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DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

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COURSE TITLE: ADVANCE METAPHYSICS

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COURSE GUIDE

COURSE GUIDE
CRS861: ADVANCED METAPHYSICS – 3units

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CRS861: ADVANCED METAPHYSICS

Introduction

CRS861: Advanced Metaphysics is a three credit unit course. It is made up of 24 units which present very broad insights into what metaphysics as a major branch of philosophy is interested in. This course studies systems of metaphysics: realism, idealism, nominalism, universalism, etc. Concepts of nature, reality and thought. Problems of Being, God and human nature; substance, freedom and determinism, fatalism, participation, essence and existence, and chance. The relevance of metaphysics to contemporary problems. Major modern and contemporary philosophers. It also studies theories of time; the relationship between time, space and consciousness. The perception of time in various cosmologies (African, Western and Eastern); Time, permanence and change; time, temporality and eternity.

The course is compulsory for obtaining an MA in philosophy. The course guide gives an overview and description of the course content, explicates on why the course is a key requirement in philosophical studies, present relevant course materials and tools with various ways to utilizing these for the purpose of learning and teaching. Practice questions in the form of review questions; that is, presentation schedule with Tutor marked assignments is also added to this course guide for effective learning by students.

Course Aim

The major aim of this course is to stimulate and facilitate an exciting learning experience of students for quite an abstract and very often considered dry aspect of philosophy – metaphysics. It not only introduces students to the very broad issues central to metaphysics, it presents some of the nuances of the debates in a

systematic manner while demonstrating its connectedness with other aspects of philosophy and of course other disciplines. The course objectives of this effort are aimed at both to familiarise students with the nature, interest and science of metaphysics as well as to make the learning experience exciting at the same time for students. That is;

- i. to enable students have a profound grasp of the main issues and themes relevant to our study of metaphysics at some advanced level.
- ii. to enable students state in clear terms what metaphysics is and what it is not against the backdrop of the many misconceptions of metaphysics.
- iii. to introduce students to how various cultures and societies or more specifically regions view some of the problems and themes in metaphysics.
- iv. to be able to unequivocally show how metaphysics differs and relates with and relevant to other disciplines as well as the society at large.

In addition to the broad objectives stated above, each unit as part of the larger module frame also has specific objectives. They are stated at the beginning of the unit. Students are encouraged to read and study them while they work their way through the entire unit. These objectives help to gauge one's familiarity with the main issues discussed in the units and so students are encouraged to utilize them accordingly. The unit objectives are to:

- i. have an overview of the subject matter and scope of metaphysics.
- ii. able to draw a line of distinction between what is and what is not metaphysics.
- iii. have a bird's eye view of the themes and issues central to the discipline of metaphysics.
- iv. understand how the concept of metaphysics is conceptually and theoretically understood.

- v. have a dashboard image of the various important moments in the development/understanding of metaphysics.
- vi. show the various sub-divisions and their concerns/subject matter.
- vii. appreciate the perennial nature of some of the problems of metaphysics.
- viii. understand the contributions of various important philosophers to metaphysics; and
- ix. stimulate metaphysical reflections as attempts to understanding the intractable problems in metaphysics.

What you will Learn in this Course

The overall aim of PHI 314: Advance Metaphysics is to introduce and deepen students' appreciation of what the focus and interest of metaphysics is all about as an important branch of philosophy. It also discusses the various branches and their subject matter in ways that show the fundamental connection there is between metaphysics and other aspects of philosophy. It hopes to stimulate metaphysical reflection and thinking among students by ensuring there is a profound appreciation of the various attempts to resolve some of the problems in metaphysics over the years as well as make the learning experience very exciting and interesting.

Working through the Course

To complete this course – Advance Metaphysics, you are required to carefully read the study units, interact with the recommended texts and examine other accessible materials especially those that are online. Each unit contains review or self-assessment exercises. Note that in the course of time it will be required of you to make presentation at both the individual and group levels and make submission of same as well as written essay/assignment which will be assessed and graded as part of your final assessment in this course. At the end of each module, the reader/student will find a set of review questions and list of further readings to

assist the student to follow through by way of personal or self-study purposes. It is worth explaining that the purpose of the exercises is to help the reader/student engage in critical reading (reflective, a probing, questioning reading), rather than the kind of passive reading in which we often indulge. Though many questions are simply comprehension questions, which require readers/students to check their understanding of the ideas in the text, others require readers/students to produce their own examples, to draw out the implications, to evaluate arguments, and to assess the materials they have read. These questions should be helpful in guiding the thinking of students and should also provide useful materials for instructors.

Find below a list of all you will need to know in respect of the components of the course.

Course Materials

The course has the following major components:

- i. Course Guide
- ii. Study Units
- iii. Textbooks
- iv. Assignment File

Kindly note that you must obtain the materials. In the event that you encounter any problem in obtaining the text materials kindly contact your tutor.

Study Units

There are Nine (9) modules and twenty four (24) study units in the course. They are:

Module 1: Metaphysics: Nature, Branches and Other Disciplines

Unit 1: Meaning, Conceptual and theoretical definition, branches and nature

Unit 2: General Issues and Problems in Metaphysics

Unit 3: The Relevance of Metaphysics

Module 2: Systems of Metaphysics

Unit 1: Realism

Unit 2; Idealism

Unit 3: Nominalism

Unit 4: Universalism

Unit 5: Concepts of Nature/Reality/Thought

Module 3: Problems of Being

Unit 1: Being and Non-Being (Nature, Characteristics and History)

Unit 2: The God Question in Metaphysics

Unit 3: Human Nature (Mind, Body and self-Identity)

Unit 4: The Mind-Body Problem (Some Theories/Debates)

Unit 5: Notion of Substance (Monism vs Pluralism)

Module 4: Freedom and Determinism

Unit 1: Freedom and Free Will

Unit 2: Determinism (Indeterminism, Fatalism ,Compatibilism vs Imcompatibilism)

Module 5: Further Reflections on Some Other Problems of Metaphysics

Module 6: Participation

Module 7: Essence and Existence

Module 8: Chance/Indeterminacy and Causality

Module 9: Theories of Time and Space

Themes and Topics Reflected Upon Include: Time and its theories in various traditions/cosmologies (African, Western and Eastern); Time, Space and Consciousness; Time, Permanence and Change; Temporality and Eternity

Set Text Books

Aja, E. (1996). *What is Philosophy? An African Inquiry*. Enugu: Donze Publications.

- Aja, E. (2001). *Metaphysics: An Introduction*. Enugu: Donze Publications.
- Carroll, J. W. & Markosian, N. (2010). *An Introduction to Metaphysics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hamlyn, D. W. (1984). *Metaphysics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Heidegger, M. (1961). *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, tr. Ralph Maheim. Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Company, Inc.
- Iroegbu, P. (1996). *Metaphysics: The Kpim of Philosophy*. Owerri: International Universities Press Ltd.
- Kabuk, V. S. (2017). *A Fundamental Approach to Philosophy of Education*. Port Harcourt: HOI Publishing Company.
- Le Poidevin, R et al. (2009). *The Routledge Companion to Metaphysics*. London & New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis.
- Loux, M. J & Zimmerman, D. W. (Eds.) (2003). *The Oxford Handbook of Metaphysics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Loux, M. J. & Zimmerman, D. W (Eds.). (2005). *The Oxford Handbook of Metaphysics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mbiti, J. S. (1969). *African Religion and Philosophy*. London: Heinemann.
- Munford, S. (2012). *Metaphysics: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ney, A. (2014). *Metaphysics: An Introduction*. London & New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis.
- Omogbe, J. (1996). *Metaphysics Without Tears: A Systematic and Historical Study*. Lagos: Joja Educational Research and Publishers Ltd.
- Omogbe, J. (2001). *Knowing Philosophy: A General Introduction*. Lagos: Joja Educational Research and Publishers Ltd.
- Onyeocha, I. M. (2009). *Introfil: A First Encounter with Philosophy*, Second Edition. Washington, DC: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy.
- Parrat, J. (1977). Time in traditional African thought, *Religion*, 7:2, 117-126.
- Rea, M. (2014). *Metaphysics: the Basics*. London & New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis.
- Unah, J. I. (1996, reprinted 1998). *Metaphysics, Phenomenology and African Philosophy*. Ibadan: Hope publications.
- Unah, J. I. (2010). *Metaphysics*. Lagos: University of Lagos Press.
- Van Inwagen, P. (2015). *Metaphysics*, fourth edition. Colorado: Westview Press.

Presentation Schedule

Two presentations shall be expected from the students. The course facilitator will allocate two topics to students and the mode in which they are to be prepared at the commencement of the semester. The expected time frame for turning in the assignments will also be made known by the facilitator. For example, the facilitator expects the students to undertake the assignments at both the individual level and at group/cluster levels. The facilitator is to organize the students into groups paying attention to issues of gender balance and age groups. For the individual assignment, each student is expected to work alone and to have the first assignment submitted by mid-semester while the second assignment to be worked upon as a group or cluster of students submitted at the end of the semester just before the final written examination. Kindly note that for topics assigned to individual students and group of students, it is expected that each student and leaders of the cluster or group of students shall have a specific time to do a presentation and the presentation opened up for discussion and contributions by other participants. (Specifically, each student is given 15 minutes for the presentation – 10 minutes for the presentation by individual students and 5 minutes is for discussion/question and answers). This is to improve the communication and of course presentation skills of students.

Both presentations attract equal marks (5% of the student's total marks). Beyond the presentations it is expected that the individual and group assignments be forwarded to the facilitator for formal grading and assessment.

Assessment

Given that the presentations constitute just five (5%) of the student's total score, other components of the total assessment package will include two (2) short essays of six (6) pages maximum and not less than five (5) pages including references. These essays are to be typed-written using the New Times Roman in twelve (12) font's size with double line spacing. The recommended referencing is the APA 6th

edition (available for free download online). The facilitator will outline a list of topics from which students will be free to pick/select within a specific period of time and report back to the facilitator to ensure students offering this course do not write same topics. The essays constitute 10% of the expected final score of 100.

To guide against plagiarism, students are encouraged and expected to use the following links for plagiarism check before submission of their essays/papers:

- <https://plagiarism.org/>
- <https://www.library.arizona.edu/help/tutorials/plagiarism/index.html>

The final component of the assessment the student is expected to undertake is the examination which attracts 70% of the total score of 100.

How to Get the Most Out of this Course

To get the most out of this course, it is mandatory for students to:

- Have 75% of attendance through active participation in the entire interactions and facilitations;
- Study each topic in the course materials prior to it being treated in the class;
- Timely submission of assignments with strict observance of the timeline or deadlines as failure to adhere to such will attract some penalties;
- Intra and Inter group sharing and discussions are encouraged among the students for deeper understanding of the course;
- Download, access and use all the relevant materials for personal use;
- Practice the various review questions; that is, self-assessment exercises in the main course material;
- Sit for the final examination;
- Contact the facilitator of the course in the event of any concern or challenge you may encounter in the course of this interaction.

Tutor and Tutorials (Facilitation)

Online facilitation based on a learner-centered approach is the mode of facilitation for this course. At the beginning of each topic, the facilitator will introduce the

topic before opening it up for class interaction and discussion in order to facilitate the learning engagement. As has been emphasized, each student is expected to study the course materials prior the classroom session and actively participate in the discussion by way of making relevant contributions in terms of questions or further reflections on the topic under study/discussion. The facilitator will at the end of each session summarise the forum debate, upload relevant materials, videos or podcasts to the forum and finally ensure information regarding the course is properly disseminated to all students through email or SMS if and when the need arises. The facilitator will solely be responsible for the grading and assessments of students for the course.

Summary

Advance Metaphysics is an insight into what metaphysics is all about. Upon completing this course, students will be able to know what metaphysics is,

metaphysical systems, metaphysical problems and other interesting aspects of metaphysics.



MAIN COURSE

MODULE 1: METAPHYSICS: NATURE, BRANCHES AND OTHER DISCIPLINES

INTRODUCTION

This module is made of two study units. The first study unit focuses on the question: what is metaphysics and what are its branches? The second study unit addresses general issues, highlight problems central in metaphysics and examines the question: is metaphysics relevant? In the first unit, you will learn the meaning and subject matter of metaphysics; that is, various ways we can define and understand metaphysics; conceptually and theoretically and outline the basic subdivisions and the subject matter of each of the subdivisions of metaphysics.

UNIT 1: MEANING, CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL DEFINITION, BRANCHES AND NATURE OF METAPHYSICS

CONTENTS:

- i. Introduction
- ii. Objective of the study
- iii. Main Content
 - a. Meaning
 - b. Etymology of Metaphysics
 - c. Conceptual Definition
 - d. Theoretical Understanding
 - e. Branches of Metaphysics
 - f. Nature of Metaphysics
- iv. Summary
- v. Conclusion
- vi. Tutor Marked Assignment
- vii. References and Further Reading

i. Introduction

This unit presents the meaning, conceptual and theoretical understanding of metaphysics. It also outlines the basic subdivisions of metaphysics while at the

same time characterising their subject matters. It does this to give students a very broad context and background to the entire concern of this course. The need for some general background and introductory reflection to refresh our minds on what the nature of metaphysics is to foreground a deeper and better appreciation of the basics and principles of this course - advance metaphysics. To achieve this all important refresher exercise it is important to start by undertaking a kind of stock taking of what is metaphysics and what is not against the backdrop of the frequent misconceptions of this very important branch of philosophy.

ii. Objectives of the study

This unit is intended to enable the students achieve the following objectives:

- a. To define and delineate what is metaphysics.
- b. To demonstrate what metaphysics is not
- c. To know the various ways of defining a concept in philosophy generally; i.e. theoretically and conceptually
- d. To know the various subdivisions of metaphysics and the subject matters thereof

iii. Main content

a. What is Metaphysics?

