace the chain of arguments outlined above with "a single argument that needed nothing but itself alone to prove its conclusion, and would be strong enough to establish that God truly exists and is the Supreme Good, depending on nothing else, but on whom all other things depend for their existence and well-being." In doing so, he devised one of the most-discussed arguments in the history of philosophy, presented in *Proslogion* 2 as follows: Therefore, Lord, You Who give understanding to faith, give me understanding to the extent You know to be appropriate: that You are as we believe, and You are that which we believe. And, indeed, we believe You to be something than which nothing greater can be thought. Or is there is not some such nature, then, since "The Fool hath said in his heart: There is no God" [Psalms 13:1]? But certainly that same Fool, when he hears this very thing I say, 'something than which nothing greater can be thought', understands what he hears; and what he understands is in his understanding, even if he were not to understand that to be.

It is one matter that a thing is in the understanding, another to understand a thing to be. For when the painter thinks beforehand what is going to be done, he has it in the understanding but does not yet understand to be what he does not yet make. Yet once he has painted, he both has it in the understanding and also understands to be what he now makes. Therefore, even the Fool is convinced that there is in the understanding even something than which nothing greater can be thought, since when he hears this he understands, and whatever is understood is in the understanding. And certainly that than which a greater cannot be thought cannot be in the understanding alone. If indeed it is even in the understanding only, it can be thought to be in reality, which is greater. Thus if that than which a greater cannot be thought is in the understanding alone, the very thing than which a greater cannot be thought is that than which a greater can be thought. But certainly this cannot be. Therefore, without a doubt something than which a greater is not able to be thought exists (*exsistit*), both in the understanding and in reality.

The logical analysis, validity, and soundness of this argument have been a matter of debate since Anselm came up with it. Yet its general drift is clear. God, Anselm tells us, is something than which nothing greater can be thought. (Note that he does not present this formula as a definition or part of the meaning of "God" but rather only as a claim that is true of God; the indirect negative formulation is important since we cannot adequately think of or conceive God as such.) So understood, the denial of God's existence leads to a contradiction, as follows. That than which a greater cannot be thought cannot itself be thought not to exist, since if it were, we could think of something greater than it, namely that than which nothing greater can be thought existing in reality. But it is logically impossible to think of something greater than that than which nothing greater can be thought. Thus the denial of God's existence must be rejected, and so God's existence affirmed. Hence Anselm's argument as a whole is *ad hominem*, directed against someone who accepts the claim that God is something than which nothing greater can be thought; once accepted, Anselm offers a *reduction ad absurdum* of the denial of God's existence.

In the *Monologion* and *Proslogion*, Anselm says that he is trying to establish the existence of a "nature" (or equally an essence or a substance). The divine nature is identical with the very qualities of which it is the paradigm, and furthermore is also a concrete particular: God is an individual, albeit a three-in-one individual. In addition to such an extraordinary nature, there are also common natures, such as human nature, which is present in each human being as his or her individual nature. Anselm holds that such common natures "become singular" when combined with a collection of distinctive properties (*proprietates*) that distinguish an individual from all others (*De incarnatione Verbi* 11). In the same work he inveighs against the extreme nominalism of Roscelin of Compiègne that anyone taking universals to be no more than vocal utterances deserves no hearing on theological matters; Roscelin cannot understand how a plurality of humans are one human in species, and cannot understand how anything is a human being if not an individual (chap. 1). While the extent of Anselm's metaphysical realism is a matter of debate, remarks such as these make it clear that he countenanced some form of realism about universals.

5.3   Anselm on Philosophy of Language

Anselm adopts Augustine's view of language as a system of signs. This general category covers linguistic items, such as utterances, inscriptions, gestures, and at least some acts of thought; it

also covers nonlinguistic items, such as icons, statues, smoke (a sign of fire), and even human actions, which Anselm says are signs that the agent thinks the action should be done. Roughly, a sign signifies something by bringing it to mind; this single semantic relation, founded on psychology, is the foundation of Anselm's semantics. As noted above, common names — at least natural kinds terms —signify common nature and proper names signify the common nature in combination with distinctive properties. Non-denoting terms are problematic; "nothing" seems to be significant only by signifying nothing, a paradox that perplexes Anselm in several treatises.

Troublesome as they are, Anselm directs his most sustained inquiry into semantics not at empty names but at "denominative" terms, roughly what we call adjectives. The difficulty he addresses in his *De grammatico* can be stated simply: "white" cannot signify whiteness ("whiteness" does that); nor can it signify what is white ("snow" does that); what then does it signify? Anselm's answer depends on several distinctions, the most important of which is between direct and indirect signification (*per se* and *per aliud* signification). A term signifies directly if it brings the proper and customary signification to mind; it signifies other things indirectly, perhaps things linked somehow to what the term directly signifies.

As a first approximation, then, Anselm holds that 'whiteness' directly signifies whiteness, whereas 'white' directly signifies whiteness and indirectly signifies things that have whiteness (and is used to pick out the latter). Verbs, for Anselm, signify actions or "doings" of some sort, broadly speaking, including even passive processes; that is their distinguishing feature. Names and subjects, respectively, signify subjects and their doings; when combined in a sentence, the truth of the sentence reflects the underlying metaphysical dependence of doings on doers, of actions on subjects. Now just as Anselm's theory of meaning applies to more than words, so too his theory of truth applies to more than statements.

Activity 5.1

Take a moment to reflect on what you have read so far. Based on your learning experience on St. Anselm's philosophical thoughts, can you identify some of the ideas that his ethics consist of?
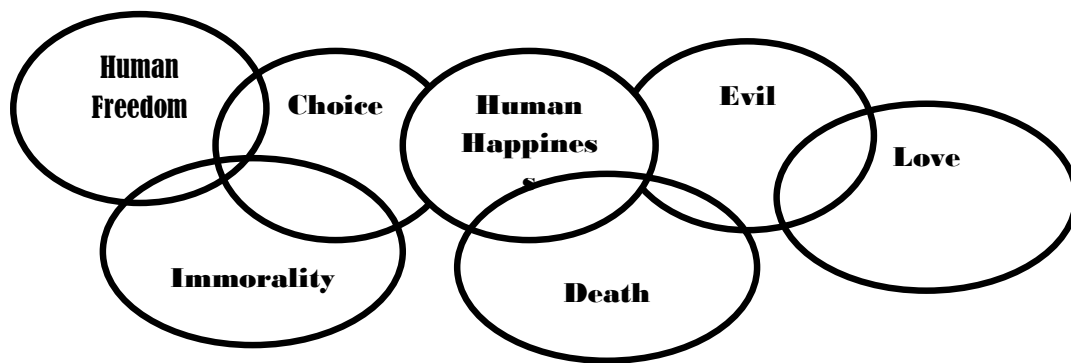
Fig 5.2: Some Ethical Concepts

Activity 5.1 Feedback:

Take a look at figure 5.2; it depicts various concepts discussed in ethical philosophy. But of particular interest is to identify the ones that features only in St. Anselm's Ethics.

In the *De veritate*, Anselm puts forward an account that recognizes a wide variety of things to be capable of truth—statements, thoughts, volitions, actions, the senses, even the very being of things. This shall be futher emphasized in the box below:

Box 5.1: St. Anselm on Truth

Truth, for Anselm, is a normative notion: Something is true when it is as it ought to be. Thus truth is in the end a matter of correctness (*rectitudo*), the correctness appropriate in each instance. It is important to note as Anselm holds that:

- For statements there are actually two forms of correctness: A given statement ought to signify what it was designed to express, and, if assertive, it ought to signify the world the way it is.
- The first is a matter of the propositional content of an utterance, the second whether that propositional content is asserted (or denied).

Summary of Unit 5

In Unit 5, you have learned that:

1. Anselm's philosophical goal was to provide conclusive arguments to rationally demonstrate the Christian teachings.

2. His conviction that faith necessarily preceded understanding greatly influenced his method, metaphysics, ethics, and so on.

3. In all, his ontological argument for God's existence attests to his great genius and has ensured his place in the history of philosophy.

4. Today, his ontological argument is debated and has attracted the interest of many scholars – admirers and critics.

Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 5

Now that you have completed this study session, you can assess how well you have achieved its Learning Outcomes by answering these questions. You can check your answers with the Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions at the end of this Module.

SAQ 5.1 (tests learning outcome 5.1)

In his metaphysics, how did St. Anselm conceive of the good?

SAQ 5.2 (tests learning outcome 5.2)

What would you consider to be the focus of St. Anselm's method?

SAQ 5.3 (tests learning outcome 5.3)

What, for Anselm, is the most fundamental metaphysical truth?

SAQ 5.4 (tests learning outcome 5.4)

In what way is St. Anselm's notion of freedom different from the traditional account?

SAQ 5.5 (tests learning outcome 5.5)

Why did St. Anselm consider philosophy of language as that which has to do with signs?

Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 5

SAQ 5.1: Aquinas believes that nothing is good by itself and what is the basis for the good in the world is indeed the supremely good.

SAQ 5.2: St. Anselm called his method of inquiry "meditation" which is famously expressed as "faith in search of understanding".

SAQ 5.3: The existence of God

SAQ 5.4: Anselm defends a unilateral conception of freedom different from the traditional bilateral conception, according to which an agent is free when certain conditions are satisfied.

SAQ 5.5: He believes that language is about signs; a sign signifies something by bringing it to mind.

Unit 6   St. Thomas Aquinas

Expected duration: 1 week or 2 contact hours

Introduction

In this lecture, we will learn about Aquinas who was an eminent philosopher and theologian but mainly a theologian, because of his religious background. He was greatly influenced by the works of Aristotle, had an in-depth study of Aristotle's works. As an expert on Aristotle's philosophy, he developed and interpreted the ideas of Aristotle in his own ways. Just as some of the works of Aristotle were controversial, some of his views were in conflict with the teachings of the Catholic Church; for instance, his notion that the soul does not survive the body and that the world had not been created but was eternal. Despite this, Aquinas attempted to reconcile the Catholic theology with the philosophy of Aristotle and was majorly concerned with illuminating the relationship between faith and reason, in other words, between theology and philosophy.

Learning Outcomes for Unit 6

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

6.1 State why St. Aquinas is referred to as the angelic doctor (SAQ 6.1).

6.2 Describe the great achievement of St. Thomas Aquinas (SAQ 6.2).

6.3 State how St. Aquinas disagreed with the idea of Bonaventure (SAQ 6.3).

6.4 Describe who Aquinas regarded as the Absolute being (SAQ 6.4).

6.1   About St. Thomas Aquinas

6.1.1   Background and Education

St. Thomas Aquinas (1224 – 1274) was born near Naples in Italy, into a noble Italian family. He is considered by many to have been the greatest philosopher of the medieval epoch. As early as five years, he began his studies in a Benedictine monastery and later attended the University of Naples where he studied philosophy. However, Aquinas in 1244 entered the Dominican order, but this was a disappointment to his family who wished to see him becoming a Benedictine monk, a vocation that was prestigious during his time. He studied under Albert the Great, another great medieval philosopher for four years in Cologne. Aquinas proved himself a

distinguished and outstanding student and consequently Albert the Great sent him to the University of Paris in 1252, where he became a lecturer in the theology department. Following his dedication and zeal, he became a full member of the faculty in 1257 where he continued to teach until 1259. Aquinas lectured on philosophy and theology at various Dominican monasteries around Rome for the next nine years, but returned to the University of Paris in 1268. Nevertheless, he returned to Italy in 1272 and taught at the University of Naples before his health began to fail in 1273, and sequel to his frail health he died in March of 1274.

Fig. 6.1: Picture of St. Aquinas (the angelic doctor © www.stasnm.org

Aquinas, no doubt, was a prolific writer; he began his writings in Paris in 1252. His works consist of various lengthy theological treaties, commentaries on the works of others, disputations on theological and philosophical issues, as well as other numerous short works. But then, his most vital works are the two *Summas*: the *Summa Contra Gentiles* and the *Summa Theologica*.

Others, from philosophical point of view are his *De Ente et Essentia*, *De Malo*, *De Vertate*, *De Unitate Intellecus Contra Averroista*, as well as his numerous commentaries on the works of Aristotle. Note should be taken of the fact that, in some of his works, he presents his ideas in form of questions, which are divided into articles and each article asks a question, which is followed by various objections representing the views of other scholars, and followed in turn by his own idea of the issue under discussion, then his replies to the initial objections.

6.1.2   Some Major Influences on St. Aquinas

Aquinas' works show the influence of a number of other philosophers, among whom are Plato, Augustine, the Islamic philosophers Avicenna and Averroes, as well as Maimonides the great Jewish philosopher. Aquinas was an eminent philosopher and theologian but mainly a theologian, because of his religious background. He was greatly influenced by the works of Aristotle, hence he had an in-depth study of Aristotle's works and as an expert on Aristotle's philosophy he developed and interpreted the ideas of Aristotle in his own ways. Some of the works of Aristotle were controversial, and as well, some of his views were in conflict with the teachings of the Catholic Church, for instance, his notion that the soul does not survive the body and that the world had not been created but was eternal. Despite this, Aquinas attempted to reconcile the Catholic theology with the philosophy of Aristotle and was majorly concerned with illuminating the relationship between faith and reason, in other words, between theology and philosophy. Aquinas is not saying that all articles of faith were demonstrable with reason, but he thought many were; therefore, he tried to show the dictates of reason as represented by Aristotle, and those of faith were compatible in the areas in which they intersect. Even though his views were not readily accepted in his days, because of the large challenge they posed to the already established Augustinian theology, he later became the official theologian of the Catholic Church, the angelic doctor, and he remained so till date.

- o Suppose you are having a discussion with Tayo on the beauty of Aquinas' philosophical ideas then suddenly asks you this question: what major philosopher influenced the thoughts of Aquinas, how would you respond?

- You ought to tell Tayo that St. Thomas Aquinas was majorly influenced by Aristotle; in fact, he was considered to be an expert in the analysis of the works of Aristotle.

