

UNIT 3

HUMAN INTELLECT AND KNOWING

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3.0 OBJECTIVES

Human beings have a life entirely different from plants and animals. Human beings think, reflect, reason, affirm and deny. They acquire knowledge, possess ideas and manifest capacity for understating. They have sense knowledge, ability for imagination. They can recall things and state of consciousness of the past. They continually search for truth. They have the power of self-consciousness. These are typically human acts. How do we explain these mysterious phenomena? In this unit we shall answer some of these questions:

By analysing the nature of the human intellect and the phenomenon of human knowledge.
By examining the meaning of human intellect, its object and specific operations.

By exploring the nature of human knowledge with special reference to sense knowledge and intellectual knowledge, the kind of relationship that exists between the senses and the intellect, and a note on the relationship between intellect and will.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The intellect is a faculty which by its very nature strives actively towards truth or knowledge or intelligibility. We are aware of this striving in our intellectual operations. This striving is a natural appetite of the intellect.

The human intellect is an immaterial or spiritual cognitive faculty. A faculty is that by means of which human beings perform mental or conscious activities, and a mental faculty is concerned with the mental operations. Immaterial or spiritual signifies something which is not intrinsically dependent of matter, not requiring matter as an auxiliary cause for its existence or for its operation. Since thinking is an immaterial or spiritual operation, the faculty by means of which it occurs is the intellect and is itself immaterial.

3.2 EXISTENCE OF THE INTELLECT

Some philosophers, usually materialists, sensists and positivists deny that human beings possess immaterial knowledge that is essentially different from sense knowledge. Hence they deny the existence of the intellect. According to them, human brain is required for thinking, since any serious impairment of the brain makes thought impossible. Against this view we maintain that brain is a necessary *condition* not a cause of thinking. A necessary condition is one that enables a cause to produce its effect, without actually contributing towards the product itself.

Proof from acts of judgement

The human brain is not a cause of thinking can be proved through the metaphysical principle “as a being so it acts” (*agere sequitur esse*). Since the brain is a material substance, concrete, visible, tangible, singular, existing in space and time, contingent and not necessary, its effects also must exhibit these characteristics.

Human beings make judgements and they contain ideas. Ideas are products of the intellect and they are universal, not limited to space and time, not extended, not concrete. Every ordinary

judgement of the intellect also contains elements of necessity, true at all times, and in all places. For example, “whatever is, is”; “everything that comes to be has a cause”; “two plus two make four”, etc. These require a power that is beyond time and space and free from the contingency of matter. This immaterial, spiritual power is called intellect.

Proof from acts of reflection

Human beings are capable of reflection. When a human person knows, he or she is also aware that he or she knows. In this ‘awareness of being aware’ the subject and object coincide (that is, the thinker and the thought are the same). This cannot occur in purely material beings. The human self-presence or act of reflection or self-consciousness is a proof that human beings possess an immaterial, spiritual power of thinking called the intellect.

Human intellect is intrinsically independent of matter

We have already seen above that every being acts according to its nature (‘as a being so it acts’). Accordingly, the intellect must also act according to its nature. The operations of the intellect are: formation of ideas, judgement and reasoning. These operations are immaterial. Hence the intellect is immaterial. Our intellect is not intrinsically dependent on matter (brain). Brain is not the cause of the operations of the intellect. Brain does not think though it is in close relation to the operations of the intellect. Animal knowledge is material and there is an essential difference between this kind of knowledge and human knowledge.

Human intellect is extrinsically dependent on matter

Although the human intellect is not intrinsically dependent on the brain, it is extrinsically dependent on it. Without the brain in good condition, our intellect in ordinary circumstances cannot produce its operations. It can be proved in the following way:

If there is a serious impairment of the brain, either by some accident or intoxication, intellectual operations are difficult or impossible. Every idea of ours is accompanied by an image. But this image is a product of the senses intrinsically dependent on matter.

Every human operation is the action of a being composed of form and matter. Therefore, no human operation is possible without some co-operation of matter. Hence we admit an extrinsic dependence of our intellect on matter for its operations.

