CHAPTER-II
JUSTIFICATION AS PROOF

In philosophy "rationality of a belief" means that a belief is amenable to reason. And a belief will be considered clearly as rational if the truth of the belief could be proved. So, the question arises "what is it to prove something?"

To answer the afore said question, I shall start from the beginning - for example, asked whether the existence of something 'A' can be proved, a philosopher will like to enquire what the questioner intends by the word 'proved'. We will try to persuade the questioner that until we are clear about as to what a proof is, there is not much point in making any attempt to answer this question. But, the questioner (a non-philosopher) may be over confident about his understanding of the question, may get puzzled at the question "what is a proof? For, on the one hand, he will be inclined to say that he might already know the answer. For he is fluent in his use of the verb 'to prove' and its derivatives. He must have been talking many times about proving onething or the other and never found any difficulty in making himself understood. He may come to a conclusion that it is mere wastage of time to ask what a proof is. On the other hand, he is aware to some
extent that he could not say right away what a proof is. And that is rather a strange fact if he already knows what a proof is.

Philosophers since Socrates have asked such questions as: ‘what is knowledge?’ ‘what is duty?’ ‘what is truth?’ and what is beauty etc. And I think that the question ‘what is proof?’ is one such question. what is striking about them is that they are asked by people already skilled in the use of these concepts (who know how to use the verb ‘to know,’ etc). of others who are neither more nor less skilled in using these concepts. A man who asks what is ‘antidisestablishmentarianism’? either wants to know what that word means or to check that some one else does. He assumes that the person to whom this question is put is either more skilled in his use of words or less so. And, there is here an important difference. There are certain words which we learn to use without learning to define. And these include not only simple terms such as ‘red’, ‘rough’, and so on but also certain complex terms. Complex terms can however, commonly be taught stating their meaning in simple terms. I doubt if there has ever been any one who knew an antidisestablishmentarianism when he met one who could not give a perfectly correct answer to the question ‘what is antidisestablishmentarianism?’. But I have never heard of any one being taught how to use words like ‘know’, ‘true’, ‘beautiful’, and so on by means of a definition. It is one thing to be able to use these
words, it is quite another to reply adequately to such questions as ‘what is knowledge?’

what is puzzling about these questions such as ‘what is knowledge?’ is that, when asked by a fluent speaker of English language, they do not seem to be requests for information. For the man who asks them needs no further knowledge than what he already has to tell a right answer from a wrong one. For instance, if it is suggested that knowledge is nothing but a true belief, we would not think it an adequate answer to the question ‘what is knowledge?’ We know that where a man’s belief is true but where he was very lucky to be right. And, we would not like to say that someone knew, if it was a matter of luck that he was right. To satisfy ourselves that knowledge is nothing but true belief we need to analyse our concept of knowing.

To answer this, we have to find out what it means to know or what must be involved in a given case if it is to be a case of knowledge. In asking such question we are attempting to make explicit what must be true of a given case if, consistently with the conventions established for using the verb ‘to know’, it is held to be one of knowledge. In so far as we already know how to use the verb ‘to know’ we already know how to talk within those conventions. Analysis, then, only to make explicit what we already know implicitly. It results in statements of what must be so given certain conventions. We donot ascertain the truth
statements by any kind of empirical investigations or research. They are, so to say, not a posteriori. Their truth is, rather, known independently of experience. It is to be called as a priori. For example, ‘What is known is true’. Within the conventions which govern our use of the verb ‘to know’ one cannot consistently say both that it is not raining and that someone knows that it is raining. We donot discover from experience that whatever is know is true. That is why it is a priori. It is indeed a necessary truth about our concept of knowledge. Thus it is logically necessary condition of the truth of ‘John knows that it is raining’ that the statement ‘it is raining’ to be true. For if it were not raining, then, neither John nor, for that matter anyone else, could know that it is raining.

