CHAPTER I

WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY, RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Philosophy happens to be the most general reflection on world, nature, things, history as well as human understanding of these different dimensions of Universe. Philosophers do not have any special area to investigate such as Astronomy or Biology. But, however, nature of physical universe as well as life belongs(1) to the objects of reflection and wonder for a philosopher.

Traditionally we know, philosophy is divided in three or four main branches like metaphysics, logic, epistemology, Axiology or science of values of ideals of human striving. It is wrong to underline one branch of philosophy say logic over the rest. It can be argued that no philosopher can philosophize without fully understanding the tools of thinking. It is important for a philosopher to estimate the character of success of application of these tools to various objects of inquiry that man is supposed to engage himself with. But while philosophy sketches the various elements that world is constituted of, it also gives reason for justification of using reasons to draw these sketches of the universe.

Philosophical enquiries embrace both the cognitive as well as the non cognitive human interests. We are concerned about the place of man in the over all universe as well as his role in history and the foundations of society that only our critical

1. Aristotle Metaphysics A6, 987 b2 (Trans.W.D.Ross)
reflection on the nature of human beings and their relation with other human beings could specify. In order to critically and impersonally provide a scheme of social solidarity, philosophy must reflect and investigate what are the general demands of human life and their mutual cooperation. Such things as desires, motives, ideals are of abiding interest to mankind and philosophers who take these seriously are called moralists or ethical philosophers.

Philosophy in general therefore is a self-conscious reflection on all the different themes of material interaction and the spiritual world. Different philosophers, focus on one or the other groups of questions related to such questions as the following:—

What we definitely know about nature? What is at the back of different changing appearances?

Does the world go on growing and adding new things in it? Or otherwise the world appears in many phases nevertheless its essence and substance remains the same? Can there be objects without qualities or qualities without objects? Is a thing without any of its relations understandable? Or can relation be understood by anybody without those things which they realise?

OR

How reason that is expression of human mind and language that man makes are capable of taking the intricate pluralities

2. Preface to the Principals of Philosophy.

and diversities of various substances, qualities, relations, essences and express their exact configurations in our own words?

Why we believe that what I utter in my words can let others grasp my thoughts by decoding my arbitrary verbal expressions? Is there one reason or many reasons? What is the status of laws of thought? Are they necessarily Universal? Can there be a world where laws of thought can be violated?

Briefly we are not concerned with our everyday problems of here and now, success and failure but to find out the universal framework of the total framework of the reality. Along with these questions, Philosophers also attempt to visualise the nature of human life, its ultimate values such as freedom, equality, justice and find out how far they are organic to the world of appearance which seems to be source of any concern for human values. When we are faced with these doubts about our values, we ask questions who are we? why we are in this world? Is all our hope and concern for justice, freedom, equality, generosity, compassions etc. are merely subjective illusions. Which are having no sense in a world which is primarily indifferent to our most anxious pursuit of ideals.

When philosophers are seized with the problems of last paragraph then they start asking questions whether this whole totality of universe has a direction or a purpose or a goal? Whether all our anxiety for seeking a better life and just life

References :- Philosophical investigations I, Para.98(P45)

Philosophical investigations I,para.243-50 (PPAB-90)
is merely a Personal whim illusion? To answer such questions we have not to look outside on nature and history but to make a journey with in our own conscious being. As we do that we discover the domain of the divine sublime and the holy. And thus philosophy passes into the questions of why the world is or the ultimate? This question delivers philosophy to the gate of religion which we now pass on to discuss.

RELIGION :

How to discuss religion? Religion unlike philosophy covers many other elements than the intellectual mappings of the world. Of course, religion also offers some kind of overall picture of the universe as a whole inclusive of human relation to this whole. In this picture the paramount place does not belong to a theoretical curiosity. Religion is the cumulative expression of man's effort to make himself at home with all other Beings. Our common experience shows a lot of disharmony and indifference of one thing towards the rest. In fact the overwhelming feeling one runs across everyday in our normal world is that of indifference, disorder or opposition. Even when we notice some partial order such as day and night following each other in a cycle, plants growing from seed to fruit and seed again, animals finding food from the fruits of the plants and nourishing vegetation by their existence, one still does not know if all such unity and order are just happenstance.
Now in the course of man's evolution from his purely animal ancestry, he has come to possess a sense of wonder or doubt about his own place in the cosmos and the fate of his peers. Of course, such doubts could arise in mankind only after a lot of mental evolution had been gone through. Religion is the generic name of this tumult of collective mind gone over ages earliest form of society needed collectivity and cooperation among its different members.

Who could not find why they should cooperate and not defy any social discipline of supernatural being as the only service of command in order to keep their people together and provide social basis of collective life. This cooperation was needed particularly in view of man's insecure position in nature and its formidable uncertainties he had to exercise and his intelligence to be alive to make secure grounds for effective coordination of collective obligations for mutual benefit.