Truth as the formal object of the intellect

The object of the intellect here refers to what it can know. The proper object of the intellect refers to the things it knows naturally and easily. Thus the proper material object of the intellect

comprises of all objects that can be perceived by the senses. But the formal object of the intellect is the “quiddity” or “whatness” of the material objects. The intellect knows beings from the point of view of their truth or intelligibility. Thus the adequate *material object* of the intellect is *being* and its adequate *formal object* is *truth* or intelligibility. But because of the dynamism of the intellect, its scope extends beyond the realm of mere material things. The total or adequate object of the intellect is being in all its extension, whether material or immaterial.

Intellect forms ideas through abstraction

The process of intellectual knowledge proceeds as follows: the information gathered regarding an object by the senses is brought together in the image (also called phantasm). This image is singular, individual, concrete and material (eg. this individual tree, with its individuating features: small, dark, a mango tree with leaves,, etc). From this individual representation we pass to a universal, general idea by means of *abstraction*, which is an activity of the intellect. The intellect in abstracting drops the individuating concrete features contained in the image (eg. dark, small, the fact that this happens to be a mango tree, with leaves, standing here and now, etc) and retains only the universal idea or concept (eg. ‘treeness’ of the tree). Ideas (concepts) thus formed are central to intellectual knowledge.

Intellect is capable of perfect reflection

Intellect has the capacity of reflecting on its own activity (eg. ‘I think that I think’, ‘I am aware of my awareness’). The intellect not only performs an activity but it *knows* that activity while it is going on. The senses possess no perfect self-reflection. My eyes see but they are not aware that they see. No external sense is aware of its own activity. The central sense (common sense) is not aware of the activity of the external senses.

Since the intellect is capable of perfect self-reflection whereas none of the senses is, there is an essential difference between the sense and the intellect. This difference is based on the materiality of the senses as opposed to the immateriality of the intellect. Perfect self-reflection means self-consciousness, a very high quality of consciousness. But consciousness is opposed to matter, and self-consciousness excludes any intrinsic dependence on matter.

Dynamism of the human intellect

Human intellect is a dynamic faculty, that is, a faculty which strives actively towards its object, towards knowledge, truth and intelligibility. We are aware of that striving in each of our intellectual operations. That striving is not an elicited but a *natural* appetite, that is, an appetite

which is not preceded by knowledge. Every act of knowledge is a passage from potency to act, a real movement. And every real movement has an end.

But no knowledge of this or that particular thing or any collection of particular beings can satisfy the human intellect. The striving of our intellect goes beyond them both extensively and intensively, extensively because we want to know *many more beings*; intensively because we want to know in a *more perfect manner* the beings which we do know. A human person therefore strives, albeit unconsciously, for the knowledge of a reality without any restriction or limitation. In other words, the intellect strives towards knowledge of the unlimited being. The nature of the striving of the intellect is therefore infinite. Nothing can satisfy it except infinite knowledge or infinite truth. Such knowledge is of the infinite being, which we call God or Brahman or whatever else we may conceive as the infinite and ultimate reality. It may be recalled that Joseph Marechal (1878-1944) was a philosopher who tried to prove the existence of God from the dynamism of the human intellect.

3.3 HUMAN KNOWING

Knowledge is one of the greatest mysteries confronting the human mind. Knowledge seems to come in many varieties: we know people, places and things. We know how to perform a task, we know facts. The phenomenon of knowledge is so common. It is so continually with us but we do not realise how mysterious it is.

Indian philosophy uses several terms for 'knowledge' such as *vidya* (learning or science), *jnana* (meditative or contemplative knowledge), *prajna* (spiritual understanding or wisdom) and *samjna* (clear comprehension or intellectual grasp, in some contexts innate awareness).

In Indian philosophy knowledge is not treated merely as an epistemological factor but as a basic element in the path to salvation or liberation for knowledge can break the cycles of *samsara* (birth-death-rebirth). The essence of true knowledge is therefore knowledge of the eternal. The Upanishads, Samkhya, Nyaya, Advaita Vedanta of Sankara and Buddhism are typical examples of systems of thought that present knowledge as the way to ultimate liberation (*moksa, nirvana*).