6.2   The Philosophical/Theological Achievements of Aquinas

The great achievement of St. Thomas Aquinas was that he brought together into a formidable synthesis the insights of classical philosophy and Christian theology, specifically Christianizing the philosophy of Aristotle. Having said this, we shall now look at the various ideas of Aquinas. In Thomistic metaphysics, Aquinas, just like Aristotle explains change in terms of ten categories, made up of substance and nine accidents, maintaining that a change may be either a substantial change or an accidental change. He believes that in a substantial change, the substance of a thing is completely changed to another substance, for example, when a wood is burnt; it eventually changes to another substance, ashes. But then, when the wood is used to form a table for instance, the wood undergoes an accidental change. For Aquinas, the nine accidents are: quantity, quality, relation, place, time, position, state, action and passion. Hence, the above are nine ways in which we can talk of substance, and so they are nine ways in which a substance can undergo change or alteration.

Nevertheless, when a substantial change takes place, something undergoes the change from one substance to another and this is responsible for the continuity between the two substances and this is the prime matter, which is pure potentiality. That is to say that, prime matter is the potentiality to receive different new forms. Put in other words, that is the potentiality to become anything. Prime matter cannot exist on its own but can only exist with a substantial form, which is that which makes a thing what it is. We should equally note that prime matter and substantial form cannot be separated, as none can exist without the other. Prime matter is not determinate; it is totally indeterminate as it is just the potentiality to receive any form, hence it is only the substantial form that makes a thing what it is, a particular kind of thing, but it does not make a thing an individual thing, and so the principle of individuation according to Aquinas, is prime matter assigned by quantity, that is, prime matter in need of matter and form.

Aquinas did not agree with Bonaventure's idea that both material and spiritual things/beings are composed of matter and form, but he maintained that matter and form are

compositions of only material things/beings, while spiritual beings like angels are not composed of matter and form, but are pure form without matter. This doctrine, however, is known as *hylemorphism*, which could be traced back to the thoughts of Aristotle. This doctrine raised questions on the existence of angels, but Aquinas holds that the existence of angels could be proved, and feels that the hierarchy of being would not be complete unless we agree on the existence of angels, which would subsequently bridge the gap between human beings and God. In the hierarchy of being we have inanimate or organic beings, which are the lowest kind of beings, followed by organic beings, that is, sensory beings, which are animals higher on scale, and higher still are the human beings, who are rational-corporeal beings. Then, at the top of this hierarchy we have God, who is the Absolute being; pure act without matter or potency. Aquinas went further to opine that the gap between man, the spiritual-corporeal being and the infinite spirit, God, is such that we have to definitely suppose that there exist other beings, higher than man but finite spirits without matter, and he calls these angels, hence following the above, he gave a rational basis for the Christian belief in angels.

Activity 6.1

Take a moment to reflect on what you have read so far. Based on your learning experience, and knowing that St. Thomas Aquinas' philosophical thoughts are broad, can you note what is considered his greatest achievement in the following?
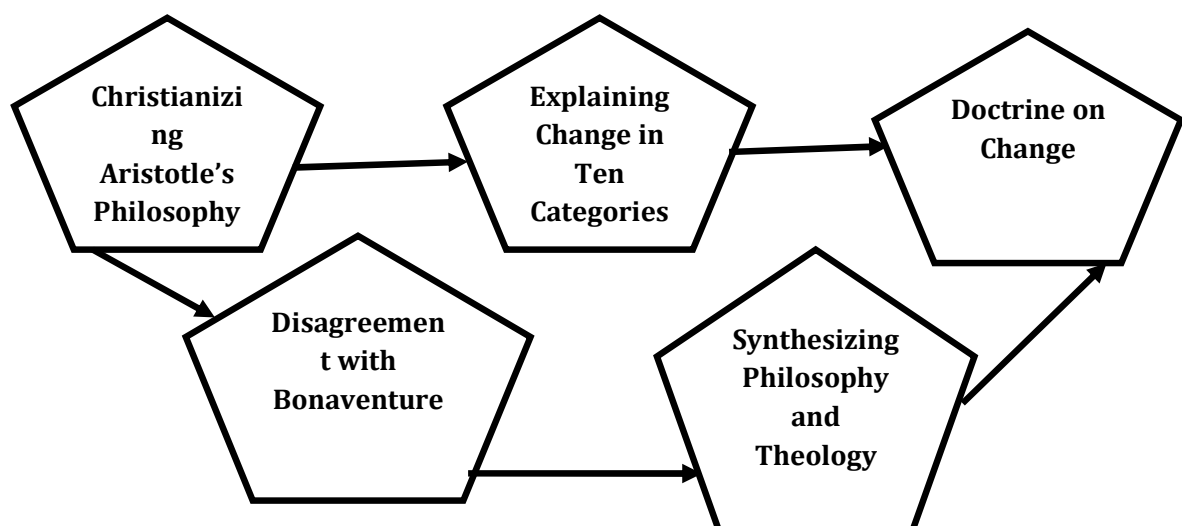
Fig. 6.2: A Flow chart on the thoughts of St. Aquinas

For Aquinas, in all finite beings, essence and existence are not the same, thus they are not identical. The essence and the existence of finite beings are distinct, for they all receive their existence from outside and because of that they are not necessary beings. He holds that it is only in God that essence and existence are identical, since he is the necessary being whose very essence involves existence. Therefore, all finite beings are contingent beings; their existence is not necessary, since their essence does not involve existence. (The essence of a being is that which makes it what it is – different from other kinds of things/beings). More on this is represented in Box 6.1.

Box 6.1: Aquinas on Essence and Existence

The essence of corporeal beings is the substance, as it is composed of matter and form, while in terms of immaterial being, the essence is the form alone, without matter, since they are not composed of matter and form. However, the following points should be noted:

- He sums up saying that existence is determined by essence, since a being can only exist according to its essence.
- He also holds that although essence and existence are distinct in finite beings, they are inseparable, for there can be neither essence without existence nor existence without essence.

Summary of Unit 6

In Unit 6, you have learned that:

1. Aquinas tried to show that the dictates of reason as represented by Aristotle and those of faith were compatible in the areas in which they intersect.

2. His great achievement lies in the fact that he brought together into a formidable synthesis the insights of classical philosophy and Christian theology.

3. Furthermore, in his potency and act doctrine, Aquinas maintains that any being that is subject to change, that is, any being that is subject to development or improvement is made up of potency and act.

4. Even though his views were not readily accepted in his days, because of the large challenge they posed to the already established Augustinian theology, he later became the official theologian of the Catholic Church.

Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 6

Now that you have completed this study session, you can assess how well you have achieved its Learning Outcomes by answering these questions. You can check your answers with the Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions at the end of this Module.

SAQ 6.1 (tests learning outcome 6.1)

   Why is St. Thomas Aquinas otherwise known as "the angelic doctor"?

SAQ 6.2 (tests learning outcome 6.2)

   In his career as a theologian, what is the greatest achievement of St. Aquinas?

SAQ 6.3 (tests learning outcome 6.3)

   What is the basis for the disagreement between Aquinas and Bonaventure?

SAQ 6.4 (tests learning outcome 6.4)

   In his doctrine on the hierarchy of beings, Aquinas talked about the Absolute being, who is the Absolute being?

Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 6

SAQ 6.1: This title was given to Aquinas when he became the official theologian of the Catholic Church.

SAQ 6.2: The great achievement of St. Thomas Aquinas was that he synthesized the insights of classical philosophy and Christian theology.

SAQ 6.3: Aquinas disagreed with Bonaventure that both material and spiritual beings are composed of matter and form, but he maintained that matter and form are compositions of only material beings.

SAQ 6.4: The Absolute being, for Aquinas, is God who is a pure act without any mixture of matter or potency.

Unit 7   Aquinas on the Existence of God

Expected duration: 1 week or 2 contact hours

Introduction

In this lecture, you shall learn about St. Aquinas' arguments for the existence of God; Aquinas gave five arguments, which are nowadays seen as proofs for God's existence. Contrary to Anselm who began his proof with the idea of a perfect being, that which nothing greater can be conceived – which he calls God – Aquinas claims that all knowledge must begin with our experience of sense objects. Instead of beginning with innate ideas of perfection, he rested all his five proofs upon the idea derived from a rational understanding of the ordinary objects that we experience with our senses.

Learning Outcomes for Unit 7

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

7.1 State what concept Aquinas used to explain his first proof on the existence of God (SAQ 7.1)

7.2 Describe the view of Aquinas on the cause of all perfection in all created things (SAQ 7.2).

7.3 State who Aquinas regarded as the unmoved mover (SAQ 7.3).

7.4 Describe Aquinas' position on the source of all human knowledge SAQ 7.4).

7.5 State the two prominent features that run through Aquinas 'five proofs for God's existence (SAQ 7.5).

7.1   Aquinas' Religious Philosophy

7.1.1   Aquinas' Arguments (Proofs) for the Existence of God

Aquinas' first proof of the existence of God was demonstrated with motion. He starts by saying that we are certain, because it is evident to our senses, that in the world some things are in motion, and that it is equally clear to us that whatever is in motion was set on motion by another, that is, was moved by something else. Furthermore, when something is at rest, it will never move until something moves it, and so, when a thing is at rest, it is potentially in motion. Motion is the transformation of potentiality to actuality, for motion occurs when something

potentially in motion is moved and it is then actually in motion. He further holds that nothing can be transformed from a state of potentiality by something that is also in a mere state of potentiality, hence, something actually moving moves a thing in potentiality. In other words, nothing can be reduced from potentiality to actuality except by something in a state of actuality. Also, what is actually at rest cannot be simultaneously in motion, and so, whatever is moved must be moved by another. But then, for Aquinas, if we are to account for motion, we cannot do that by going back in an infinite regress, for it would seem that all are potential movers, but there must be an unmoved mover, who is actuality itself and that is God. Making this point clearer he says: "There must therefore be a Mover, who is able to move things but which does not itself have to be moved." This Mover, according to Aquinas, is God.

- o Tope is worried about the idea of proof that is very prominent in Aquinas' philosophy. He is a lawyer who believes that for anything to be considered as a proof, it must be material evidence – something tangible. So now Tope wants to know if Aquinas' own proofs are of this material kind. How would you respond to him?
- The type of proofs being referred to in Aquinas philosophy is not the material kind. Rather, it simply refers to certain arguments/views offered as reasons for something to be- in this case, reasons offered to argue for the existence of God.

In his proof from efficient cause, Aquinas holds that we experience different kinds of effects and in every instance we assign an efficient cause to each effect. He says that the efficient cause of the statue is the work of the sculptor, and if the activity of the sculptor is removed, we will not have the effect which is the statue. There are various efficient causes traceable as regards the sculptor, for instance, the parents of the sculptor are his or her efficient cause, and also, the workers in the quarry are the efficient cause of this particular piece of marble's availability to the sculptor. These point to the fact that there are limitless efficient causes, since sculptors do not cause themselves and statues do not cause themselves either. Since nothing can be prior to itself, a cause is prior to an effect, its prior cause must have its own cause and since we cannot continue to go this way, Aquinas points that there must then be a first efficient cause, to which everyone gives the name God.

However, this led to his third proof from necessary versus possible being, and he says that in nature we find that things are possible to be and not to be, such things are for him possible

or contingent because they do not always exist; they are generated and are corrupted. There was a time a thing (an object) is not in existence and when it comes to existence, it is still possible that at a point it will cease to exist. This means that all possible beings at one time did not exist, will exists for a time, and will finally pass out of existence. When possible things come into existence, they beget other things, as seen in parents bearing children. Aquinas believes that possible beings do not have their existence in themselves or from their own essence and that if all things were only possible things, then at one time there was nothing in existence. Also, if there was a time when nothing existed, then nothing could start to be and even now, there would be nothing in existence, because that which does not exist begins to exist only through something already existing. And if this is so, Aquinas concludes that we must therefore accept and admit the existence of a being having of itself its own necessity, and not receiving if from another, but rather causing in others this necessity. This being is what all men speak of as God.

Next in Aquinas' argument for the existence of God is proof from the degree of perfection. He says that in our experience we find out that some beings are more and some less good, some true and noble. These and other ways of comparing things are possible only because things resemble in their different ways, something that is the maximum. He further maintains that, there must be something that is truest, noblest and best. By the same reasoning, since it can be said about things that they have more or less being, or a lower or higher form of being, as when we compare, let's say, a stone with a rational creature.

Aquinas then argues that there must be something which is to all beings the cause of their being, goodness and every other perfection, that is to say that, there is cause for the perfection which exists in created things and then there must be one responsible for all these perfection in created things and this we call God. Finally, on proof from the order of the universe, Aquinas says that it is obvious that things, such as, parts of the natural world or parts of the human body, which do not possess intelligence, behave in an orderly manner. That is, they act in a special and predictable ways to achieve certain ends or functions as the case may be; their actions are orderly and this makes for order in the universe, take for instance, the orderly rotation between night and day. These things act intelligently and lead to an orderly universe and based on this, Aquinas concludes that there exists an intelligent being, by whom all natural things are directed to their ends and this being he calls God. Thus, Aquinas concludes his

argument for the existence of God, leaving us with two principle features, which ran through in all his five proofs, which are the foundation of the five proofs in sense experience and the grip upon the idea of causality. However, versions of Aquinas' arguments from cosmology and ontology are still relevant and accepted by the Catholic Church even till date, though modern philosophers have almost rejected all the five ways of Aquinas.

Activity 7.1

Take a moment to reflect on what you have read so far. Based on your learning experience, and knowing that Aquinas offered five basic proofs to argue for the existence of God, in the spaces provided, try to write down a summary of the five proofs. Can you?

Proofs	What do you know about the Proof?
1. Argument from motion	
2. Argument from Efficient Causes	
3. Argument from Possibility and Necessity	
4. Argument from Gradation of Being	
5. Argument from Design	

Fig 7.1: An exercise on the basics of St Aquinas' arguments for the existence of God

7.2 Aquinas on Man's Knowledge of God

Aquinas goes further to comment on man's knowledge of God; he looks at it from the conclusion derived from natural cognitive faculties, which is the senses and reason of secular philosophy, as well as conclusion gotten from divine revelation, which is the faith of divine theology. He maintains that the above are two generally autonomous ways of looking at the same reality, which is God. Our natural cognition works from below to know God, through his effects as the creator of the universe on the one hand, and divine revelation, which is

supernatural cognition, works from above to know God as cause, on the other hand. The above idea of Aquinas readily brings to mind that faith and scientific knowledge (reason) are sharply distinguished, not by object, but by method. He holds that the two are cognitive processes which involves the assent of the intellect to truths; but whereas, faith requires the addition of the will in order to believe truths with certainty, scientific knowledge requires no such application since the intellect sees truths immediately, intuitively or argues in a valid way to establish truths from intuitively known premises.