As a discipline and as a branch of philosophy metaphysics remains a significant aspect of the discipline of philosophy to such an extent that philosophy cannot be said to be worth its name without the study and appreciation of the core parts that make up the discipline of philosophy. These core parts are fundamentally three viz: - metaphysics, epistemology and axiology (ethics). The importance of metaphysics along with epistemology and ethics cannot be overemphasized in one's study of philosophy. Thus, students of philosophy are expected to take courses in these

different aspects/branches of philosophy in order to make complete and comprehensive their programme in philosophy.

Before we examine some of the various important themes and theories in metaphysics it is important to clear some misconceptions about metaphysics. In some contexts, metaphysics is wrongly/erroneously conceived to be generally said to be wholly and entirely concerned with the great beyond and secrets of and about the workings of the nature/universe such as the occult operations and mystical powers. Occultism is not metaphysics and Metaphysics is not occultism (Iroegbu 1994: 15).

There are various positive ways of conceiving metaphysics that is worth outlining for our purposes in this course. For example, one of the positive understandings of what the subject matter of this branch of philosophy is concerned with provides a rather broad picture of the focus of metaphysics. In this instance, metaphysics is concerned with the study of being as such or the totality of reality or all that there is. In fact, like other sciences, being is the subject matter of metaphysics. Thus, the nature of being in its deepest aspects, its causes, properties is the focus of metaphysics. Another positive way of looking at metaphysics also is that this branch of philosophy is concerned with the nature of framework with which we approach and seek to understand the world around us. This sort of Kantian and post-Kantian image of the discipline of metaphysics plays a huge role in the contemporary era of philosophy.

There are two ways to define metaphysics; conceptually or theoretically. The former simply takes on the concept and analyses it. For example, it is a well-known fact of history that the term originates from the Greek expression: *Ta meta ta physica* (after the physics). Andronicus of Rhodes, who edited and collated Aristotle's works in C. 70 B.C. placed the work that Aristotle called First

philosophy, after the ones on Physics and termed it After the Physics. Therefore, from the two Greek words that make it up “meta” – after, beyond, transcending and “physics” – physics, body or matter to mean that which concerns itself beyond the physical. Does it then follow that it does not consider things in the physical world at all or in any sense at all? I think not, suffice it to note that it does seek explanations of the nature of things per se in the most general sense and in ways distinct from just being concerned with particular things. We will now attempt to define metaphysics in the second way; theoretically. To define a term theoretically is simply to outline how various experts or professionals in a field define the term. In other words, their various theories of what the term is about.

Therefore to define metaphysics theoretically, metaphysics seeks to study reality as such; that is, in its most comprehensive scope and basic principles/properties (Iroegbu 1994: 21-22; Koons&Pickavance 2015). Other theorists and philosophers define it differently thus; for Plato, metaphysics concerns itself with the knowledge of the supra-sensible, for real things are existents in the world of forms/ideal world which of course are explanatory of the transient world. In the view of Descartes, metaphysics focuses on the knowledge of things beyond the sensible world. For Kant, it is the transcendental analysis of the contents of the human mind. In the view of Aquinas, metaphysics is the ultimate explanation of the mystery of being visible and invisible, in the ultimate being (causal and final) which is God. Metaphysics for Martin Heidegger is the ontological inquiry into the “Sein”, “being”, “to be” of all that there is: why there are essents.

The scope or sub-division of metaphysics

In some texts, metaphysics is traditionally divided into two broad areas; general and special metaphysics. While general metaphysics is often regarded as ontology

and sometimes interchangeably used for metaphysics broadly speaking (the science of being as being); special metaphysics is further divided into three areas to include; theodicy or natural theology (here the concern surrounds the nature and problem of God, good and evil in the world, suffering, immortality of the souls, and whether the universe has purpose or end or meaning at all). Other branches are cosmology (centers on the origin, nature, structure and existence of the universe or the cosmos) and rational psychology (focuses on the problem of mind, nature of the mind-body problem and associated issues of consciousness).

The focus of these various branches outlined above show how comprehensive the scope of metaphysics is. In other words, metaphysics seeks to deal with the nature and totality of reality – what is.

Again, these branches of metaphysics reveal something about the fundamental nature of this particular aspect of philosophy; that is, metaphysics. A quick review of our foregoing discussion on the various branches into which metaphysics traditionally breaks show that a thorough study of metaphysics gives one preliminary insights albeit panoramic insights into other areas of philosophy. One is likely to encounter these various aspects during one's study of the course such as philosophy of mind, philosophy of nature/science amongst others. At this point, it is crucial to say a few things about the nature of metaphysics in relation to other disciplines in a very brief manner.

As our introductory reflections show that metaphysics studies reality in its ultimate sense and context, does it make sense to claim that the concerns of other disciplinary endeavours seem rather superfluous. For example, as we have demonstrated that general metaphysics as ontology studies being, what then is the need for other disciplines such as anthropology, geology, biology and others? Do these other disciplines study nothing? Or study same being? If these disciplines do

study being, what is the nature of the differences there are between metaphysics as ontology which studies being as against these other intellectual disciplines that study various aspects of being since they do not study nothing?

One distinguishing factor is the approach or method adopted by these disciplines as against the method adopted/used in metaphysics or philosophy generally. Whereas these sciences, for example, use the empirical method that involves the observation, experimentation, testing, quantification, modeling and analysis to access and warrant their results. Metaphysics, on the other hand, uses the meta-empirical approach that involves reflection, logical and argumentative reasoning procedures to engaging its subject matter.

Another point of difference between metaphysics and the other sciences worth noting is the nature of the basic question posed in these disciplines. While questions in these other sciences are formulated along the lines of the 'how' questions, metaphysics proceeds roughly by posing the 'what' and 'why' questions as fundamental to assessing its subject matter. According to Iroegbu (26-27), in the questioning task, there are two-fold concerns; the formal and the material object of metaphysics. Whereas the former is whatever all realities is, existing beings, all essences. The latter; that is, the formal object of metaphysics is the act of existence, the 'to be', the being of whatever is, just as the formal object of medicine is health.

General Issues and Problems in Metaphysics

Metaphysics is the science of being, its attributes, its principles and its categories. It is in other words, that part of philosophy that is concerned with the basic issues of reality, existence, personhood, and freedom versus determinism. Aristotle calls it "First Philosophy" because it concentrates on the first or most basic questions we

encounter when we study the issues of life. It grapples with such questions as what reality is, whether it is limited to the physical, material world alone, or whether reality could exist in the mind and what difference there is, if any, between reality and appearance. In Aristotle, Metaphysics when called 'First Philosophy', it is used to distinguish it from second philosophy or the theory of nature (Physics). The subject matter of metaphysics therefore is being as being, of its principles and causes and of the divine.

Metaphysics is a philosophical inquiry into the most basic and general features of reality and our place in it. Because of its very subject matter, metaphysics is often philosophy at its most theoretical and abstract. Our simple, intuitive reflections on our familiar experiences of everyday life and the concepts that we use to describe them can lead us directly to some of the most profound and intractable problems of metaphysics.

On the nature of existence, we shall deal with the question of what it is for something to exist and what it is for us to acknowledge something as existing. The problem of identity – we shall try to know whether qualitative indiscernibility entails identity, or whether identity is always necessary or can be contingent, whether identity is relative to mortals. On "modal" concepts like necessity and possibility, essence and essential property, necessary and contingent truth, and "possible worlds." what it is for something to be a "thing," and, in particular, what makes one thing at one time to be "the same thing" as something at another time. This part is followed by a group of writings addressing the same question for persons: there is a clear and deep difference, most of us would feel, between our continuing to live till tomorrow and our being replaced by an exact "molecule-for-molecule" duplicate in our sleep tonight; but in what does this difference consist? We shall also come across the nature of causation, the relation that David Hume

famously called "the cement of the universe." Major contemporary accounts of the nature of causation will be presented. In the opening of the paragraph of his introduction to metaphysics, Heidegger articulates his metaphysical question about reality.

Why are there essents rather than nothing? That is the question. Clearly it is no ordinary question. Why are there essents, why is there anything at all, rather than nothing? Obviously this is the first of all questions, though not in a chronological sense. Individuals and peoples ask a good many questions in the course of their historical passage through time. They examine, explore, and test a good many things before they run into the question "why are there essents rather than nothing". Many men and women never encounter this question, if by encounter we mean not merely to hear and read about it as an interrogative formulation but to ask the question; that is, to bring it about, to raise it, to feel its inevitability. (Martin Heidegger, 1961, p.1.)

According to Heidegger, the question, why are there essents rather than nothing? Is first in rank among other questions. It is so because it is the most far reaching the deepest and the most fundamental of all questions (2).

4.0 Conclusion

This study unit addressed the question of what is metaphysics and the subject matter of metaphysics.

5.0 Summary

This study unit examined the meaning of metaphysics, its branches and its nature. It revealed that the nature and focus of metaphysics is the effort to give the deepest meaning to all of reality. This effort includes not only the things that are beyond the physical but inclusive of the very things present in the physical as well. For

example, while there is an interest to tell of the place of the human person within the attempt to construct a comprehensive story of reality. Thus seen, the discipline of metaphysics remains a core and an indispensable aspect of the human enterprise to make meaning of the universe.

6.0 Self-Assessment Test

1. Attempt a theoretical and conceptual Definition of metaphysics.
2. What are the branches of metaphysics and their subject matters?
3. How is metaphysics different from other sciences?
4. How can you demonstrate the relationship between metaphysics and other sciences?

7.0 References and Further Readings

Ajah, E. (1996). *What is Philosophy? An African Inquiry*. Enugu: Donzie Family Circle Publications.

Omogbe J. (1994). *Metaphysics Without Tears*. Lagos: Joja Press Ltd.

Koons, R. C. & Pickavance, T. H. (2015). *Metaphysics: The Fundamentals*. Chichester: WILEY Blackwell Publication.

Iroegbu, P. (1995). *Metaphysics: The Kpim of Philosophy*. Owerri: International Universities Press Ltd.

UNIT 2 - GENERAL ISSUES, PROBLEMS AND RELEVANCE OF METAPHYSICS

CONTENTS:

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objective of the study
- 3.0 Main Content
- 4.0 Summary
- 5.0 Conclusion
- 6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment
- 7.0 Suggested References

1.0 Introduction

This unit examines the general issues, problems and the question of the relevance of metaphysics. It seeks to outline briefly what the fundamental issues in metaphysics are about with a view of setting the stage for our engagement with the next module on the systems of metaphysics.

2.0 Learning Objectives

The objectives of this study include:

- a. To highlight the overview of the issues and problems of metaphysics
- b. To examine the relevance of metaphysics against the backdrop of the anti-metaphysical thinking in society

3.0 Main Content: Overview of the General Issues, Problems and Relevance of Metaphysics

The primary goal is to examine some of the questions around the place and relevance of metaphysics to not only philosophy but other areas of life and society. While it must be acknowledged that the voyage of metaphysics had not always been a smooth sailing one, it is important for metaphysicians to always demonstrate what and why metaphysics is not only central to philosophy but other aspects of life particularly to contemporary problems and issues. Thus, at the end of this module students would be able to tell the importance of metaphysics.

The voyage of metaphysics has not been a smooth sailing one; indeed, during much of the middle half of the century, metaphysics was in the doldrums, at least within the analytic tradition. This was largely due to the anti-metaphysical influence of the two then dominant philosophical trends. Logical positivism and its

formalistic, hyper-empiricist legacies lingered through the 1950s and 1960s in the United States, nourishing an atmosphere that did not encourage serious metaphysics, while in Britain the anti-metaphysical animus derived from "ordinary language" philosophy and the later works of Wittgenstein. However, metaphysics began a surprisingly swift, robust comeback in the 1960s, and since then has been among the most active and productive areas of philosophy. It is now flourishing as never before, showing perhaps that our need for metaphysics is as basic as our need for philosophy itself. I believe our subsequent interactions will give a broad glimpse of metaphysics from the Ancient through this century.

According to Hamlyn (1995: 9), "from time to time in the history of philosophical thought philosophers of the positivist orientation have come up with criteria of meaningfulness by which metaphysics could be shown to be nonsense in one fell swoop. Hume, for example, wished to consign to the flames anything that contained, in effect, pure *a priori* reasoning, except for 'abstract reasoning concerning quantity and number'". Later philosophers, such as Ayer, have claimed that because metaphysical theses are not verifiable by reference to experience and are not merely logical or mathematical in content they are nonsense. In neither of the cases is there an attempt to examine metaphysical arguments closely".

Relevance of Metaphysics

Aja (21) presents an analogy to demonstrate the relevance of metaphysics to philosophy as well as other disciplines. In the analogy philosophy is considered as a tree whose survival depends on its root through which the tree is not only anchored but the requisite nutrients it needs to flourish and fructify are obtained and supplied from the ground which in turn fed into the various branches that bear fruits as imagery and representative of the various sciences. From this imagery one can then suggest that the survival of the tree itself, quality and in fact quantity of the fruits are largely dependent on the extent to which the roots are well rooted to

provide for the entire tree to flourish. Little wonder metaphysics is considered to be the capstone of philosophy such that when philosophy is emptied of metaphysics, it renders it very barren.

It is no doubt that some metaphysical positions have in the past gone so abstract, hair-splitting and grossly *noumenal* that they were completely removed from the very reality they set out to explain. They became so transcendental to be true. In some systems, the science became simply a doctrine of axioms that explains neither this-worldly nor the other-worldly reality. It became entirely irrelevant. It must strive not to be reduced to the branch of empirical sciences, the discipline ought to be a relevant undertaking. It must seek to address the burning problems of concrete reality at its own level and with its own method. Such issues that must be investigated must reflect on questions of the after-life, the fate of the dead, the relationship between life and the after-life, the various nuances of the constituents of the human person in the vast universe of which the human person is part, (Iroegbu 31).

