**Question: Discuss the laws of thought.**

**Answer:** The term ‘laws of thought’ refers to three basic principles which are thought to be the fundamental axioms of logic. Aristotle was the first philosopher to formulate these laws. He identified these as necessary conditions for thought. These laws are considered so fundamental that obedience to them is both the necessary and the sufficient condition of correct thinking.

The three laws of thought are:

1. **Law of Identity:** This law asserts that *if any statement is true, it is true.* To state the law symbolically, p is p. Some other formulations are: “everything is what it is;” “whatever is, is.” Everything that exists has a specific nature. Everything exists as something in particular and it has characteristics that are a part of what it is. This constitutes its identity. The law of identity states that no object can have two identities. A tree cannot be a telephone, and a dog cannot be a cat. Everything exists as something specific, its identity is particular, and it cannot exist as something else. Accordingly, we cannot use the same term in the same discourse if it signifies different senses or meanings.
2. **Law of Noncontradiction:** This law asserts that *no statement can be both true and false.* To state the law symbolically, every statement of the form (p . ∼ p) must be false or self-contradictory. In other words, it is impossible for both p and not p to be true. Some other formulations are: “Nothing can both exist and not exist at the same time and in the same respect;” “No statement is both true and false.” For instance, biologically speaking, Y can be the father to his son Z and a son to his father X, but he cannot be biologically both a son and a father to the same person at the same time. He must be one or the other. This is the way reality is.
3. **Law of Excluded Middle:** This law asserts that *every statement is either true or false.* To state the law symbolically, every statement of the form (p ѵ ∼ p) must be true. In other words, either p or not p must be true, there being no third or middle true proposition between them. Some other formulations are: “Everything either exists or does not exist;” “Every statement is either true or false.” This is because the truth of the one follows from the falsehood of the other. Thus, if a statement is not completely true, then it is false. A “half-truth” is a lie. Sometimes we come across statements which seem to violate the law of excluded middle, as their truth or falsity cannot be known. An example would be the statement, “There is life on Mars.” However, this does not mean that the statement is neither true nor false. It just means that its truth or falseness is not known.

The three laws of thought have been mainly conceived of as descriptive, prescriptive, or formal. As *descriptive* laws, they have been regarded as descriptive (*a*) of the nature of "existence as such," (*b* ) of the subject matter common to all sciences, or (*c* ) of the activity of thinking or reasoning. As *prescriptive* laws, they have been conceived of as expressing absolute or conventional standards of correct thinking or reasoning. As *formal* laws, they have been held to be propositions which are true in virtue of their form and independently of their content, true *in* all possible worlds, or true *of* any objects whatsoever, whether these objects exist or not.