7.3   Aquinas on the Source and Nature of Human Knowledge

Nevertheless, Aquinas agrees with Aristotle that all human knowledge is gotten from sense perception and that there is nothing in the intellect which was not first in the senses, since God transcends perception and the range of human experience, it obviously follows that we can never know positively what God is, that is, we can never have knowledge of his essence or nature in a positive way, and so, we can never know what God is but we can only know what he is not. We can therefore approach the knowledge of God by removing from the concept of God certain elements that are features of creatures; we can remove from the concept of God elements of corporeality, limitation, potentiality, mutability, imperfection among others, by doing this, we can get nearer to forming the correct idea of God, but we can never come to the knowledge of his true nature. We can say that God is not corporeal, not material, not limited, he has no potentiality, does not change, has no imperfection and these are indications that God is an immaterial or spiritual being, who is infinite and immutable, not composed and not subject to space nor time. He cannot be located spatially and he is absolutely perfect. Aside the negative ways of forming right ideas of God, we can as well approach the idea of God through positive ways, that is when we get the idea of God through certain positive attributes which are shared in a limited way by creatures, but its fullness is found in God. Such attributes as justice, wisdom, life, beauty, goodness, power, being, among many others. These attributes are predicated of God and they are divine, but shared by human being in a limited and imperfect way.

From the above, it is established that creatures are being, but in the real fact God is Being itself. God does not simply have life just as human beings but he is life itself, he is also not simply just but he is justice itself, not good but goodness itself and so it is for all other divine attributes. Hence, God is the infinite source of all these attributes reasoned Aquinas. He does

not simply have them; they are identical with his being. Based on the fact that the idea of being is the one we know from experience, also our idea of goodness is the one we know from experience, that is, human goodness. This applies to all the positive attributes that we predicate of God's being, and so what do all these mean when we apply them to God? Does applying them to God mean the same thing as when applied to human beings? Do these concepts have exactly the same meaning when predicated of God as they have when predicated of human beings? This problem led Aquinas to assert that they do not have exactly the same meaning, while maintaining that there are three kinds of predications: univocal, analogical and equivocal predications. These are three ways of saying the same thing about two or more people (or things) or three ways a concept can be predicated of two or more people (or things).

When we talk of univocal predication, the same thing is predicated of two people in exactly the same way and with exactly the same meaning. For instance, the word die is predicated of both a king and a slave univocally, when we say that a king dies as well as when we say that a slave dies. In this case, the word "die" is seen exactly the same way and having the same meaning in both the instance of the king and of the slave. But then, in analogical predication, Aquinas maintains that it is based on similarity between the two persons or things to which a concept is applied. For instance, when it is said that a person is healthy and that a food is healthy, the word healthy is not used in exactly the same way and does not have exactly the same meaning. Same is the case when we talk of or refer to people as human beings and also say that God is a being, the word being is not exactly having the same meaning in the two instances; hence, it is not the same way man is a being that God is also said to be a being. The similarity and the difference are reflected in analogical predication, and so analogical predication implies that there is similarity and difference in a way terms or words are applied to two persons or things. Thus, the attributes predicated to both God and man is analogically predicated. Finally, on predications, Aquinas says that the same word is applied to two persons or things in completely different way, with completely different meaning in equivocal predication. For example, when it is said that a ball is used to designate a kind of dance and also to designate the round object played in a football game. Another instance is the case of a bat, which is used to designate an animal the flies as well as the instrument used for playing table tennis. We can see that there is no similarity between the two things either bearing ball or bat, and they do not have the same meaning in their different applications. Following the three predications, Aquinas

holds that when we apply the same words or concepts to both God and human beings, we are neither doing so univocally nor equivocally, but analogically, hence the attributes that are predicated to both God and human beings are predicated analogically. In other words, there is similarity and dissimilarity in the way concepts are applied to both. Although man is similar to God in some measures, but then, man's likeness to God is an imperfect one, and so there are lots of differences in the way concepts are applied to God and human beings.

We have looked at the attributes of God and how human beings share some of these attributes in an imperfect way and so Aquinas says that having been created, every creature has a relation to God and this relation is that of dependence. God created all things out of nothing and not out of pre-existing material. The imminent question becomes: why did God create, since he is infinite and needs nothing and so has nothing to gain from creation, creatures as they are cannot add anything to God's being, his happiness, his perfection, or even his glory. In an attempt to answer this question, Aquinas maintains that God created in order to communicate his goodness to other beings.

Box 7.1: Aquinas on what God can and cannot do

Aquinas believes that God can do all things because he is omnipotent, but points out immediately that God cannot do what involves a contradiction because what involves a contradiction is not something, but it is nothing. It is however, important to note that:

- Aquinas distinguishes between physical and moral evils, insisting that physical evil is part of the order of the universe while moral evil is due to man's misuse of his freedom which is itself a good thing.
- To be free implies the ability to choose good or evil and to remove one would implicate the removal of the other and that would ultimately mean removal of human freewill.

Furthermore, on the question of why did God not remove evil in the world, since he can do all things, Aquinas says that evil is not something positive, but it is a negation, a privation of good. Therefore, evil was not created and could not be created by God, since it is not a positive entity. We can say that God permitted evil because of the good it accompanies, that is to say that, the possibility of evil is tied up with the possibility of good. We can then say from the above that man's capacity to feel pain is bound up with his capacity to feel pleasure and so, if the capacity to feel pain or suffering were removed, then the capacity to feel pleasure would also be removed, for both are from man's sensitive nature.

Summary of Unit 7

In Unit 7, you have learned that:

1. Aquinas' first proof of God's existence was demonstrated with motion.

2. From his proof of efficient cause, Aquinas maintains that there must be a first efficient cause to which everyone gives the name God.

3. In demonstrating the existence of God, Aquinas based them on his analysis of sense objects, as well as, upon his idea that the existence of these objects requires a finite series of causes and ultimately, a first cause, which he calls God.

4. For him, motion is transformation of potentiality to actuality; in this sense, there must be a Mover who is able to move things but does not itself have to be moved. This Mover, he calls God. Another argument for God's existence is from degree of perfection.

5. Aquinas maintains that the major feature of all sense objects is that their existence requires a cause and so by the light of natural reason, the intellect knows by experiencing events. Thus, that for every effect there must be a cause, and that nothing comes from nothing.

Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 7

Now that you have completed this study session, you can assess how well you have achieved its Learning Outcomes by answering these questions. You can check your answers with the Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions at the end of this Module.

SAQ 7.1 (tests learning outcome 7.1)

St. Aquinas' first proof was demonstrated with what?

SAQ 7.2 (tests learning outcome 7.2)

According to Aquinas, what is the cause for the perfection which exists in created things?

SAQ 7.3 (tests learning outcome 7.3)

Who does Aquinas refer to as the unmoved mover?

SAQ 7.4 (tests learning outcome 7.4)

For Aquinas, all human knowledge is derived from what source?

SAQ 7.5 (tests learning outcome 7.5)

What are the two prominent features that run through Aquinas' five proofs?

Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 7

SAQ 7.1: Motion

SAQ 7.2: God

SAQ 7.3: God

SAQ 7.4: It is derived from the senses.

SAQ 7.5: i. foundation of the five proofs in sense experience

ii. The grip upon the idea of causality

Unit 8   Other Teachings in Aquinas' Philosophy

Expected duration: 1 week or 2 contact hours

Introduction

In this lecture, you will learn more about the philosophical teachings on Aquinas. Thus we will continue our discussion of Aquinas by looking at his teachings in the areas of epistemology or theory of knowledge, politics and morality.

Learning Outcomes for Unit 8

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

8.1 Describe Aquinas' unique conception of man (SAQ 8.1).

8.2 State what Aquinas says give human beings the capability to contemplate God (SAQ 8.2).

8.3 Describe Aquinas view on the mind acquires knowledge (SAQ 8.3).

8.4 Describe what, for Aquinas, is the highest good for man (SAQ 8.4).

8.5 Describe how Aquinas conceives of a State (SAQ 8.5).

8.1   Aquinas' Philosophical Teachings

8.1.1   Aquinas' Conception of Man

Aquinas had a distinctive conception of man. He says that man is a physical substance; this was unique because he insisted upon the unity of human nature. Man is a unity of body and soul, therefore, without the soul, the body would have no form and, without the body, the soul would not have its required organs of sense, through which to gain its knowledge. Aquinas further maintains that as a physical substance, a person is a composite of soul and body. The soul is the form of the body; the unity that exists between the soul and the body is not accidental as seen in the Platonic idea but it is a substantial unity, that is, the unity between them is that between matter and form, making the two constitute one unified entity, each compliments and is complimented by the other. Worthy to note is the fact that Aquinas did not follow Aristotle to

conclude that none (soul/form and body/matter) can exist without the other and that the soul therefore perishes with the body at death. He maintains that the soul is immortal, that at death it is separated from the body and continues to live on.

Aquinas notes that animals and plants have souls, that the soul of a plant performs vegetative functions, that is, it has the capacity of growth, nutrition and reproduction. The soul of an animal has the power of sensation and locomotion, while the human soul has all the above, including the power of intellection and thought. Some of the powers of the soul cannot be exercised without the body, and these are those the soul shares with plants and animals. The soul can exercise the power of intellection on its own without the body and that is why the soul can continue conscious life after it is separated from the body. But Aquinas holds that the angels are pure intelligence and that they have no bodies. Even though human beings are rational creatures, their special attribute Aquinas says is to exist and function as persons only when unified as body and soul. Since it is the soul that confers upon a person bodily form, it equally gives a person life, as well as understanding and other special physical functions. The soul equally accounts for humanity's capacity for sensation and the powers of intellect and will. More than these, humanity's highest capacity is located in the intellect and this makes human beings rational animals, giving them the means and ability to attain the contemplation of God.

8.2 Aquinas' Epistemology

On the problem of knowledge, Aquinas was impressed with the answer Aristotle gave to those who doubted that human the mind could arrive at certainty on any subject; hence he followed his theory of knowledge. Aquinas accepted Aristotle's approach, opining that the human mind knows what it does through its confrontation with actual concrete objects. The mind is therefore, able to grasp what is permanent and stable within sensible things. When we sense things or persons, we know their essence; what we know about them, given the fact that they are in flux, is that they are either more or less a tree or a man, but we are not in doubt about what they are. It was Aquinas' view that there could be no knowledge without sense experience, for nothing could be in the intellect that was not first in the sense. According to him, the intellect sees the universal in the particular thing; it abstracts the universal from the particular. The mind does not possess any innate ideas, but is rather in potentiality to knowledge. Unlike angelic intelligence, the human mind, set in the composite of soul and body, has as its natural object of

knowledge the essential properties of physical things. In this way, Aquinas does not base the truth of knowledge on certainty, on a subjective disposition (as Augustine did), but he bases truth on the evidence of being, on an objective condition.

- o Uche is someone who believes that human knowledge is something that lies within. He claims that the knowledge that he loves his wife is within him so no other person can know about it except himself. In the light of Aquinas, view on knowledge what can you tell Uche?
- • You should tell Uche that his own perspective on human knowledge contradicts that of Aquinas. Rather than basing the truth of knowledge on subjective dispositions, Aquinas holds that the truth knowledge is something that is within the purview of an objective condition.

Noteworthy is the fact that Aquinas is of the opinion that man's knowledge, with the exception of the revealed knowledge, is completely the work of man. In other words, there is no role played by the divine illumination (postulated by Augustine) in the acquisition of ordinary knowledge.

8.3   Aquinas on the Idea of the State

Aquinas also ruminated on the idea of the state. He says that the state is a natural institution and that it is derived from the nature of humanity. It is worth mentioning that Aquinas was following the political theory of Aristotle and subsequently took the phrase that man is by nature a social animal. It would be recalled that Aristotle supposed that the state could provide for all the needs of humanity because he knew only of the natural needs of humanity. On the other hand, Aquinas believes that in addition to the material of natural needs, humanity also has a supernatural end, but it is not the function of the state to deal with this ultimate end, but the church directs humanity to this end. Furthermore, he maintains that the state is willed by God and has its God-given function. He did not believe like Augustine that the state is a product of people's sinfulness but says that even in the state of innocence human beings would have lived in society. Even then, a common life could not exist, unless there was someone in control, that is, someone to attend to the common good. According to Aquinas, the primary function of the state is to serve the common good by keeping the peace, organizing the activities of the citizens into harmonious pursuits, providing for the resources to sustain life, as well as preventing as possible

as it can, obstacles to the good life. Aquinas states further that the state is subordinate to the church, even though he did not consider the church as a super state, he saw no contradiction in saying that the state has a sphere in which it has a legitimate function and so autonomous, and that at the same time, it must subordinate itself to the church, because there are aspects of human life that bear upon humanity's supernatural end, so the state should in no way frustrate human beings' spiritual life.

It must be noted that Aquinas is not in any way saying that the church should challenge the autonomy of the state; he says that the state is not absolutely autonomous, because of the spiritual dimension of human beings and hence he calls the state a perfect society. The spiritual end of humanity cannot be achieved by mere human power but by divine power and so this ultimate end, even though it is achieved through divine power, the state must recognize this aspect of human life. We are not saying that the state should become the church but the sovereign should order these things which lead to heavenly beatitudes and prohibit there constrains as possible as they can. Just as the state rules the behaviour of its citizens through the agency of law, the state is in turn limited by the requirements of just laws, as it is not intended to make laws arbitrarily, but must make them under the influence of the natural law, which is humanity's participation in God's eternal laws. The law makers in a state have authority to legislate from God the source of all authority and are responsible to God. Therefore, if the sovereign decrees an unjust law by violating God's divine law, the law must not be observed reasoned Aquinas. More than these, Aquinas says that the proper effect of law is to lead it's subject to their proper virtue, to make those to whom the laws are given good. That is to say that, the effect of law is to make human beings good.