4.0 Summary

This study unit examined and outlined some of the general issues and problems in metaphysics. It also discussed the relevance of metaphysics against the backdrop

of the growing positivistic culture that tend to see the end of metaphysics. Despite all of the anti-metaphysical tendencies the discipline of metaphysics has continued to wax stronger than ever as a deeply relevant and intellectually rewarding enterprise not only for the individual philosopher but also the various sciences and society at large.

5.0 Conclusion

Metaphysics remains the soul of philosophy to such an extent that to empty philosophy of metaphysics is to render philosophy barren. A thorough assessment of the place of metaphysics reveals also how pervasive metaphysics is. It must however be cautious in the matters it indulges with so as to avoid the charge of irrelevance as has happened in the course of the history of metaphysics when it went about concerning itself with hair-splitting and unnecessarily abstract matters. For metaphysics to remain alive, it must endeavor to deal with issues that are of significant importance to humans and society at large.

Tutor Marked Assignment

What is the relevance of metaphysics?

References and Further Reading

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Aja, E. (1996). *What is Philosophy? An African Inquiry*. Enugu: Donze Family Circle Publication.

MODULE 2: SYSTEMS OF METAPHYSICS

INTRODUCTION

This module sets out to examine the main systems of metaphysics highlighted in the course description. It seeks to expose the overarching thematic of the various systems of metaphysics, identify their main proponents, historical developments and the various inflections that these systems now take in contemporary thought. There are numerous systems of metaphysics but our focus however is limited to the assessment and evaluation of four namely; universalism, nominalism, realism and idealism. These systems and theories seek to simply describe the nature of what there is in reality or how we can characterise the basic nature of the world in which we live. The systems of metaphysics to be examined in this present module include: Realism, Idealism, nominalism and Universalism. We seek to have a general broad characterization of the main themes of Realism, Idealism, Nominalism and Universalism. Each of the four systems of metaphysics will be examined per study unit in order to make for thorough assessment of their features and variants. At the end of the module students should be able to tell an untrained inquirer the basic ideas and subject matter of the themes we shall consider under this module as study units. Part of the concern also is to endeavor to demonstrate the basic differences there are and how these systems relate in some ways. Therefore for this module, four study units will constitute the significant major moments for our reflections.

Unit I: Realism

Unit II: Idealism

Unit III: Nominalism

Unit IV: Universalism

Unit I: Realism

This study unit discusses realism as one of the popular metaphysical systems in the history of metaphysics. It seeks to highlight the various types or variants of realism and the various proponents of these various forms that it has assumed.

1.0 Introduction

This study unit presents students with what realism means; that is, what it means to say that something is real. It examines the metaphysical system of realism. It seeks to outline and describe the main current of this system by identifying the various forms or variants of the system, the main proponents and the historical development of realism as a metaphysical system.

2.0 Learning Objectives

This unit will help students to:

1. Underpin what realism as a metaphysical system is.
2. Understand the historical development of realism
3. Know the various variants or types of realism and of course their proponents

3.0 Main Content

What is Realism?

A proper understanding of realism as a metaphysical system or doctrine requires a clear clarification of the terms real and reality. The term real means something that exists as a fact; it is actual rather than imaginary, fantasy or ideal. It refers to things or events that exist in their own right as opposed to that which is imaginary, fictitious or ideal. Reality on the other hand is therefore the state or quality of being real or actual existence in contrast to what is merely apparent or just appearance.

Realism as a metaphysical system signifies the assertion of the existence of a reality independently of our thoughts or beliefs about it. It holds that our minds or

what we think about a reality cannot change it. The reality should be accepted and confronted as it is. It is therefore a practical understanding and acceptance of the actual nature of the world, rather than an idealized or romantic outlook of it, (Kabuk 2017: 77). Realism (after the Latin word for “thing”) is the position defended by realists who “affirm the existence of special things (the universals) that exist over and above the world of particular things”.

There are different types of realism; rational realism and natural/scientific realism. Rational realism is further divided into classical realism and scholasticism. The classical realists base their ideas on the thoughts of Aristotle who is believed to be the founder of realism as a reaction and rejection of the transcendental world of ideas created in the philosophy of his tutor, Plato. In Aristotle, the material world is not only real but does contain the entirety of all that there is to know composed of matter and form. The scholastics version, on the other hand, is based on the medieval Christian thinkers. Both versions of realism admit that material world is real as it exists outside the minds of those who observe it. The proponents maintain that the rational universe of the sensible objects and their orderliness are the creative act of the supreme intelligible being (God).

The second version of realism is the natural or scientific realism. The rise of this philosophy was witnessed during the renaissance era where scholars sought for the supremacy of science over other disciplines in answering basic enigmatic questions. The rise of science in Continental Europe which swept almost all areas of enquiries changed the societal orientation throughout the continent and impacted the emerging world. The proponents of this form of realism include; Francis Bacon, John Locke, David Hume, John S.Mill, A.N. Whitehead and Bertrand Russell, (Kabuk 2017: 78) just to name a few.

This version posits that philosophy seeks to intimate the rigour and objectivity of science since the world around us, and all that there is, are real. It is the task of

science to investigate its nature or properties. Hence, natural or scientific realists are found to be skeptical of all forms of idealism but are seen to be experimental in nature.

4.0 Conclusion

Realism and its various forms were highlighted in this study unit. Realism opposes idealism in defense of the view that various objects in the world of our experience or in the world generally are real and actual. These real or actual existents are perceived by the senses whether the mind reports of them or not. In other words, objects exist independently of the mind.

5.0 Summary

A succinct presentation of realism as a metaphysical system was achieved in the study unit. It mentioned the two versions of realism; the rational and the scientific forms of realism; it also identified and historicized the views and proponents of the various versions of realism. It also underscores the fact that in spite of the divergences or differences among the various views held by the proponents of the different forms or versions of realism, there is a common tenet that real and objective nature of the natural world, objects or things, exists independently of the human mind. In other words, these things or realities are extra-mental realities, different from the mind that perceives or thinks about them, (Aja 2015: 129). Realism as presented is the view that there is a reality independent of the mind and independent of conscious beings. The impetus towards realism comes in turn from the commonsense reason that there is surely more to what exists than what is simply within our minds.

6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment

Realism is diametrically opposed to idealism: discuss.

7.0 References and Further Reading

Aja, E. (2015). *What is Philosophy? An African Inquiry*. Enugu: Donze Press.

Kabuk, V.S. (2017). *A Fundamental Approach to Philosophy of Education*. Port Harcourt: HOI Publishing Company.

Unit II: Idealism

This study unit discusses Idealism as one of the popular metaphysical systems in the history of metaphysics. It seeks to highlight the various types or variants of idealism and the various proponents of these various forms that it has assumed.

1.0 Introduction

This study unit examines idealism as one of the main metaphysical systems. It seeks to outline and describe the basic tenet of this system by identifying the various forms or variants of the system, the main proponents and the historical development of idealism.

2.0 Objectives

This study unit has the following learning outcomes for students:

- a. To understand the basic tenets of idealism
- b. To know the various strands of the system
- c. To understand the historical development of the system.

3.0 Main Content

The Meaning of Idealism

The word is a derivative of the noun ‘ideal’, which suggests freedom from inflections of the material world or unreality of what depends simply on the mind (Kabuk 2017: 68). Idealism implies that reality is actually dependent on the mind rather than on something that exists independently of the mind. In other words, the ideas, and thoughts constitute the essence or fundamental nature of all realities. Idealism therefore is the system of thought or doctrine that emphasizes mind, spirit or the soul as ultimate realities. The material world is only a manifestation of a reflection of what is in the mind or the spirit. In this case, we cannot truly know anything for certain about whatever external world may exist; all we can know are

the mental constructs created by our minds, which we can then attribute to an external world.

Idealism involves the thesis that all we can be aware of (and therefore all that what we are aware of can consist in) is such representations or ideas. In the 17th/18th century usage of the term, 'idea' does not mean merely 'concept' but any mental item which is, so to speak, of something. It is worth noting also that Plato's so-called idealism is quite different thing from the idealism during the era referred to above; it is a theory to the effect that sensible things, the objects of perception, are to be explained by reference to ideas/forms, the ideal entities postulated by Plato.

Idealism is contrasted primarily with realism which holds that reality is independent of the mind. However, views are considered idealists' when they hold that reality is outside the mind but loosely dependent on the mind for their consciousness, (Kabuk 69). Narrower versions of idealism claim that our understanding of reality reflects the workings of our minds first and foremost – that the properties of objects have no standing independent of the minds perceiving them. Extreme versions of idealism deny that any world at all exists outside of our minds. Theistic form of idealism limits reality to the mind of God. Other forms of idealism include Plato's, epistemological, subjective, objective, transcendental and absolute idealism. Major idealists include Plato, Gottfried W. Leibniz, G.W.F. Hegel, I. Kant, G. Berkeley, etc.

Views of Some Selected Idealists

The origin of idealism is attributed to the works of Plato who first projected the idea of the world of forms as different from the world of the senses. According to Plato, the material world and other material realities are mere reflections of the ideal world in the world of forms. The sensual or material world is transient,

imperfect, corruptible, and mutable while the world of forms is incorporeal, incorruptible, immutable, permanent and perfect.

In the medieval period, following St. Augustine the world of God is the ideal world. For him, it is the soul rather than the mind that has knowledge and access of the truth given its closest nature to God from whom it emanates. In the modern era, Descartes argues that all ideas have no separate existence outside the perfect being who is the foundation and object of thought. For Berkeley, the fundamental principle of all of realities is perception as contained in his famous dictum, “esse est percipi” to mean “to be is to be perceived”. This means that reality or existence depends fundamentally on its perception by the mind. It was Hegel who introduced his idea of dialectical idealism wherein the absolute spirit advances itself towards perfection by undergoing through a series of thesis and its antithesis to form a synthesis constantly evolving progressively in view of perfection, (Madsen 2009:115).

4.0 Conclusion

The reflective exercise has defined idealism as a metaphysical system that stresses the supremacy or superiority of the mind or idea over matter. It emphasizes that reality is mental rather than material; spiritual rather than physical. For the idealists, therefore, the entire existence or reality exists only as ideas in the universal mind and the particular mind (human mind) interpreted as part of the universal mind.

5.0 Summary

The study unit has examined idealism as a metaphysical system in contradistinction to realism. Idealism as presented rejects the view that material existence can be independent of the mind by defending the view point that existing reality is simply ideas or the mind that perceives it. The study unit also highlighted

the various versions of idealism and reechoed some of the particular emphasis made by some philosophers in the course of the history of philosophy.

6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment

What is the basic thrust of idealism?

7.0 References and Further Reading

Kabuk, V. S. (2017). *A Fundamental Approach to Philosophy of Education*. Port Harcourt: HOI Publishing Company.

Madsen, P. (2009). *101 Great Philosophers: Makers of Modern Thought*. London: Continuum International Publishing Co.

Unit 3: Nominalism

This study unit seeks to examine what the fundamental thrust of nominalism is and to highlight the contributions of various philosophers on building the metaphysical system to what it is today and the various forms or types of nominalism that there are.

1.0 Introduction

This study unit examines the metaphysical system of nominalism. It seeks to outline and describe the main current of this system by identifying the various forms or variants of the system, the main proponents and the historical development of the system.

2.0 Objectives

The objectives of the study include the following:

- a. Help the student to understand the basic ideas at the centre of nominalism.
- b. Facilitate an appreciation of the historical development of the system
- c. Know the various forms that the system has taken.

3.0 Main Content

What Nominalism Means?

Nominalism is the rejection of universals. It is also the rejection of abstract objects in another equally important sense. This is the view that there is nothing in the universe except particulars; particulars are all we can perceive, and particulars are all that there are, Aja (141). In the consideration of the ancient problem of

universals as per the place of properties we very often talk about or refer to when we describe objects of our experience or make normative assessments; two usually opposing schools of thought are immediately evident; realism and nominalism.

Realism (after the Latin word for “thing”) is the position defended by realists who “affirm the existence of special things (the universals) that exist over and above the world of particular things”. Their opponents are called the nominalists (after the Latin word for name). While the realists believe that the universals, such as property of being a horse or the property of being a water molecule, are real things needed to ground or explain in any ultimate way the obvious similarity of particular horses or particular water molecules to another. The universals are somehow shared by or present in those particular things, nominalists, in contrast, deny that we need any such metaphysical explanation of similarity: the particular things themselves suffice to explain when we use common names (like “horse” or “water molecule”) as we do”, (Koons&Pickavance 2015: 10). Other examples of these abstract objects or entities include; numbers, properties, possible world, and propositions.

Two versions of nominalism are popular in the literatures; one that denies or rejects universals and the second version is one that rejects abstract objects. The implication of this distinction is that there is a difference between universals and abstract terms. Universals can have particular objects instantiating them within space and time whereas abstract notions are atemporal and aspatial or simply they do not have spatial or temporal instantiations. Examples of philosophers in the course of history belong to one version of nominalism or the other. David Armstrong believed in universals but that everything that exist do so within space and time and so can be said to be a nominalist in the sense of denial or rejection of abstract entities. W.V.O. Quine, on the other hand, accepts sets or classes and accepts abstract entities but reject universals and can be said to be a nominalist in

his rejection of universals.

4.0 Conclusion

This study unit has undertaken the exposition of what nominalism means. It considered nominalism in its two senses as fundamentally as an anti-realist school of thought ;(a). as the rejection of universals, and (b) the rejection of abstract objects. Both senses imply that for nominalism as metaphysical system only concrete things or particular objects exist.