No animal has ever been able to fathom the underlying basis of effective reactions to such challenges. Human religion at the earliest stage provided a foundation for forming human institution that would ensure success against odds that nature posed and uncertainty of phenomena that confronted mankind. Religion whether an act of intelligence or imagination or arising of aforesaid practical needs for cooperation and collective

References :- Friedrich Schleiermacher, On Religion, translated by John Oman and the Christian Faith translated by H.R. Mackintosh, contain classic statements of the view that religion is essentially a mode of experience.
organisation of human labour that leads to body of beliefs had to be made consistent. So religion therefore is a quest for cohesive model of man's integration with his peer's environment ecology and his hopes to realize his position as savage in originator. Only dimly realized possibilities of collective achievements. Man in this collective act of mythology projects a world picture that reassures him that he is not forlorn and is bound to achieve and be blessed by over all success and totality in his ambitions have secured foundations on the basis of belief which are shared by the group i.e living together.

The religion holds the primary focus on such assumptions and faith of mankind in history. This need not be based on any widely experienced and perceived nature of the phenomenon that the society as a whole runs into the ordinary business of seeking adaptation for survival.

Human Myths by queer act of imagination and forth transcend and submerge many incongenial and unhappy fears as well as the undergone world agonies.

The religioWyj discourses provided for the first time to them confidence and solidarity by holding a divine eternal father and protector giving them collectivity and ensure their supports to civilizational achievements.

Accordingly religion is the anchor of the cultural basic of human endeavørnces to break away from the rules of nature
compulsions as governed the sub-human life forms of all other animate beings. Religion accordingly becomes even its most primitive stage a distinct differentiation of Man against the blind Nature or vital instincts of lower animals.


Man accordingly held the proud faith as the favoured child of the infinite god from whom he comes to have the brief stay for this worldly existence to which he gives meaning achievements and values. These are preserved by society and its different institution which are possible under the faith, is the Divine assurance. Religion involves many practices such as worship, prayer rituals as well as recitation, contemplation and meditation on the specially identified words and saved texts called central to faith which are either supposed to be divine by God's grace or great prophets and seers who have cultivated their spiritual powers to be in tune with the very central being of the world and Universe. Such texts aphorism and epics are collectively venerated and guide the practice of religious way of life to maintain the central article of faith.

A general picture that of captured the fickle and the ephemeral drives and impressions of frightened early man. Accordingly the religion should not be looked upon as an empty
abstract activity of words, concepts and theories. Such as these which are associated with the realities of religion are introduced much later by preachers theologians philosophers and religious priests when human society has arrived at a higher level of intellectual comprehension and act of writing, printing and collective prayers etc.

As such one should not think religion to be in any sense antagonist to philosophy which has already been noted presupposes advanced intellectual powers on the part of thinking minds in terms of rational rules of understanding and construction.

Infact Religion is much earlier in society than either science or philosophy. Religion therefore is not artificial product of abstract reflection like tools of thinking, logic, philosphy etc. However this is also clear that no other forms of life except the intelligent reflective human being could have been able to either imagine or practice a religion or hold a mythological representation of their lived world as a cosmology.

To that extent practices of religion its beliefs institutions like church scripturers, their readings, arts, modes of worship etc represent people living as a society.

In culture and civilisation, religion starts as a response to ensure our collective effort to strive for making a safe heaven in the face of hostile environment. But soon after the

W.T.Stace, Time and Eternity

The moral expect of religion is stressed in Immanuel Kant, Religion with in teh limits of Reason Alone, By T.M. Green and H.H. Hudson.
need for consistency as noted briefly earlier coherence and unity in different elements of this response brings forth some overall unity of to another level of social and historical concreteness. The faithful constitute a natural society with necessary organisation, idols, rites, codes, that seems to emanate from their basic idea about divinity His commands and guidance for control of man’s interaction with nature, time and man’s own kind.

There is another dimension of religion that makes for the experience of sublime, that is not of our everyday experience. This particular sublimity fuses in itself highest of harmony, peace and order a rare attribute of our world picture which is generally chaotic and emotionally threatening to our hopes and expectations. All religion’s people strive to seek and lie blessed into such a state of ecstasy. In this moment of ecstasy, a prophet is born and he speaks to his peers in a way that they also gain some sublimity through the contents of prophet’s vision as recorded in his sacred words. No rational criterion for such enchanted state of hyper communication be offered out of our total stock of everyday happening and experiences. This is the place that underlines the role of mystic visions at the core of religious faith. All scriptures are beyond the scrutiny
of rational philosophical enquiry which must be put under
brackets in order to lead the serene emanations of divine grace
leaving our mortal coils to move up above the mundane and the
humdrum happenings of selfish, egoistic strivings of most of us.
This experienced enjoyment and communication of ecstasy is the
very essence of religious experience which is the rock of
religious phenomenon.

PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION :-

Next question is what is philosophy of religion? It was at
one time generally understood to mean religious philosophising in
the sense of the philosophical defence of religious convictions.

It was seen as continuing the work from 'natural' stand-
point as distinguished from 'revealed' theology. Its aim was to
demonstrate rationally the existence of God, Thus logically
buttressing the claims of revelation. But it seems better to call
this endeavour "natural theology", and to term the wider
philosophical defence of religious beliefs "apologetics".

Then we may reserve the name "philosophy of religion" for
what is its proper meaning, namely philosophical thinking about
religion.

Philosophy of religion, then is not a part of religious
teaching. The atheist, the agnostic and the person of faith all
can philosophize about religion. Philosophy of religion is not a
branch of preconviction related to revelation of God to a

John Dewey, A Common Faith

The Two Sources of Morality and Religion translated by K. Ashley
Audra.

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prophet but a branch of philosophy. It studies the concepts and beliefs, systems of religion as well as the prior phenomenon of religious experience and the activities of worship and contemplation on which these belief systems rest and out of which they have arisen. It also investigates the differences in the way in which our everyday beliefs and convictions go to get enriched and mutually support our claims to have transcendent knowledge of ultimate God. Can these two levels of our thinking be bridged?

Philosophy of religion is thus a second order activity, standing at one remove from its subject matter. It is not itself a part of the religious realm but is related to it as for example the philosophy of law is related to the realm of legal phenomenon of rules, their interpretations, arguments, judgement and to judicial concepts and reasonings likewise the philosophy of art to artistic phenomena. The philosophy of religion is related to the particular religions and theologies of the world. It seeks to analyse concepts such as God, Dharma, Brahman, Salvation, Worship, Creation, Sacrifice, Nirvana, Eternal life, Etc. in such ways that particular religious traditions are made intelligible in the light of different interpretations of these basic categories.

Philosophy of religion is occupied to a large extent with the consideration reason for and against various fundamental religious beliefs, particularly the various arguments for the

Edwin A.Burtt, Types of Religious Philosophy and Robert Patterson, An introduction to the Philosophy of Religion.
existence of God. But we find many other matters created in books that are regarded as being within the philosophy of religion. These include the nature and significance of religious experience, the nature of religion, the relation between religion and science, the nature of religious faith as a mode of belief and awareness, nature of revelation and its relation to the results of human experience and reflection, notion of liberation and moral values and responsibility, the logical analysis of religious symbolism, and possibilities for reconstructing religion along relatively non-traditional lines.

Most important thing for common sense about religion is that it guides our everyday life. It provides us for number of important beliefs that guides our conduct, attitudes and feelings. It gives answer to questions concerning the ultimate source of things, the governing forces in the cosmos, the ultimate purpose of the Universe, and the place of man in the entire scheme. It tells us what a supreme being is like, what demands he makes on man, and how one can get in touch with him. It offers a diagnosis of human ills, and it lays down a "way of salvation" that if followed, will provide a way to remedy these ills and satisfy man's deepest needs as well as fulfill a proper equilibrium of various other compelling urges with our desires to reconcile them with the ultimate quest for Supreme Being.

Philosophers have raised critical questions about the
justifiability of value of religious beliefs, rites, moral attitudes and modes of experience. However philosophers have largely focussed their critical powers on the validation of doctrinal side of religion. In works on the philosophy of religion, attention is focussed primarily in what might be called the metaphysical background of the doctrinal system, the world view of the religion, the view of the ultimate source and nature of the universe, the nature of man, man's place in the universe, the end to which man is, or should be devoted to act, and so on. This is because philosophical discussions concentrate on finding out aspects of different historical religions that go to provide a common frame of the world view valid for any possible understanding of the world. It also includes, Man's relation to the maker of this world and how can man pry into the secrets of god's relation with his creations.

It might also be argued that if we ignore specific particular religious convictions, the overall world view of all religions inquire into most undeniably significant fact of unity and purpose in the universe as a whole. However without presupposing some particular religious beliefs, it would be easy to show that the acceptance of elaborate theological beliefs as well as participation in collective rituals is an essential part what we stated about human existence earlier in an paragraph

William F. Alston, Religious Belief and Philosophical Reflection.
fully human life, therefore religion is based on some deep requirements of human condition that is assurance of metaphysical support.

Philosophers of religion also investigate the nature of religious experiences because it is often claimed that such experiences provide direct warrants for the existence of God, or of other objects of religious worship. One is naturally led into a survey of the types of religious experience and into questions of their psychological bases. Finally, if a philosopher has decided that the basic beliefs of the traditional religions of his society are unacceptable, he is naturally faced with the question of what to do about it? If he finds that religion is a crucially important aspect of human life, he will try to find some way of preserving religious functions in a new form that can be justified by theoretical arguments as well meet the practical concerns.

