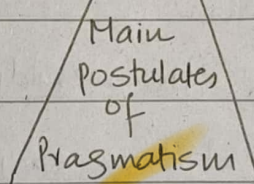## Question 7 [a]

Pragmatism is a philosophical and relatively modern movement of the early twentieth century that aims to bridge the gaps between empiricism and rationalism. Its focus is on the usefulness and satisfaction of ideas in life. The three main proponents of Pragmatism are Charles Peirce, William James and John Dewey.

I   What is Pragmatism

(i) Cash Value of Ideas

-Myopic and generic introduction
-Weak argumentation, add substance
-dangling and misplaced structure
-all of your headings should be explanatory and in synergy
Avoid breaking of paragraphs

Main
Postulates
of
Pragmatism

(ii) Satisfactoral application of philosophical notions

(iii) Usefulness of ideas

(i)   Cash-Value of Ideas

Pragmatists argue that rationalists and empiricists were too skewed and detached in their approach towards

objective truth. Both focused rigidly on one set of ideas but not its practical application. An idea is only true if it is useful and practically applicable, according to pragmatism.

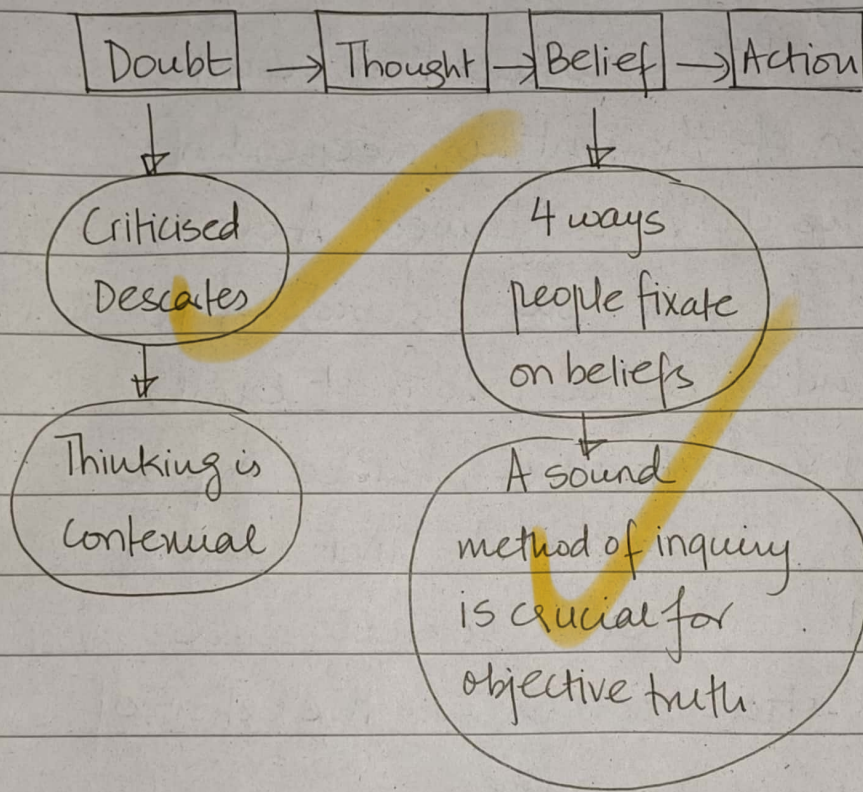(ii) Satisfactoral application of philosophical ideas

Pragmatists argue that if any set of propositions manifest meaningfully for an individual, then they are true. This also implies the subjective nature of philosophical postulations holding either a 'true' or 'false' meaning dependent on individuals and thus differently applicable.

(iii) Usefulness of ideas

According to pragmatism, it is important for an idea to

meaningfully translate as action in life. Only then that idea is significant and holds any value.

