

**Contemporary Issues in philosophy of Mind and Cognition**

**Prof. Ranjan K. Panda**

**Prof. Rajakishore Nath**

**Department of Humanities and Social Science**

**Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay**

**Lecture No. # 03**

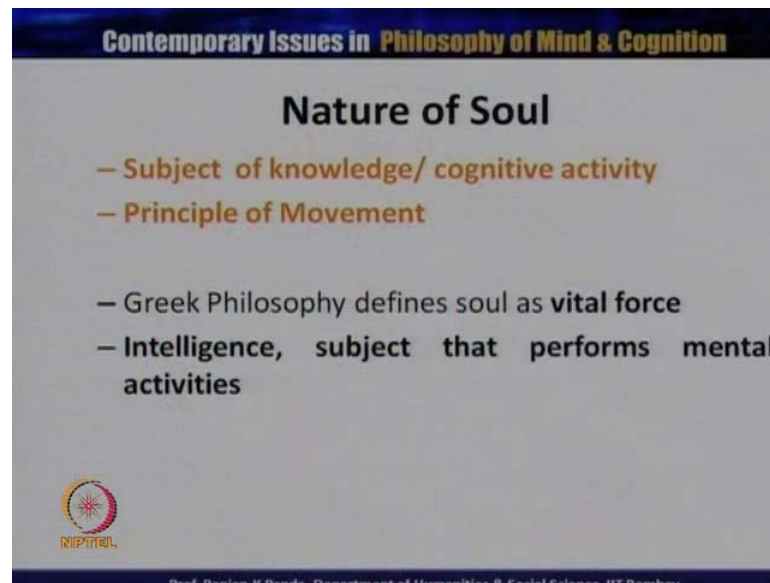
**Plato's Theory of Mind**

Today, I want to discuss Plato's theory of mind. Plato's theory of mind provides a transcendental thesis of consciousness and we will try to see, how transcendentalism is advocated by Plato. As you know, Plato's theory of mind or Plato's conception of the soul is a kind of a metaphysical theory of the notion of consciousness.

Now, this metaphysical theory, as I mentioned to you, is something significant because it is initiating a debate on dualism, that is, dualism between the forms and the particulars. So, Plato's construction of the soul is developing a dualistic thesis, that is, how the forms are independent of the particulars that are there in the world. So, this idea of knowing the particulars or knowing the world is possible in Plato's philosophical schema with the help of the anthology of the forms. The anthology of the forms is presupposed to understand how knowledge is possible.

So, Plato's dualism as a metaphysical theory of reality starts with an epistemological discourse, that how knowledge about the world is possible and how can we have the objective knowledge about the world. So, in the epistemic discourse of Plato's philosophy, we will find, that metaphysics is dealt very significantly and let us go in to details of what is the Plato's idea of the soul or what is the Plato's notion of soul as a kind of a transcendental entity.

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The nature of the soul in Plato's theory shows, that soul is the subject of knowledge; it is the source of all our cognitive activities. Whatever we do, whatever we perform and whatever we think, all flows from the soul, meaning thereby, soul is the source of the entire activities.

Hence, soul is considered as the principle of movement in this lecture. When I am trying to discuss Plato's notion of soul, I would particularly refer to (( )) philosophical essay on Plato's view of the soul, published in 1995 in the journal mind. Robert's essay is kind of an interpretation to Plato's understanding of the soul, where about reconstructs Plato's notion of mind, giving a contemporary interpretation to Plato's thesis, that is, how mind, the transcendental phenomenon can be viewed from a conscience perspective.

As you all know (( )) advocated transcendental philosophy very strongly. Now, going back to this understanding of conversion of soul, soul as a principle of movement can be interpreted as the source of voluntary actions and also the source of our thinking. Thinking also represents some kind of a process or a movement of these activities of the mind, is like the activities of the human beings. Human beings perform voluntary actions and they also think voluntarily.

