CHAPTER - I

THE CONCEPT OF INTUITION : AN ANALYSIS

1. Intellect and Intuition :

Philosophers feel that there are certain things which cannot be known by the ordinary means of knowledge such as intellect, sense-experience, etc. So, they speak of another method which is different from intellect and also not available to sense-experience. It is the method of intuition. As intellect is often contrasted with intuition, it will not be out of place if several features of the differences between intellect and intuition are indicated. The differences may be thought of as follows:

(1) It is generally thought that intellect has a logical or discursive character the function of which is to analyse the elements of the objects of knowledge and to give us a view of things only in the most abstract sense. It takes into account only those aspects which are common to a group of things and ignores the unique individuality of the singular things. On the other hand, intuition presents the object in all its totality and full concreteness presenting to us its uniqueness.

(ii) Intellect works always with the help of general ideas, concepts, notions which give us a notion of the general aspects of the presented materials. Thus, intellect is one step distant from reality, for, the given materials known have to be organised in the forms of general ideas, concepts, etc. But intuition is in
description is not possible without symbolical representation. Intuition does not describe, but seizes the object and as such it does not need any symbolical representation. Only in cases where the seizing has to be communicated to others or to oneself for understanding the realization, the necessity for description may arise and in such cases, the method of symbolical representation may be adopted.

(v) Regarding the objects which may be known by intellect and others which may be known by intuition, it is difficult to make a clear-cut distinction; for the universals believed to have a reality of their own by the rationalists may be the objects of both intellect and intuition. Only it can be pointed out that intellect is interested in the general features, while intuition wants to grasp the particular and the individual. Intellect operates with the general, abstract concepts, but the mode of knowing by intuition is non-general, non-abstract. It is interested in the reality of the individual thing as it is and such thing cannot be grasped by the abstract concepts. If we understand the differences between intellect and intuition in this way, we find that intuition tries to give us knowledge of those objects such as reality as a whole which transcends the boundaries of the intellectual apparatus, the self, the particular entities, for their unique mysteries are inaccessible to the eye of intellect, the principles of beauty, morality, the axioms of logic and mathematics, which have to be established as self-evident in an immediate certitude of the pure cognition of intuition. Intellect
may make us aware of the necessity of accepting some principles as forming the foundation of the different branches of knowledge; but it is a matter of strong controversy, whether intellect can discover the required apodictic certainty.

If we take into account these differences between intellect and intuition as generally accepted by philosophers, the question of their exact relation is very important. It will be the task of the present thesis to determine such relation with reference to a critical analysis of the ideas of some major thinkers of Western philosophy who adopted either intellect or intuition or both in course of their philosophical investigations.

2. **Ambiguity of 'Intuition'**

In the context of the prevalent differences between intellect and intuition, the present thesis wants to examine some theories of intuition in Western philosophy. But the word 'intuition' is highly ambiguous. In its broadest sense intuition means direct and immediate knowledge. It does not need the help of any intermediary state or process. Whatever is known is given to the knower directly, concretely and in its entirety. It is also claimed that knowledge by intuition is unerring, clear and distinct. The characteristics of intuition as understood in this way are accepted by all advocates of the theory of intuition. Intuition in the sense of immediate apprehension may give rise to different types, which may accept immediacy but there may be differences
in other aspects. Therefore, before a systematic investigation of the theories of intuition is undertaken, it would be better, if an analysis of the senses, in which the word 'intuition' is used, is carried out. Only then will it be possible to delimit the area of the thesis - the particular form of intuition to which it wants to devote itself.

As it has already been pointed out, among the things which may not possibly be known by intellect, may be included the idea of reality as distinguished from appearance, some concepts and categories accepted by the philosophers to explain the universe, the moral standards, principles of beauty, truth, etc., logical and mathematical axioms, idea of God and attitude towards life and knowledge of the self and the world in its totality etc. These are the supposed objects of knowledge not acceptable to the available ways of cognition. With regard to the knowledge of these objects, generally, the word 'intuition' is used. The list of objects enumerated above as the possible objects of 'intuition' is exhaustive. The different types of objects as understood to be known by 'intuition' suggests that there may be different senses in which the word 'intuition' may be used. In other words, there are different types of 'intuition' in which different kinds of objects are known.