Meaning of human knowing

Human knowing may be described as *acts of apprehending* or seizing a certain something so that that 'certain something' is present to the subject apprehending it.

Knowing is an *immanent action*, more perfectly immanent than nutrition, growth and reproduction. It begins and ends within us. Often the objects of our knowledge are things outside us. But only when they are interiorised we have knowledge. By knowing an object we become in a certain sense that object, that is, we identify ourselves with the thing known.

Knowledge is fundamentally in our *consciousness*. To be conscious means to identify oneself with oneself. For example, I say, "I am" only when I am conscious of myself and I will myself. Hence to know means to *identify oneself with the thing known* by overcoming the subject-object duality.

Only with animals that we begin to speak of knowledge. Animals know objects, but they are not aware that they are knowing. They are not capable of reflection or self-knowledge. But in human beings there is real knowledge because they are capable of self-reflection.

Different kinds of human knowledge

Human knowing is a complex operation. We acquire various types of knowledge which nevertheless can fundamentally be reduced to two: *sensitive knowledge* which human beings have in common with animals, and *intellectual knowledge*, which is specifically human. In human beings the two types of knowledge are not water-tight compartments or two separate planes, but they are closely bound together and so the functioning of the intellectual plane is strongly conditioned by the functioning of the sensitive plane and vice versa.

Sense Knowledge

Human knowledge has its origin in direct perception of material sensible realities. It is difficult to give a clear definition of sensation or perception. It can be described as the most elementary cognitive reaction of an organism to a simple stimulus. A sensation presupposes the interaction of some stimulus with a specialised part of the organism. This specialised part is called sense organ.

External senses

Sense knowledge is that which is obtained through the senses. Traditionally the sense organs of human beings are considered as five: eye = sight (visual), ear = hearing (auditory), nose = smell (olfactory), tongue = taste (gustatory), skin = touch (tactile). They are called external senses because the organs by means of which their action develop are found on the external surface of the body. Sense knowledge examines material things in their singularity, both as object taken as a whole or as a part. Human beings do not experience pure sensation. It is always connected with

an object located in space and time. For example, red colour with something which is red, sound with sound of something. The characteristics of sensation are: *quality* which helps us to distinguish one category of sensation from all others, *intensity* and *duration* both of which help clarity.

Indian philosophy uses the term *indriya* for the organs of sense by means of which we have direct perception of the world around us. The above said five senses are called *jnanendriya* ('knowing agents'). Some schools of Indian philosophy also speak of a sixth sense, namely, *manas* (mind) which is the seat of images.

Internal senses

Human beings are gifted with four internal senses: common sense (central sense), fantasy (imagination), memory and instinct (estimative power). The internal senses are senses which are not directly in contact with external reality, but refer to it indirectly.

Common sense (*sensus communis*) is the mental power which gathers, compares, distinguishes and synthesizes the objects and operations presented by the active external sense. It is also called central sense. Common sense helps one to distinguish between different sensations. For example, black from white, sweet from bitter. The result of the activity of the common sense is the image (phantasm). The image completes the knowledge of the thing at the sensory level. It is the final product of sensorial knowledge. The intellect forms its ideas by turning its attention upon the image. By means of abstraction the intellect grasps the essential elements of the thing represented in the image, leaving aside the individualizing material determinations. The result of the abstractive process is the idea or concept.

The fantasy conserves the data gathered by the common senses and reproduces them in a manner different from how they are found in reality (i.e. breaks up the images and reassembles them, for example, a centaur). This faculty is also called imagination. Memory is the faculty of recollection or remembrance. It is the power to recall past objects and states of consciousness and recognise them as having been present in former experiences (eg. image of my teacher as I saw her on the first day of class in college). The instinct or estimative power is the capacity to perceive something useful, harmful, painful, or pleasurable to the species. For example, a rat evades a cat. This power involves some kind of judgement, but a judgement which uses no ideas.