8.4 Aquinas on Ethics

Aquinas' contribution in the area of ethics is prodigious. In Thomistic ethics, Aquinas basically built upon Aristotle's theory of ethics, even though with a Christian orientation. He considered ethics or morality as a quest for happiness – God. While Aristotle was talking of intellectual contemplation of God, the unmoved mover, Aquinas cantered on the beatific vision of God in heaven. The highest good for man, for Aristotle is the philosophical contemplation of God by philosophers here on earth, but for Aquinas it is the mystical contemplation of God in heaven by anybody who has lived a good life on earth, hence necessitating his idea on morality. Aquinas

agrees with Aristotle that virtue is a mean, that is, it lies between two extremes, and that it is a habit formed by repeatedly and persistently performing the same kind of good actions. Aquinas argues that there is a double level of morality corresponding to a person's natural end and to his or her supernatural end. Furthermore, he opines that morality is majorly the function of reason; this is so because human beings are rational beings and, sequel to that, moral beings. Animals, on the other hand, he says are amoral because they are not rational. Aquinas went on to make a distinction between practical and speculative intellects; practical intellect has a duty to guide and direct human behaviour towards good and away from evil, while the function of speculative intellect is abstract reasoning, as in metaphysics, mathematics, as well as logic. Right reason is therefore the moral standard, which is to say that those actions that conform to right reason are good, while on the contrary, those that are opposed to right reason are evil actions.

Activity 8.1

Take a moment to reflect on what you have read so far. Based on your learning experience and understanding of Aquinas' Ethics, what would you classify as the highest good for man in what follows?
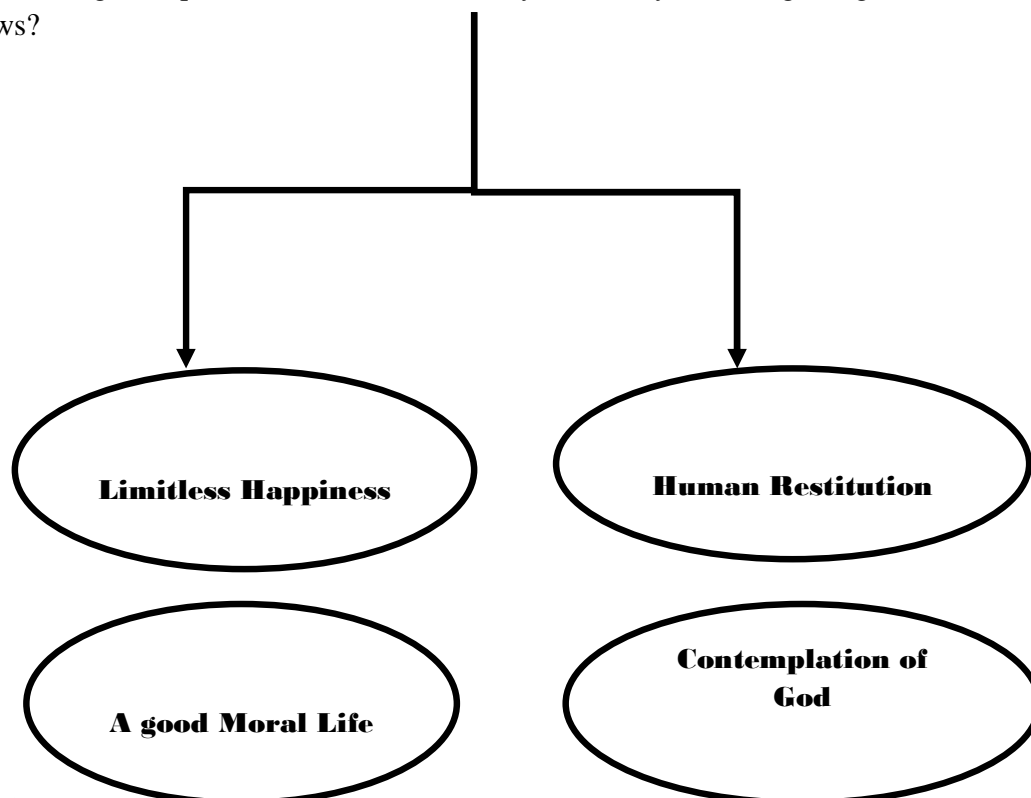

Fig 8.1

Furthermore, Aquinas maintains that freedom of the will is a necessary presupposition of morality; this is so because if the will is not free, then we cannot account for moral responsibility for actions, and so how would we reasonably blame, punish, praise, or even reward people for their right or wrong actions, if they were not acting freely. Following the necessity of freewill, Aquinas says that determinism, denying human freedom removes the basis of morality, but we should hold and maintain that the will is free and that human actions are free actions as well. A free action is a voluntary, as well as a conscious action, that has its source within the agent himself or herself, and so the doer of a voluntary action must know what he or she is doing and must be from the person's free decision and not under compulsion. Thus, an action performed out of ignorance for Aquinas is not voluntary, nor can forced actions be voluntary. He further distinguishes between the role of the intellect and that of the will in human actions. The role of the intellect he says is to enlighten and illuminate an action before it is done, that is, it enlightens, examines the action and gives approval or disapproval of the action. On the other hand, the role of the will is to execute an action in line with the enlightenment, approval or disapproval given by the intellect, and so, the will is always supposed to be guided by the intellect. However, there are four things to consider before we can be in a good position to make moral judgment about an action. They are: we must consider whether the action was voluntary, the specific nature of the action, the intention of the action, as well as the circumstances in which the action was carried out.

Human beings have an innate and natural disposition to grasp the fundamental principles of morality, the human nature means that human beings must act in one way or the other. Aquinas says that we grasp and know the fundamental moral principles by intuition and that the capacity of this intuitive apprehension is natural in human beings and is called *synederesis*. Also, by *synederesis* we know that certain kinds of action are right or wrong. It is the conscience that applies this knowledge to the particular action we intend to perform in a given situation, in order to see if the proposed action, given the situation, falls within the category of right or wrong actions. Having done this, the conscience comes up with a decision as to if the proposed action should be performed or avoided. Even though the conscience can be wrong in making the decision regarding the rightness or wrongness of an action, Aquinas insists that the judgment made by the conscience should always be obeyed. Human beings should not go against the conscience for "every conscience, whether right or wrong, whether it concerns things evil in

themselves or things morally wrong, whether it concerns things evil in themselves or things morally indifferent, obliges us to act in such a way that he who acts against his conscience sins."

We should recall that morality as Aquinas viewed it is not an arbitrary set of rules for behavior; the basis of moral obligation is found, first of all, in the very nature of humanity. Various inclinations are built into the human nature, such as the preservation of life, the propagation of species, and because of the fact that people are rational, the inclination towards search for truth, hence, the basic moral truth is to do good and avoid evil. However, to ensure order in the society human laws are formed for the proper direction of the community's behaviour. The moral law is founded upon human nature, that is, upon the natural inclinations towards specific modes of behaviour, and upon the reason's ability to discern the right and the proper course of conduct. Human nature has certain characteristics and so the rules for behaviour that corresponds to these features are called natural laws. Aquinas reasoned that humanity's existence and nature can be fully understood only when seen in relation to God. The natural law must be described in metaphysical and theological terms, just as the Stoics and St. Augustine did. For Aquinas, law has to do with reason, and so the rule and measure of acts is the reason, this is because it belongs to reason to direct a person's activity towards his or her end. Law consists of those rules and measures of human acts and so is based on reason and the natural law is dictated by the reason.

Furthermore, Aquinas argues that since God is the creator of all things, human nature and the natural law are best understood as the product of God's wisdom or God's reason and on this backdrop, he distinguishes four types of laws. Eternal law refers to the fact that the whole community of the universe is governed by divine reason. Thus, eternal laws are laws of God, the creator of all things. Natural laws for Aquinas consist of that portion of the eternal law that pertains to people. The participation of the eternal law in the rational creatures is called the natural law, the natural law is nothing else than the rational creature's participation in the eternal law. It is also fitting to reiterate at this juncture that the basic precepts of natural law are the preservation of life, propagation and education of offspring, and pursuit of truth and a peaceful society and so, the natural law consists of broad general principles that reflect God's intervention for human being in creation. The third type of law is the human law, which refers to the specific statutes of government; they are derived from the general precepts of natural law. From the

perspective of natural laws, the human reason needs to proceed to the more particular determination of certain matters and these particular determinations, devised by human reason are called human laws. Aquinas maintains that what gives a rule the character of law is its moral dimension, its conformity with the precepts of natural law, as well as its agreement with the moral law. Nevertheless, Aquinas holds that every human law has just so much of the nature of law, as it is gotten from the law of nature. He further adds that if it deflects from the law of nature at any point, it is no longer a law but a perversion of law.

For Aquinas, it is necessary that besides the natural and the human law, human beings should be directed to the supernatural end by a law given by God – hence, the divine law. The divine law Aquinas says is available to people through revelation and is found in the scriptures. It is given to humanity through God's grace and not human reason, to ensure that all people know what they must do to fulfill both their natural end and especially their supernatural end. Aquinas maintains that there are some differences between natural law and divine law. For him, natural law represents humanity's rational knowledge of the good, by which the intellect directs the will to control humanity's appetites and passions, while the divine law comes directly from God through revelation. Whereas natural law leads people to fulfill their natural end by achieving the cardinal virtues of justice, temperance, courage, and prudence, divine law is a gift of God's grace, whereby people are directed to their supernatural ends, having obtained the higher or theological virtues of faith, hope and love.

Box 8.1: Aquinas on the Character of Law

Aquinas says that this law is to direct human beings to their proper end, since they are ordained to an end of eternal happiness, along with temporal happiness, so there must be a law that can direct people to that supernatural or ultimate end.

It is important to note that:

- He denies the character of law to a command of a government that violated the natural moral law
- He also holds that such a command should not be obeyed, as we ought to obey God, rather than human beings.

Summary of Unit 8

In Unit 8, you have learned that:

1. Aquinas had a distinctive conception of man, as that which is a composite of soul and body.

2. he did not follow Aristotle to conclude that none (soul/form and body/matter) can exist without the other that the soul perishes with the body at death. For him, the soul is immortal and is separated from the body at death and continues to live on.

3. In the area of knowledge, he maintains that there could be no knowledge without experience.

4. In politics, he asserts that the primary function of the state is to serve the common good by keeping the peace, organizing the activities of the citizens into harmonious pursuits, providing for the resources to sustain life, as well as preventing obstacles to the good life.

5. In the area of ethics, Aquinas is of the opinion that human beings as rational beings are moral beings. Hence the basic moral truth is to do good and avoid evil.

Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 8

Now that you have completed this study session, you can assess how well you have achieved its Learning Outcomes by answering these questions. You can check your answers with the Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions at the end of this Module.

SAQ 8.1 (tests learning outcome 8.1)

What makes Aquinas conception of man unique?

SAQ 8.2 (tests learning outcome 8.2)

According to Aquinas, what is that thing that makes man contemplates God?

SAQ 8.3 (tests learning outcome 8.3)

What is the opinion of Aquinas on how the mind knows?

SAQ 8.4 (tests learning outcome 8.4)

What is did Aquinas considered to be the highest good for man?

SAQ 8.5 (tests learning outcome 8.5)

What is the definition of state offered by Aquinas?

Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 8

SAQ 8.1: He considers man to be a composite being, physical substance with a unity of body and soul.

SAQ 8.2: It is the intellect which man has that makes this possible and it is what make human beings rational.

SAQ 8.3: Aquinas is of the view that the mind knows through its confrontation with actual concrete objects and the mind is able to know what is permanent and stable within sensible things

SAQ 8.4: The highest good for man, in the view of Aquinas, is the mystical contemplation of God in heaven by anybody who has lived a good life on earth and this gave birth to his idea of morality.

SAQ 8.5: According to Aquinas, the state is a natural institution which is derived from the nature of humanity.

Unit 9   John Duns Scotus

Expected duration: 1 week or 2 contact hours

Introduction

In this lecture, you will learn about John Duns Scotus who stands out to be one of the most penetrating and influential figures of the Medieval/Scholastic age. He is best known for the originality of his philosophical systems – one which is neither Aristotelian nor Augustinian. In his system, Duns Scotus sought to overcome the contradiction between Augustinianism and Aristotelianism, in other to reach a philosophical synthesis capable of reconciling the valid points of Aristotelianism and Augustinianism.

Learning Outcomes for Unit 9

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

9.1 State the three main sources of John Scotus thoughts (SAQ 9.1).

9.2 Describe the original contributions made by John Scotus to Metaphysics (SAQ 9.2).

9.3 State the principal theme of John Scotus' Metaphysics (SAQ 9.3).

9.4 Describe what Scotus regarded to be the proper name of God (SAQ 9.4).

9.1   About John Duns Scotus

9.1.1   Background and Life of John Duns Scotus

Not so much is known about John Duns Scotus' life. However, history and tradition holds it that he was born at Maxton in Scotland, at the court of Roxburgh, in 1265. As teenager he entered and Franciscan Order, in the course of which was later ordained a priest. The decade between the end of his novitiate and his priestly ordination (1281 - 1291) was spent in studying, at Oxford, Paris and various other places. He completed his scientific formation with the studies of "Trivium" and "Quadrivium". After his ordination he was in Paris to perfect his theological culture and to prepare for the achievement of the title of "magister theologie". In 1298 he was

recalled to England to comment on the *Sententiae* of Peter Lombard at Oxford and Cambridge. His Oxford comment is called the *Lecturea prima* and the one from Cambridge is titled the *Reprotatio cambrigiensis*. He returned to Paris in 1301, where he re-commented on the *Sententiae* in his lectures – this commentary is entitled the *Reportata parisiensia*.

