

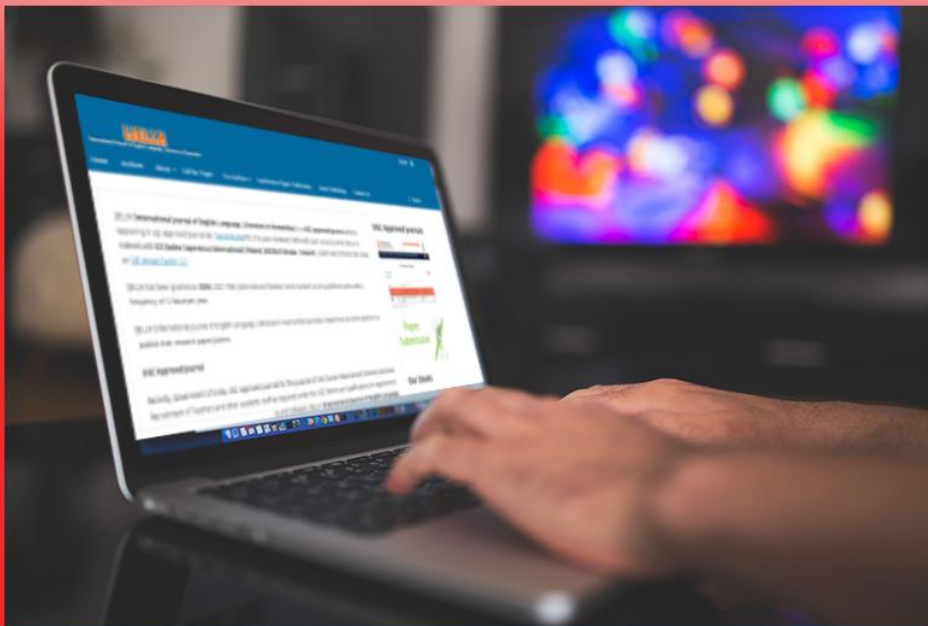
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*Abhinaya.V

Research Scholar, Department of English,

Annamalai University,

Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu, India.

abhilit90@gmail.com

**Dr. K. Muthuraman

Professor, Dean, Faculty of Fine Arts,

Department of English, Annamalai University,

Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu, India.

Agnosticism – An Overview

Abstract: In English Literature approaches and theories plays an important role to analyse a literary piece. In those days critics used many approaches and theories like Philosophical, Historical approaches, deconstruction, feminism, eco-criticism etc...To analyse a work. People are often using same approaches and theories, but there are so many approaches and theories which are less in use. For example: Lexicographical approach, Syllogism, Antiquarianism, Agnosticism etc... This paper mainly focuses to explore what is Agnosticism? And its features.

Keywords: Agnostic, Atheism, God, Theism, Religion.

Introduction

In contemporary theology Agnosticism is about the existence or non-existence of a God or deity. It is intellectually unjustifiable to make a strong opinion, one way or another. Agnostic is an ancient Greek word which means without knowledge. 'A' represent 'without' and 'Gnosis' represent 'Knowledge'. The term Agnosticism is coined by Thomas Henry

Huxley in the year 1869 in a speech at a meeting of the Metaphysical society, to describe his philosophy which rejects all claims of spiritual or mystical knowledge.

Thomas Henry Huxley identified Agnosticism not as a creed rather a method of skeptical evidence based inquiry. Agnosticism is not to be confused with any other religious views which particularly opposing the ancient movement Gnosticism. Gnosis is a Greek word which means 'Knowledge'; it is used by early Christian church leaders to describe the 'Spiritual Knowledge'. During the first century of the Christian era the term Gnostic is derived to denote the new Christian community. Among early followers of Christ, few groups are representing themselves from the church by claiming not simply a belief in Christ and his message also a special witness or revelatory experience of the Divine. During ancient and modern period agnosticism is considered as an essence of Science. It refers that a man shall not say what he knows or believes that which has no proper scientific proof to know or believe.

Huxley describes agnosticism as a form of demarcation. Agnosticism simply claims that we fail to attain the knowledge to determine whether the God exist or not. It differs from atheism; it is based n the lack of knowledge rather than lack of belief. Agnosticism is a method to sort down what is true and what is untrue, based on the sceptical evidences. The term 'Skeptic' refers 'agnostic', it is a doubt towards a belief, and basically it occurs in Philosophy particularly in knowledge, religion and politics. In present scenario, even in the field of neuroscience, psychology, technical and marketing field also used the word agnostic to mean 'not knowable'.

The concept of agnosticism is expressed even before the term coined. During sixth century BCE Sanjaya Belatthiputta an Indian ascetic teacher who lived in the region of Magatha expressed agnosticism about life after death in Pali literature (Pali Canon). He is a follower of Buddhism and his teachings are characterized as agnostic.

In the Samannaaphala Sutta,

..If the Tathagata exists after death...doesn't...both...
neither exists after death would I declare that to you?
I don't think so.
I don't think in the way.

I don't think otherwise.