5.0 Summary

The metaphysical system of nominalism though sounding ambiguous sometimes simply has been described and exposed in this study unit. The unit began with exposition of what nominalism means. Two senses of the term meaning to reject the reality of abstract objects and the rejection of universals were identified as key in our understanding of what the term means. The notion does not only stop at rejecting the realities of both universals and abstract objects but defend the view that only particular objects exist. From these two senses, the unit drew and gave examples of what universals are as different from abstract objects. The former can be instantiated by particular objects whereas the latter do not have temporal or spatial relevant existence. An example of the latter is numbers.

6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment

What is nominalism in simple terms?

7.0 References and Further Reading

Koons, R. C. & Pickavance, T. H. (2015). *Metaphysics: the Fundamentals*. Chichester: WILEY Blackwell Publications.

Aja, E. (2015). *What is Philosophy? An African Inquiry*. Enugu: Donze Press.

Unah, J. I. (2010). *Metaphysics*. Lagos: University of Lagos Press.

Unit 4: Universalism

This study unit discusses universalism as one of the popular metaphysical systems in the history of metaphysics. It seeks to highlight the various types or variants of universalism and the various proponents of these various forms that it has assumed.

1.0 Introduction

This study unit examines universalism as a system of metaphysics. It seeks to outline and describe the main current of universalism by identifying the various forms or variants of the system, the main proponents and the historical development of universalism.

2.0 Objectives

The objectives of this study unit will achieve the following for the students in terms of:

- a. Enable the student to have a grip of the main current of the system
- b. Facilitate an appreciation of the historical development of universalism
- c. Help student to understand the various trends that are characteristic of systems in metaphysics.

3.0 Main Content

What is the exact nature of universals is a problem at the heart of universals and universalism. It is the case that there are concepts and ideas we use and have come to identify in our daily usage that speaks to this problem but we hardly pay close attention to them. For example, we very often describe certain actions to be good actions or wrong actions or describe certain things in terms of their shape and colour or size or quality in terms of these objects instantiating these so called qualities without deeply paying attention to where these qualities we use or say of these objects really inhere or exist. Or to say it differently, whether they exist in these objects or whether their modes of existence is such that they are outside of these objects that instantiate them. So for example, we describe a ball as round as far as the shape is concerned with colour red as far as the colour is concerned. The question and the problem then becomes whether the roundness or redness exist

outside of the ball that is so described. According to Omoregbe (11), such things as beauty, justice, whiteness, goodness, humanity, etc are universals. They are universal concepts, but they are not just ideas in the mind. We recognize them in things that exhibit them, and this means that they are real though they are not physical. They are realities, though not tangible realities. It appears then that there is more top reality than what is utterly physical and in fact tangible. In western philosophical tradition, Socrates was the first to identify the universals and insisted upon the distinction between the things that exhibit them and the universals so exhibited by these particular things or acts. For example, when Socrates asked his contemporaries to define justice, and they went ahead to give examples of instances of just acts, Socrates would tell them they had not answered his questions as he was not asking for instances of just acts but justice itself. Given the distinction between just act and justice itself, it seems Socrates was right. So if this case, then where does it exist or how does it exist brings to the fore the problem of universals. In the work, *Isagoge*, a commentary on the work of Porphyry Boethius asked whether universals were realities outside the mind or exclusively simply ideas in the mind. Are they real entities which could be found anywhere apart from the individual objects that manifests them? (Omoregbe 12).

Two variants of realism have emerged in the context of the history of metaphysics especially within the context of the medieval period to attempt for the nature of the existence of universals. These two schools of thoughts or variants are exaggerated or ultra-realist school and the moderate realist variant. While the former; that is, the ultra-realist variant argue that universals are real entities that exist somewhere

else apart from the particular objects that instantiate them. So the objects that instantiate them only participate in the nature of the universals. Proponents of this school of realism include the following; St. Anselm, John Scotus of Eriugena, Remigius of Auxerre, and William of Champeaux. The second variant is the moderate realist school that is defended by thinkers such as Boethius, John of Salisbury, Albelad, and Thomas Aquinas. These scholars argue that universals exist in individual objects and are extracted from them by the mind. In the modern era and in fact still held by the empiricist tradition today, Berkeley and Hume deny the reality of the universals. In other words, they deny the reality of the universal and argue that only ideas of particular things exist, Omoregbe (12).

Another school of thought on the nature of universals is nominalism, proposed by William of Ockham. This view holds that universals or general names are mere labels. In fact, the word nominalism comes from the Latin word, *nomina*, meaning name. For William of Ockham, universal essences are concepts in the mind. Hence, the form of nominalism developed in his thought system is regarded as conceptualism. So, universal essences are concepts caused in our minds when we perceive real similarities among things in the world.

4.0 Conclusion

This study unit examined the nature of the problem of universals. The various schools of thought on universalism were explored. The realist account of the nature and place of the universals in relation to the particular objects that instantiate them. While it notes that the universals as entities can be distinguished from the objects that instantiate them, the issue of whether they; that is, the universals really exist remains quite problematic which is at the heart of the nominalism alternative defended by William of Ockham for example. There are different schools of thoughts that attempts to account for the nature of the universals and how they exist in relation to particular objects that instantiate them.

5.0 Summary

This study unit shows that universals are real and these universals can be distinguished from the particular objects or acts that instantiate them. Various schools of thought are noted to have made attempts to account for the nature of the existence of the universals. For example, three schools emerged in the medieval period of philosophy. These three schools of thought are ultra or exaggerated realism, moderate realism and nominalism proposed by William of Ockham. In the modern era of philosophy and still held within the empiricist tradition is the claim that universals do not exist outside of the particular objects or acts in which they inhere or are objectified.

6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment

Attempt to account for the nature and problem of existence of universals?

7.0 References and Further Reading

Omogbe, J. (1996). *Metaphysics without Tears: A systematic and historical Study*. Lagos: Joja educational Research and Publishers Limited.

Unah. J. I. (2010). *Metaphysics*. Lagos: University of Lagos University Press.

Egbeke, A. (2001). *Metaphysics: An Introduction*. Enugu: Donze Publications

MODULE 3: CONCEPTS OF NATURE, REALITY AND THOUGHT.

For our module three, the focus will be the exposition of the concepts of nature, reality and thought. As very broad concepts the focus is to ensure students are introduced and exposed to the various ways in which these concepts are theorized and understood through the various significant moments in the history of metaphysics.

Unit 1: The Concepts of Nature, Reality and Thought

1.0 Introduction

In the history of philosophy, what constitutes nature, reality and the possibility of thought about these themes have been central to philosophers from the ancient era through to the contemporary times. In this study unit, the focus is to simply highlight some of the characterizations of what these scholars through history think

of nature, reality and thought.

2.0 Objectives

The objectives of the study include to;

- a. Highlight what the various scholars through history think and say of nature, reality and the possibility of thought.
- b. Help students have an overview of the thinking of philosophical forebears on these themes.
- c. Stimulate in students the interest to rethink these ideas in their own ways at the same time paying critical attention to the history of these discourses.

3.0 Main Content

What is reality? What constitutes nature? What is the nature of thought? These are key questions at the centre of the philosophical storehouse of the contributions of various forebears in the course of the history of metaphysics and of course philosophy. While many observed that change was a fundamental nature of reality, in other words, all around them they observed things constantly undergoing changes, certain aspects that underlies nature was not itself experiencing the same constant changes which was of course of interest to the many who paid attention and made effort to account for the nature of the universe; that is, the world around them, nature or reality and whether it was possible to have knowledge of the basic stuff of the nature or the world around them.

During the pre-Socratic era, many of these thinkers who raised questions and excited about their experiences came to the conclusion that nature or reality was real and unchanging. In the views of some this reality was one and appears in many ways or forms at different times. So for example, for Thales, this reality was water. For Anaximander it was the apeiron; the boundless while for Anaximenes, it was air. For Heraclitus and Parmenides, it was change and constant flux for the former and then being which is permanent and unchanging for the latter. With respect to these characterizations the question then became what and how do we

account for the apparent change we experience all around the world. For Parmenides and even in Plato as well (in his theory of the world of forms/ideas), the world of ordinary life and experience is not being or reality and thus, unreal. It is mere appearance and illusion to think it is real. For access to these realms are divided into two; that of opinion or the senses through which we experience and encounter change and what appears to us to be undergoing change in and around the world whereas through the way or power of reason, we can have access to the world that is real and unchanging. And so, against this backdrop the distinction between valid logical reasoning and experience is foregrounded and founded. On the part of Aristotle there was a total rejection of the other world kind of view in Plato's metaphysics. What is real accordingly is not present in another world outside of the experiences and that the changing nature of the visible world must be a basic feature of nature. When we are able to discover what the real and basic constituents that make up the natural world then we can understand and account for the changing natural world.

According to Aja (21) every natural object is always undergoing change at the same time something remains the same in that object that undergoes changes. For him therefore, there are four causes which are key for us to understand and ascertain what really changes and yet able to still be itself. The material cause – what is it that changes? The efficient cause – what makes it change, what produces the alteration? The formal cause – what does it change to, what new form does it take or acquire? And finally, the final cause – for what purpose or reason does it change and in view of what goal does it change? The building blocks for understanding the Aristotelian system are two; form and matter constitutively make up objects in nature imbued with the potentials to become actualities in view of certain ends in view. All objects in the natural world apart from the Unmoved Mover as Aristotle called it is always undergoing change (i.e. changing its form to

take on another form) and yet something remaining unchanging or permanent about it (matter) within the dynamics of potentialities turning into actualities in view of achieving the status of pure form (the teleological goal or final end) which it never really attains.

The medieval thinkers took on this system and interpreted the Unmoved Mover to be God reflective of various religious traditions. In the modern era, philosophers had various views on reality, nature and thought. Descartes for example postulated three substances – God, mind and matter and ended up with a rather religious or theological image of nature that in fact threatened to weaken the two other forms or substances of mind and body in explaining the nature of reality. In response to the Cartesian metaphysical system, Hobbes agreed that the physical world is real and then worked out a thorough going mechanistic or materialistic system that did away with anything spiritual or religious. In fact, the mental world as pictured in the Cartesian world is in fact part and parcel of the material world within the Hobbesian metaphysical characterization of the nature of reality. The real world is composed of bodies. A body is that which having no dependence upon our thought is coincident or coextended with some part of space. Nature or reality therefore was conceived as purely matter in motion and therefore there appears to be no difficulty in explaining the connection between what we think about and what is happening outside of us. On the part of Spinoza, reality is simply composed of one substance and its modifications which he called God or Nature with infinite number of attributes. This system is called Monism. It is only by two means that we know these attributes and these are: thought and extension.

Everything else that exists is just the extension or the mode of one or two of either of the two known attributes by which we know of this only one substance that exist and necessarily exists, which of course, is God or Nature. This notion of God in the metaphysical system of Spinoza is entirely different from the Christian idea of God

given how Spinoza went on to characterize this God as impersonal, lacking in any ability to perform miracle and in fact, a natural being to be known and loved more through the study of physics and mathematics than through traditional religious practices as preached in Christianity, (Aja 36). In Hegel, we find another intriguing attempt whereby reality or everything that exists in nature can be understood only in terms of the absolute or objective mind which is in the process of evolution throughout the history of the world. Though a complicated system the absolute or the objective mind through a process of dialectics that involves a thesis and antithesis to form a synthesis that in turn undergoes the same process of dialectics again until the absolute mind is able to attain perfect rationality and complete or total self realization – the stage when complete thought and complete being will be one and the same thing.

4.0 Conclusion

The foregoing study unit attempted an examination of the concepts of nature, reality and thought using the tool of history. It broadly itemized some of the thinking and characterization of what these concepts and themes mean by identifying philosophers who in the course of history made contributions to our understanding of these terms and concepts. It began by examining the pre-Socratic thinkers and their views and thoughts on nature and reality in terms of what fundamentally constitutes them through to the modern period of philosophy.

5.0 Summary

The views and thoughts of some metaphysicians from the classical era through the medieval to the modern period of philosophy were identified and discussed. While the thoughts of thinkers in the Ancient period provided useful tools for a greater appreciation of our experiences of nature and what there is in nature generally, their thoughts and theories were taken over and reshaped or redressed to meet the religious flair of the thinking during the medieval period. These thoughts were further advanced by modern philosophers to the extent that quite a number of other

problems emerged in the various systems that were defended by these scholars which have remained problematic ever since and these will continue to inspire further reflections for contemporary thinkers even in our time.

6.0 References and Further Reading

Aja, E. (2001). *Metaphysics: An Introduction*. Enugu: Donze Press.

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Onyeocha, I. M. (2009). *Introfil: A First Encounter with Philosophy* (Second edition). Washington D.C.: Council for Research and Values in Philosophy.

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Loux, M. J. & Zimmerman, D. W. (Eds.). (2005). *The Oxford Handbook of Metaphysics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

MODULE 4: THE PROBLEM OF BEING

In this section our objective is simply to explicate on the nature of the problem of being as central to metaphysics. Our interrogation of this all important problem will enable the students to appreciate the centrality of the nature and problem of being. We shall therefore look at how in the course of the history of philosophy various thinkers have tried to grapple with the problem of being and the extent to which their various attempts succeeded or failed to account for a comprehensive solution to the problem of being. Students will also be encouraged and challenged to attempt providing a rational solution to this long standing problem in metaphysics. Within Aristotle's work, being as such or being-qua-being as part of the central problems in metaphysics remains an exciting project for philosophers. In fact, the interpretation of what exactly the notion of being Aristotle had in mind while describing the possibility of the science of being reflects one of the very nature of focus of general metaphysics as distinct from the understanding of being of specific thing, say living things etc. the concern therefore is to examine whether it is possible to inquire into the nature of being as such or the possibility of to be without reference to specific kind of thing. Here the contribution of Plato provides some insights into how to understand this concern about the possibility of having very abstract and general ideas into the nature of specific kinds of things. Here the idea is the Platonic discourses on the nature of forms or world of ideas, (Hamlyn 1984: 1-2).