During the conflict between Boniface VIII and Philip the Fair, Duns Scotus openly supported the former. As a provocative reprisal, the king forcefully interrupted his teaching by ordering his return to England, where he taught at Oxford from 1303 - 1304. In 1308, after brief visit in Paris, he was invited by his superiors to the Franciscan *studiorium* in Cologne. A few months after his arrival, in 1308, he died at the age of 43.

Irrespective of the brevity of his life, Duns Scotus' literary production was prodigious. This production includes 26 volumes in the famous Vivès edition in which majority are the commentaries on Aristotle and Peter Lombard. His principal work, the *Opus oxoniense*, takes up fourteen volumes in the Vivès edition. The *Opus oxoniense* is Scotus' definitive masterpiece. Although not the immediate fruit of his teaching, it is a systematic work which Duns Scotus slowly composed and organized, by a collection of the best of his lectures that proved his vitality of thought. Due to his early and unexpected death, Scotus left the work incomplete. The work was completed by his disciples who, instead of publishing the manuscript of their master with its missing and incomplete parts, attempted to present the work in its complete and perfect from.

9.1.2   The Sources of Scotus' Thought

Three main sources influenced Scotus' thought: the Augustinian-Franciscan school, the Aristotelian school (of Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas) and the school of Avicenna.

   i.   From the Augustinian school, he adopted:
-   The doctrine of the superiority of will over intellect.
-   The doctrine of the plurality of forms.

   ii.   From the Aristotelian school, he borrowed:
-   The critique of the doctrine of "rationes seminals".
-   The critique of the doctrine of illumination.

- The negation of the possibility of "apodictically" proving creation in time.

iii.   From the school of Avicenna, he imbibed:

- The doctrine that the concept of being is a univocal concept.

- The distinction between the necessary in itself and thee necessary in cause.

9.2   Scotus' Metaphysics

The most original doctrines of Scotus' metaphysics are: the univocal concept of being, "ecceity", and the formal distinction between essence and existence.

1. The Univocal Concept of Being

Being is the object of metaphysics. Scotus sees being not the being of the greatest perfection ("esse perfectio omnium perfectionum") of Thomas Aquinas, but the "ens commune", or being as the most common perfection, which precedes every determination, including the division between finite and infinite being. This being is said to be predicable of all that is.

Being conceived in this form is univocal and is predicated in the same way of everything. In all cases, being is said to mean the same thing, the opposite of non-being. They reason by which Scotus was led to a univocal predication of being is theologically embedded. He holds that if the predication of being is not univocal with respect to God and creatures, then creatures cannot proceed to acquiring a possible and workable knowledge of God. Although the concept of being is said to be univocal, it is not a genus because it surpasses all genuses.

2. **"Ecceity"**

Unlike posited by Aristotle and Aquinas, Scotus holds that individuality is not due to the quantity of matter the individual has, but due to a particular form, "ecceity", which is superimposed on the specific form. While this specific form is said to give the individual his specific characteristics, the individual form gives him his individual characteristics.

Each individual has his own individual form: Socrates has Socratese-ness, Plato has Plato-ness, Tunde has Tunde-ness, Chichi has Chichiness and Kunle has Kunle-ness, etc.

3. The Formal Distinction Between Essence and Existence

Duns Scotus does not see any real distinction between essence and existence, in the like of Thomas Aquinas, but only a formal distinction. Scotus identified four types of distinctions:

- Essential distinction: between two essences (dog and cat).

- Real distinction: between two separable things (soul and body).

- Formal distinction: between two aspects of the same thing which are defined in a different way (divine attributes).

- Modal distinction: between the modes of the same quality or perfection (for example, between finite and infinite).

9.3   Scotus on the Existence and Nature of God

The principal theme of Duns Scotus metaphysics, as in many other philosophers, is on the nature of God. This was no different like in Aristotle, who is considered to be the father of metaphysics. Scotus does not exclude the possibility of proving the existence of God "a priori", rather he holds that Anselm's ontological argument does not have probative value, but only persuasive value. Neither does he consider Aristotle's argument of movement conclusive because, in his judgment, the way of movement can at the most indicate a "first Motor", but it does not demonstrate that the first Motor must be infinite; while the philosophical concept of God is that of an infinite being.

For Scotus, the only valid proof is based on causality. However, his proof is peculiar in that it does not work from the phenomenon, from the fact or secondary causes, in the likes of Aquinas, but rather from "effectibility". Therefore, his initial proposition is not that in the world there is something produced or caused, but rather there is something which can be produced. As argued by Scotus, whatever can be produced cannot produce itself, much less can it be produced by nothingness. Thus, it must be produced by another, and since one cannot regress to the infinite, one must reach a prime cause. This prime cause must truly be first in all the orders of causality, not only efficient, but also formal and final. According to Scotus, the simply prime

agent cannot be caused. This is proved by the fact that the effectively independent cannot be produced.

- o Your neighbour, Mr Jones, is a very sceptical fellow who is opposed to the teachings of John Sctous. Suppose he tells you that he does not believe in God because we cannot really say who produced God, what kind of response would you give to Mr. Jones drawing insight from Scotus' religious philosophy?

- A good response would be to say that God himself is not a produced being because he is the prime cause who produces everything that exists within the universe.

This is clear because if it were caused by virtue of another or as effected by another, then there would be either a process to the infinite, or a circle, or the state of an ineffable independent "effectivity". That is, the prime consequence is proved that, if it is 'ineffectible', then it cannot be finalized, because the final cause only causes because the cause metaphorically moves the efficient cause to react, since the entity or the finite does not depend otherwise on it, insofar as it is first. Now, nothing is a cause for itself, except because what is caused essentially depends on it insofar as it is first. The other two consequences, that if it is 'ineffectible', then it cannot be made material or formed, are proved together because whatever is not the extrinsic cause of something is not an intrinsic cause either, because of the causality of the extrinsic cause means perfection without imperfection, while the causality of the intrinsic cause necessarily means an annexed imperfection, and because the intrinsic cause is part of the caused. Therefore, the reason for the extrinsic cause is naturally before the reason of the intrinsic cause. Therefore, in negating the former, one negates the latter.

Duns Scotus believes that we can attribute innumerable names to God, however, the proper one, that which belongs only to Him, which thus best qualifies Him with respect to other beings, is the name of "infinite being in act". In fact, we can reach many concepts proper to God which do not belong to creatures, such as the concepts of all the simple perfections, in the highest grade. The most perfect concept – the one in which we know God perfectly through almost a description – is had by conceiving all simple perfections in their greatest grade.

Nevertheless, a concept both the most perfect and the most simple possible to us is the concept of the infinite being. This is more simple than the concept of a good being or a true being, or of any other similar concept, because 'infinite' is not an almost-attribute or passion of being, of he of who it is predicated, but it expresses the intrinsic way of being of that entity. Hence when I say 'infinite being', I do not have a concept derived almost accidentally from the subject or from passion, but a concept pertinent in itself to the subject, which exist in a determined level of perfection, that is, the level of infinity."

In addition to being infinite in the order of being, Scotus holds that God is also infinite in the orders of knowledge and will. Hence infinity in the order of will means that God is supremely free, and hence that His will is not necessitated or subordinated to knowledge. Therefore, Scotus hold that not even the eternal Ideas place a limit on divine freedom. Hence contrary to Thomas Aquinas who holds that the order of creation and moral precepts given by God to man depend primarily on divine wisdom, Scotus state that these depend directly on divine will. This follows that, if it is true that the universe has a rational order and answers to certain and necessary rules, then these laws and this rationality are the result of a preceding choice whose foundation consists only in God's omnipotent will. Even the principle of good is not a rule or norm of this absolute will; indeed, this principle is subjected to full divine freedom. Everything that God produces is in itself good; and certainly, it God would have wished to establish a natural and moral order totally different from what He created, then he would have very well been able to do so. He also could have established other laws, and other virtues and sins if He had wished because the only criterion for the justice of a law is its correspondence to divine will.

With this vigorous affirmation of the primary of will over intellect in God, Scotus does not wish to say that God acts arbitrarily, that He could change His decisions at His pleasure, and that He could from one moment to another command contradictory things. According to Scotus, the primary of the will means that the will of God is free to determine the essence of a thing. Still, once this has been determine the essence of a thing. Still, once this has been determined, God imposes laws which correspond to its nature.

9.4   Scotus on Man and the Primacy of the Will

Prevalent in Scotus' anthropology are elements of Aristotelian provenance, inspired with Platonic and Augustinian spirits. While the former are predominant in the definition of man's general structure and his faculties, the latter dominate the interpretation of human action.

Activity 9.1

Take a moment to reflect on what you have read so far. Based on your learning experience and understanding of John Scotus' philosophical thoughts, do you think the figure above depicts his notion of man?
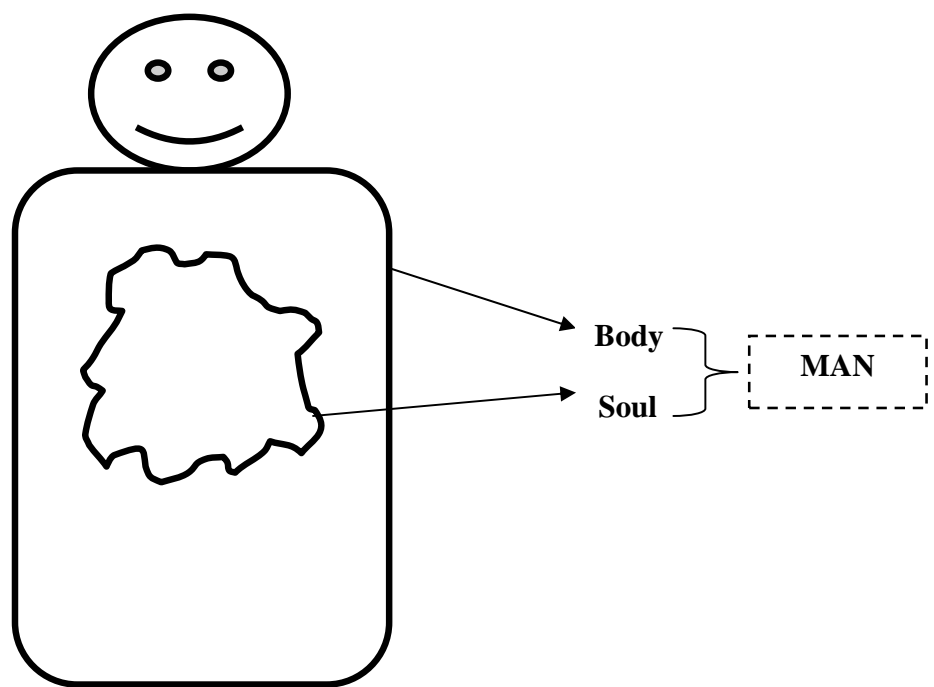
Fig 9.1: Sowing the composite elements of man according to John Scotus

In the Aristotelian conception, Scotus holds that the human person is a component of soul and body. However, in the like of the Franciscan tradition who differed from Aristotle, Scotus does not believe that the soul is the only form of the composed being. Together with the soul there is a "forma mixtionis" of the corporeal composition. The immortality of the soul can only be demonstrated theologically, while a cognition of spirituality can be acquired working from the operations of the soul. The non-extended nature of thought, self-consciousness, the

indetermination of the intellect, and above all the structural indetermination of the will, are the most decisive arguments of the spirituality of the soul.

As for Aristotle, Scotus holds that the intellect and will are the main faculties or potencies of the soul. However, he refutes the thesis defining the two potencies as accidents of the soul. He resolves the question by applying the principle of formal distinction: intellect and will make up one thing together with the soul, although they are formally distinct from each other.

The same is not true for the will, or the appetite for good. Its essence is not to be defined as "rational appetite", but as "freedom". Freedom is understood as the intrinsic capacity of the will to be the cause of the voluntary act. Every act either proceeds from nature (and is thus necessary and obligatory) or it proceeds from the will and is hence free. Nature and will are the two great forces which divide between them the kingdom of being. Only in God do they coincide; in all other cases they are distinct. Man's will is free regarding all particular goods, for which the relation with the Absolute Good is not necessary. There is no necessary bond between the absolute and infinite Good and any finite and particular good. In this way, Scotus expresses the thesis of the primacy of will with respect to the intellect; only in this sense can his system be labeled with the term "voluntarism", as opposed to the "intellectualism" of the Aristoletlian-Thomists.

Scotus' primacy of the will over the intellect is fundamentally motivated by three fundamental premises: i. Christian Revelation, as stressed by St. Paul, states among all the virtues, love supersedes, only love prevails; ii. in the tradition of faith, as posited by St. Augustine, strong emphasis has always been given to the concept of free will, which is the foundation of merit and demerits; iii. Scotus considers the experience of human will placed in a concrete situation, an experience interpreted in light of the preceding principles.

Thus, Scotus rejects the Thomistic position of making will a rational appetite, through which nothing is willed if it is not first known. The Thomistic orientation that places wisdom at the centre of all human experience was also rejected, given that the intellect interests itself with the universal, while the will is conquered by the sphere of concrete and particular things. Going beyond the intentions of Thomas Aquinas, Scotus reads into these theses their ultimate consequences. He does not see how they can be accepted without the negation of freedom.

Should the intellect be a nature which under certain conditions offers a necessitated expression, in the same vein, the will as a rational appetite, is necessitated by the structure of the intellect, and hence freedom is lacking. In addition, the abstractness of intellective operations does not indicate a greater dignity. Scotus' ontological system gives more importance to the particular, as opposed to the universal (the doctrine of "haecceitas").

On these theses, the difference between Thomas and Scotus is evident if taken to their ultimate consequences. A Christian philosopher determines clearly the ultimate end; this coincides with the essential and definitive relation (accompanied by beatific enjoyment) with the Absolute, God. For Aquinas, the encounter with God takes place in the beatific vision through the intellect elevated by supernatural light, with the resulting joyous participation of the will. On the contrary, Scotus accents the will, not conceived as the potency of the soul but as something formally distinct from the soul, the means of encounter with God. This encounter is of two free wills, on omnipotent, the other finite. Like in Aquinas' beatific vision which includes the participation of the will, so Scotus' voluntary encounter with God does not exclude the participation of the intellect. Nevertheless, Scotus stresses that there is no accidental mediation between the soul and God, and that the soul itself is virtually and structurally capable of union with God. His views on the primacy of the will are further captured in box 9.1 below:

Box 9.1: Scotus on the Primacy of the Will

In the exercise of freedom, humanity has the task of freeing the self from natural conditions in the exercise of freedom, oriented by the supreme principles of the laws manifested by God himself. It is important to note that:

- Scotus affirms the absolute priority of the will over the intellect.
- Scotus does not conceive the will and freedom as purely unconditioned and undetermined potency, since these are oriented towards an ultimate end – God.