Now, the question arises, as to, ‘What are the logically necessary conditions of a statement to be true?’ If X knows that p is true, we can express one analytic truth by saying that X knows that P only if P is true. But, this will amount to a very partial analysis of the concept. A complete analysis will have to include a set of logically necessary conditions which taken together, are sufficient conditions of knowledge. A complete analysis will state that under what conditions a statement of the form ‘X knows that P’ must be true, not merely what must be true if ‘X’ knows that ‘P’is true. For example, we take the concept of ‘Bachelor’. There are analytic truths about bachelors, those will readily occur. ‘Bachelors are male’, ‘bachelors are unmarried, are the obvious
the obvious occurrences. Something, like the following will seem satisfactory as an analysis:

‘X is a bachelor’ is true if, and only if, the following statements are true:

1. X is male;
2. X is eligible for marriage;
3. X is unmarried.

Of the above conditions, the second condition seems a little vague, for example, a boy of ten years is not a bachelor because his age renders him ineligible, and Priests and Monks who have taken a vow of celibacy would not ordinarily be considered as bachelors. What ever the criteria be, we are to remember that without knowing what those criteria are, one would not be able to judge in a given case whether someone was a bachelor. This is a sort of analysis which I purport to put forward in order to tackle the question ‘what is it to prove something?’

In our ordinary daily life, there are all sorts of contexts, where we are called upon to prove something or the other. For example, we may be called upon to prove our identity, to prove where we were last Saturday afternoon, to prove that we can do something, to prove, we have paid our fares, and so on. And we may want to prove something for our own benefit even if no one else calls upon us to do so, to prove
we are not scared of heights, that all equilateral triangles are equiangular, or whatever.

But the question arises, "When is it true to say that a person has proved something to another?" When a person 'A' proves something to a person 'B', 'A' proves to 'B' that some claim P is true. What we want to understand is just what exactly 'A' would have succeeded in doing if he has proved to 'B' that 'P'. What conditions would have to be met? What conditions are necessary conditions of the truth of a statement like 'A has proved to B that P'? One thing to be remembered here is, we donot want to conclude for particular examples only.

Two conditions must be met if A is to have proved to B that p. One is that B must now be convinced of p. Proof is very commonly offered where someone needs to be convinced. And the result, if it is successful, is that he is convinced. But, this does not seem to be a necessary condition. For, there are proofs which can be given of such truths that 7+5=12, truths of which non of us needs to be convinced. And there are proofs about much more complicated propositions of logic or mathematics which are not deemed unsuccessful because some weak student of these subjects are not convinced. But this does not mean those of us were wrong who would say that it is a necessary condition of A having proved to B that p that B should now be convinced of p. For there is a distinction which we make in the way we speak about 'proof' between proving something to someone and
proving something for him. We can prove something for someone even though he does not need to be convinced. It might, for example, add to someone’s understanding or arithmetic if it were proved for him that \(7+5=12\). But it would make no difference to what he believed. And, indeed, it would not detract from its being true that \(7+5=12\) had been proved for someone if that individual did not understand the proof, for example, Anselm’s ‘Argument for the existence of God’—it is believed that it was not Anselm’s concern to prove the existence of God. And, clearly, he cannot be construed as having tried to prove to himself that god existed. Of that he was already convinced. This shall be discussed in detail in next chapter. But, the fact that his motive was to understand why the man who says in his heart ‘there is no God’ is a fool, does not show that he was not trying to prove the existence of God. On the contrary, I think it is quite proper to say that, in proving for himself that God existed, he hoped for understanding.

More importantly, however, the very argument might be used to prove to the person who says in his heart ‘there is no God’ that he is a fool. The same argument, that is to say, can be used both to prove something for someone and to prove something to someone. And this suggests that, although it is essential to A’s having proved to B that \(p\) that B becomes convinced of \(p\), it is not essential to proof as such that it results in conviction. So, if our question had been ‘what conditions must be met if A is to have proved that \(p\)?’ we should not have had to say
that there is some individual person B who has as a result of A’s efforts, become convinced that p.

The connection and difference between proving something to someone and convincing them is of particular importance for inquiry. This difference between proving and convincing brings us to the second condition of A’s having proved to B that p. It is that p be true. We can convince to someone of the truth of a claim which is in fact false. But, we cannot prove to someone that a claim which is in fact false is true. When we convince someone that something is true, we establish (show, prove) to his satisfaction that it is true. Some people are more easily satisfied than others and it is easier to convince some people than it is to convince others. It is not surprising, therefore, if people can sometimes be convinced of the truth of claims which are in fact false.