The rat does not know that cats in general are dangerous. Human beings also possess estimative power, but it is called cognitive power.

Value of sense knowledge

Human sensation is something which is intrinsically dependent on matter in as much as it is intrinsically depend on the brain, the nerves and sense organs. Sensation gives pragmatic certitude. Hence some philosophers such as Carvacas, hedonists, Epicureans, Buddhists and the empiricists and positivists in general have exaggerated its importance. The Buddhists who are radical empiricists speak of extrasensory perception also as a valid source of knowledge. Sensation is neither subjective nor objective but *relative*. Through sensation we know things *as they affect us*. Thus sensation is relative. If our senses are altered, reality would be different to us. For example, in the case of colour-blind people. This means that our senses alone will not provide certitude but senses in conjunction with the intellect.

Human intellect is 'present' in the senses animating them throughout the sense experience. Hence human sense knowledge without the intellect is impossible to conceive. In other words, there is a combination of sensorial knowledge and intellectual knowledge in each instance of perception.

Intellectual knowledge

The second form of knowledge in human beings is intellectual knowledge. It is also a complex process.

Clarification of some basic concepts

When we study human intellect and human knowing we come across a number of key concepts. Clear distinction between them is necessary in order to understand the complexities of human knowledge and to avoid possible confusion of terms. Some of the important concepts are the following:

Mind

Mind is often taken as a vague, general term which includes all human cognitive powers but the senses.

Intellect

Intellect when used technically refers to the immaterial faculty in human beings, which is responsible for abstraction and possesses the natural striving towards infinite knowledge or truth.

Intellection

Intellection is universally recognised as comprising three distinct *processes*: formation of ideas or concepts, judgements and inferences.

Concept or *idea* is the intellectual representation of a thing. It represents what a thing is. Animals have therefore no idea or concept because they have no intellect.

Judgement is the pronouncement of agreement or disagreement between two ideas. Judgement is the first act of the intellect by which we affirm or deny something about a reality.

Inference is the reasoning process in which from the truths known, we conclude to a truth previously unknown.

Intelligence

Intelligence means the *power of learning* from experience or the ability to adapt to new circumstances. Intelligence is opposed to instinct (a type of inborn knowledge that excludes learning). Taken in this sense intelligence is present not only in human beings but also in animals (“animal intelligence”) is current in psychological literature.

Intellectualism

Intellectualism generally designates a philosophical or theological system in which intellect is accorded primacy as opposed to will. It is also applied in pejorative sense mainly by modern thinkers, to refer to philosophers who stress abstract generalisation and rationalisation to the exclusion of subjective and existential concerns.

Insight

Insight is the act by means of which the mind *understands* a certain state of affairs.

Understanding

Understanding is the power of the intellect which perceives the truth and validity of idea and principles on the basis of *direct and immediate* evidence. It develops according to age and education and differs from individual to individual.

Formation of ideas is the first operation of the intellect

Formation of ideas or concepts is the “first” operation of the intellect. Ideas are the centre of human knowledge. The seat of the ideas is the intellect.

But ideas are not inborn in us. Senses have a part in their formation. From the sense knowledge we pass to intellectual knowledge, from image (phantasm) we derive an idea or concept. Image (phantasm) is a terminology used to designate the highest product of the combined senses. It is

material. But an idea is immaterial. Here a problem arises; how do the material senses influence the immaterial intellect? Various answers have been given to this problem, such as the following:

According to empiricism, the intellect receives the ideas from the imagination as the imagination receives its images from the senses, and as the senses receive their sensations from the outside world. This view leads to materialism and if we follow it, we would not know spiritual realities. There are philosophers who say that ideas are inborn in us. This is the solution of Plato (427-347 BC) who claimed that we 'remember' the ideas which we contemplated in a previous existence. According to occasionalism, we receive our ideas directly from God (Nicholas Malebranche, 1638-1715 AD). This idea was defended in a slightly different way by Rene Descartes (1596-1650 AD), G.W. Leibniz (1646-1710 AD) and Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677 AD). God puts ideas directly into our mind. But ordinarily he does not do it. He generally uses secondary causes. Hence everything is an occasion for God to put the corresponding idea in our mind. For example, I receive a prick with a pin and I feel pain. The prick is the occasion for God to put the idea of pain into my mind. If ideas cannot come from senses, if they are not inborn in us and if they are not directly caused by God, they are produced by the intellect itself. As we have already seen, the intellect abstracts the idea from the images. To abstract means to leave out consideration of all that is material, individual, concrete features of the image and keep only the general and universal features. This is the view generally held by most philosophers.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. What is the nature of the human intellect?