Unit 1: On Being and Non-being: Nature, Characteristics and History

1.0 Introduction

The question of the problem of being and the nature of being is one of the most intriguing questions in metaphysics because one of the main branches of metaphysics; that is, ontology concerns itself with the nature of being. In fact, the question, "What is being?" has remained one of the intractable and preeminent concerns in the entire philosophical history right from the age of the pre-Socrates through to this day. It is the case partly because some other important philosophical or specifically metaphysical problems are centred on our understanding of being and how we characterize what being is. For example, the problem of appearance and reality is predicated on our understanding of how we conceptualise and understand being. Is being one or many? Is being static, real, unchanging or dynamic, unreal, and effervescent? For this module, our concern will be an attempt to characterize what is being, contrast it with the idea of non-

being, present a history of the discourse and the various nuances of the discourse on the problem of being and its nature. We shall adopt Omoregbe's calibration for ease and brevity.

2.0 Objectives of the study

This study unit has the following objectives:

- a. To help students understand the centrality of being in metaphysics
- b. To facilitate an understanding of what is being
- c. To facilitate an understanding of what is non-being
- d. To show the historical character of the discourse on being as a central theme in metaphysics.

3.0 Main Content

a. Being and Non-being in the Classical Era

According to Parmenides, being is whatever is. In other words, whatever exists is being. For him therefore, being is one, unchanging and eternal. With this calibration of what being is therefore, it can be asked what becomes of the things we experience around us that is constantly changing and passing. The simple answer then to the query is to simply suggest that these things do not and cannot constitute being since they do experience and undergo constant change, transient and of course they are many as we do see around us and in our environment. Central to this characterization of Parmenidean notion of being is the classic distinction between appearance and reality. Accordingly, being is one and reality is one and not many or transient. Thus, whatever that changes or is transient is non-being. The human senses through which we perceive the world around us is prone to error and capable of deceiving us, hence what we experience to undergo change in and around us is appearance and not reality; for it is only through the powers of reason that we can access reality which is unchanging and not transient.

The contribution of Plato to this debate is also along this same thought pattern of Parmenides. For Plato, the things we experience and perceive around us in this world are unreal, changing and multiple which only do reflect or imitate what are real and unchanging that only exist in the world of Forms/Ideas accessible through the intellect/reason. However, the ultimate form of all forms is Goodness. On the part of Aristotle, he identified being, in fact, pure being as the object of metaphysics; that is, being as being or being as such. Within this conceptualization of the perfect being as the subject matter of metaphysics, metaphysics becomes the science of pure being, theology in some sense.

b. Being in the Medieval Context

The medieval context introduced the notion of Supreme Being into the equation by

making the origin of the universe and created order the central themes for philosophical reflection. In this regard therefore, Thomas Aquinas replaced the notion of the Being as Being with God. The notion of being as used in the medieval context divides into two: the analogical and the univocal senses. While Being according to Aquinas is strictly used for God alone and all other created things as being in the analogical sense, Don Scotus opined that there is just only one sense in which we can understand and use the idea of being and it is same for God or created beings – humans for example.

c. Being in The Modern period

In the Hegelian system of the notion of thesis and anti-thesis dialectics, being is contrasted with non-being with becoming as the resultant synthesis. One scholar whose attention and focus majorly dwelt on being was Martin Heidegger. In his work, two categories of being are distinguished; being itself and individual beings. The former being itself or being of being is the source of other beings; that is, of individual beings and in which being itself manifests itself. Another existentialist who took a radical turn away from any mystical or religious line of thought was Jean-Paul Sartre for whom, being is what is. However, there are two notions; being in itself and being for itself. Whereas the former is conscious the latter is unconscious. The foundation of being is nothingness, for it emerges from nothingness. Being by its very nature is merely contingent.

d. Being in the Contemporary Thinking

Being is considered anything that exists materially or immaterially and so it remains the project and focus of ontology today to explain the nature of what there is in reality. Much of the discussions and debates about the problem of being in contemporary thinking therefore branches into the various special sciences today. And so there is a significant interest shown by metaphysicians in the works of cosmologists, astrophysicists and other related sciences seeking to understand and explain the nature of all that there is in existence.

4.0 Conclusion

This study unit has outlined the debates and views on the nature and problem of being in metaphysics. It noted that being is the subject matter of ontology. Being in this context is in the most general and universal sense of it. Hence, Ontology as the study of being as being, of first principles and causes of the divine. Unlike other disciplines that concern themselves with parts, the concern of ontology as metaphysics is about absolutely everything, not in every details but only those matters which all things share.

5.0 Summary

The problem of being is central in metaphysics. In fact, the special concern of

ontology but of general interest no doubt to many areas of study in the contemporary era to account for the nature of what there is; materially or immaterially which has continued to attend to the interests of those in metaphysics as well as other special sciences. We have examined the historical moments from the classical era, medieval period, modern periods to this day how this central theme and problem in philosophy continue to intrigue philosophers and ordinary people on what the nature of being and non being is.

6.0 Tutor Marked Assignment

What is being? What are the historical moments in the discussion on the problem of being and how did various key figures in these various periods define being?

7.0 References and Further Reading

Omogbe, J. (1996). *Metaphysics Without Tears: a Systematic and Historical Study*. Lagos: Joja Educational Research and Publishers Limited.

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Module 5: The Concept of God and Human Nature (Human Person and Self-Identity)

At the end of the study of this module students should be able to conceptualise and discuss the arguments for and against the existence of God. Also students should be able to discuss the metaphysical character of human nature which sets it apart from the other aspects of nature. Hence, for this module made of three units; we will examine the primacy of the God question in metaphysics. The concepts and nature of the problem of mind, body and self-identity broadly construed. We do not pretend to exhaustively tease out all of the details on the subject matter of philosophy of religion and philosophy of mind as sub-fields in philosophy for that matter. None the less, it is key to broach on these themes and related discourses we encounter not only in metaphysics but in all other aspects of philosophy which of course do go to show how interconnected these topics and problems are in philosophy. What are the arguments for and against God's existence? What is the human person? What is the nature of human nature? How different is the human person from other animals? How does the human person self-identify? Is the

human nature fundamentally the same across cultures and societies? What are its qualities or properties, if there is any at all? Is the human person just a bundle or exclusively mere collection of physical/material or biological properties? Are there supra-physical qualities associated with only the human person? These are some of the questions crucial to our understanding of the nature of the human person and the place of the human person in the world in which the human person lives. It is against this backdrop that we shall endeavor to examine the concepts of human nature, the mind-body problem while examining the various theories associated with them, albeit brief.

Unit 1: The God Question in Metaphysics

The central theme of the present unit is God. The question of the nature of God is an important one in philosophy. What type of reality is God? Is he a concrete or historical or abstract being? In this unit the arguments rather than what are generally termed proofs will be explored. Also, a few counter arguments that seek to undermine the arguments for God's existence will also be highlighted as evaluations of the arguments for God's existence.

1.0 Introduction

The focus here is to expose the arguments for and against God's existence. The essence of the present unit therefore is to further establish the centrality of God as

an important aspect of metaphysical undertaking not only in history but even in the contemporary time. In fact, as it will be made clear shortly, the God question is also crucial for the broad context within which various systems and theories (religious and non-religious) attempt to explain the origin, meaning and nature of the universe. A classic representation of this is the seemingly unending debate between creationists and evolutionary thinkers on the origin of the universe.

2.0 Objectives of the Study

For the students, the following are the objectives of the study:

- a. To understand the ubiquitous nature of the God question in metaphysics.
- b. To appreciate the strength and weaknesses of the various arguments for and against God's existence
- c. To be able to attempt some personal and profound reflection on this all important theme and question.
- d. To estimate the theoretical as well as practical implications of these discourses. For example, how to grapple with the presence of evil in a world created by a supremely good and all powerful God.

3.0 Main Content

The theme "God" is a ubiquitous one within and outside metaphysics. In the history of philosophical thinking, many scholars down the ages have also attended to this theme. In terms of the questions regarding the existence of the being of God; there are numerous claims and counter claims which we may not exhaustively be able to handle in this present unit. Thus, the attempt here seeks to provide general and broad picture that introduces students to the various nuances that there are on this topic. This is because the concern here is the metaphysical relevance of the concept as God is also central in the discipline of theology and the various religions there are. In a sense one can broadly divide the various positions into three groups; the first group is made up of those who argue and affirm God's existence generally termed "Theism". Those who defend this view are called theists. The second group argues against the existence of God and so largely denies God's existence, generally termed "Atheism". Those who hold this view are called atheists. The third group is rather in between as they are rather indifferent and hold the view that we cannot know whether or not God exists. The last group is often regarded as "Agnosticism". Those who hold this view are called agnostics.

The question however remains if the concept God can really be defined at all. Writing on this subject, Iroegbu (85) reports that God is understood as "a supreme personal being – distinct from the world and creator of the world". This was the point of departure of the 1948 debate between Bertrand Russell and Fr. Fredrick Copleston on U.S. Television on the theme of the existence of God. In various

cultures and religious worldviews, God is variously defined or characterized with attributes and these representations or descriptions can be found in a number of different stages. However, the most important attributes of the theistic concept of God are his transcendence and personality, Onyeocha (305-306).

There are two main sources of the knowledge of God: revealed theology or divine revelation; that is, the Holy Books for instance and natural reason or intellect. While the former constitutes theology the latter is natural theology or theodicy. This is key in the context of the intractable problem of evil or suffering in the world.

Arguments for the Existence of God

According to Onyeocha (308) the arguments for God's existence can be broadly grouped under two types; namely, *a posteriori* and *a priori* arguments. *A posteriori* arguments are based on experience while *a priori* are based on reason and independent of experience. The cosmological and teleological arguments fall under the *a posteriori* form while the ontological and moral arguments fall under the *a priori* form. I will now try to elucidate and provide brief details of the formulations of these arguments.

The Cosmological arguments: though first developed by Aristotle, a pagan philosopher during the classical period but were later christianised by Thomas Aquinas in the Medieval era. They are the five ways Aquinas argues for the existence of God.

1. From Motion: the observation of the universe there is a chain of motions. Whatever that is in motion was moved by something else that precedes it. To avoid infinite regress, it is taken for granted that there is a first mover, an unmoved mover who is in itself unmoved but responsible for the movement of every other thing in motion. This first unmoved mover is said to be God.
2. From Efficient Cause: whatever is cause is caused by another. Nothing can be an efficient cause of itself, otherwise it would be prior to itself which is impossible. For the thing which causes another must exist before the caused in order to cause it, Iroegbu 97. Again, to avoid infinite regress, the first efficient cause which is responsible for all other causes but itself uncaused is conceived as God.
3. From Contingent to Necessary Being: there is ephemerality that characterize the beings of our experience in the world. A being is here today and tomorrow the being is no more. In other words, things come and they go out of existence or die as the cause may be. Thus, the quality of existence of such beings is contingent; they are not necessary as they can stop existing. What accounts for the existence of things; i.e. contingent beings must itself

be unaffected by contingency of existence, hence, necessary being must exist to give existence to all other realities that only have possible or contingent existence. The being that exists necessarily is conceived as God.

4. Degrees of Perfection: in the universe we observe that one thing is better than another, and later we find another thing better than the first one. If we were to trace these grades of perfection we would eventually arrive at the most perfect being, the ultimate source of perfection. The most perfect being is God, Omoregbe 51.
5. Order and Harmony: another term for this argument is that of design or teleological argument. In the universe, there is apparent order and purpose by which events, seasons, and other phenomena occur or the mechanisms through which organisms behave in a patterned and arranged fashion. This sort of order and careful arrangement cannot just be as a result of the activity of chance but a product and manifestation of an intelligent, careful planner who programmed the universe to operate the way it does. This teleological argument according to William Palley is akin to the working of the wall clock which works in an orderly fashion. Though we do not physically see the intelligent designer at work, deductively, we must conclude that the intelligent designer exists. How else could one account for the intelligent, ordered and perfective functions present in the universe? An intelligent designer responsible for the order and harmony in the universe Aquinas regards as God.

The Ontological Model of Argument for God's Existence

Another model of argument for God's existence is the ontological argument defended by Rene Descartes and St. Anselm of Canterbury. The thrust of the ontological argument is very meaning and implication of the concept God. According to Iroegbu (99), the ontological model goes outside of experience and seeks to show the reality of God from our very understanding of what God is by definition, nature and conception. By explicative logical coherence, it shows that we cannot existentially deny what we essentially affirm by saying that God is the greatest reality, the perfect being, non-contradictory absolute. For St. Anselm, God is the greatest object possible in thought that exists in reality as well if not God cannot be said to be the greatest conceivable being. In this formulation, there seems to be a logical jump from the very idea of God to the reality of God. Does it then follow that for everything one is able to conceive of comes into existence or does exist? For example, if I can conceive a flying horse or unicorn does not make these things to exist in reality. As a result of this kind of challenge, Descartes appeals to mathematics and uses the concept of a triangle to escape the logical

jump in St. Anselm's formulation. Accordingly, "we all conceive of God as an absolutely perfect being. If he is perfect, he cannot lack one of the attributes of perfection, that of existence. If he did not exist, he would not be perfect. To avoid contradiction, since he is perfect, he necessarily exists", therefore, God exists, (Iroegbu 100).

Argument from Morality

According to Immanuel Kant, morality presupposes the existence of God. "Human moral experience witnesses a consciousness of moral duty. Duty is an internal imperative of doing good and avoiding evil. This is a natural datum founded on an internal logic of a moral law giver in human's interior self. It is a dictate of practical reason characterized by duties and responsibilities for the good of all", (Iroegbu 94). For morality only makes sense if there is a God who not only impresses the moral law on the consciousness of all humans but also rewards each accordingly. Through this moral law therefore God is able to regulate and control the behavior of humans. The obvious challenge is there are those who do not believe in God yet follow strictly the moral law. This makes it possible to then consider the possibility that belief in God or religious affiliation is not a necessary condition for any adherence to moral duty though it may enhance it.