Now, let us see whether these two conditions will suffice to distinguish a case where someone has proved something to someone from the case which is similar to but falls short of it. In other words, if A has convinced B of the truth of a claim which is in fact true, does it follow that A has proved to B that the claim in question is true. Example:

(a) “Sailors witness sea lions preying upon penguins and return with the story. Some scientists are sceptical, remembering the tales about mermaids and so forth. Others are convinced, holding that sailors could not easily have been mistaken about such matter.
(B) Jones is a shop assistant. One day a customer complains to the manager of the shop that Jones has deliberately short-changed him, giving him, it is alleged, a 10 pence piece instead of a 50 pence piece in change. The Till is found to be correct. Jones readily admits to having in his possession both 10 pence pieces and 50 pence pieces. But he stoutly denies the charge of having short-changed this customer. He reminds the manager that in his eight years of employment in the shop no similar complaint has been made against him. It is, moreover, he points out, only a few weeks since he won a substantial sum on football pools. The manager is convinced that Jones is telling the truth (as indeed he is) and assures the customer that he must have been mistaken."

In both these cases, it can be seen that though we can convince others of the truth of some claim which is in fact true. But, in none of these cases, we can prove the truth of the claim which is in fact true. The second case, for example, is a case of probability rather than proof. The manager is satisfied that it is not likely that Jones short-changed this customer, that it is much more likely that customer made a mistake. His conviction stops short of knowledge. In this sort of circumstances it may be impossible for a man to prove his innocence. It need not be, of course. We can imagine what would prove John’s innocence. Suppose he can remember some unusual characteristic of the 50 pence piece he gave to the customer - say, that two of its sides had fret marks on them
the customer might be asked to search his pockets again. If he then found just such a coin that would be taken as proving that Jones was telling the truth. For that is a test which would not have been satisfied if Jones’s story had not been a true one. We would, for practical purposes, discount the possibility that the customer had entered the shop with just such a curious 50 pence piece in his pocket. But, since he cannot show that his story passes such a test, Jones cannot prove that he is telling the truth.

But, the position of the sailors is not like that of Jones. They know their story is true but they cannot prove it. If they had filmed the scene they would have been in a different position. For then the truth of their story could be established beyond doubt.

From this, I think, it follows that there is really a great difference between convincing some one of a claim which is in fact true and proving it to him. But the problem seems even greater than these examples show. For, in these examples proof is lacking only in practice. It is not that there are no procedures for establishing that some one short changed or that sea lions take penguins. Only, in these cases such procedures could not in practice be appealed. But there seem to be cases where people are convinced of things where it is not clear what those procedure could be. A man may become convinced, for example,
that it is his mission in life to become a jungle doctor. But what would it be like to prove that he had such a mission?

He would not require to be convinced himself, of course, but others might need to be. Suppose he asks a missionary society to support him through his medical training. They will want to be convinced that he does have a mission. But, will they want proof? There might be a proof that he never had a mission to be jungle doctor. If he turns his back on the idea as soon as he has qualified, that might be such proof. And the missionary society will need to be convinced that he is sincere and determined. Yet his being sincere and determined is not a proof that he has a mission.

It may indeed be that there are many statements which cannot be proved true because there is no recognised procedure for testing their truth. Of these, most are kind of utterances for which proof would never be demanded. For instance, ‘all men are brothers’ is a statement of whose truth men may become convinced. But there are no recognised procedures for testing it.

More commonly still, perhaps a statement may be tested by means of one sort of procedure but not susceptible to proof by means of other procedures. Thus, a statement which is held to be true a posteriori will be tested by procedures in which an appeal is made to experience.
It will not be provable by procedures appropriate to *a priori* statements. And the same holds the other way around. It is an *a priori* truth that all equiangular triangles are equilateral. So one would not adopt empirical procedures, such as measurements in order to prove it. To prove something one needs to adopt one of the recognised procedures for testing statements of that sort.

What further condition or conditions do we need to add for our analysis of what it is to prove something to someone?

I should now say that someone A has proved to another B that p if, and only if, the following conditions are met:

i. B is now convinced of p;
ii. p is true;
iii. There are recognised procedures for testing truth of statements such as p;
iv. A convinces B of the truth of p by adopting one such procedure and there by showing that some test is satisfied which would not have been satisfied if p had been false.

For some purposes it would be necessary to say a good deal more than this. Indeed, we have been considering one aspect of proof to the exclusion of another. We have been considering what it is to prove something to someone - rather than what it is to prove something for him. The same proof might, as I suggested earlier, serve both the
purposes. But, primarily my account relates only to the question - What it is to prove something to someone ? And, I think in this thesis which concerns basically to convince the sceptic - whether the existence of God can be proved. This serves the purpose and I shall exclude the other aspect of proof i.e. what is it to prove something for him.