There are philosophers who do not think that reality has to be known by 'intuition', for, according to them, reality need not be absolutely distinguishable from the world of our everyday experience. The same method of knowledge which acquaints us with
the objects of experience can, perhaps, reveal the nature of reality. Still, such philosophers would admit the necessity of intuition as the most important faculty which helps us understand the nature of certain concepts and categories without which we cannot have a systematic account of the world of our ordinary experience. This may be one type of intuition or one of the senses in which the word 'intuition' is used, as the aim of intuition is to give us knowledge of those essential concepts and categories without which experience cannot be systematically grasped. Besides this, the faculty of intuition may be thought to be important for establishing the moral and aesthetic ideals as well as mathematical and logical axioms. In the light of the different ways in which intuition gives us knowledge of these different things, it will be better to understand intuition, which claims to give us knowledge of reality, or concepts and categories indispensable for the knowledge of reality, logical and mathematical axioms, moral and aesthetic ideas, as epistemological intuition; while other types of intuition which do not claim to give us any such knowledge or perhaps, cannot give us any knowledge, may be classified as non-epistemological intuition. This shows that one type of intuition may claim to give us knowledge, whatever be the object, while there may be another type of intuition which has no such claim. The broad divisions of intuition may thus be epistemological and non-epistemological intuition; while these broad divisions may include other subdivisions. As the present thesis is concerned with some theories
of intuition in western philosophy which are mostly interested in the questions of the knowledge of reality, or concepts and categories essential for the knowledge of reality, as well as the knowledge of beauty and moral good, the discussion in the present chapter will try to decipher the general features of epistemological intuition; but it will also indicate the general sense of non-epistemological intuition and in what respect the former differs from the latter.

3. Epistemological Intuition:

By epistemological intuition I mean that type of intuition which claims to give us knowledge and it is possible that the claim is justified, as knowledge claim has to be a justified claim. The discussion on the nature of epistemological intuition may, however, be divided into the following types, all of which may share the knowledge-claim character, but may differ regarding the nature of objects which are supposed to be known.

(a) Metaphysical Intuition: Intuition may be called epistemological from its nature of knowledge-giving character. But the object of such intuition may determine its particular character.

Intuition which proposes to deal with the knowledge of reality and also claims that such knowledge is possible can be called 'metaphysical intuition.' The French Philosopher Bergson introduced the word 'intuition' in this sense because he understood reality to be something wholly different from what is
conceived by ordinary men and science and as such cannot be
known by the ordinary and scientific methods of cognition. But
I think that 'metaphysical intuition' may be widened to include
the concepts and categories essential for the knowledge of
reality. Such concepts and categories constitute the basic con­
ceptual framework of the knowledge of reality. But philosophers
are of opinion that these concepts and categories have a self­
evident character and it is not possible for our ordinary expe­
rience to establish them. They are given immediately with an
apodictic certainty and it is the faculty of intuition which
makes us aware of their validity. Such concepts and categories,
which include the universals, the nations of substance, principle
of causality, unity, totality, etc. are mentioned by Plato,
Aristotle and Husserl; and these notions play an important part
in our knowledge of reality. The type of intuition which lays
the foundation of the knowledge of reality can also be called
metaphysical intuition.

(b) Moral and Aesthetic Intuition: There is a controversy
whether moral and aesthetic ideals are objects of intuition.
Without entering into the controversy I would like to maintain
that there are such ideals like beauty and goodness and these
are revealed in intuition. We cannot deny that there is an
absolute good or categorical imperative which we are bound to
obey. Such an imperative or unconditioned good cannot be derived
from sense-experience. It has been established by philosophers
like Moore that the 'Good' is simple and un analysable and is
apprehended by intuition. The will as the basis of the imperatives shines in its own light and such light is the light of intuition. Morality occupies an important part of our life and the moral standards which claim a self-evident validity must be based on intuitive apprehension of the moral principles.

Aesthetic experience is also intuitive because it is concrete and contains a presentation of the totality of the object; it is also "... the fundamental act of knowing individual things". There are principles of aesthetic appreciation and such principles constitute the standards on the basis of which we can determine whether an object is beautiful. These standards derive their validity from intuition, because it is intuition which gives them a foundation. As it is "Beauty is the most profound, the most insoluble, the most fascinating of all the mysteries life presents" and the Beauty itself has to be revealed intuitively. "It is not surprising then that men are willing to recognize a mysterious mental faculty to account for so curious a mental working; and the strength of the claim of intuition in the aesthetic field is increased by the direct evidence of artists themselves". As the ideals of morality and aesthetic creation and appreciation are objects of knowledge claimed to be established by intuition, which establishes the validity of such ideas, such a mode of intuition can also be called epistemological intuition.