II   Charles Peirce and Pragmatism

| Doubt | → | Thought | → | Belief | → | Action |

Doubt →
- Criticised Descartes
- Thinking is contextual

Belief →
- 4 ways people fixate on beliefs
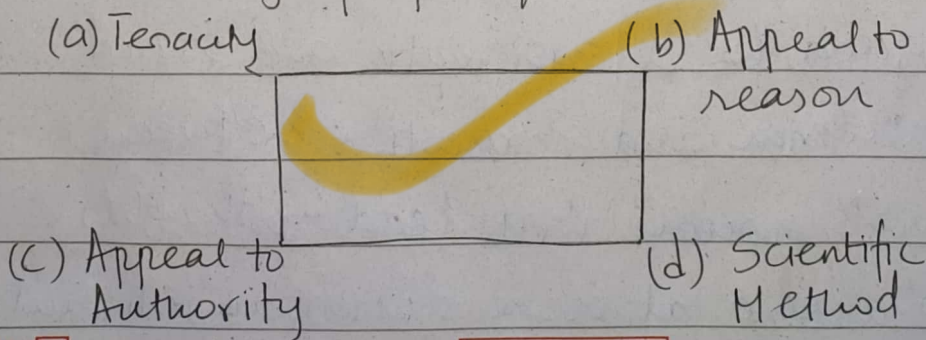- A sound method of inquiry is crucial for objective truth

As the illustration shows, Peirce was a Pragmatic philosopher who argued for a systematic and sound procession and connection between one's doubts that lead to thoughts. To arrive at clear action, an individual

needs to fix their set of
beliefs and method of
inquiry to arrive at sound
knowledge.

Criticised Descartes for rigidly
fixing his theories

Peirce posited that Descartes'
notion of thought as independent,
of the world is flawed. A clear
and distinct idea according to
Descartes is the one that exists
in mind. However, Peirce proposes
that a clear and distinct idea is
contexual. One's context and
situation determines the extent of
validity of an idea.
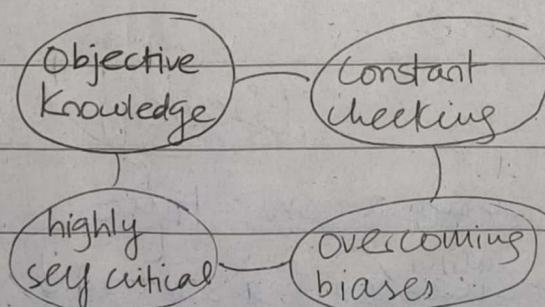

Four ways people fixate their beliefs

(a) Tenacity   (b) Appeal to
                                    reason

(c) Appeal to   (d) Scientific
Authority   Method

In his essay, the Fixation of Belief, Peirce outlined the ways people hold on to belief. Tenacity, Appeal to reason and and authority are ways people refuse to step out of their innate beliefs and consider them wrong.

As such, these methods do not yield independent and critical thinking. After careful scrutiny of all methods, Peirce explains that the scientific method is the most sound method of inquiry. for its unbiased approach and process of searching truth.

MAIN TENETS OF SCIENTIFIC METHOD:

Objective Knowledge — Constant checking

highly self critical — Overcoming biases

III   William James and Pragmatism

> "An idea is true if it satisfies,
> is verifiable and verified
> in experience"
>
> (James)

William James was a close contemporary of Charles Peirce and his ideas are very much aligned with him. His focus, too, was on the 'Cash-Value of Ideas', their usefulness and he proposed the Pragmatic Theory of Truth, Idea of multiple truths and The Will to Believe.

IV   John Dewey and Pragmatism

> "Education is a social
> process, it is life
> itself"
>
> (Dewey)

Dewey was a one-time student of Charles Peirce and

applied the notions of Pragmatism relayed by him and James on Education. Dewey Proposed that education must be progressive and teach students critical thinking, as well as problem-solving.

Role of philosophy is to devise instrumental techniques

Dewey argued that philosophy should be an innovative endeavour where new techniques are developed and thought of in order to deal with the environment.

V   Conclusion

Pragmatism is an important contribution to philosophy as it moved away from traditional ways of thinking about and regarding philosophy as solely a technical and intellectualistic endeavour. It brought philosophy to the mainstream realm.

of life and common man. As a result, it made philosophy much more intelligible than it previously was.

Question 8 [c]

Utilitarianism is a school of thought in philosophy that focuses on ethical results or consequences of an action. It is an ethical theory that focuses on consequentialism and focus on results as a branch of moral philosophy.

I **What is Utilitarianism and its main postulates**

(i) Intentions are irrelevant

(ii) Actions should be judged on the basis of happiness they produce

(iii) Utility of an action determines its ethical worth

(iv) Utilitarianism is other-regarding

(i)   Intentions are irrelevant

The judgement of an action or deed is based on its outcome. Hence, the thought behind the act or motive is disregarded and not important.