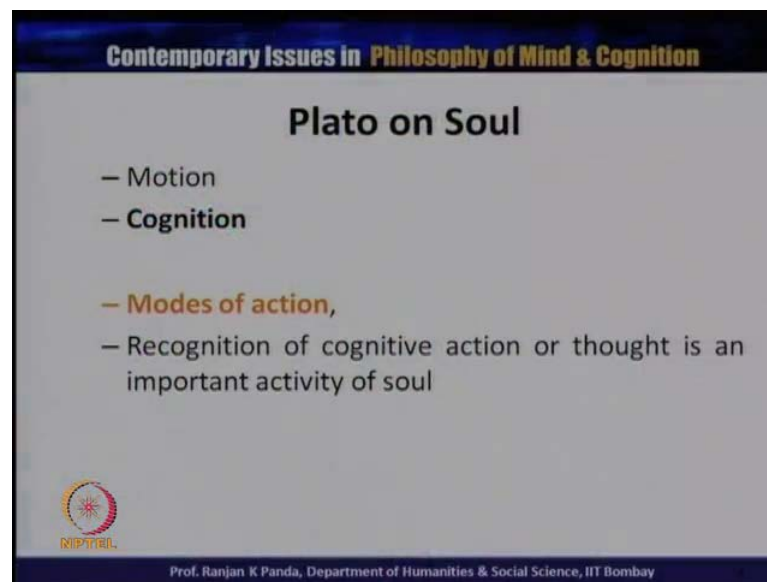
In fact, (( )) say is natural to the being, that the being thinks. So, this thinking is a kind of a natural activity, is possible because there exists a spiritual vital force, because the

Greeks have defined soul as a vital force. According to them this vital force can be translated as intelligence; the subject, that performs all mental activities.

So, from that point of view, soul is the source of thinking. Thinking is a mental activity and the activities, that are happening in the mental life, flows from this vital force or possible because of the existence of this vital force.

Now, when, let us say, that let us talk about motion when Plato talks about the vital force as the basis of both voluntary movements and cognitions.

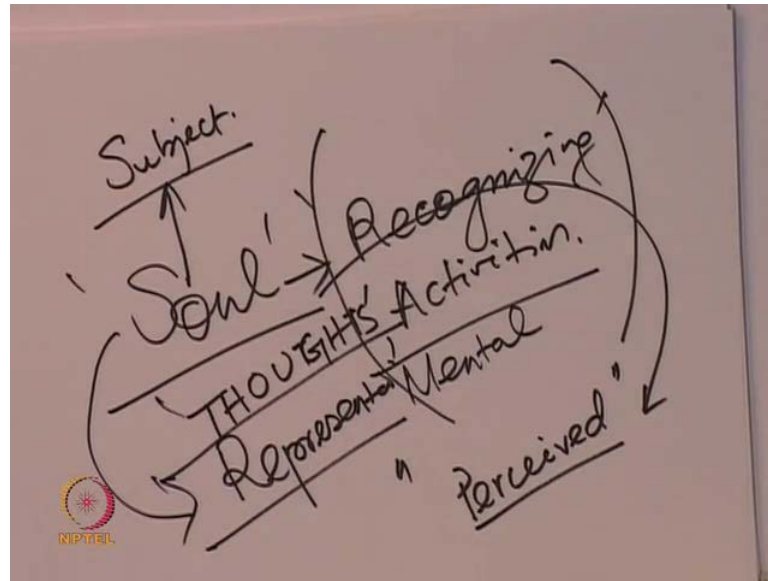
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Therefore, it is important, that we talk about modes of actions referring to this idea of cognition, that how do I recognize things, how do I interpret things, how do I view a particular thing in the world?

So, therefore, the mode of cognition is important or the mode of action is important because it talks about the recognition of cognitive actions or thought is an important activity of the soul.

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So, what is that the soul is doing? The soul is, in fact, recognizing the activities. What is that the soul is doing? The soul is, in fact, recognizing the activities, activities happening at the realm of the mental or the realm of the mind.


Now, this act of recognition, recognition of what is being so perceived, what is being perceived or what is given to our sense experience or what is being experienced by the soul or the subject is important. So, this act of recognitions recognizing, that what is being, let us say, represented and whatever is represented is there at the realm of thought or thinking thoughts are representations of the world. So, it is the soul, which recognizes thoughts, which try to understand the content of thought. Hence, recognizing is a kind of a unique activity of the soul, it recognizes something as something.

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## Plato's Epistemology

- Knowledge as unchanging reality
- Knowledge as ceaseless flow of particulars in the world
- **Knowing through senses**
- **Knowing through intuition**

  
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Now, this act of recognition or identification is a kind of an epistemic act, it is not viewer psychological act. (( )) Plato's epistemology talks about psychology, let us say it is an epistemic act because epistemology talks about truth and falsity. Epistemology can talk about how the religions of believe is possible, it talks about how believes are revised.


Believes are not knowledge in Plato. We will see, that how believes are different from knowledge.

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## World

- Things in the world
- Particulars
- **Particulars** are different from **Ideas**.

