The term “Continental philosophy” in contemporary philosophy refers to philosophical thinking that spread in Europe during the end of the 19th century and the 20th century. The various movements that are included under this heading are: German idealism, phenomenology, Existentialism, Hermeneutics, structuralism, Post structuralism, Critical theory of the Frankfurt school and French Feminism. In this block we will be studying early continental philosophers and later continental philosophers. They are Edmund Husserl, Heidegger, Theistic Existentialists (Kierkegaard and Marcel) and Atheistic Existentialists (Jean Paul Sartre and Albert Camus).

The following four units give us a glimpse into what continental philosophy is and the various contributors of this period such as Husserl, Heidegger, the theistic existentialists and atheistic existentialists.

**Unit 1** introduces us into the philosophy of Edmund Husserl. Introducing his life and influences, this unit will focus on what was to form the basis of the early continental philosophy, the phenomenological method. This in turn includes a number of reductions which will lead one to the Consciousness as such. Husserl’s method inspired a number of philosophers to follow their own paths.

**Unit 2** is exclusively devoted to the study of the Philosophy of Martin Heidegger. The unit brilliantly exposes Heidegger’s thought and life, his fundamental Ontology, preliminary Analysis of Dasein and his primordial interpretation. It will tell us why and how Heidegger has become one of the most influential philosophers of the contemporary period.

**Unit 3** highlights the views of some of the theistic existentialists. We have two theistic existentialists: Kierkegaard who redefines existence and proposes blind leap as the foundation of faith and Gabriel Marcel who digs deep into such issues as incarnation and freedom, philosophy of relation, relation to the finite other, inter-subjectivity, and relation to the Absolute Other in faith and hope.
Unit 4 deals with some of the Atheistic existentialists like Sartre and Albert Camus, who developed their philosophy in which God did not have any major role to play. Sartre analyzes existence and concludes that the presence of the other destroys one’s freedom and increases anxiety. Camus’ philosophical background is the injustice that he faced and the absurdity in which one finds oneself.

As we see in these units, an important characteristic trait of continental philosophy is its emphasis on meta-philosophy. The continental philosophers have often sought to redefine the method and nature of philosophy itself.