(ii)   Actions should be judged on the basis of happiness they produce

The pleasure that is derived from an action ultimately determines the ethical worth of an action. If the intent behind the happiness was selfish too, if it is leading to pleasure, it is valuable and hence moral.

(iii)   Utility or usefulness of an action determines ethical worth

Proponents of Utilitarianism, John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham posit that the guiding

principle of any action should be the "greatest good for the greatest number." All decisions should focus on satisfying the majority of people.

(iv) Utilitarianism is other-regarding

With its focus on maximum benefit for the maximum number of people, utilitarianism argues that one is to pursue pleasure and happiness for as many people as possible. It focuses on collective interests and does not place the individual at the center.

II Two types of Utilitarianism

① Act Utilitarianism   ② Rule Utilitarianism

Act Utilitarianism is focus on actions that produce greatest good for greatest number. Only

such actions should be chosen
and executed.

Rule Utilitarianism is driven
by the notion to living by rules
that maximise greatest good for
the greatest number in the
long run.

III Comparison of Utilitarianism and
Ethical Egoism
Unlike Ethical Egoism that
posits that everyone ought to
pursue an action according to
individual self-interests. The
focus of utilitarianism is not the
self or justification of selfish
actions at the harm of many
others.

Utilitarianism	Ethical Egoism
↓	↓
self-interested deeds are not justified	self-interested deeds are justified

IV   Conclusion

Utilitarianism is an important ethical theory that guides much of the public policy decisions today. Its focus on yielding the maximum benefit for the greatest number is a shift towards collective interests and the integration of multiple individual interests in the social fabric of society as a whole.
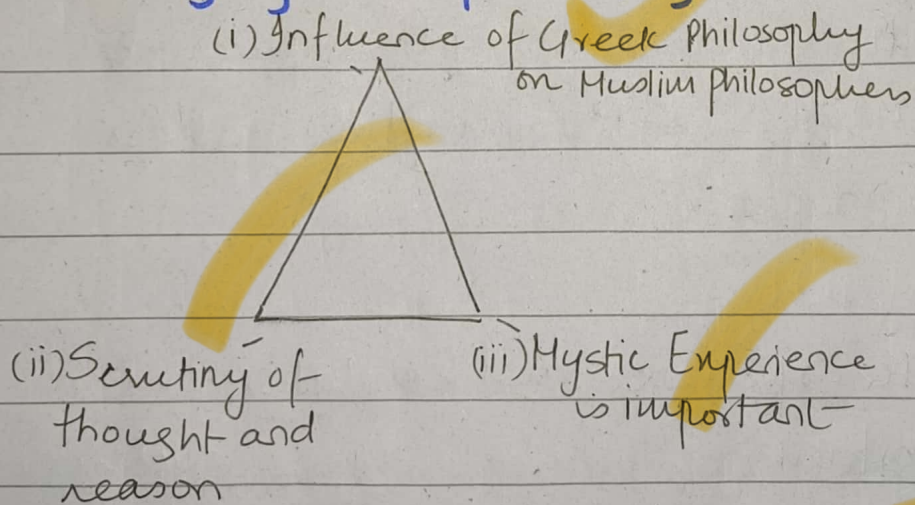
"The whole function of philosophy ought to be what definite difference it will make to you and me." (William James)

As such, the utilitarian theory of ethical decision-making is the most pragmatic in its usefulness and satisfaction it yields.

Question 6

Al-Ghazali is an important Muslim philosopher who focused on mystic experience and revelation along with reason and science as reliable sources of knowledge. As such, he does not refute the discipline of philosophy but the way philosophy was done by the philosophers before him. He charges the philosophers for cutting the grounds of religion in an incoherent manner.

I   **Al Ghazali and the currents of the age for his philosophy**

(i) Influence of Greek Philosophy on Muslim philosophers

(ii) Scrutiny of thought and reason

(iii) Mystic Experience is important

(i) Influence of Greek Philosophy on the

Muslim philosophers

Al-Ghazali was critical of the excessive influence of Greek thought on Muslim philosophers. This swayed them away from Islamic philosophy and its principles.

(ii) Scrutiny of thought and reason

Sense perceptions have the capability to deceive us, while axioms of law and mathematics cannot absolutely be true either according to Al-Ghazali. A source beyond both these to arrive at truth which is mystic experience is what the Muslim philosophers disregarded.