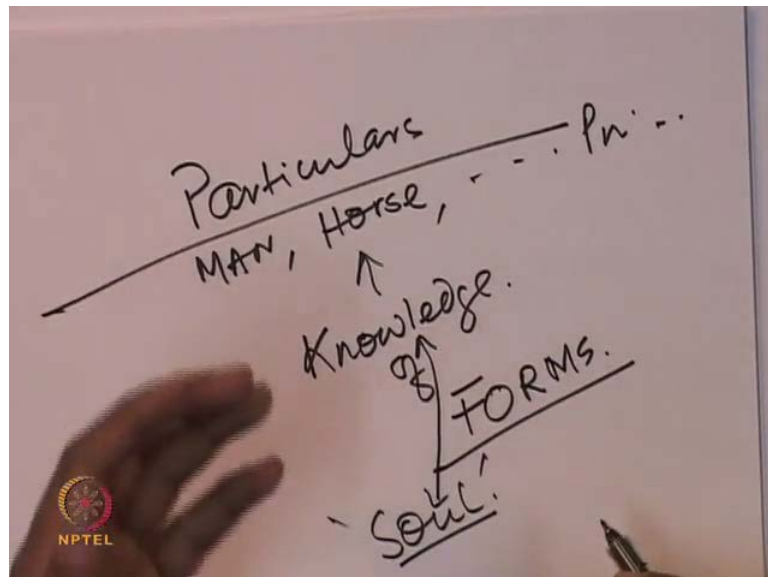
  
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So, it is important, therefore, that we talk about the world because as a, as a knowing subject, as a conscious subject, the soul understands the things in the world, the soul possesses knowledge about the world, the soul recognizes what is there in the world and what is there in the mind.

So, what is the world? The world is the totality of things as (( )) says. So, there are things in the world. So, in platonic worldview we find, that Plato describes of the world having particulars. So, there are particulars, there are unique particulars and these particulars are different from (( )) or the forms.

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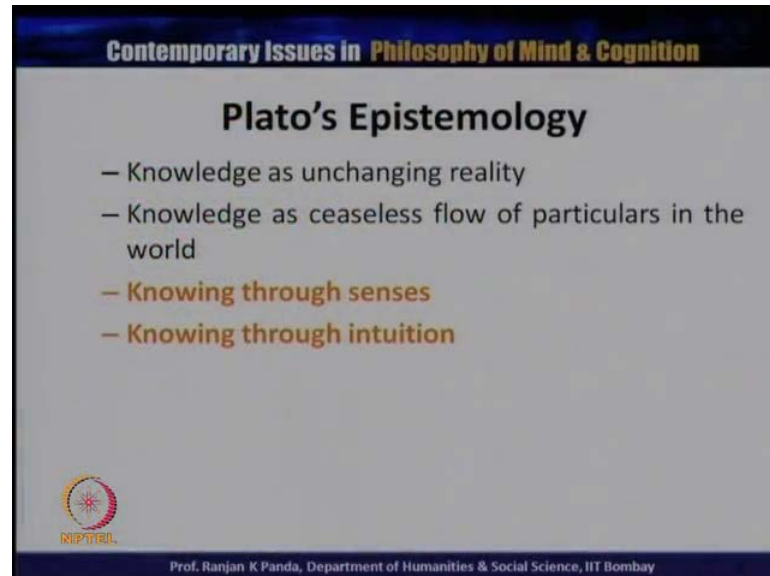


So, in Plato's theory of mind or Plato's theory of soul, we will see, that there are particulars, say we have man, horses, things like that, there are n numbers of particulars, now these particulars are known. So, the knowledge of, the knowledge of these particulars is possible through the subject who is a knower.

So, this dichotomy between the knower and the known, the subject and the object, the particulars and the forms, how the individual, the subject who is a knower, knows the particulars? How does it recognize, that yes, this is a pen and this is my pen? The very fact, that I recognize this as something; the fact, that I identify the pen and this identity is different from the identity, that other particulars are having, that it is different from chairs, tables, pencils and scale. So, that identity is something, which Plato is concerned with. How we have this identity? How do we have the knowledge of identity? How do

we know, that yes something is the case? So, that is how we will talk about Plato's epistemology.

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Plato's epistemology is concerned about knowledge as unchanging reality. Knowledge is different from, from your experiences; your experience of things is changing. So, knowledge is something about unchanging reality; knowledge as ceaseless flow of particulars in the world.