Arguments Against God's Existence

Many scholars deny the existence for God for various grounds. One of the most prominent figures is Friedrich Nietzsche who is popularly known to have said that God is dead. This means that for him, God was or existed but is no more! Within his thought system, man now has assumed the place of God and poised to become the super –power. David Hume is another who argues against God's existence given the radicalization of empiricism that he championed. Others include thinkers who belong to Logical positivism who denied God and in fact all other

metaphysical reality since they fail to satisfy the criterion of meaning or verification set by them.

One other classic argument against God's existence is the claim that God is hidden otherwise termed, divine hiddenness. It is a view formulated along the line that God has failed to present itself and openly be scrutinized in order to prove its existence and disprove the claims of the skeptics or atheists. For God's existence is by no means a sufficiently clear aspect of reality. The various arguments of non-beliefs are in fact proves or evidence for the non existence of God.

It is important to point that beyond some of the few points above, there are counter arguments for each of the five ways of Aquinas discussed in the foregoing. For example, as criticism of the argument from order and harmony that underlie the universe, it is argued that chaos is also very much present in the universe. Earthquakes, floods, and natural disasters or physical evils that cause suffering and pain cannot be said to be wholly accounted for in any persuasive and convincing way in that order and harmony model. Added to this is the view that the argument from degrees perfection does not demonstrate that all perfections are ultimately embodied in only one being as the only source of all perfections.

Further Notes on some of Important Concepts related to theme of God.

It is worth pointing briefly are some terms that are associated with theistic thinking. Some of these terms have been defined by Iroegbu (90) and they include; pantheism, monotheism, polytheism, panentheism, deism and fideism amongst others.

1. Pantheism is associated with Baruch Spinoza who identified God with nature. Thus, natural things are expressions of divine being and activity. Hence, the classic remark of his, God or Nature.
2. Monotheism is the belief in one and indivisible God.
3. Polytheism is the idea that there are more than one God; some sort of pluralistic notion of God that make God more than one.
4. Panentheism is a species of pantheism, accepts God's existence, but relates him reciprocally to creatures. Everything is hooked in God and God is hooked on everything. Proponents of this include; F. Kranse and Alfred North Whitehead.
5. Deism is the view that God exists but he has no more sustaining influence nor does he again care for what is happening to the world he originally created.
6. Fideism is the view that God exists and does intervene in history and the truths of the Christian religion are acceptable only by faith and not reason.

4.0 Summary

The concept of God was the central concern of the unit. The unit examined the centrality of the God question in metaphysics. It examined the arguments for the existence of God and some few arguments against the existence of God. It broadly divided the arguments into the *a posteriori* model (made up of the cosmological and teleological arguments) and the *a priori* model (made up of the ontological and moral arguments for God's existence) of argument for God's existence. The unit also highlighted some of the weaknesses of some of the cosmological arguments as promoted by St Thomas Aquinas. The weakness of the teleological argument was also highlighted. The unit also mentioned some of the thinkers and schools of thought that argue against the existence of God. Some important topics associated with the theme of God were also defined following Iroegbu's characterization.

5.0 Conclusion

The unit examined the ubiquitous concept of God in metaphysics. It presented the arguments for and against the existence of God as contained in the literatures. Particularly the unit examined the cosmological arguments, the teleological, and the ontological and moral arguments for the existence of God. Some arguments against the existence of God were also discussed. Some major concepts were then further clarified as a way of improving the understanding some philosophical jargons associated with the theme of God.

6.0 Tutor Marked Assignments

Outline the various models of arguments for the existence of God

What are some of the arguments against God's existence?

Define the following terms: pantheism, panentheism, deism, fideism, monotheism and polytheism.

7.0 References and Further Reading

Omogbe, J. I. (1996). *Metaphysics Without Tears: A Systematic and Historical Study*. Lagos: Joja Press Ltd.

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Unit 2: A Short Note on what Human Nature is

The central theme to be examined in this brief study unit is what the nature of the human person is in metaphysics and how this has been theorised in the course of the history of metaphysics.

1.0 Introduction

The central concern is to provide a brief insight into what human nature is and show the historical development of the understanding of what human nature or human person generally is in the course of the history of philosophy. In other words, the focus is to examine what is it or what those qualities are or features that make a being a human person.

2.0 Objectives of the Study

The following are the objectives of the study for the students;

- a. To understand what human is;
- b. To appreciate the development of the concept in the history of metaphysics;
- c. To be able to outline some defining features of human nature as peculiarly different from the other aspects of nature.

3.0 Main Content

Three broad images of the human nature are manifest in the literatures. These include; the classical or rationalistic inherited from Ancient Greece and Rome; the Judeo-Christian view and the naturalistic or biological view.

The classical thinking as regards the notion of the human person is that provided in the work of Boethius which is that the human person is an individual substance of a rational nature. The quality of rationality simply means a self-reflective consciousness. Plato considered reason as the highest part of the soul and so it is reason's primary task to guide conduct. Aristotle also considered reason as the highest faculty of the soul, and the distinguishing faculty that sets the human person apart from the other parts of nature. This foregrounds the Cartesian notion of the thinking self that is not only conscious of the fact that he entertains doubt but that he was in fact conscious of his doubting self-encapsulated in his classic

formula, “Cogito ergo sum” (I think therefore I am). In developing this argument of the human person, Omoregbe (38) outlines six features that make a person to include: rationality, freedom, morality, sociality, interpersonal relationship, and individuality. In other words, for one to be considered a human person, he or she must be a rational being, a moral being, a social being, a free being, a being capable of interpersonal relationship and an individual being. These fundamental features outlined above do really distinguish the human person from all other beings in nature.

Another important feature of the human person is the effort to clarify and understand what makes up the human person and the implications of such characterization. In the Cartesian system for instance, the human person is seen to be made of two entities or substances: thought and matter otherwise referred to as mind and body. Whereas the mind is a mental or immaterial substance which is capable of thinking while the body is an extension of matter which is a material substance. These two entities are interconnected in the human person within which they affect and influence each other in some ways. The very exact nature of the relationship between the two different substances; one immaterial and the other material has remained problematic for scholars over the years since the time of Descartes who first characterized the problematic in a very interesting manner. Some of the various ways efforts have been made to account for the very nature of relationship will be considered in the subsequent study unit.

The Judeo-Christian viewpoint suggests that the human person is considered as the image of God and a special creature different from the parts of the created order. In fact, the human person is seen as a finite being as well as a being that has some spiritual connections as well. While it is part of the created order and thus affected by the weaknesses and limitations of the earth or worldly affairs, it has the capacity to transcend same when it is able to devote itself to the highest values and practice - God. This theological and religious view reads meaning and purpose in the created order. Humans are ends in themselves and should not be used as means to an end. It also views the human person as a moral being who is morally responsible, (Onyeocha 211).

The Naturalistic or scientific viewpoint on human nature suggests that the human nature as part of the larger physical universe under the operations of natural laws and principles. The fundamental role of cells and its other small elements are a key to understanding the human person in relation to the larger universe that follows the evolutionary processes and activities.

In the various philosophical traditions the make-up of the human person vary from

the popular notions in the western philosophical tradition. Whereas the human person is seen to be made of two substances as it in the Cartesian system seen in the foregoing, the mode of thinking and philosophical underpinnings in various cultures may have different account with implications for how the human person is perceived and understood. For example, in much of African philosophical thinking, the accounts of the person provided are sometimes dualistic (the body and the spirit/soul) whereas some others present tripartite framework involving three entities to involve the body, the soul and the spirit. Little wonder, Gyekye (1998: 65) opines that in Akan metaphysics of the person and of the world in general, all this seems to imply that a human being is not just an assemblage of flesh and bone, that he or she, a complex being who cannot completely be explained by the same laws of physics used to explain inanimate things and that our world cannot simply be reduced to physics. The idea here is that the conception of the human person or the nature of the human nature is a very important one and interests in telling the narrative of what and how it is remains central not only among scholars but also individuals across societies.

4.0 Summary

This study unit has explored the question of what human nature is and what sets it apart from the other parts of nature or the universe. Three fundamental broad theories were highlighted. These theories include: the rationalistic or classical view, the Judeo-Christian model and the Naturalistic or scientific view of human nature. If materialism (the thinking that all that there is in nature or the universe is wholly matter and there is nothing extra to it; that is, mental aspect for instance) is true then there is nothing unique about human nature that is constitutively part of that nature/universe.

However, as the study unit shows, there is more to matter in nature. As demonstrated in the foregoing discussion, human nature though as part of the universe is peculiar and the peculiarities have been assessed. In fact, the effort to investigate and discuss what reality really means for the human person itself is an indication that such beings involved in the endeavours are conscious. An aspect of human nature that cannot be wholly accounted for within the mechanistic or scientific model of explanation alone and in fact does constitute a basis to draw a line between such beings and the rest of the universe/nature.

5.0 Conclusion

While one may not be able to exhaustively and convincingly argue that one position is ultimately the correct version of the problem at hand, at least some robust familiarity with the various nuances make the exercise worthwhile and philosophically rewarding.

6.0 References and Further Reading

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Unit 2: On the Problem of Mind and Body

The mind-body problem remains one of the perennial problems in philosophy as it has not only attended the interest of many philosophers through the ages but has defied final resolution also.

1.0 Introduction

Ever since the time of Rene Descartes it has remained very central to philosophy. More importantly the encroachment and resolution of many problems by the sciences and its advances to understanding and explaining all that there is in terms of matter and quantifiable and measurable terms have made this problem central and important.

2.0 Objectives of the study

The learning outcomes or objectives of the study for students for this unit include;

- a. To be able to understand the main thrust of the problem of mind and body;
- b. To have an overview of the historical perspective to efforts in resolving it;
- c. To stimulate reflections on the various theories there are in an effort to resolve the problem of mind and body drawing on inspirations of earlier thinkers.

3.0 Main Content

The mind-body problem is an attempt to understand the relationship between mental phenomena and the bodily basis of those phenomena. It is exceedingly hard to account for these; hence, it is a problem. The effort to understand and explain how these two distinct parts actually do relate has generated a lot of theories and debates. The classic distinction noted by Descartes point to some other issues that have remained problematic in accounting for the nature of relationship between mind and matter. Which of the two is more fundamental and how do they operate in a human person? What is the nature of each and their features? How do these two distinct and essentially different features really relate, if they do and where does this take place? What is the nature of influence and effect that each exact on the other? These are some of the questions that have divided experts in many fields. While some are of the view that mind is the fundamental nature of reality directing activities of the body. This is a claim held by materialists such as Gilbert Ryle that mind or consciousness is epiphenomenon – that is, accidental by-product of matter.

There are numerous theories defended by experts in various fields in philosophy and science. The focus here is not to highlight and engage all of these theories but to point out some that we think are the popular and major ones with a view of stimulating further reflections among students on this problem. We shall adopt the categorization of theories in the explication of this problem in Aja (142-147)

because it provides very detailed as well as comprehensive summary of the main points of the various theories in ways you do not find in the texts available to me. The list includes the following;

1.1.1 Interactionism

The Cartesian formulation of the problem aptly captures the central thesis of this theory which suggests that though of distinct nature with different essential attributes, they however exact influences on one another – in other words, they interact. Descartes went ahead to identify a part of the brain called the pineal gland as the seat of the soul or the mind wherein this interaction takes place. Such a view did not account for why there is interaction between the two distinct substances and the location of a place within the brain where the interaction takes place was an overreach on the part of Descartes. It is key to note that the double aspect theory of body and mind proposed by Spinoza is not the same thing with the view of Descartes and does not say much as regards interaction between both given that mind and body (the mental and the physical aspects) are conceived of as two sides of a single substance.

1.1.2 Occasionalism

This theory was suggested by Malebranche and according to him, on the occasion of bodily stimuli or impressions, God create the appropriate idea and response in the mind.

1.1.3 Parallelism

It the thought of Gottfried Leibniz, there is a parallel between the mental phenomena and the physical phenomena and there is not any form of causal relations between the two phenomena. Mental processes and physical processes are equally real, they are not causally related; they merely accompany each other in time.

1.1.4 Identity Theory

The theory simply holds that every mental item can be identified with some physical item. Though there are several refinements and reformulation of this theory the end goal is simply a targeted effort to totally eliminate the mental dimension from within our understanding of the phenomenon.

1.1.5 Epiphenomenalism and the denial of mind

It is a theory that suggests a one dimensional mode of interaction whereby the physical phenomena produces the mental features that are noticed and never in the reverse order/vice versa. This view also suggests that the mind is merely a bodily function. Aristotle, Hegel, Hobbes and other behaviourists such as Thomas Huxley endorse this theory.

1.1.6 Psychological Monism and the denial of matter

This theory suggests the primacy of the mental over matter. Thus, the body is considered as mental appearance to such an extent that causal series is confined to the mental realm alone and so what we think or regard as matter is a shadow cast by thought. Matter is merely an appearance such that the body is an externalization of mind. Leibniz, Berkeley, Schopenhauer are its proponents.

1.1.7 Dualism

This doctrine is opposed to monism (only one fundamental kind of state in our universe) that there are two fundamental kinds of states in the universe, mental states and material states that are thoroughly distinct and totally separable from each other. Mind and matter are considered to be equally fundamental, entirely independent and mutually irreducible. Descartes and Leibniz are proponents of the dualist view. There are different versions of the dualistic account of the mind and body problem. For example, dualistic interactionism as described in the foregoing part of this section which involves a 2 way interactionism – causation goes both ways; from the mental to the material and vice versa. The Cartesian view is representative of this model of dualism. The others are: the one-way model of epiphenomenalism and then the no-way model of parallelism, (Carroll &Markosian 2010: 135-136).