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2) How do you show that the human intellect is extrinsically dependent on matter?
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3.4 IDEAS ARE PREDICTABLE OF MANY

When we have an idea we embrace unconsciously but really the whole extent of reality. In other words, ideas have a peculiar quality: they are predictable of many (universal). The first contact with a new object yields a universal idea. It will be an imperfect one, but it is a universal idea nevertheless. For example, “something black”. This is a universal idea. Then I realise that it is a deer. Concepts like, being, beautiful, man, woman, child, dog, house, stone, etc., are applicable to many realities. Hence *all ideas are universal*.

Ideas are universal yet reality known is individual

Every reality which actually exists is individual. By the principle of no-contradiction no reality can be at the same time and under the same aspect one and multiple. In other words, in our everyday knowledge we know first the singular, individual, concrete people and objects (eg. concept of ‘human person’ as this man or this woman). But they are known by the whole person, intellect and senses combined. The intellect knows only the intelligible features of the object and they coincide with its substantial form which is the same in all individuals of the same species. Therefore, to know only the *substantial form* of an object is to know only that which the object has in common with other individuals of the same species (eg. ‘treeness’, ‘cowness’ etc.). What distinguishes one individual from another is relation to *quantified matter*. But a spiritual power such as the human intellect cannot directly know quantified matter. Therefore, it does not know that which distinguishes one individual from another. But in our ordinary knowledge we always use *intellect and senses together*. The intellect gives us the universal intelligible features, the senses apply and restrict them to particular individuals.

Judgement is the Second Operation of the Intellect

Judgement is the “second” operation of the intellect. To judge means to affirm or deny a thing. Every concept presupposes a judgement since it originates in a judgement. For example, “This is a cow”; “It is not a tree”. Both are judgements. Often what would seem to be a mere concept is actually a simple judgement. Thus judgement is the central point of our intellectual life. There is no consciousness of the object of our intellect until we have an intellectual expression of it. This expression takes the form of judgement and we have knowledge.

Inference is the third operation of the intellect

Inference (reasoning) is the “third” operation of the intellect. In order to acquire new knowledge the intellect has recourse to inferred truths using *deduction* and *induction*. These methods are used for reaching evidences and proving that such and is or is not the case. Mathematics (which uses abstract logical forms) and experimental sciences (which use the method of hypothesis and verification through experimentation) also use ‘reason’ in order to acquire new knowledge, though the laws and theories founded on the experimental method cannot be definitely true and unchangeable. Nevertheless, whatever law or theory which is verified is considered as true due to the logical law that necessarily governs the procedure.

3.5 LEVELS OF INTELLECTIVE KNOWLEDGE

There are three levels of intellectual knowledge: ordinary, scientific and philosophical.

First level: Ordinary knowledge is that knowledge of things which from the age of reason on could be obtained, and obtained without any force, without mathematical and profound studies. It is the knowledge which is the fruit more of good sense than of reasoning. Though apparently superficial this knowledge can be very profound and may even contain solution to ultimate questions.

Second level: Scientific knowledge is an ordered and systematic knowledge of determined aspects of reality. It is essentially specialised knowledge (eg. medicine, biology, astronomy, physics etc.). But this knowledge is superficial and cannot deeply delve into things and history. Effectively it explains many things but it does not know what is life, time, history, consciousness, truth, liberty, virtue, justice, goodness, love, etc. Unfortunately, today, there are some scientists who pretend to explain everything with scientific knowledge.