So, there are two ways in which we know things, one through our sense experiences. I see that there are chairs; I see, that people sitting on the chairs; I see, that people are listening to the lectures. Now, this very fact, that I have this sense experience shows that I know through sense experiences, that if this knowing will give impression of the knowledge, which Plato is talking about. Plato is rather more concerned with the intuitive knowledge.

Plato does not deny the fact, that there is sense experiential knowledge, but is sense experiential knowledge permanent? For Plato, visibility is different from intelligibility. So, there are knowledge and knowledge claims, which are more intelligible in the sense, that which is known through intuition, which is known through the reason, so reason and intuition plays an important role in cognizing the objects that are there in the world in cognizing those particulars that Plato is talking about.

So, the sense experiential knowledge on the one hand, which are temporary and the intelligible knowledge, which derived through the use of intuition or reason is something very significant.

Now, what is that knowledge the Plato is concerned with? Plato is obviously concerned with the knowledge of forms. How do we know, that it is a human being? How do we know, that this is my horse or this is a horse? According to Plato, these particulars are nothing, but the copies of the universals.

So, Plato gives the **primasitive (( ))**, the forms in the sense, that forms are ontologically real and the knowledge of particulars is possible because they are the copies of those universals, universal ideas or forms. So, the very fact, that Plato is giving primacy to the universals, we need to know, how do we complicate those universals? How do we understand those universals?

Now, **(( ))** Plato, it is through the soul we have the knowledge about those forms, the form of human beings or man or the horse or the table or any other particulars you take for example, will talk about how the soul is engaged with those forms.

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### Doxa Vs episteme

- Doxa/ opinion is based on sense experience
- 'the changing objects in perception are relatively unreal.'
- Knowledge about the forms/ ideas are eternal.
- They are universal knowledge

**Visible Vs intelligible**

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Now, let us little bit, you know, focus on how it is in epistemic activity. Now, Plato makes a distinction between Doxa and episteme. Doxa talks about opinion, which is based on sense experience, whereas the episteme talks about the knowledge, that is, the




knowledge about the forms. As I said, forms are eternal; it is not, that ontological eternity that Plato is concerned with. Whether the knowledge of these forms are eternal in the sense, that knowledge does not change when talk about the change of knowledge. Then, we need to talk about how does one goes on understanding the knowledge of these forms and the extract knowledge is the knowledge about goodness.

So, Plato talks about the hierarchy of the knowledge of forms, just beauty, goodness; goodness is the highest verities of knowledge. So, in, in that sense, the knower transcends the knowledge, his knowledge about the forms, permanent or eternal. This process of transcending one to the other is conceivable, is intelligible, that is, moving the forms by using forms. It is pure conceptual knowledge. For his knowledge about the sense experiences are with permanent, they are transitory phenomenon. They are transitory phenomenon in the sense, that we can revise our knowledge based on our sense experiences. So, this revision is possible.

Now, the same color appears in many different ways, the variation of the light, the lighting condition. So, that kind of things will talk about how knowledge varies from context to context, from place to place.

So, knowledge about the particulars is not permanent knowledge, they keep on changing. So, from this we can conclude, that there are knowledge, which are permanent, is a universal and there are knowledge, that is, knowledge about the particulars are not universal knowledge.

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### On Soul

- The soul is 'akin' to Ideas or forms. This relationship is defined as affinity."
- "Affinity is a condition by virtue of which the soul contemplates or apprehends true being"

– (Eric J. Roberts 1995:373)

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As I mentioned, that it is the soul, which comprehend the knowledge of the forms. So, therefore, it is the soul is akin to ideas or forms. Now, this relationship is defined as a kind of an affinity. So, it is affinity to the forms.

Now, look at what Robert writes. Roberts says, affinity is a condition by virtue of which the soul contemplates and apprehends true being. So, affinity is a kind of an epistemic relation, it is not mere psychological relation, it is an epistemic relation, where the soul contemplates on the forms. So, for example, when I understand what beauty is or what goodness is, so my relationship or my engagement with this form and my engagement with a good action performed by a particular individual are two different moods of engagement. So, in that sense, Plato is making a kind of a distinction between the sense experiential knowledge, where the subject is **judging** the action of the individual.

And my basic understanding of what good is, are two different kinds of relationships, both are in fact, conscious because I am experiencing the performance of a good act, I am also understanding or tracing this action as good action. So, what is important for Plato is to emphasize, that what kind of engagement or what kind of relationship we have with forms. Is it same with the particulars? For Plato, it is not. So, therefore, let us say, it is a kind of an affinity by virtue of which the soul contemplates.