1.1.8 Mind according to Emerging Evolution

This theory holds that there is no dualism, no interaction and no extreme denial. Matter is real and mind is real. Mind however has new features of its own that cannot be adequately interpreted with reference to the standards of previous levels. The self is considered as the living individual with its needs and interests and capacities for feeling, thinking, and creative imagination. The self is not the mind. The self is the living being who carries on these mental processes, (Aja 147).

Some other thinkers have suggested that the problem is what it is because of the linguistic and conceptual confusion that have been associated with the formulation of the mind and body problem. The view is held by Gilbert Ryle, a contemporary British philosopher who accused Descartes and others of being guilty of what he calls *category mistake*. Category Mistake is committed when a concept is treated as if it belonged to one system or category of ideas when, in fact, it belongs to another. He thus, dismissed the idea of the mind by ridiculing it in terms of a ghost in a machine – where ghost represents the mind and the machine for the body, (Onyeocha 2009: 328).

4.0 Conclusion

This study unit has examined the mind and body problem that became

philosophically engaging right from the time of Rene Descartes. The problem continues to be of interest to philosophers as well as other experts to account for the nature of the relationship there is between mental processes and the bodily extended self or properties as distinct substances. The study unit exposed the various nuances of the attempts that have been proposed to resolve the intractable problem. It identified various theories and described their main thrust.

5.0 Summary

The nature of the relationship between the mind and body was the central theme of the study unit. The intriguing nature of the problem and how intractable the problem has been in philosophy was highlighted. Different theories as attempts to clarify the very nature of the relationship between the two distinct yet connected entities in the human person. From those that proposed two distinct entities causally involved and interactive, from extremes that deny one at the expense of the other to moderate view were all highlighted.

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MODULE 6: NOTION OF SUBSTANCE (MONISM VS PLUARISM)

In the history of metaphysics, one of the main points of disagreement between Baruch Spinoza and Wilhelm Leibnitz is the nature of the underlying reality which reason tells us to be so, whatever the senses tell us. In other words: what is the nature of substances? Must there be only one of these or many, and if the latter, how many?

Unit 1: Substance: Problems and its Characterisations

1.0 Introduction

For this study unit, we set out to examine the concept and place of substance in metaphysics or philosophy generally. What is the notion of substance about? Is substance necessary and how does one distinguish between one substance and the other? What are the traditional and modern theories of substance? It also attempts a philosophical excursion and discussion on substance in metaphysics in its various periods.

2.0 Objective of the study

The main objectives of the study are:

- a. To underpin what the notion of substance connotes
- b. To know the history of the debates surrounding the notion of substance
- c. To ascertain the various dimensions of what the notion means in metaphysics

3.0 Main Content

The notion of substance is an important one in metaphysics that has continued to be of interest to philosophers. The ability to be able to sustain talk and belief in change and identity over time makes sense only when we appreciate what the concept of substance implicates/means. Whereas the Greek and Latin roots or etymology of the word substance may mean different things but whichever way one may conceive it, it is always in relation with the idea of being or beingness. From its Latin root, it means something standing beneath the properties. The Latin word, sub (under) stans (standing). While the Greek word for substance “ousia” means that which is fundamental. According to Iroegbu (49), substance is contrasted with accident. The former exists in itself whereas the latter inheres or exists in the substance. The substance supports the accident in existence, underlies it.

In Aristotle, substance means particular things. For example, this man, this horse, used to refer to matter, a category. For him, there are primary and secondary substances, the latter being species or general instances of primary substances. Omoregbe (5) adds that “in Aristotle’s philosophy substance has two meanings. In the first sense, substance is whatever exists on its own while its opposite, accident,

is whatever cannot exist on its own but can only inhere in other things". A clear example of this can simply be gleaned when we look and consider colours, which is a clear case of understanding the difference between the contrast between the notion of substance and accidents. It is the case that colours do not exist on their own. Their existence is premised on something more fundamental in which particular colour exists or inheres.

In Locke, substance refers to that which underlies something or other which is supposed to give support to the properties that inhere in it. In describing this traditional doctrine of substances, particular substances are never predicated of anything else but everything else is predicated of them. This also constitute what Strawson calls the basic logical subjects.

Basic particulars are not only identifiable; they are re-identifiable. That is, they not only occupy space but do have a certain persistence through time, so they can be re-identified as the same thing as that which was. Aristotle puts the matter by saying that they are the only things that can remain the same while receiving contrary qualifications. They retain their identity through change. Substances therefore have a relative permanence; they do not have a merely instantaneous form of life. They have a form and matter and so substances are the building blocks of both material and immaterial reality as well. In this context, the contrast between substance and accident makes a lot of sense.

One important feature of substance is the idea of simplicity. In fact, simplicity is said to be an important feature of what constitute substance. The thesis that substances must be simple is integral to atomist theories as long as they hold that the atomicity or indivisibility of atoms is one of principle and not merely something that holds good in fact. Thus, the basicness of substance must itself entail its absolute simplicity. A clear example of this in the history of philosophy is the contribution of Leibniz with reference to his theory of monadology. Monads are simple and basic entities from which all of nature is made of. They are simple in the way that the ego is; they are absolutely one yet capable of representing a plurality, as the ego does in its perception of the world. This is a feature which is not exemplified in any material thing, so that the ultimate substances must for that reason, be immaterial.

In contemporary thinking, the advancement of science and its worldviews tend to give impression and plausibility to the view that the best way in which to speak and think about the world are not those of substance, identity and change, but for example, events and processes. A. N. Whitehead is an example in fact. For his, what we earlier thought to be substances are best conceptualised as aspects of processes. In fact, science does not sustain the conception of the world of persistent

substance subject to change. The objects are rather ingredients into events; they are one might say, logical constructions out of events and processes, (Hamlyn 60-84). The next point to then clarify is what happens and how are we able to tell the difference between one substance and another? Attempts to respond to this question are central to what medieval scholars refer to as the problem of the principle of individuation. Here connected with this problem therefore is the theme of identity and how to distinguish one thing from the other. While it is important to note that this problem though important should not detract from the fact that the notion of substance here defended is one which constitute the specific nature of a thing and thus synonymous with essence or nature. It is in virtue of which a thing is what it is, as distinct from other things or from its qualities.

4.0 Summary

The foregoing unit treated the notion of substance, meaning and its distinctive nature character. In the process it provided a historical assessment of the notion of substance by tracing the etymology of the word both in Latin and Greek to underscore the fact that substance can simply be contrasted with accident. Substance was considered to be that which is fundamental or the basic principle, supporting being and primary reality under which accidents inhere or lie.

5.0 Conclusion

This study unit examined one of the problems in metaphysics – substance and its nature. It provided insights into the historical and contemporary reflections on what the notion of substance connotes.

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MODULE 7: FREEDOM AND DETERMINISM

Freedom are of many types; from to do as one pleases and the absence of any constraints. For example, anyone in prison cannot be said to have the first sense of freedom to do as much as one pleases. One of the very often quoted line from Jean Jacques Roseau is “man is born free but he is everywhere in chains”, to underscore the importance that is given to the concept of freedom. In fact, in many societies today, freedom is a popular term as it is always referred to as one of the pillars of civilization and political advancement whereby this notion of freedom is not only enshrined in the constitutions of states that guide societies and people but acclaimed to be what is fundamentally human against the backdrop of universal human rights calls. Despite the inalienable nature of its character in sociopolitical parlance, it is basically of metaphysical nature that is of interest to us in this study unit. It is against this backdrop that this module seeks to examine what is freedom and what the lack or absence of it means; that is, determinism.

Unit 1: Freedom and Free Will

1.0 Introduction

What is freedom is the question that this study unit seeks to answer. What are the types of freedom that there are and why is the notion of freedom metaphysically interesting? Is there any metaphysical basis for the notion of freedom? If yes, what is it? If no, why? This will be the focus of this present study unit.

2.0 Objectives of the study

The objectives of this study unit for students are;

- a. To understand the meaning of freedom.
- b. To underscore the metaphysical basis of the notion of freedom.
- c. To be able to explicate why the notion of freedom is problematic.

3.0 Main Content

Freedom is one concept that is very often used but hardly there is unanimous and universal consensus as to what exactly it means. In some texts and defended by some authors are two ways to conceptualise freedom or tell what freedom is from what it is not. These two notions are; freedom to and freedom from. The two senses do not mean the same thing as we would see shortly. The former sense connotes the ability to do as one pleases which is of an internal kind. It is to use the positive sense of the word freedom. The second manner of use means absence of any constrain of any sort which may be an external kind of factor. This latter sense is to use the notion of freedom in the negative sense. Freedom is used interchangeably with free will and it is used in relation to the nature of the human person in the universe. Thus, the understanding that one holds of the very nature of the universe; that includes, the origin and character of the universe defines how

one approaches and understands the concept of freedom or freewill. Is freedom or freewill a matter of illusion or it is real in the sense that the human person has a unique place within the entire universe and does operate with capacities that are uniquely associated only with the human person. Freewill or freedom problem arises in the context of the question of moral responsibility. That is, whether it is morally responsible to hold the human person for his/her actions and inactions in the society. Thus, if it is the case that the human person is fundamentally free then it makes sense to hold the human person responsible for whatever actions carried out by the person. If it is the case that the human person is not free then such a person cannot be said to be morally responsible and so make no sense to be held accountable for such an action.

If freedom is true then determinism is false. And if determinism is true then freewill is false. In other words, both positions cannot be true at the same time and in the same context. However, there are ways in which these contraries can be reformulated and refined in order to accommodate both positions as we shall see when we study the problematic nature of the two together in one of our subsequent study units.

Sometimes questions are raised as to whether there is a limit to freedom (limited freedom) or there isn't any limit to it (absolute freedom). In existentialist thinking of J.-P. Sartre, the human person is accorded absolute freedom and so cannot but be fully and wholly responsible for the choices and decisions thereof. According to Iroegbu (255) the existential freedom defines his essence. The human person has creative power to escape the mechanical laws of nature and evolution. The progress of human creativity proves this his total freedom. My freedom is my whole being, my entire existence. The import of this for morality therefore is that only one law operates: choose thyself! Choose thy values. Thus, in the exercise of his unlimited freedom, the human person makes his or her image which of course does have consequence in the sense that it involves anguish for one cannot shift the responsibility to others.

4.0 Summary

The notion of freedom was the subject matter of the study unit. Different types of freedom were identified and some few examples were given. The notion of moral

freedom was problematized because that is the only sense or type of freedom that makes meaningful and metaphysically interesting the discourse on moral responsibility.

5.0 Conclusion

The focus of this study unit was the idea of freedom and what it means. It examines why the notion of freedom is of philosophical or metaphysical interest. It particularly highlighted the fact that the type of freedom that makes our study metaphysically interesting is the notion of moral freedom because of its relevance for issues related to moral responsibility.

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Unit 2: Determinism

Determinism denies that there is freewill or freedom. The human person does not have free will to exercise in taking actions or making choices. There are different brands or variants of determinism that have been defended through the course of the history of philosophy.

1.0 Introduction

When the human person is said to be determined is to say that the human person lacks the capacity to exercise any form of freewill. In characterizing the human person, several factors and causes have been identified as limiting the capacity of the human person to be free in making choices. When the notion of determinism is stretched to its limits, it means that holding the human person morally responsible for his or her actions and decisions will be problematic. This unit will therefore attempt to clarify what the basic features of determinism are, its various forms given the various reasons advanced in defense of the claim and the position of the proponents that hold these views.

2.0 Objectives of the study

The unit will help students to:

- a. Underpin determinism;
- b. Understand the historical evolution of determinism;
- c. Distinguish the various types of determinism and their proponents.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 What is Determinism?

Determinism means the denial or rejection of freewill associated with the capacity of the human person to exercise freewill/freedom in any significant way in making decisions, choices or taking actions. It means that everything that happens is determined as everything has a cause. No wonder then Aja (154) states that it is a doctrine of universal causation. It says only that every event has a cause. It does not say whether the cause is mental or physical, whether it is inorganic nature or organism or people or God. As far as determinism is concerned the cause can be anything. If determinism is true, then there is no freewill since the two positions cannot be true and false at the same time. Or better still, is there a way in which these apparent contrary positions can be reformed or revised to accommodate the possibility of both positions being true or false at the same time?

Extreme form of determinism is often regarded as fatalism. Fatalism is simply the view that whatever will be will be. In other words, human beings for example have no power to change the course of events. It does not deny that everything that happens has a cause. What it says in effect is simply that the future will be of certain nature regardless of what we do, and that therefore there is no point in our trying to do anything about it, (Aja 155). This position has a lot of implications for human persons and societies where such views are the prevailing worldviews. So for example, certain people can resign themselves to fate and eschew hard work and diligence that can sometimes impact on the prospects of the successes that one

can attain or achieve. The point here is that the position of fatalism seems to be a pernicious view that ought to be done away with by all means necessary.

If everything is caused, how can we avoid the problem of infinite regression in our quest to account for the series of causes responsible for causing series of events under query?

3.2 Types of Determinism

There are many types of determinism that have been identified by various scholars. Broadly two broad ways to look at the problem of determinism is the extent to which any position of determinism is able to accommodate and provide some space for moral responsibility. Such that when those who hold deterministic views make room for moral responsibility and accountability such a view is representative of soft version of determinism. On the other hand, any system that leaves no room at all within their deterministic views for moral responsibility, such extreme versions is generally hard determinism. We shall now examine different systems to see where each fall into whether soft or hard versions of determinism.