Third level: Philosophical knowledge constitutes the third level of intellectual knowledge. Its fields of research are the ultimate problems (of knowledge, being, will, metaphysics, ethics, etc). Its method is pure reasoning. The data of philosophical knowledge is furnished either by ordinary knowledge or by scientific knowledge.

3.6 DIRECT AND REFLEXIVE CONSCIOUSNESS

A human being is gifted with two types of consciousness, namely direct consciousness and reflexive consciousness.

Direct consciousness (also called immediate or concomitant consciousness): Every act of knowledge, just as any other activity, carries with itself an implicit, indirect, concomitant cognizance of the subject which accomplishes the action.

Reflexive consciousness: It is that moment of knowledge in which a person concentrates his or her attention on himself or herself, on his or her operations, his or her acts, his or her being, diverting his or her attention from the world, from things or objects. This explicit consideration of oneself, making oneself the object under consideration is an act of **self-perception** (a perception from the inside). It is a privileged knowledge which each one of us can have of our own.

3.7 CO-OPERATION BETWEEN INTELLECT AND SENSES

Human beings do not have pure intellectual knowledge devoid of sense knowledge or pure sense knowledge without the involvement of the intellect. In every concept we distinguish both intellectual and sensible elements. In us there are no innate ideas. Ideas have their sources outside the intellect and the intellect must derive them from the things. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) says: "There is nothing in the intellect which has not been first to the senses except the intellect itself". Thus in all cases of our intellectual knowledge there is a collaboration of *a priori* and *a posteriori* elements. The *a posteriori* elements come from the senses and ultimately make up an image (phantasm). The *a priori* elements come from the intellect itself. They consist in the basic ontological affirmations of which the first one is 'this is' or 'something exists'.

Substantial unity between intellect and senses

The substantial unity implies not only the unity of body and soul in a human being but also that of human senses and intellect. As the soul is to the body, so the intellect to the senses. Intellect

does not stand above the senses but *it is in them* so that an object never affects the senses without at the same time affecting the intellect. Whatever enters the human senses at once falls within the range of the human intellect. In reality there is *only one knowing subject*, composed of both body and soul. This means that the intellect is already at work in the senses and in the formation of the images. It animates the formation of the images and then through the activity of abstraction produces the universal idea.

All human knowledge is analogical

Analogy is application of a term to different realities partly with the same meaning and partly with a different meaning. All our human knowledge is analogical, and this is especially true of immaterial realities. Words are *indicative* of reality. There is no one to one correspondence between the words we use and the things they refer to. We do not have pure knowledge of anything. All knowledge is therefore analogical. In the analogical knowledge of an immaterial reality, we use a material representation. Our representation is partially true and partially false, and what we mean implies *affirmation, negation and transcendence..* For example, we really mean that the soul permeates the whole body (affirmation), not however in the manner of a fluid (negation), but in a more perfect, immaterial way (transcendence).

Is there intuitive knowledge in human beings?

A pure spirit knows through intuition, that is, directly and without the mediation of mental pictures or representation. Human beings are finite spirits-in-matter. In them the intuition is so imperfect that it is *not intuition in the strict sense of the term*. Only the first principles of all knowledge may be considered as intuitive knowledge in human beings. But of themselves they yield no knowledge since they are only potentially conscious and need the intervention of an object derived through the senses in order to emerge into consciousness.

Yet in the human intellect there is an element which corresponds in some degree to the intuitive knowledge found in pure spirits. But it is *intuition only in the wider sense of the word*. When we affirm an object we are aware of the fact of affirming it. That *awareness* requires no concept or judgement whatsoever. It is direct and intuitive. And since the object of our knowledge is always the object of an affirmation, the object falls indirectly under this intuition. Therefore in human beings *affirmation is the substitute* for the intuition of pure spirits.

3.8 RELATION BETWEEN INTELLECT AND WILL

The relation between intellect and will can be considered on the level of *structure* and on the level of *activity*. Structurally speaking a human being is a rational being because of the intellect. The intellect distinguishes human nature from every other nature. Again, nothing can be desired or willed unless it is perceived in some manner. The desire to possess something springs from the cognition of it. Thus *on the level of structure priority belongs to the intellect*.