In Unit 9, you have learned that:

1. Duns Scotus differed from his predecessors on a number of points, for instance, his rejection of the Thomistic position that puts a premium on the intellect over the will.

2. Most of Scotus' ideas were expressed in his metaphysics.

3. John Scotus borrowed thoughts like the doctrine of will over intellect from the Augustanian school.

4. John Scotus gave serious considerations and contemplation to the question of God's existence.

Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 9

Now that you have completed this study session, you can assess how well you have achieved its Learning Outcomes by answering these questions. You can check your answers with the Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions at the end of this Module.

SAQ 9.1 (tests learning outcome 9.1)

What are the three main sources of John Scotus thoughts?

SAQ 9.2 (tests learning outcome 9.2)

What are John Duns Scotus' most original contributions to the discourse of metaphysics?

SAQ 9.3 (tests learning outcome 9.3)

What is the principal theme of John Scotus' Metaphysics?

SAQ 9.4 (tests learning outcome 9.4)

What, for Scotus, should be the proper name by which God is called?

Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 9

SAQ 9.1: the three main sources of John Scotus thoughts include:

i. the Augustinian-Franciscan school

ii. the Aristotelian school

iii. the school of Avicenna.

SAQ 9.2: The areas contributed most originally to metaphysics by Scotus includes: the univocal concept of being, "ecceity", and the formal distinction between essence and existence.

SAQ 9.3: The principal theme of John Scotus' Metaphysics is on the nature of God

SAQ 9.4: He holds that the proper name of God should be "infinite being in act".

Unit 10   William Ockham

Expected duration: 1 week or 2 contact hours

Introduction

In this lecture, you will learn about how the influence of faith diminished and resulted in the decline of Scholasticism in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. On the cultural level, in particular, the people of those centuries distanced themselves from the dogmatism of faith and began to embrace reason which proclaimed its autonomy both in the fields of science and philosophy. People no longer appreciated the efforts of figures like Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Scotus to harmonize Christianity and Greek philosophy. It was at this time when Scholasticism was losing its strength that William of Ockham flourished to save the admirable cooperation that once existed between faith and reason.

Learning Outcomes for Unit 10

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

10.1 State what Ockham refers to as the supreme principle that influences human thinking (SAQ 10.1).

10.2 Describe what Ockham's razor is all about (SAQ 10.2).

10.3 State Ockham's conception of human knowledge about the world (SAQ 10.3).

10.4 State the kinds of signs which Ockham say there are (SAQ 10.4)

10.5 Describe how Ockham sees the doctrine of the trinity (SAQ 10.5).

10.1   The Background of William Ockham

William of Ockham was born between 1280 and 1290 in the village of Ockham. He studied theology at Oxford, and his writing range within the scope of theology, philosophy, and physics. His life was a controversial one, especially with regards to being accused by the Church as heretic in his theological teachings. He was one of the most influential philosophers of the fourteenth century. He was at Oxford, and then at Paris, where he was first the pupil and

afterwards the rival of Duns Scotus. He was involved in the quarrel of the Franciscan order with Pope John XXII on the subject of poverty.

10.2   The Philosophical Thoughts of William Ockham

10.2.1 Omnipotence of God

The doctrine of the Omnipotence of God was taken by Ockham as the supreme principle that must inform all our thinking about the world. In his words, 'I believe in God, father almighty; which I understand thus, that everything which does not involve a manifest contradiction is to be attributed to the divine power'. It was from this central conviction that he draws some very radical conclusions in the areas of epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics. He argues that if God is all-powerful, then his creation of the world was not guided by any rational necessities. Everything in the world in the world is contingent. Since this is the case, then only experience can tell us about the existence of things in the world and their properties.

Fig 10.1: The image of William Ockham © Tom Bradly (blogs.citypages.com)

10.2.2 Ockham's Razor

Ockham is best known for a maxim which is not to be found in his works, but has acquired the name of "Ockham's razor." This maxim says: "Entities are not to be multiplied without necessity." Although he did not say this, he said something which has much the same effect, namely: "It is vain to do with more what can be done with fewer." That is to say, if everything in some science can be interpreted without assuming this or that hypothetical entity, there is no ground for assuming it. I have myself found this a most fruitful principle in logical analysis. This principle of parsimony, whose frequent use by Ockham gained it the name of "Ockham's razor," was employed as a methodological principle of economy in explanation. He invoked it most frequently under such forms as "Plurality is not to be assumed without necessity" and "What can be done with fewer (assumptions) is done in vain with more"; he seems not to have used the formulation "Entities are not to be multiplied without necessity."

- o Tolani is a friend of yours who likes to talk a lot. On a particular weekend that he visited you he told you of a story about a fight in the market close to your school. In order to make his story interesting, he told you that the fight was very big such that it involved almost all the traders in the market. In fact, he also told you that it took the joint effort of the Police and the army to stop the mayhem. However, when you finally visited the scene of the fight, you were told that it was only between two sections of the market (between meat sellers and pepper sellers) and not exactly has Tolani has told you. So what kind of conversational error has Tolani committed?
- Going by William Ockham's philosophical thoughts, one can say that Tolani committed the error known as Ockham's razor.

Thus, the principal use made by Ockham of the principle of parsimony was in the elimination of pseudo-explanatory entities, according to a criterion he expresses in the statement that nothing is to be assumed as necessary, in accounting for any fact, unless It is established by evident experience or evident reasoning, or is required by the articles of faith.

10.2.3 Ockham's Metaphysics and the Problem of Universals

Occam was a nominalist; the nominalists of the fifteenth century looked upon him as the founder of their school. He thought that Aristotle had been misinterpreted by the Scotists (followers of Duns Scots), and that this misinterpretation was due partly to the influence of Augustine, partly to Avicenna, but partly to an earlier cause, Porphyry's treatise on Aristotle's *Categories*. Ockham reduced the metaphysical problem of universals to simply the question of whether we can use general terms and proper names in propositions to refer to individuals. He maintained a nominalist's position. For him, some universals do not really exist, God cannot conceive of them either. God can have an idea of what he is going to create, but this is always an idea of a particular individual. He opined that if we say God created the human species, God did not have in mind the form of 'Humanity'. Instead, he had in mind the multitude of distinct individual people, all of whom somewhat resemble each other.

Furthermore, understanding is of things, not of forms produced by the mind; these are not *what* is understood, but that by which things are understood. Universals, in logic, are only terms or concepts predicable of many other terms or concepts. *Universal, genus, species* are terms of second intention, and therefore cannot mean *things*. But since *one* and *being* are convertible, if a universal existed, it would be one, and an individual thing. A universal is merely a sign of many things. As to this, Ockham agrees with Aquinas, as against Averroes, Avicenna, and the Augustinians. Both hold that there are only individual things, individual minds, and acts of understanding. Both Aquinas and Ockham, it is true, admit the *universale ante rein*, but only to explain creation; it had to be in the mind of God before He could create. But this belongs to theology, not to the explanation of *human*.

Ockham's nominalism separated faith and reason. He had raised critical questions about the status of universal terms. The central question as to whether such terms as man refer to any reality other than particular men, James and John. Is there a *substance* in addition to these *particular* men to which the universal term *man* refers? To a keen logician such as Ockham these critical questions had far-reaching consequences. Most important of all was his conclusion that in using universal terms, the mind is not doing anything more than thinking in an orderly way about particular things. Only concrete individual things exist. Universal terms such as man refer equally to James and John not because there is some real substance of 'man-ness'. In which both James and John *share* or *participate,* but only because the nature that is James is like the nature

that is John. Universal terms such as *man* are simply *signs* or *names* (hence *nominalism*) for designating those concepts that particular things engender in human reason. Human reason, then, is limited to the world of individual things. Ockham's view was genuinely empirical. The mind, he said, does not know anything more than individual things and their qualities even though the mind is able to use universal terms. Such terms are nothing more than terms or names for classes of individual things: above all, universal terms do not refer to a realm of reality *above* or *beyond* the world of concrete individual things.

10.3   Other Philosophical Accomplishments by William Ockham

10.3.1 Ockham's Epistemology

In his theory of knowledge, Ockham believes that all knowledge about the world can either be *intuitive knowledge/experimental knowledge or Abstractive Knowledge*.

1. INTUITIVE KNOWLEDGE: This is a type of knowledge that includes our perception of external things and our immediate awareness of our own inner states such as acts of will, joy, and sorrow.

2. ABSTRATIVE KNOWLEDGE: This is a type of knowledge that is not related to an object of immediate experience is a derivative form of knowledge called *abstractive* knowledge. This knowledge is a pale residue left in the mind by our original experiences. The objects of these experiences are retained in the mind as concepts or mental sings. Abstractive knowledge includes the image or memory of a specific thing minus the concrete details of its existence. They also include ideas that refer to an entire category of individuals such as 'animal', 'tree', and 'book'.

10.3.2 Ockham's Theory of Sign

A sign is something that stands for or represents something else. There are two kinds of signs: Natural and Conventional Signs.

    A. Natural Signs: These occur whenever an object signifies its cause or when a particular object creates an image (e.g. smoke is a sign of fire) or mental picture within us (e.g. when we see a red rose it cause s a red rose image to be retained in our mind).

B. Conventional Signs: These occur when each culture invents words to refer to those mental images which were retained in our mind as a result of Natural signs.

10.3.3 Ockham on Direct Realist Empiricism

Following Aristotle, Ockham asserts that human beings are born blank states: there are no innate certainties to be discovered in our minds. We learn by observing qualities in objects. Ockham's version of empiricism is called "direct realism" because he denies that there is any intermediary between the perceiver and the world. Direct realism states that if you see an apple, its redness causes you to know that it is red.

Ockham pre-empts idealism through the notion of intuitive cognition, which plays a crucial role in his four-step account of knowledge acquisition. It can be summarized as follows. The first step is sensory cognition: receiving data through the five senses. This is an ability human beings share with animals. The second step, intuitive cognition, is uniquely human. Intuitive cognition is awareness that the particular individual perceived exists and has the qualities it has. The third step is recordative cognition, by which we remember past perceptions. The fourth step is abstractive cognition, by which we place individuals in groups of similar individuals. Notice that, if an apple is set in front of a horse, the horse will receive data about the apple—the color, the smell, etc.—and react appropriately. The horse will not, however, register the reality of the object. While intuitive cognition is itself non-propositional, it provides the basis for formulating true propositions. A horse cannot say "This apple is red" because its mind is not complex enough to register the reality of what it perceives. The human mind, registering the existence of things—both *that* they are and *how* they are—can therefore formulate assertions about them.

10.3.4 Ockham's Logic

According to Ockham, the human mind, although born without any knowledge, come fully equip with a system for processing perceptions as they are acquired. This system is thought, which Ockham understands in terms of an unspoken, mental language. He might compare thought to a machine ready to manipulate a vast quantity of empty boxes. As we observe the world,

perceptions are placed in the empty boxes. Then the machine sorts and organizes the boxes according to content. Two small boxes with similar contents might be placed together in a big box, and then the big box might be conjoined to another big box. For example, as perceptions of Rover and Fido accumulate, they become the concept *dog*, and then the concept *dog* is associated with the concept *fleas*. This conceptual apparatus enables us to construct meaningful sentences, such as "All dogs have fleas."

For Ockham, only substances and qualities have real essence definitions signifying things composed of matter and form. The other eight categories signify a substance or a quality while connoting something else. They therefore have nominal essence definitions, meaning that they are not existing things. For instance, suppose you have one orange. It is a substance with a real essence of citrus fruit. Furthermore, it possesses several qualities, such as its color, its flavor, and its smell. The orange and its qualities are existing things according to Ockham. Ockham eliminates the rest of the categories along the same lines.

10.3.5 Ockham's Theology

For William of Ockham, theology is not a science. As a staunch empiricist, he is committed to the thesis that all knowledge comes from experience. Yet we have no experience of God. It follows inescapably that we have no knowledge of God.

Furthermore, he sees the doctrine of the trinity, according to which God is three persons in one, as a logical contradiction. The Trinity is the core Christian doctrine. Christians traditionally consider the Trinity a mystery, meaning that it is beyond the comprehension of the human mind. Ockham goes so far as to admit that it is a blatant contradiction. He displays the problem through the following syllogism:

According to the doctrine of the Trinity:

 (1) God is the Father,

     and,

 (2) Jesus is God.

Therefore, by transitivity, according to the doctrine of the Trinity:

(3) Jesus is the Father.

Yet, according to the doctrine of the Trinity, Jesus is not the Father.

So, according to the doctrine of the Trinity, Jesus both is and is not the Father.

For Ockham, however, this syllogism establishes that theology is not logical and must never be mixed with philosophy.

10.3.6 Ockham's Proofs of God's Existence

Ockham rejects all of the alleged proofs of the existence of God, in particular, Anselm's ontological proof and Thomas Aquinas's cosmological proof. Ockham thinks that the most plausible version of each boils down to an infinite regress argument of the following form:

> If God does not exist, then there is an infinite regress.
> But infinite regresses are impossible.
> Therefore, God must exist.

The reason Ockham finds this argument form to be the most plausible is that he fully agrees with the second premise, that infinite regresses are impossible. If it were possible to show that God's non-existence implied an infinite regress, then Ockham would accept the inference to his existence. Ockham denies, however, that God's non-existence implies any such thing. Ockham thinks that infinite regresses are impossible only in so far as they imply extensive infinity. According to Ockham, advocates of the ontological proof reason as follows: There would be an infinite regress among entities if there were not one greatest entity. Therefore, there must be one greatest entity, namely God. He didn't counter this reasoning by denying that greatness is an objectively existing quality, rather he take the Great Chain of Being for granted. The Great Chain of Being is a doctrine prevalent throughout the Middle Ages and beyond. According to it, all of nature can be ranked on a hierarchy of value from top to bottom, roughly as follows: God, angels, humans, animals, plants, rocks. The Great Chain of Being implies that greatness is an objectively existing quality.