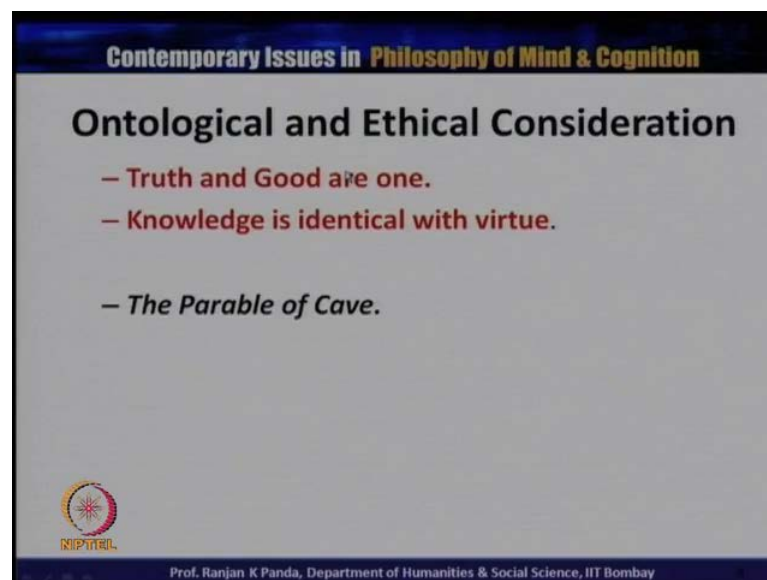
So, what is that affinity, affinity between the soul and the forms? So, that affinity we need to talk about when we say that soul and forms are connected with each other. So, it

is this connection Plato is trying to bring out, which is different from the connection, which one would have with the particulars.

So, this connection is different and this connection is different. Now, Plato's theory of forms, **vis-a-vis** the theory of mind or the soul, one finds, that Plato is talking about an ontological dualism, which is an epistemic concern because Plato's ontology developed from the discourse of epistemology and this ontological dualism, **dualism between...**

So, the knower and the known are the forms and the particulars also have some kind of ethical considerations.

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There is an ethical consideration attached to the ontological considerations because when we say, that knowledge is universal, Plato say, truth and good are one because the knowledge is universal in the sense, that it is a true knowledge, it is different from the opinions.

Opinions can be formed by everyone, opinions are based on our sense experiences, but opinions, which are produced by understanding things, for Plato, are insignificant. If opinions have no grounding on our intelligence, then opinions are just meaningless. As you know, that Socrates who is having dialogues with Plato and ((C)), other fellow friends is very critical of **sophists** who are the reason why his people and sophists were all the time engaged in giving opinions.

So, therefore, they had no idea about what is goodness, what is justice. For them, this is, the judgment about justice keeps changing. So, Socrates was very skeptical about that kind of approach where knowledge is not a permanent phenomenon because the definition of justice keeps changing and that is the criticism, as the criterion or Platonic criticism against relativism or against the kind of approach, which sophist used to have.

So, man who intends to know, who desires to know truth, this desire is a kind of a, is a natural desire; man is a (( )) of truth. So, so, the desire to know is something very basic, something very fundamental to human life.

Similarly, the desire to perform good action is also very fundamental to human life. In fact, Plato is talking about this ethical aspect of human life, he is emphasizing this ethical aspect of human life, that the, how the virtue of being good and the virtue of knowing are interrelated. And knowledge is identical with virtues; virtue is knowledge, Socrates' famous statement.

Virtue is knowledge, now this is described in his famous parable, that parable of cave. I am sure, you all must aware of famous parable, where Plato tries to show, how opinions are different from knowledge. Plato also shows the virtue of knowing. We would discuss about this parable in the next class, but let me summarize what I was trying to tell you about the nature of soul.

There are two things I am trying to suggest here. One that understanding of the nature of soul is an epistemic activity, or this epistemic activity shows, that there is an ontological dualism present in Plato; the dualism between the form and the particulars.

Now, this dualism is created because of the mode in which the soul is engaged with the forms and the soul is engaged with the particulars. There are two different kinds of engagement. Forms are independent of particulars, soul is independent of particulars because soul is not identical with particulars, but soul is in affinity with the forms. It is with this kind of affinity we can talk about how one relates the forms with the particulars or how does one recognize the basic particulars or how does one have the knowledge of basic particulars.

We will discuss in detail about it in the next class with reference to Plato's famous parable, that parable of cave and we will try to show, that how ethics, ontology and epistemology are interrelated.

Thank you.