Since, as I said above that there are different methods involved in proving something, now I shall consider the kinds of proof.

There are two different kinds of proof. One tries to prove the truth of a claim by resorting to empirical tests. For example, if someone wants to prove that he can drive a car. He will, in one sense demonstrate the driving of the car publicly etc. On the other hand, the other tries to prove something logically i.e. to say by resorting to arguments. Here some statements are taken which are not questionable or atleast acceptable to all people concerned. And it is shown that anyone who accepts these statements must also accept the truth of the conclusion drawn from these statements i.e. the statement which required to be proved.

These proofs can further be distinguished on the grounds of the procedures involved. The first kind is some times called as ‘direct’ proof and the second as ‘indirect’. The implication is that the second kind though not the first kind of proof involves inference, I think the
empirical proof may well involve inference. There is, for instance, an inference from ‘John is driving a car’ to ‘John can drive a car’. So I think this distinction between direct and indirect proof is not of any great significance here. In this case, it is however, the evidence of experience which is decisive, not any process of reasoning. There are also arguments which seek to demonstrate some conclusion from premises which are empirical. And, in these cases it is the argument which is decisive, not the fact that the truth of the premises is established through experience.

Now, since my thesis is about the rationality of religious beliefs, let me consider these two kinds of proof from this perspective of religious beliefs considering one of the most important belief in religion namely “the existence of God”.

The question that comes to me at this point of discussion is that ‘can we empirically prove the existence of God?’ or ‘Is an empirical proof of the existence of a God possible?’ As we see, the empirical proofs of the existence of things are very clear. If I want to prove to someone that there is a cat in the living-room my procedure will normally be to take him there and ask him to look for the cat himself. He is then likely to have visual experience to have for his satisfaction a kind of proof and that would end the matter.
Gods, however, are commonly not thought of as spatial beings. Even though they may be associated with certain places rather than others, particular mountains for instance, deities cannot themselves be observed in those places. They manifest themselves in less direct ways.

Empirical proof in matters of religion is, therefore, of a rather indirect sort. For example, Gideon demanded of Jehovah proof that Israel would be delivered by his hand. The test is that, if Jehovah will deliver Israel by Gideon’s hand, then a fleece left out door overnight will be dry in the morning when the ground is covered in dew. In the book of Judges it is related that Jehovah provided this proof and later gave Midian and all the host into the hand of Gideon.

In this case, it is Jehovah and not Gideon who proves that Israel will be delivered. It is by the grace of god that Gideon has proof of this. And clearly an omnipotent god would be capable of establishing his existence no less than his intentions. And there are all sorts of spectacular devices by which he might convince the sceptical. If the sceptical were felled with the regularities of a law of nature, for example, many would think the existence of a god established. And, if this were not enough the evidence could be increased. But my question is not that whether God could establish his existence? But, whether it is humanly possible to establish the existence of God by means of an empirical proof?
Here, two things would be worth mentioning. Firstly, not only are there not established procedures for putting such a statement as "there is a God" to the test, but it is not clear what those procedure would be. Secondly, even if there might be, it would be impossible to engage in such a test without the connect of the God concerned. For he would hardly be a god whose existence could be proved contrary to his will. So, in view of the above, I shall be entitled to conclude that it is not humanly possible to establish the existence of god by empirical proof.

So, now I shall come to the proof by Arguments.

The very first question that comes to my mind is that "How can an argument prove something?" As mentioned above someone can be said to be 'arguing' for a claim when he gives reasons for accepting it. He will commonly put forward his belief that reasons entitle him to accept the claim in question by linking his statement of those reasons to the claim he infers from them by such words as '... so...', '...if...', '... then', '... therefore, and so on. An argument, thus, consists basically of two parts: (a) 'the premises' to cite that something is so and (b) 'conclusion', which one is said to believe on that basis.

By no means every argument constitutes a proof of its conclusion in the sense of 'proof' we are interested in. Some of the conditions which must be met if someone is to have proved something to other by
means of an argument are as stated by John Hick in his introduction to "the Existence of God".

According to John Hick, one person 'A' will be said to have proved something to another person 'B' only if the following conditions are met:

(i) A has offered B a valid argument;
(ii) the premises of this argument are true;
(iii) B acknowledges the truth of these premises.

Now, as we know that valid argument is one whose conclusion cannot be consistently denied by anyone who accepts its premises. For, if the premises of a valid argument are true, its conclusion must also be true.