3 Ibid., p. 135.
(c) **Mathematical and Logical Intuition**: In mathematics and logic we start from the self-evident axioms and then proceed step by step to the necessary conclusions. Mathematical and logical necessity cannot be established by sense-experience, for sense-experience is variable, contains discrete and often contradictory elements, and so they have to be grounded in the immediacy of self-evidence, which can be offered only by intuition. According to Mr. Stocks and Mr. Ewing, a direct and immediate apprehension of the self-evident truth is possible by means of intuition. The self-evident truths to which Mr. Ewing refers are the "...simple primitive laws of deductive logic or mathematics, or the more sweeping truth, for example, of causality". In a deductive system we proceed from premises but reason cannot justify the primitive premises and "the act of deducing must be seen as true, intuitively". As this kind of intuition is the ground of a system of knowledge, it can also be called epistemological intuition. Though mathematical and logical intuition can be included under the broad division of epistemological intuition, they will not be discussed separately. The theories of intuition which are supposed to be discussed in the thesis will, perhaps, explicate the nature and possibility of this particular form of intuition.

Epistemological intuition may be either of the two types - intellectual or sensuous. Some philosophers may think and, in this group we may include Plato and Spinoza, that intellect in

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5. *Ibid.*, ....
the last phase of its activity develops an immediacy and a form of direct apprehension. But philosophers like Bergson are of opinion that intuition is opposed in nature to intellect and they claim that intellect has merely a discursive or analytical function and it can never acquire the capacity of yielding knowledge. Bergson will, perhaps, also say that intuition is non-sensory and non-intellectual. At the same time Bergson admitted that if intellect had a different use other than the discursive one, his intuition may be characterized as intellectual. Philosophers following Kant will speak of sensuous intuition where intuition does not have an independent power of giving knowledge, but acts in a subordinate manner to the faculty of sensibility.

The problem regarding the relation between sense-experience and intuition is not an insoluble one, for there we have to judge whether intuition is always sensuous or there can be any non-sensuous or pure intuition. But it is a debatable issue whether pure intellect at the level it rises to an intuitive capacity can give us any knowledge and though Kantians would deny any such possibility, philosophers including Hegel and Husserl speak of an intellectual intuition. The problem arises with regard to the questions whether intuition is completely opposed intellect and sense-experience or whether intuition possesses an intellectual element by which the object grasped in an immediate apprehension can also be analytically determined or whether intellect can develop the power of intuition or whether there is a place where both
intuition and intellect merge with each other. All these questions will occupy an important place in the interpretation of intuition by the important thinkers of western philosophy who have been selected in the thesis, namely, Plato, Kant, Bergson and Husserl.

4. Non-Epistemological Intuition

We can talk of another type of intuition which can be called non-epistemological intuition. It does not give us knowledge of any specific object, though it makes us realize many aspects of our own lives as well as the mysteries of the universe. Psychological intuition and mystical intuition may be included under the title 'non-epistemological intuition'.

(a) Mystical Intuition: According to the mystics, reality can be approached not in the ordinary ways of knowledge, but through the extra-ordinary way of mysticism. The mystic insight suddenly reveals the hidden wisdom or unveils the mystery of the world. "The first and most direct outcome of the moment of illumination is belief in the possibility of a way of knowledge which may be called revelation or insight or intuition, as contrasted with sense, reason, and analysis, which are regarded as blind guides leading to the morass of illusion. Closely connected with this belief is the conception of a Reality behind the world of appearance and utterly different from it".  

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knowledge by intuition as an immediate grasp and the uniqueness of such experience. Intuition may be interpreted as a type of experience where we fail to explain how we have realized a particular aspect either of ourselves or of the world.

Mysticism is sometimes defined as the fundamental experience. The mystic aims at what is transcendental and spiritual. He ignores the world—even in its supernormal manifestations—and always wants to be united with the one.

This one is the Reality, the mystics believe, which underlies everything and at the same time it is "...a living and personal Object of Love; never an object of exploration." 9

The living union with this fundamental reality cannot be obtained through intellectual cognition, neither from emotional longings. It is arrived at by means of an insight which transcends intellect and senses. The mystic insight is a "...practical experience in a state of heavenly ecstasy; it is a superconscious intuition in a flight of spiritual transport." 10 It is not a process, but a direct flash of spiritual light which reveals to us the Absolute Truth.

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7 D. Baumgardt, Great Western Mystics, New York, Columbia University Press, 1961; p. 5.
9 Ibid.
There is at least one mystical idea, the idea of unity, which is also considered by the metaphysician. "]... among religious mystics the conviction of unity arises from a personal experience of union, a union with the 'Divine' or the 'Absolute', in which the self is suddenly realized, not as a part of the absolute, ... but as of its essence".\textsuperscript{11} Thus there is no distinction between the knowing subject and the known object in the mystic experience.