(iii) Mystic Experience and Revelation is important

Al-Ghazali called on the people to realise the importance

of religious experience that is ineffable and divine. As such, its presence and importance as a source of truth cannot be denied. Because the philosophers denied this, and focused too much on reason owing to Greek thought, he criticises their incoherence.

II Al-Ghazali's criticism of the Philosophers

In his important work, Tahafat ul Falsifah, The Incoherence of the Philosophers, Al-Ghazali proves the impossibility of building metaphysics upon reason.

(i) Removing doubt that had seeped in Muslim thought

Al-Ghazali criticised the heavy influence of Aristotlean ideas on Muslim philosophers. He worked on removing the doubt regarding

Muslim philosophy and traditional doctrines.

(ii) Dispute between Al-Ghazali and the philosophers

In Tahafat ul Falsifa, Al-Ghazali challenges almost all doctrines of Aristotle, Plotinus and Al Farabi and Ibn Sina.
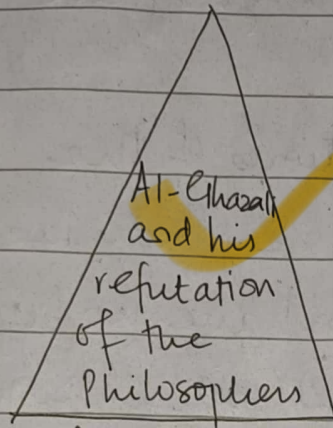
(iii) Theory of Emanation was based on incoherent arguments

The notion of God emanating from Causes that philosophers held on to, the everlasting and eternity of the world are all baseless arguments according to Al-Ghazali.

(iii) Al-Ghazali charges three doctrines with infidelity for cutting the very grounds of religion

(a) Eternity of the World

Al-Ghazali and his refutation of the Philosophers

(b) Denial of God's knowledge of the particulars

(c) Denial of bodily resurrection

(a) Eternity of the World

Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina proved the eternity of the world based on few assumptions:

(i) Nothing comes out of nothing, effect has a cause

(ii) When a cause comes into oppration, effect is immediately produced

(iii) A cause is something other than the effect

According to Al-Ghazali, none of the assumptions has any logical Necessity

The assumptions of the philosophers that stem from the idea of emanation have no logical connectivity. The philosopher's notion that the world is created, yet it is eternal is a logical impossibility. The notion of eternal creation is a self-contradictory one.

(b) Philosophers' denial of God's knowledge of the particulars

Al-Ghazali deeply criticises for how philosophers reduced God's knowledge to merely universals or things in general.

Philosophers said the God is an Absolute Unity of the world and hence cannot possess knowledge of multiplicity.

c) Denial of bodily resurrection

The philosophers were staunch believers of the immortality and unity of human soul. The denial of bodily resurrection in the Hereafter was an extreme view influenced by Greek thought that the philosophers adopted.

Skepticism of Philosophers' physical resurrection meant denial of
    (i) Revivification of bodies
    (ii) Physical pains and
        pleasures
    (iii) Existence of paradise
        and hell in physical
        terms

Philosophers said language of Quranic text in this matter is symbolic and metaphorical

The philosophers posited that there is no need to literally interpret

the Quran as it speaks of resurrection in spiritualistic conception

Al-Ghazali denies their argument for its duplicity

Al-Ghazali explained that the philosophers only select verses and put them out of context to serve their purpose. In fact, their denial of resurrection was based on Platonian dichotomy between soul and body.

Philosophers have a deterministic world view

Al-Ghazali proposed that the philosophers saw things in terms of their cause and effect. They seek naturalistic observations to prove their point but fail to prove their arguments through such simplistic categorisations.

II   Proving the possibility of miraculous
     and extraordinary

           Al-Ghazali's critique of the
     logical incoherence of the Philosophers
     on matters such as bodily resurrection
     and eternity of the world is one of
     the most original contributions to the
     history of human thought.

     Honoured with the title 'Proof of
     Islam.

           For his cogent arguments proving
     that the will of God is unconstrained
     and how the Quran establishes the
     existence of Hereafter, he was honoured
     for reviving the status of Islamic
     philosophical thought.