Ockham claims further that advocates of the cosmological argument reason as follows: There would be an infinite regress among causes if there were not a first cause; therefore, there must be a first cause, namely, God. There are two different ways to understand "cause" in this argument: efficient cause and conserving cause. An efficient cause brings about an effect successively over time. For example, your grandparents were the efficient cause of your parents

who were the efficient cause of you. A conserving cause, in contrast, is a simultaneous support for an effect. For example, the oxygen in the room is a conserving cause of the burning flame on the candle. In Ockham's view, the cosmological argument fails using either type of causality.

10.4 Ockham's Ethics

Ockham's ethics combines a number of themes. For one, it is a will-based ethics in which intentions count for everything and external behavior or actions count for nothing. In themselves, all actions are morally neutral. Nevertheless, despite the divine command themes in Ockham's ethics, it is also clear that he wanted morality to be to some extent a matter of reason. There is even a sense in which one can find a kind of natural law theory in Ockham's ethics; one way in which God conveys his divine commands to us is by giving us the natures we have. Unlike Augustine, Ockham accepted the possibility of the "virtuous pagan"; moral virtue for Ockham does not depend on having access to revelation.

For Ockham, acts of will are morally virtuous either extrinsically, i.e. derivatively, through their conformity to some more fundamental act of will, or intrinsically. On pain of infinite regress, therefore, extrinsically virtuous acts of will must ultimately lead back to an intrinsically virtuous act of will. That intrinsically virtuous act of will, for Ockham, is an act of "loving God above all else and for his own sake. In his early work, On the Connection of the Virtues, Ockham distinguishes five grades or stages of moral virtue, which have been the topic of considerable speculation in the secondary literature:

1.The first and lowest stage is found when someone wills to act in accordance with "right reason"—that is, because it is "the right thing to do."

2.The second stage adds moral "seriousness" to the picture. The agent is willing to act in accordance with right reason even in the face of contrary considerations, even—if necessary—at the cost of death.

3.The third stage adds a certain exclusivity to the motivation; one wills to act in this way only because right reason requires it. It is not enough to will to act in accordance with right reason, even heroically, if one does so on the basis of extraneous, non-moral motives.

4.At the fourth stage of moral virtue, one wills to act in this way "precisely for the love of God." This stage "alone is the true and perfect moral virtue of which the Saints speak."

5.The fifth and final stage can be built immediately on either the third or the fourth stage; thus one can have the fifth without the fourth stage. The fifth stage adds an element of extraordinary moral heroism that goes beyond even the "seriousness" of stage two.

Activity 10.1

Take a moment to reflect on what you have read so far. Based on your learning experience, and knowing that William Ockham's philosophical thoughts are quite broad, will you be able to arrange the following according to the grades of moral virtue in Ockham's Ethics?
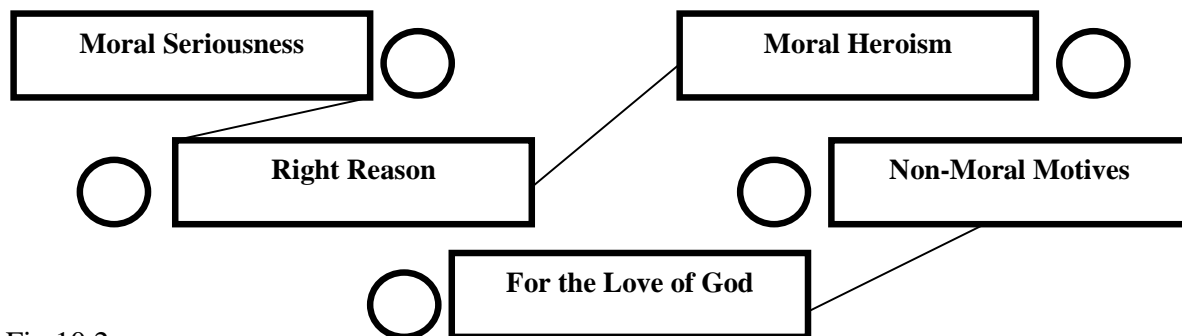

Fig 10.2

Activity 10.1 Feedback:

Take a look at figure 10.2; it shows the various stages/grades in moral virtue in William Ockham's Ethics. You are to write in the circles provided the numbers 1-5 showing the particular grades that each thought belong to.

Box 10.1: William Ockham on Moral Virtue

According to William Ockham, while moral virtue is possible even for the pagan, moral virtue is not by itself enough for salvation. It is important to note that for Ockham:

- There is no necessary connection between virtue—moral goodness—and salvation.
- Salvation requires not just virtue (the opposite of which is moral vice) but merit (the opposite of which is sin), and merit requires grace, a free gift from God.

Summary of Unit 10

In Unit 10, you have learned that:

1. In Ockham's doctrine of the omnipotence of God, he sees God as the basis for all human thought. and his metaphysics,

2. In his metaphysics, Ockham reduced the metaphysical problem of universals to simply the question of whether we can use general terms and proper names in propositions to refer to individuals.

3. In his epistemology, he distinguished between intuitive knowledge and abstractive knowledge and also gave his version of empiricism.

4. Ockham contends that theology should not be mixed with philosophy since the two pursue different concerns.

5. He rejects all alleged proofs of God's existence, in particular, Anselm's ontological proof and Aquinas' cosmological proof.

Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 10

Now that you have completed this study session, you can assess how well you have achieved its Learning Outcomes by answering these questions. You can check your answers with the Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions at the end of this Module.

SAQ 10.1 (tests learning outcome 10.1)

What, in the view of William Ockham, is the basic principle that influences human thinking?

SAQ 10.2 (tests learning outcome 10.2)

What do we mean by Ockham's razor?

SAQ 10.3 (tests learning outcome 10.3)

In what did Ockham conceives of our knowledge of the world?

SAQ 10.4 (tests learning outcome 10.4)

What are the two kinds of signs that Ockham believes exist?

SAQ 10.5 (tests learning outcome 10.5)

What is the view of Ockham on the Christian doctrine of trinity?

Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 10

SAQ 10.1: The Omnipotence of God

SAQ 10.2: It means that entities are not to be multiplied without necessity

SAQ 10.3: Ockham believes that all human knowledge can be intuitive knowledge/experimental knowledge or Abstractive Knowledge.

SAQ 10.4: Natural and Conventional Signs.

SAQ 10.5: According to him, the view that God is three persons in one is a logical contradiction.

Unit 11   Islamic Scholasticism: Al-Shari, Avicenna, Averroes and Algazel

Expected duration: 1 week or 2 contact hours

Introduction

In this lecture, you will learn about scholasticism especially Islamic scholasticism. Generally speaking, scholasticism is a method of critical thought which dominated teaching by the academics (scholastics or school men) of medieval period especially their program of employing the method of articulating and defending dogma in an increasingly pluralistic context. Not so much of a philosophy or theology as a method of learning, scholasticism places a strong emphasis on dialectical reasoning to extend knowledge by inference and to resolve contradictions. The term "scholasticism" is often associated with the medieval theological and philosophical system of learning based on the authority of St. Augustine and other leaders of the early Christian Church, and on the works of Aristotle. In a sense, this plural philosophical orientation has largely contributed to the animated flavour of medieval philosophy; this is evident in the school men's attempt to bridge the gap between religion and reason.

Learning Outcomes for Unit 11

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

11.1 Describe the thought system or orientation that influenced Islamic scholasticism (SAQ 11.1).

11.2 State the idea central to the notion of Islamic Scholasticism (SAQ 11.2).

11.3 Describe the major accomplishment of Al-Ashari in terms of Islamic Scholasticism (SAQ 11.3).

11.4 State the primary preoccupation of Avicenna's philosophy (SAQ 11.4).

11.5 Describe Averroes' position on faith and reason (SAQ 11.5).

11.6 State Algazel's contribution to Islamic Scholasticism (SAQ 11.6).

11.1   The Basic Influences on Islamic Scholasticism

It is common to see people associate scholasticism to the writings and products of the theological engagements of only Christian writers as if scholasticism was an exclusive Christian phenomenon. But this is a huge error (an error we may refer to as the *exclusionist error*) which stems from the Eurocentrism typical of Western Culture. The reason why we are emphasizing Islamic scholasticism here is to show that apart from the traditions of Christian philosophy humanity has also produced cultural works of the highest value in other regions of the world. The point we are making here is that scholasticism thrived in the Muslim world as well but it was quite a different kind of scholasticism than that which existed in the European Middle Ages. It was not essentially Aristotle oriented, but rather a synthesis of Asharism and Avicennism or Neoplatonism. But this does not in any way suggest that Islamic scholasticism was not influenced by some degree of Aristotelian thought.

In fact, historians have argued that Islamic scholasticism which is a rational reflection of faith and takes into account Platonic and Aristotelian teaching, developed first among Muslims, Jews and only later among Christians. That is, even though Christian scholasticism is more emphasized in intellectual discussion today it was indeed preceded by both Islamic scholasticism and Jewish Scholasticism. Central to the idea of Islamic scholasticism is the notion of "kalam" or "theology". This term is arrived at by some scholars (in the eighteenth century) through the application of the philosophical method (of pure reasoning) to the exposition of the sacred texts. It is used to describe a form of knowledge that in Islam is given the name "Kalam", or knowledge of the word (originally, the Arab "Kalam" meant "word") and corresponds practically to theology. This meaning of the term is further highlighted by Alfarabi, one of the great Islamic philosophers who describe "Kalam" as a set of dogmas or doctrines regarding the attributed of God embraced by any religion. Thus, "Kalam" is regarded as the science which allows the triumph of the dogmas and actions determined by the legislator of religion and the rejection of all opinions contradicting religion. However, there are certain notable thinkers of scholars who have one way or the other contributed to the development of Islamic scholasticism. In this exposition,

we shall concentrate on the thoughts of the following thinkers: Al-Shari, Avicenna, Averroes and Algazel.

11.2   Al-Ashari

Al-Ashari is regarded as the founder of orthodox (Muslim) scholasticism. He was a deeply revered scholar of the Koran. Born around 873 in Basra, he belonged to the school of the mutazilites and defended their positions in his early writings. However, during the later period of his life, he changed his opinion about the beliefs of the mutazilites. He attempted to unearth the profound heterodoxy which subsumes in the doctrines and teachings of the mutazilites. The basic error of this sect was that of using reason and philosophy to excess in their interpretation of the Koran. This led them to negate the attributes of Allah and the pre-destination and pre-existence (not creation) of the Koran. In order to achieve this aim, he completed a work entitled *Makalat al-isalmiyin* which is divided into three parts: the first is an ample review of Islamic sects and heresies; the second is a systematic exposition of all fundamental doctrines of the orthodox creed; the third is an exposition of the diverse conceptions of the "Kalam".

Thus, our interest is on how his thoughts and philosophical thinking has contributed to the development of Islamic scholasticism. As a scholar of the Koran, Al-Ashari follows a middle road between "literal" or "fundamentalist" interpretation which had prevailed until the advent of "mutazilites". He rejects the former because it is infected with anthropomorphism and condemns the second because it leads to agnosticism. Hence he defends the reality of God's attributes, but in order to recognize them he excludes the possibility of literally interpreting the Koran. Al-Ashari refuses to subject the truths of the Islamic creed to reason's scrutiny, as if reason were to possess a criterion superior to that of faith in order to discern truth from falsity. He maintains that faith excludes the possibility of using reason as such criterion, because faith affirms that Allah is invisible, super sensible, mysterious and omnipotent. What Al-Ashari hopes to achieve was to make some kind of separation between the spiritual or religious from the rational or speculative.

11.3   Avicenna

Avicenna was born at Bokhara in central Asia in 980. His father was a high functionary in the Islamic government of the Samanid dynasty. He is probably the most influential philosopher of the pre-modern era. He is often regarded primarily as a metaphysical philosopher of being who was concerned with understanding the self's existence in the world in relation to its cogency. Avicenna's philosophy is an attempt to construct a coherent and comprehensive system that accords with the religious exigencies of Muslim culture.

- o Philip is a non-Muslim who is trying to understand the fundamentals of Islamic Scholasticism. In a quest to put his thoughts into perspective, he came to you for enlightenment. How would you enlighten him using Avicenna's philosophical teachings?

- • Islamic Scholasticism fundamentally looks at the derivatives of the Islamic faith drawing inspiration from the thoughts of the scholastics – epseically those of the Islamic orientation. Avicenna employed philosophy to construct a coherent and comprehensive system of Muslim culture.

As such, he may be considered to be the first major Islamic philosopher. The philosophical space that he articulates for God as the necessary existence lays the foundation for his theories of the soul, intellect and cosmos. Furthermore, he articulated a development in the philosophical enterprise in classical Islam away from the apologetic concerns for establishing the relationship between religion and philosophy towards an attempt to make philosophical sense of key religious doctrines and even analyze and interpret the Quran. Meanwhile, Avicenna's exploration of some metaphysical themes in the construction of his Islamic theological views could be traced largely to his extensive readings of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (he claims to have understood this text after his fortieth reading).

It is, however, important that we stress the significance of Avicenna's philosophical system. To begin with, Avicenna created a philosophical system of enormous proportions where he skilfully inserted the great distinctions of Aristotelian metaphysics (act as potency, matter and form, substance and accidents) into a neo-Platonic cosmological framework. Avicenna had learned from certain hints in *al-Farabi* that the exoteric teachings of Plato regarding "forms," "creation," and the immortality of individual souls were closer to revealed doctrines than the genuine views of Aristotle, that the doctrines of Plotinus and later Neoplatonic commentators

were useful in harmonizing Aristotle's views with revealed doctrines, and that philosophy must accommodate itself to the divine law on the issue of creation and of reward and punishment in the hereafter, which presupposes some form of individual immortality. Following *al-Farabi*'s lead, Avicenna initiated a full-fledged inquiry into the question of _being_, in which he distinguished between _essence_ and _existence_.