To put it formally, according to our understanding philosophy of religion concerns specifying definition of the criterion of discrimination between truly valid spiritual revelation against all kinds of visions, illusions, hallucinations and other varieties of trances, psychophysical induced by states. There is no agreement among mystics, prophets and spiritual seekers. What are the unmistakable features which are revelatory of the divine essence and are not merely/
psychological involvements of the religious seekers with extraneous matters that are questions of psychological and biographical life of the religious seeker only. Philosopher of religion shall attend to separate different combinations of such factors that seem to be noted in different religious lives to find out what necessarily constitutes the transformational results to the person who undergoes such an experience. An investigation into a paradigm of spiritual revelation on the basis of criticism of different religious persons claims would help standardising the criticism. Generally, the quality of life of peace, tranquillity and truthfulness easily follow from any revelatory spiritual encounter called by various names the experience of the holy, the numinous, sacred of simply God.

The other important problem the philosophy of religion tries to tackle is to reconcile our common sense beliefs about nature and society values that do not seem to give any support to the idea of all powerful, kind, caring, compassionate spirit, Divine person underlying these various unrelated happenings, events things as are processes known to be in our world. How can a rational person hold any such belief in the unity, harmony and purposiveness of nature, man, history and society? Philosophy of religion must investigate the claims of men of deep conviction who not only give expressions to their convictions relating to existence of such a divine and a self actualising process F.R. Tennant, Philosophical Theology.
philosophy of a fulfilment of a spiritual ideal philosophy of religion being philosophy has to examine all the evidence and arguments which seem compelling to very intelligent persons to affirm the claim that world demonstrates highest order and purpose. It is the critical duty of this very philosophy to point out like voltaire's arguments in his work "Candide" that there are large number of unexplained paradoxes and gaps in our knowledge of world around us that do not give support to the idea that the whole universe is being governed of justice, fairness, love and intelligence. "What good or what causes do snakes scorpions or earth quakes serve?" Is a question which any intelligent man is likely to ask like voltaire and would not know the answer.

Philosophy of religion must explain the existence of evil and justify to the limited reason available to man in "Apologetics" the presence of divinity despite of our continuous encounter with evil. How to give an intelligible account of such widespread irrationality and purposelessness in the wide world and how for such chaotic multiplicity of mutually conflicting forces of nature be seen as merely creatures of God's will. A God who of course is supposed to be all is all kind realises purpose and his infinite love for his creations in such cruelties, An Agonising question which philosophy of religion tackles?

J.M.E. McIntyre, Some Dogmas of Religion.

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The skeptic draws the conclusions, either there is no God or he is too feeble to overcome forces pitted against him. This common sense blasphemy is to be effectively met by not only ardent religious convictions but should be philosophically argued for on the bases of evidence and good reasons. Philosophy of religion has to adjudicate such rational debate between the faithful and the skeptic. This grand philosophical debate between the skeptic agonistic and the truly religious thinkers must develop without violence and abuse finds the right way of settling such questions and answers, without being accused of dogmatism or irrelevance is the agenda of philosophy of religion.

Lastly, philosophy of religion must also give a critical account of how religion helps man to live rational free life of moral responsibility and justification for rational tolerance of different attitudes to life that different societies, cultures and ages would afford in their search for a design of living. Can the diversity of ideals of conduct as pursuits historically by different groups be made comparable and evaluated by a process of assessment based on one's proximity to the universal essence of everything? Is it true that morality when based on religion i.e moral values and codes based on religious beliefs are likely to bring about mutual agreement very much more widely if these are tinged by a divine part of experience rather than by concerns of reasons and material inclinations of men alone? Or is it
likely that religious morality would be incapable of debate with its opponent and antagonists and generally take to persecution of heretics or elimination of dissidents by force as rude history of past millennia of religious wars and internal bigotry and oppression as have historically discredited that legacy of many world religions? Is there a philosophy of inter-Religious understanding and accommodation of divergent points of view that different groups swearing by their exclusive religious belief often enjoin? Philosophers of religion have to work hard to bring about a framework of intersection of religious beliefs and forge a possible common framework underlying them by critical reconstruction of these several belief systems.

Philosophy of religion has to see if it is possible to develop a common discourse of substantial and procedural values that could support and enhance quality of interlearning of different religious moralities. This would need philosophy of religion to liberate itself from the denominational beliefs, attitudes and ideals and that all men who live in religious communities inherit from their own societies. But to do philosophy of religion one has to detach oneself from the restrictions of casts of one’s own religious disposition (without giving them up) in order to examine them as it were in the light of relevant facts studied by scholars of philosophy from the history of other religions.

Bertrand Russell, Religion and Science.