But the primacy of the intellect does not exclude primacy of the will. The will is the radical principle of all human activity. *There is primacy of the will in the area of practical, moral, technical and artistic activity*. For this reason good will renders the whole person good. Operatively and morally speaking human being is his or her will. A human being is good if his or her will is good and bad if his or her will is bad. Just as the intellect qualifies radically human *nature*, the will qualifies radically human *activity* making a human morally good or bad.

On the level of operation (psychological level) the intellect and the will condition each other. Thus we can speak of a *reciprocal influence* of both intellect and will. Eg. I see because I want to see; I study because I want to study.

3.9 LET US SUM UP

We have analysed the nature of the human intellect and have come to know that it is an immaterial or spiritual faculty which has truth or knowledge as its formal object. The specific operations of the intellect are formation of ideas, judgment and reasoning. The human intellect is also capable of self-reflection which is a very high level of spiritual activity. The intellect is dynamic by nature and it tends towards infinite truth and knowledge. Human knowledge is a complex operation. Since a human being is a spirit-in-matter, there is an intrinsic relationship between the senses and the intellect in their operations. Thus all human knowledge begins in the senses and ends in the intellect. This means that in human beings there is no pure sense knowledge or pure intellectual knowledge but a combination of both. Finally, there is an intimate relationship between intellect and will, but at the structural level the intellect has primary over the will, though at the level of activity the primacy belongs to the will.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit

1. Show that in human knowledge there is co-operation between intellect and senses

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3.10 KEY WORDS

Intellect

The intellect is a faculty which by its very nature strives actively towards truth or knowledge or intelligibility. The human intellect is an immaterial or spiritual cognitive faculty. Immaterial or spiritual signifies something which is not intrinsically dependent of matter.

Human knowing

Human knowledge is an *immanent action*. Knowledge is fundamentally in the *consciousness*. To know means to *identify oneself with the thing known* by overcoming the subject-object duality. Only with animals that we begin speak of knowledge. Animals know objects, but they are not aware that they are knowing because they are not capable of reflection. But in human beings there is real knowledge because they are capable of self-reflection.

Abstraction

Abstraction is the process by which the human intellect arrives at an idea or a concept. The Intellect removes from the image everything that is singular, individual, concrete and material and retains only the universal element contained in it, which is called idea.

Understanding

Understanding is the power of the intellect which perceives the truth and validity of ideas and principles on the basis of *direct and immediate* evidence. Understanding develops according to age and education and differs from individual to individual.

Reason

Reason is the power of the intellect which perceives the truth and validity of ideas and principles on the basis of *indirect and mediate* evidence.

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3.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress I

1. Intellect is a cognitive faculty which by its very nature strives towards truth or knowledge or intelligibility. The nature of the human intellect is immaterial or spiritual. By immaterial or spiritual we mean something which is not intrinsically dependent of matter.

2. The human intellect is extrinsically dependent on matter can be shown in the following way: Without the brain in good condition, the human intellect in ordinary circumstances cannot produce its operations. If there is a serious impairment of the brain, either by some accident or intoxication, intellectual operations are difficult or impossible. Human intellect abstracts ideas from images. But images are products of the senses which are intrinsically dependent on matter. Every human operation is the operation of a being composed of form and matter. Therefore, no human operation is possible without some co-operation of matter. Hence there is an extrinsic dependence of the human intellect on matter for its operations.

Answers to Check Your Progress II

1. Human beings do not have pure intellectual knowledge devoid of sense knowledge or pure sense knowledge without the involvement of the intellect. Ideas have their sources outside the intellect and the intellect must derive them from the things. Thus in every concept we can distinguish both intellectual and sensible elements. This means that in all cases of our intellectual knowledge there is a collaboration of *a priori* and *a posteriori* elements, that is intellectual and sense elements, respectively. Hence Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) says: "There is nothing in the

intellect which has not been first to the senses except the intellect itself". Therefore in human knowledge there is always co-operation between intellect and senses