I don't think not not... (DN.2)

The Rig Veda which authored between 1500 to 1200 BCE, agnostic about the Origin of the Universe is expressed in "The Nasadiya Suktha" The translation by A.L Basham, from his book The Wonder that was India,

...But, after all, who knows, and who can say
whence it all came, and how creation happened?
the devas (minor gods) themselves are later than creation,
so who knows truly whence it has arisen?
Whence all creation had its origin,
he, whether he fashioned it or whether he did not,
he, who surveys it all from highest heaven,
he knows – or may be even he does not know. (10: 129)

Agnosticism can also be discussed with context of religion, few people seem to realize that agnosticism is not only well suited with religion, it plays a fundamental role of some spiritual activities. Some people think that agnosticism should stand outside of religious faith and religious systems as a disinterested observer or as a critic. Agnosticism is the broadest sense that the state of not claiming to recognize if any god exists; it is also declare that no one know if any God exist or not. It has two traits in religion, they are:

- i. Agnosticism and Orthodoxy
- ii. Agnosticism and Orthopraxy

Religions are mainly focus to preserve 'right belief' or 'orthodoxy'. Most of the institutional assets inside such a religion are dedicated to teaching, explaining, reinforcing, and promoting the 'right belief', which are the basis of that religion. Knowledge and Faith are their associated issues, but they both are separate. A person can accept as true with some preposition, which they are aware of to be true, but, they also believe in another person's preposition which they do not know to be true. If something is true or does not precluding believing that it is true, but it approves for an individual to be an agnostic also believing a religion's right belief.

The term Orthopraxy mainly used in Latin American Theology. It often contrasts with Orthodoxy seen insufficiently in the practical and political content of faith. Orthopraxy is a

right trust based with right practice. Religions are focuses to maintain ‘right action’ or Orthopraxy. Religion which focuses on right belief, atleast should have some elements of Orthopraxy but there is other which makes orthopraxy much more central. Ancient religions which follow rituals are an example for Orthopraxy. People are not asked what they believe rather they ask if they made all the right sacrifices in all the right ways. Knowledge and Action are more separated than Knowledge and Belief which creates a large space to a person to be an agnostic and also a member of a religion. It paves a way to a person can be agnostic while being a normal part of religious community.

Nowadays, ‘agnostic’ is regularly used (when the difficulty is God’s existence) to refer to these who observe the advice expressed in the conclusion of Huxley’s argument: an agnostic is an individual who has entertained the proposition that there is a God but believes neither that it is real nor that it is false. If, however, ‘agnosticism’ is defined as a proposition, then ‘agnostic’ ought to be defined in phrases of ‘agnosticism’ as an alternative of the different way around. Specifically, ‘agnostic’ need to be defined as a man or woman who believes that the proposition ‘agnosticism’ is genuine rather of “agnosticism” being described as the state of being an agnostic. And if the proposition in question is that neither theism nor atheism is regarded to be true, then the term ‘agnostic’ can no longer serve as a label for these who are neither theists nor atheists due to the fact one can persistently accept as true with that atheism (or theism) is genuine while denying that atheism (or theism) is recognized to be true.

When used in this epistemological sense, the term “agnosticism” can very naturally be extended beyond the problem of what is or can be acknowledged to a household of positions, depending on what sort of positive epistemic status is at issue. For example, it might be identified with any of the following positions: that neither theistic belief nor atheistic faith is justified, that neither theistic faith nor atheistic faith is rationally required, that neither belief is rationally permissible, that neither has warrant, that neither is reasonable, or that neither is probable. Also, in order to avoid the vexed difficulty of the nature of knowledge, one can sincerely distinguish as distinct individuals of the ‘agnosticism family’ every of the following claims about intellectually state-of-the-art people:

- i. neither theism nor atheism is safely supported by the inner states of such people,

- ii. neither theistic belief nor atheistic trust coheres with the relaxation of their beliefs,
- iii. neither theistic nor atheistic faith consequences from dependable belief-producing processes,
- iv. Neither theistic trust nor atheistic faith outcomes from faculties aimed at truth that are functioning good in an appropriate environment, and so on.

Just as the metaphysical question of God's existence is central to philosophy of religion, so too is the epistemological query of whether or not theism or atheism is recognized or has some other sort of advantageous epistemic status. It is also well worth bringing up that, even in Huxley's time, some theists embraced the time period 'agnostic' claiming that all precise Christians worshipped an "unknown God". More recently, some atheists proudly call themselves 'agnostic atheists', although with further reflection the symmetry between this role and fideism may provide them pause. More likely, though, what is being claimed with the aid of these self-identified agnostic atheists is that, whilst their belief that God does now not exist has high-quality epistemic repute of some type (minimally, it is no longer irrational), it does not have the type of positive epistemic status that can turn genuine belief into knowledge.

Conclusion

Agnosticism is regularly defined, each in and outdoor of philosophy, no longer as a principle or any other sort of proposition however as a substitute as the psychological kingdom of being an agnostic. Call this the 'psychological' experience of the term. It is sincerely useful to refer to people who are neither theists nor atheists, however philosophers may want that some other term without 'agnostic', 'theological skeptic' have been used. The trouble is that it is also very useful for philosophical functions to have a identify for the epistemological role that follows from the premise of Huxley's argument, the role that neither theism nor atheism is known, or most ambitiously, that neither the faith that God exists nor the trust that God does not exist has nice epistemic reputation of any sort.

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