V)   Al-Ghazali reconciled Philosophy
     and Religion
           Al Ghazali focused and called
     on people to focus on the two way

reinforcing relation between
philosophy and religion. He
asserted that both make one
and other intelligible and should
be treated as reliable sources
of inquiry.

(V) Conclusion

Hence, Al Ghazali does not
refute philosophy as a reliable
source of knowledge but the
method of logical reasoning
adopted by philosophers as
incoherent.

Philosophy is as important
and vital as religion to arrive
at fundamental and cogent
truths about the world. The
Philosophers were influenced heavily
by Greek thought which needs
to be revised.

Question 4

Jacques Derrida was a postmodernist French philosopher. He developed a concept of Differance in which he posited that language is a system of differences that determines truth. There is no objective truth that comes out of language. He deconstructs language and criticises Logocentrism in his concept of differance.

Derrida's concept of Differance

i) Everything is a text—

Derrida held that there is nothing outside the text. In a sense, everything is linked to language and that confines us in terms of our knowledge and truth. Similar to the linguistic philosopher Wittgenstein's idea,

"The limits of my language are the limits of my world"

(ii)   Language establishes a system of differences

Interrelated distinctions between ideas can be revealed through language but nothing beyond that.
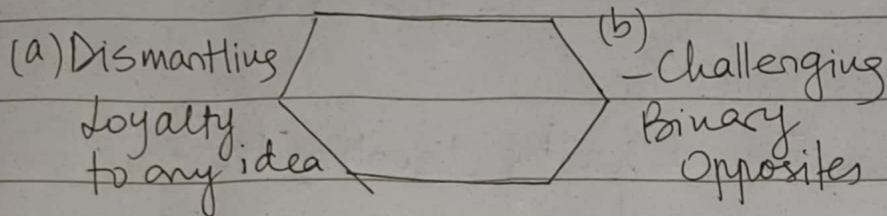
So language develops a restricted frame of references as any theory is expressed in language. The limitation of language is that it explains systems of differences but not beyond.

(iii)   No truths are absolute as language is based on differance

Truths are social constructions based on race, class, gender and social status. There is no principled difference between describing and imagining and no sharp line between fiction and non - fiction. Hence, objective knowledge is impossible.
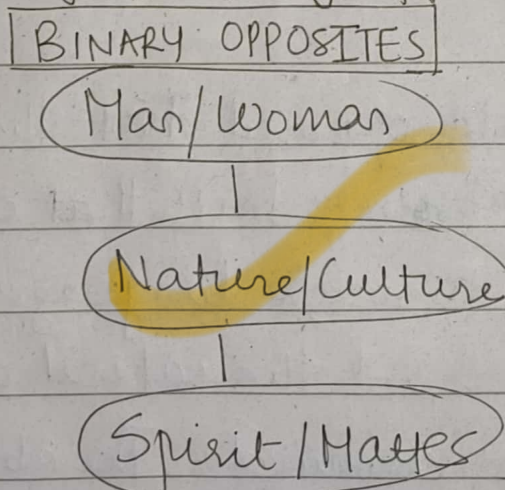
iv) Deconstruction as a method of Differance

(a) Dismantling loyalty to any idea   (b) Challenging Binary Opposites

(a) Dismantling loyalty to a particular idea

Through deconstruction, dismantling of ideas and excessive loyalty of any one concept enable to observe aspects of truth that might be buried in opposite ideas.

(b) Challenging binary opposites

| BINARY OPPOSITES |

(Man/Woman)

(Nature/Culture)

(Spirit/Matter)

Through deconstruction, a shift from the privileged position and one side is reached at.

This enables one to reverse their thought position and see it from the category of marginalised.

(v)   Logocentrism – hasty devotion to
                    logic

Reason is a tool by which certain empowered groups retain their hegemony, oppressing other groups. The emotions and experiences are to be valued of other groups over rational arguments.

Derrida opposed that there is some absolute truth that can be found through language. Language is not the natural and best way to communicate. The absolute faith in language as reliable needs to be dismantled.

(vi) Liberation should be achieved through method of Differance and understanding deconstruction

We must fight oppression by exposing the categories and meta-narratives by which the empowered retain their hegemony.

Conclusion

Summing up Derrida's concept of Differance, everything especially language is a social construct and needs to be dissected through the method of differance and system of differences.

This is the only way to break free from hegemonic and oppressive power structures as well as discourse of meta-narratives.