Mysticism, though is an attempt to know reality, differs from the philosophical concept of knowledge. There may be truth in a mystic's claim but, for some difficulties, it is not possible to regard the mystical intuition as a means of knowledge. Mr. Underhill rightly says that mysticism"has nothing in common with the pursuit of occult knowledge. ... It is the name of that organic process which involves the perfect consummation of the Love of God: ... it is the art of establishing his conscious relation with the Absolute".\textsuperscript{12}

Despite the difficulties in mysticism we cannot deny that "... there is an element of wisdom to be learned from the mystical way of feeling, which does not seem to be attainable in any other manner. If this is the truth, mysticism is to be commended as an attitude towards life, not as a creed about the world".\textsuperscript{13}

\textsuperscript{11} K.W.Wild, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 104.
\textsuperscript{12} B.Underhill, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 81.
\textsuperscript{13} B.Russell, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 11.
Without the mystic insight we cannot account for our 'faith' in a spiritual world. But mysticism though intuitive in nature cannot claim an epistemological status. It has been pointed out by many that mystical intuition is inexpressible and incommunicable. But something called knowledge has to be communicated to others and a common acceptance of what is known is also necessary. But such conditions cannot be fulfilled by mystical intuition.

(b) Psychological Intuition: The word intuition is also found in psychology though the psychological treatment of it is, however, different. The psychologist denies that intuition has the properties of a knowledge giving character. For the psychologist intuition has its status only as a behavioural concept; a concept with the help of which the behaviour of an individual can be explained clearly. Mr. Westcott points out three psychological theories of intuition. (1) The verstehenist or global understanding position, according to which intuition is a "step from inference to understanding". 14 By means of intuition one can approach the mystery of personality. (2) The second psychological theory is the inference position. This theory holds that intuition is a name for a "special case of inference". 15 Sometimes it happens that the steps of inference remain obscure to us, yet we draw conclusions. (3) The third view of psychological intuition is held by Jung. I think that Jung's treatment deserves

14 M.R. Westcott, op. cit., p. 186
15 Ibid., p. 188.
special mention. A brief discussion of Jungian intuition will throw some light on our knowledge of personality.

Jung is not at all concerned with the epistemological position of intuition. Rather, he tries to determine the origin of such intuition. For Jung intuition is not a mysterious or special faculty. Though rare, intuition is a function of human beings as sensation is. We may perceive our inner and unconscious processes through intuition, but such knowledge is not comprehensible to others.

Knowledge acquired by intuition is of a different order but it is no more true or false than our knowledge through sensation. "The function of intuition in perceiving implications is neither more nor less 'immediate' than the perceiving of sensory details through sensation".16

According to Jung, mind functions in the following four different ways: thought, feeling, sensation and intuition. Of these four faculties sensation and intuition are irrational and immediate. Intuition, then, is a fundamental aspect of human behaviour. That a particular individual can exercise the power of intuition so easily simply means that his constitutional propensities are different from ordinary men. Intuition is the general characteristic of human beings and the individual difference in the intuitive function seems to be consonant with the constitutional differences. Thus Jung's view of intuition constructs a theory of personality, rather than a theory of knowledge.

16 Ibid., p. 187.
Intuition, as it is defined by Jung, is "The perception of one's unconscious processes". The unconscious consists of the undesirable mental experiences. "Intuition, when the dominant mental function, tends to produce either the mystical dreamer or seer on the one hand, or the fantastical crank or artist on the other".

Such a conception of intuition rules out the possibility of establishing it as a faculty of knowing the metaphysical truth. It, rather, justifies our common use of the term 'intuition'. Generally, we say that women, children and primitive people are intuitive. We also speak of realizing other's character intuitively. The existence of the hunches and premonitions is uncontroversial. But these are not of philosophical interest.

We have distinguished several senses of the word intuition and have tried to show that not all cases of intuition are of philosophical importance. The philosophers' concern is that type of intuition which can give us justified knowledge, for intuition, according to many philosophers, is accepted as a means of knowledge, where other means of knowledge do not help us. But this does not mean that the characteristics of knowledge obtained by intuition would be completely different from knowledge obtained from other sources. It is for this reason the present thesis is going to be devoted to a discussion of those theories which present to us the different objects of knowledge, their specific

18: *ibid.*, p. 53.
nature and their characteristic differences from other means of knowledge. It has been pointed out that mystical intuition and psychological intuition which share the similar characteristics with the type of knowledge-giving intuition cannot give us any knowledge. So in the present thesis such types of intuition will not be considered, though, according to many, they may also have the nature of what may be called intuitive knowledge. These ideas will become clear in course of the discussions in the subsequent pages.