He argued that the fact of existence cannot be inferred from or accounted for by the essence of existing things and that form and matter by themselves cannot interact and originate the movement of the universe or the progressive actualization of existing things. Existence must, therefore, be due to an agent-cause that necessitates, imparts, gives, or adds existence to an essence. To do so, the cause must be an existing thing and coexist with its effect. The universe consists of a chain of actual beings, each giving existence to the one below it and responsible for the existence of the rest of the chain below. Because an actual infinite is deemed impossible by Avicenna, this chain as a whole must terminate in a being that is wholly simple and one, whose essence is its very existence, and therefore is self-sufficient and not in need of something else to give it existence. Because its existence is not contingent on or necessitated by something else but is necessary and eternal in itself, it satisfies the condition of being the necessitating cause of the entire chain that constitutes the eternal world of contingent existing things.

The above does suggests Avicenna's departure from Aristotle's *Metaphysics*; this point of departure is the division Avicenna made between "beings necessary for themselves" and "beings necessary in force of their cause". Here we note a fundamental distinction that preceding philosophers had always ignored between essence and existence. Avicenna considers this distinction important because it establishes the boundary between God and creatures, between the necessary being and the possible beings. Having established the existence of the necessary Being, Avicenna illustrates its principal attributes. The negative attributes are unity, simplicity, immensity, infinity and eternity. The affirmative ones are goodness, intelligence and will. He however concluded that the world comes from the necessary Being in a spontaneous way. Although most of the thoughts underlying Avicenna's philosophical system were not originally formulated by him, he his much respected for his contribution to the development of Islamic philosophy.

11.4 Averroes

Averroes is another influential thinker that greatly contributed to the development of Islamic scholasticism. He was born at Cordoba Spain in 1126. As a youth, Averroes was very studious as he completed his education in theology, law, medicine, mathematics, astronomy and philosophy. Like other schoolmen within the medieval period, Averroes was also deeply influenced by Aristotle. In fact, it was reported that he took to an in depth study of the works of Aristotle from the twentieth year of his life which sort of explains why he is popularly referred to as "Aristotle's commentator per excellence". Between 1169 and 1195 Averroës wrote a series of commentaries on most of Aristotle's works (e.g., *The Organon*, *De anima*, *Physica*, *Metaphysica*, *De partibus animalium*, *Parva naturalia*, *Meteorologica*, *Rhetorica*, *Poetica*, and the *Nicomachean Ethics*). He wrote summaries, and middle and long commentaries—often two or all three kinds on the same work. Aristotle's *Politica* was inaccessible to Averroës; therefore he wrote a commentary on Plato's *Republic* (which is both a paraphrase and a middle commentary in form). All of Averroës' commentaries are incorporated in the Latin version of Aristotle's complete works. They are extant in the Arabic original or Hebrew translations or both, and some of these translations serve in place of the presumably lost Arabic originals; e.g., the important commentaries on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and on Plato's *Republic*. Averroës' commentaries exerted considerable influence on Jews and Christians in the following centuries. His clear, penetrating mind enabled him to present competently Aristotle's thought and to add considerably to its understanding.

There are certain themes that emanate from many of Averroes' writings which are of interest to us in this lecture. It includes:

- His thoughts on Reason and Faith
- The importance of the Study of Philosophy to Islam
- Theories about the World and Man

In what follows, we shall attempt an analysis of these aspects of his intellectual contributions as it concerns Islamic scholasticism. Although, Averroes subscribed more to Aristotle's philosophy, we find his thoughts on reason and faith inclined towards the thoughts of St. Thomas Aquinas. Regarding the relation of these two ideological disposition, Averroes believes that both

reason and faith are needed in order to arrive at an appreciable understanding of religious tenets, for instance, understanding issues about the relation content of the of the law and truth. This clearly shows that Averroes was much interested in reconciling his devoted Islamic faith with Aristotelian philosophy. Meanwhile, his discussion on the relations between the concepts of truth and faith has been likened to the "double theory of truth". However, it should be noted that Averroes is not at all the founder of the theory of "double truth" (one truth for philosophy and another for theology), as is often said about him. The theory of double truth is believed to have been invented by Averroes' disciples, who on this point openly betrayed their master's thought.

In addition, Averroes also made a great deal of impact within the scholastic period with his emphasis on the importance and necessity of the philosophical spirit in religion – especially Islam. Having ascertained that there cannot be any contradiction between faith and reason, the *Koran* and philosophy, because they are two expressions of truth, he maintains that philosophy is useful in building faith in Mohammed. The first argument adduced by Averroes in favour of the study of philosophy is taken from the *Koran*. In his opinion, the book of the Prophet contains an implicit recommendation of the study of this discipline when he praises the knowledge of Allah's works and in particular the knowledge of heaven and earth. Having established that the *Koran* prescribes an accurate study of Allah's works, Averroes has no difficulty demonstrating that it is necessary to use philosophy for this research.

On his theories regarding the world and man, Averroes largely echoed Aristotle. He states that the world is eternal, and hence it does not have an origin in creation, as the theologians say, or through emanation, as Avicenna taught. He describes God as the cause of the world, not as an emanating cause, but in the sense in which "that which is included" is said to be caused by "he who includes it" as a final cause. On his conception of man, Averroes defended a famous doctrine on the intellective knowledge of the human mind. He however made a distinction between two kinds of intellect, namely: possible intellect and agent intellect. Possible intellect which associated with what the human body perceives is referred to the capacity or preparation to accept the agent's intellect. While the agent's intellect is that which is outside of the human individual and considered to be out of matter; he did not regard this as a ubiquitous phenomenon. There is no doubt that Averroes teachings and philosophical perspective is considered extremely

important in the scholastic period. Averroes enjoyed much prestige especially as a commentator on Aristotle.

11.5 Algazel

Algazel is an important Islamic scholar. He is considered to be the greatest Muslim after Mohammed. Among the Sunni (orthodox) Muslims, he enjoys a place and authority similar to those of Thomas Aquinas among Catholics. Algazel was born in Tus, in northeast Iran around 1059, almost a century before Averroes. It is important to note that in his defence of philosophy, Averroes particularly took into account the criticisms of Algazel. As a faithful to the Islamic religion, Averroes made a great deal of contribution to the fashioning and propagation of lofty Muslim ideals. His contributions can be looked at from the following perspectives:

- His critique of philosophy
- The description of God's attributes

As a thinker, he was well versed in both Greek and Islamic philosophy; with the benefit of this capability, he criticized certain Islamic philosophers who he believed were propagating falsehoods as knowledge. One of such scholars to whom he directed his criticism was Avicenna. Algazel took it upon himself to unmask the errors of philosophers especially those who have commented on the Islamic faith during the period of scholasticism. He also frowned at the non-originality of Islamic philosophers in their view about certain tenets of the Islamic faith. He could not see any justification for the almost direct copying of Greek thinkers like Aristotle and Plato in describing the nature of man, God and the Islamic view about existence in general. His criticism on this matter was so strong that he concluded that everything transmitted by Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and Alfarabi, in his opinion, is Aristotle's authentic philosophy which can be summarily subdivided into three parts: one is to be judged misbelieve, the second heresy, and the third must be completely rejected.

This, however, does not mean that Algazel did not consider philosophy useful in the practice of Islam. In actual fact, he agreed that there are some individual aspects of the philosophical discipline that is useful like mathematics, logic and politics – these are the areas of philosophy he believes are useful to the believer. But others, especially theodicy, are full of

errors and must be completely rejected. Algazel maintained that there were twenty errors in Avicenna's theodicy, three of which make him unfaithful, and the other seventeen makes him a heretic. He stated the three errors as follows:

a. the error of the negation of the resurrection of the body

b. the negation that God has direct knowledge

c. the affirmation that the universe is pre-existent *ab aeterno.*

For Algazel, these views are preposterous because none of the Muslims have ever arrived at the presentation of these views.

Furthermore, on the description of God's attributes, Algazel puts forward two fundamental doctrines which he thought would reflect God's attributes in Islam. These two fundamental doctrines of Islamic faith are: God's unity ("Allah as Allah") and Allah's message ("Mohammed is the Prophet"). He describes God as unique because God is uncaused, without principle – in fact he is the cause of each dead or living thing. He went further to describe God as the prime principle and final end of each thing, God is one in His essence, without associates, Single without anyone like Him, Lord without any to oppose Him, Alone without rival. He is One, Eternal without a First, Perpetual without principle, Perennial without end, always Eternal without End, subsistent without creation, Continuous without interruption. His description of the nature of God clearly shows the depth of his religious veneration, especially the absolute qualities he ascribed to the nature of God – he also maintained the view that God is omniscient and omnipotent: his science and His will know no limits. This religious veneration also led him to distinguish between two levels of faith, namely: the level of the simple faith and the level of the illuminated faith.

The end of philosophy was a grave loss for Islamic culture and for Islamic humanism, which has continued to decline since the critique of Algazel.

Activity 11.1

Take a moment to reflect on what you have read so far. Based on your learning experience, write down the names of the Islamic scholars who contributed to the growth of Islamic Scholasticism in the boxes provided below.
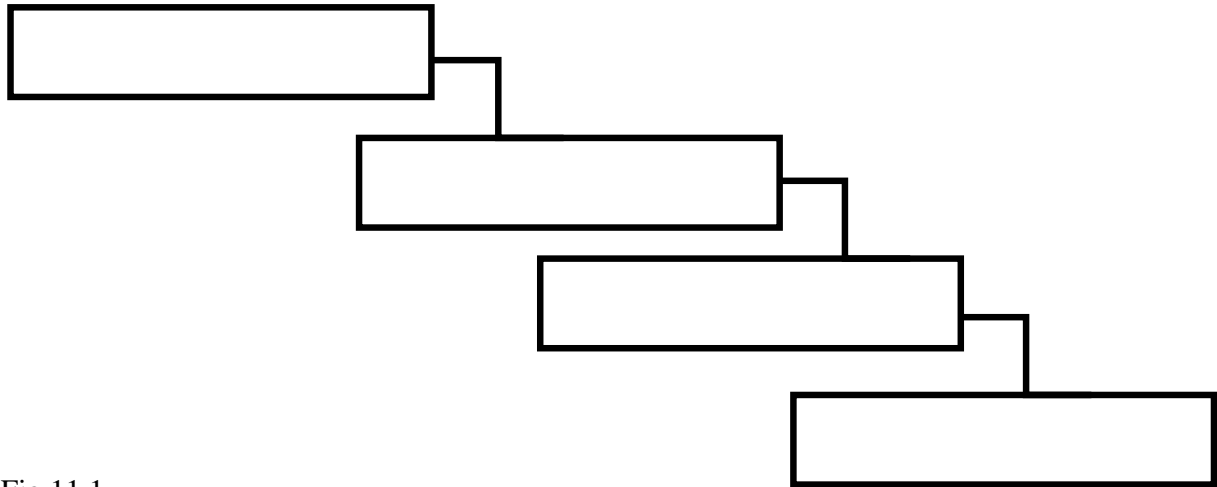
Fig 11.1

Activity 11.1 Feedback:

Take a look at figure 11.1; it contains empty boxes in which you are expected to write the names of the Scholars who contributed to the growth of Islamic Scholasticism as you have learnt in this lecture.

Note that all what we have said so far about Algazel's thought seems to be of some positive relevance to Islam, especially within the period of scholasticism, but there are some negative impacts of his thoughts which shall be explored in Box 11.1.

Box 11.1: The Negative Impacts of Algazel's Thoughts

There are also some negative impacts of Algazel's thought on the later development of Islamism. It is important to note that:

- The negative impacts of his thought on Islamic philosophy stems from his violent attacks against all philosophers, whether they are Greek or Muslim.

- His accusations of these philosophers' impiety or heresy, was a mortal blow to philosophy and practically marked the end of Islamic philosophy

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Summary of Unit 11

In Unit 11, you have learned that:

1. The term "scholasticism" is not an exclusively Christian phenomenon.

2. In fact, historians have argued that Islamic scholasticism which is a rational reflection of faith and takes into account Platonic and Aristotelian teaching, developed first among Muslims, Jews and only later among Christians.

3. Athough Christian scholasticism is more emphasized in intellectual discussion today it was indeed preceded by both Islamic scholasticism and Jewish Scholasticism.

4. The thoughts of the thoughts of notable scholars like Al-Ashari, Avicenna, Averroes and Algazel contributed immensely to the development of Islamic scholasticism.

Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 11

Now that you have completed this study session, you can assess how well you have achieved its Learning Outcomes by answering these questions. You can check your answers with the Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions at the end of this Module.

SAQ 11.1 (tests learning outcome 11.1)

What are the systems of thought that influenced Islamic Scholasticism?

SAQ 11.2 (tests learning outcome 11.2)

What is the term that depicts the central idea to Islamic Scholasticism?

SAQ 11.3 (tests learning outcome 11.3)

What did Al-Ashari aimed to achieve in his scholastic activities?

SAQ 11.4 (tests learning outcome 11.4)

What did Avicenna attempt to achieve with his philosophical system?

SAQ 11.5 (tests learning outcome 11.5)

What is Averroes' view on the debate between faith and reason?

SAQ 11.6 (tests learning outcome 11.6)

As a contribution to Islamic Scholasticism, what fundamental doctrines did Algazel put forward?

Notes on the Self-Assessment Questions (SAQs) for Unit 11

SAQ 11.1: It is a synthesis of Asharism and Avicennism or Neoplatonism.

SAQ 11.2: It is the term known as "kalam"

SAQ 11.3: He aimed to make some kind of separation between the spiritual or religious from the rational or speculative in matters of faith.

SAQ 11.4: Avicenna's philosophy is an attempt to construct a coherent and comprehensive system that accords with the religious exigencies of Muslim culture.

SAQ 11.5: Averroes believes that both reason and faith are needed in order to arrive at an appreciable understanding of religious tenets.

SAQ 11.6: Algazel puts forward two fundamental doctrines; these two fundamental doctrines of Islamic faith are: God's unity ("Allah as Allah") and Allah's message ("Mohammed is the Prophet").

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