But in the above conditions and the form an argument takes, a big question remains unanswered i.e. the truth of the premises. I think that Hick over emphasizes the person-related side of proof. I think it is not sufficient that B acknowledges the truth of the premises and so the premises become true and that A convinces B of the truth of p by deriving it validly from those premises. If that were sufficient then to me it sound that we are able to have a Pandora's boxful of arguments to consider as putative proofs of, say for example, God's existence. For we often do not know whether or not someone knows something. If not,
and if he claims to have proved something to himself by means of an argument using it as premise, we cannot rule out the possibility that he has in fact done this on the ground that the truth of this premise has not been established. He could then prove the claim in question to anyone who acknowledged the truth of the premise.

For instance there might in this way be a proof of God’s existence from religious experience. If, for instance, the following argument is produced, someone might concede it was valid but say he cannot allow that the second premise is true:

(i) if there are genuine experiences of divine forgiveness then there is a god.
(ii) there are genuine experiences of divine forgiveness.

Hence, there is a God.

If we have something inferior to proof for our premises, we have something inferior to proof for our conclusion. But, if it is so we need to understand as to what is lacking in the above argument. I think we are faced with the problem of unreliability of the truth of the premises. To overcome this difficulty we need to add a further condition to our already listed conditions. So, I shall say, in order for A to have proved something to b, the following conditions must be met:

(i) B is convinced of p;
(ii) p is true;
(iii) A convinces B of p by offering him a valid argument of which p is the conclusion;
(iv) the truth of the premises of this argument has been established beyond doubt.

Some philosophers have outright denied the possibility of proofs in philosophy. F Waismann says, "... in philosophy there no proofs; there are no theorems; and there are no questions which can be decided, Yes or No. ... Arguments certainly there are . . ."1

"A philosophic question is not solved: it dissolves. And in what does 'dissolving' consist? In making the meaning of the words used in putting the question so clear to ourselves that we are released from the spell it castes on us. Confusion was removed by calling to mind the use of language or, so far as the use can be distilled, or confusion about rules: it therefore was a confusion about the use of language, or a confusion about rules. It is here that philosophy and grammar meet."2

There are no explanations in philosophy in the sense of deductive proofs. There are only arguments and these arguments are based on the conventional points of views to justify the problems under consideration. The arguments are not used for proving or disproving any

1. Paul Moser and Dwayne Muldern: Contemporary approach to philosophy: "how I see philosophy", F Waismann, MacMillan, USA 1994,
2. ibid, p. 193
point of view in philosophy. The arguments are used as justifications and a justification is not a proof for just a very simple reason that a justification does not justify the truth of a claim, it only justifies the feasibility or meaningfulness of a claim - justification consists in reasons that one believes are relevant to the validation of a claim and these reasons normally do not entail the truth of a claim. Justification is taken as a proof in philosophy or in subjects where scientific conclusiveness cannot be achieved.

Justification is a normative term. It carries with in itself a force or authority which aims at rationality of a claim. For example, a would be mother may rationally justify her case for aborting the embryo or giving birth to the baby:

Firstly,

(i) Every body has a right over his/her body,
(ii) An embryo is a part of mother’s body,

Therefore, mother has the right to abort the embryo.

Secondly,

(i) Killing a living being is a sin and a crime,
(ii) An embryo is a potential being,

Therefore, abortion is a sin and a crime.
Now, if we agree with the above example, the examples are convincing and carry some social and moral bearings. It is this point which I would like to highlight against the positivists criterion of verifiability which only covers the factual/scientific statements and does not take into account the value statements. Factual statements may fall with in the preview of ‘proof’. But the value statements, religious statements etc. Call for only justifications which though not deductive or rigorous in nature, still have force in them. “... philosophic arguments are not deductive; therefore they are not rigorous; and therefore they do not prove anything. Yet they have force.”

This is a sort of justification which I shall try to reach in the final chapters of this proposed thesis.

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**Demonstration**: The act or circumstance of proving conclusively or a show of evidence.

**Proof**: Evidence sufficient to establish a thing as true, or to produce belief in its truth.

**Justification**: A reason or explanation that justifies or defends. In justification, evidence is generally not necessary.

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3. Paul Moser and Dwayne Muldern: *Contemporary approach to philosophy*: “how I see philosophy”, F Waismann, MacMillan, USA 1994,