Following Omoregbe's (29) classification, the various types of determinism include; ethical determinism (human actions are determined by what they perceive as good. The role of knowledge is key for this form of determinism. According to some of its proponents, to include, Socrates and Plato, even those who do evil do it unknowingly. After all, evil is in the long term harmful to the doer. Theological determinism is another type. For this form of determinism God has the foreknowledge of all actions and so it is very problematic to reconcile the fact of freedom of the human person and the knowledge of such action known by God prior to the action ever taking place. A deep assessment of the fact of God's foreknowledge of the future actions of humans does not conflict with the notion of freewill of the human person as defended by Augustine and others. There is however a problematic version of this type of determinism – predestination which holds that some persons have been so selected and specially chosen by God and endowed with grace with guaranteed salvation. For the materialists who describe the operations of nature to be predicated on the principles or laws of nature, there is not so much room for human freedom because the human person as part and parcel of the physical universe are controlled by those laws. This form of determinism is called physical determinism. This form of determinism denies any extra-physical dimension of the human person given the mechanistic orientation at the foundation of materialism generally. There is however some problems associated with this kind of thinking about the human person considered to be entirely and wholly matter. Some of the thinkers who hold this materialistic notion of the world and of course of the human person include scholars like Thomas

Hobbes and Baron Paul Von Holbach. Another form or type of determinism is psychological determinism which holds that psychological factors such as motives and instincts determine human actions and so the human person cannot be said to be free if these factors are solely responsible in causing humans to act. David Hume, Sigmund Freud and Thomas Hobbes defend this form of determinism. The problem with the form of determinism is to think that for every action that has a cause and that cause in effect determines the action which does not necessarily follow. This is the case because as Omoregbe (34) puts it, “to say that an action is free does not mean that it has no cause. Every action indeed has a cause. But the cause of an action does not determine it. What determines one’s action immediately is one’s free choice, which is one’s free decision”. Finally, there is historical determinism which simply holds that history and the events in history are determined. Hegel is a strong proponent of this form of determinism. So for him, historical events are crucial parts, in fact inevitable moments of the dialectic process through which the absolute realizes self-development in view of attaining absolute rationality. Karl Marx is another thinker who holds a similar view of history but in this case production or economic forces are the prime determinants of historical process in view of the advancement or progress of society to the highest form of society – communism. The problem with this form of determinism is that it denies the role and responsibility of humans in the affairs pertaining their lives and history.

In the modern era, especially in Kant we see that the experience of the human person on the moral plane makes a very strong case for the fact of human freedom. Thus, the attempt in metaphysics or any form of speculative reflection to resolve the problem of human freedom will yield little or no result. The human experience of regret or remorse and blame worthiness or praise worthiness following decisions or choices humans make or take as well as the very foundation of meaningfulness really of the various codes that operate in society are pointers to the fact that the human person is indeed free.

4.0 Summary

In this study unit, we have examined determinism which means that human actions are determined. In other words, it is the theory that suggests that there is a cause for everything and these causes determine human actions. Two broad versions of

deterministic thinking viz: soft and hard versions were identified and described. While the former allows and makes room for holding humans morally accountable for their actions, the latter leaves no room for moral responsibility at all. We also went further to examine the various types of these broad versions of determinism to include; physical, theological, historical, psychological determinism and the problems associated with each and outlined their various proponents.

5.0 Conclusion

We have looked at what is determinism in the foregoing study unit. We identified various versions of determinism and the specific types of determinisms there are and their defenders in the history of philosophy. We concluded the study unit by taking our cue from Kant who argued that is the moral experiences of the human person that gives us insights and clues into thinking seriously that the human person indeed is free. For if the human person is not free, then there is hardly any basis for the human feeling of remorse, regret, blameworthiness and praise worthiness as well as the meaningfulness and reasonability of the various codes whether criminal or social that guide society.

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MODULE 8: PARTICIPATION

This study unit by its very nature will be brief as it seeks to examine what the notion of participation is in philosophical parlance and the implications. It therefore seeks to outline and underscore the meaning/definition of the term and provide an account of its nature.

Unit 1: On Participation: Meaning/Definition and Nature

Given that material objects exist, do such things as properties exist? If yes, how and in what sense do they exist, apart from the material objects that instantiate them? Do the material objects in which these properties inhere exhaust the possibility of their existence such that when the material object goes out of existence for example, what becomes of the properties that once inhere in the material objects? What is the nature of the relationship between the existing material objects and the properties that inhere in these material objects? What is the notion of participation all about in philosophy? How do you define and understand the term participation are questions this study unit seeks to examine in this brief study unit.

1.0 Introduction

In ordinary usage, participation means to be involved in an activity or to take part in or be part of something, event. In philosophical parlance however the term evokes much more than that because of some questions that such a notion connotes. Thus, this study unit will briefly explore the philosophical import of the notion of participation with a view to outlining some of the problems the philosophical usage of the terms implicates.

2.0 Objective of the Study

This objectives of this study unit for students include;

- a. to understand what the term connotes/means;
- b. to appreciate the idea of participation in philosophy;
- c. to note the philosophical problems the characterization provokes;

3.0 Main Content

Participation is generally the concept Plato uses to explain the relationship between two worlds; the world of the senses/world of appearances characterized by fleeting and passing or transiting features and the world of ideas/forms which consists of the necessary, permanent and enduring essences which alone possesses real existence, its reality is true to the extent that it participates, shares in or imitates the

fully real of the ideal world. Thus, what we have in the transient world are mere copies, imitation, or participation of essences of these realities in the most real and model world of the ideal.

Two worlds are distinguished in Plato's idealism; this forms the overarching character of his metaphysics and contained in his theory of the world of forms or the ideal world. The two worlds are – world of existence or reality generally and the world of the senses. In the latter, that is the present world or world of the senses; things are rather transient and passing while in the former is transcendent world wherein inheres permanent things, universals, essences of things. Things exist in their originality and completeness in this realm according to Plato. In fact the ideas and knowledge of universals such as wisdom, goodness, beauty, justice and other universals are as a result of the pre-existence experience of the soul in that realm that we are able to recall only when the soul remembers or recollects them. The vagueness with which we are able to recall this stuff was caused by the pains associated with birth.

Plato's philosophy is called idealism not because he regards ideas as reality or reality as ideas but because he transfers the essence of things into the ideal world in his philosophy. In that ideal world alone is objective reality discoverable. Thus, what constitutes being, the essence of being can be found in that world of ideas/forms. It is in the relationship of the two worlds that the idea of participation finds its meaning. For example, when one is said to be growing in wisdom, beauty or improving in the sense of justice, this means that there is an objective wisdom, beauty, and justice in which one participatorily increases. This ideal being or virtue is in the ideal world. It alone gives satisfactory explanation of the progression of knowledge and particularly of the being we experience, participatorily here and now. A flower can be beautiful only in so far as it partakes of absolute beauty, (Iroegbu 138).

There is however some problems that arise in the sense that a substance cannot exist apart from that of which it is a substance, how do they relate if they exist apart? In response, Plato says it is only through participation. This creates an obvious ontological dualism. For the metaphor of participation, imitation and reminiscence for soul-body relationship, then there is an essential ontological gap that needs filling. If there is only participation between things; that is, between particular objects along with their properties in relation to their perfect others in the world of ideas, there is no substantial causality and the problem of origin is left unresolved.

As against the transcendent place of existence of universals in the world of forms

seen in Plato, Aristotle defends the position that universals exists, not outside of the real world but in the world of our experience. This understanding is the basis of science and of all authentic and balanced philosophy.

The concept was also prevalent in the thoughts of some medieval philosophers such as St. Thomas Aquinas in their understanding of the attributes of God and how the human person shares in the attributes though in an imperfect and limited form. According to Omoregbe (157), for although creatures are beings, in actual fact God is being itself; he is not simply a being but Being itself. He does not simply have life, but he is life itself; he is not simply just (as we say of human beings), but he is justice itself; he is not simply good, but he is Goodness itself, Beauty itself, etc. he is the infinite Source of all these attributes; he does not simply have them, rather they are identical with his being as the Source from which human beings share or participates in.

4.0 Summary

This study has examined the concept of participation. It looked at the meaning of the concept and how it is central to understanding the nature of relationship between universals and the particulars.

5.0 Conclusion

The meaning and definition of participation was examined. The problem of understanding the relationship between particulars and universals in central in our understanding of the concept of participation. The contributions of Plato and of course Aristotle during the Classical era were significant in the building blocks that formed the philosophical works of medieval scholars to the concept of participation is not only significant but huge in many ways. According to the analysis the particulars are identifiable and calibrated based on the extent to which they inhere in them, the universals. Whereas the universals exist in perfection in the world of forms the particulars in their imperfection only participates or imitates the universals.

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MODULE 9: ESSENCE AND EXISTENCE

The concept of essence and existence are a pair of metaphysical trope (recurrent and persistent theme) through which we can further understand and characterise the nature of reality. Various philosophers have different views on what constitute the essence of reality and what the very nature of existence is all about to which this present module shall focus attention.

Unit 1: On Essence and Existence

For this study unit, the focus will be the examination of what is essence and existence and how both terms have been used in the metaphysical parlance through the years. In doing this, the study unit will attempt a clarification or definition of what each term means and how the various philosophers have understood them during the major epochs of philosophy.

1.0 Introduction

For this study unit, the overall interest is to attempt the examination of these two concepts or principles that are often used in the attempt to describe and capture reality. What and how do we best define these terms in ways that address the main currents of what each mean? What are the historical discourses associated with these two important tropes in the description of reality. It is important to note upfront that there is a contested position by existential ontologists or existential phenomenologists that essence is something added to existence or rather that existence takes on essence to be properly and uniquely characterized. In fact, they contend that only human beings exist, that other entities merely are; they are *seindes* not *dasein*. The term *dasein* characterizes human reality because of all entities; it is dynamically cast into the world. It is this inbuilt dynamism that accounts for human actions, creativity and innovations which other animals and non-sentient entities do not have.

The point is that the term existence in ordinary usage is a corruption. It is a term that applies specifically to human being, considering its priority and capacities in the scheme of things, which other entities do not possess. That is why existence, for human reality, precedes essence.

2.0 Objectives of the Study

At the end of this study unit, the students will learn the following;

- a. the students will understand what is essence;
- b. the students will understand what is existence;
- c. the students will appreciate the historical contributions of various thinkers to these two terms and how relevant such efforts are today.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 What is Essence?

Essence has been defined in quite a number of ways. One of the ways in which essence has been defined is as that by which a thing is what it is. It is that which a thing is before it took real or concrete actual existence. It is potency to being. When contrasted with existence, essence is that which takes on existence. Existence is the essence put into reality, the realization of the essential, real or concrete being.

Essence is seen as the definable nature of whatever exists. It is that which makes a being different from other beings in terms of its ability to define and show that a particular being is different from the another being. The essence of a particular being can then be conceived of without necessarily having to be the case that the being in question actually exists. Essence is therefore that which has existence but it is not existence. This idea is at the centre of the eidetic principle that the renowned phenomenologist, Edmund Husserl, talks about the being concerned only with essences and not existence per se or actual existence. The problem with this phenomenological view then becomes one of settling the question whether there can be essence without existence or existence without essence. Scholars are of the view that there cannot be a situation whereby essence can be conceived outside of existence or the consideration of existence outside of essence, for the two are complementary and are quite inseparable. This is the case as St. Thomas Aquinas argues that it is existence that gives meaning or makes essence real or part of reality as such. Hence, this Thomistic idea draws a line of distinction between essence and existence in the beings that are imperfect, for example, the human person or any other finite beings. For existence is not of the nature of finite beings as such.

3.2 What is Existence?

Existence means that which is a reality or which has true, actual being. It is that which we see, touch or know to be here or there or somewhere else. What makes this reality real is the act of existing, its perfection. It is what makes a thing be in reality, in itself, phenomenologically spread in existential universe. It is the passage from possibility to actuality, from process to reality, from non-being to being, in other words, from nothing to something, (Iroegbu 48). It is important to quickly note that this feature of transition or change from being to non-being is only meaningful when finite beings are in question and not Necessary Being who has as parts of its very nature, existence as well as essence together.

It is important to note upfront that there is a contested position by existential ontologists or existential phenomenologists that essence is something added to existence or rather that existence takes on essence to be properly and uniquely characterized. In fact, they contend that only human beings exist, that other entities

merely are; they are *seindes* not *dasein*. The term *dasein* characterizes human reality because of all entities; it is dynamically cast into the world. It is this inbuilt dynamism that accounts for human actions, creativity and innovations which other animals and non-sentient entities do not have.

The point is that the term existence in ordinary usage is a corruption. It is a term that applies specifically to human being, considering its priority and capacities in the scheme of things, which other entities do not possess. That is why existence, for human reality, precedes essence.

3.3 Essence and Existence

We have tried in the foregoing to define and delineate what essence and existence mean separately. In this section we will now examine the two since they both always go together as complementary as well as inseparable themes in metaphysics. In fact, to understand how the two are so related it is important to distinguish between the idea of contingent beings and necessary being. As the terms contingency implies any being that exists contingently and so does not have to exist and it is imperfect in many respects. Such beings do not have as part of their nature both essence and existence. For a being to be categorized as necessary being it follows that the being cannot but exist because it has as part of its very nature both essence and existence. Thus, in the necessary being, essence and existence are identical. According to the scholastics, particularly, Thomas Aquinas defended this view to the extent that contingent beings depend and rely on Necessary Being (God) for its existence. In the modern period, Kant argued that the attempt to separate existence from a being, contingent being in this case was flawed. This is the case because to think or imagine a being is to take for granted its existence since existence is in fact not an attribute or a predicate of the being.

In the contemporary times, the characterization we draw upon from the medieval era that consider existence to limit the essence of a contingent being is at a crossroad given the radical shifts in the understanding of the human person. The work is in progress within the technological and scientific world for the transhuman project. There are promises regarding possible fundamental changes to how we think and consider some of these features with which we try to understand the being of the human person and other emerging developments - ambitious projects and programmes in the field of artificial intelligence and robotics science.

3.0 Summary

The brief study unit discusses essence and existence against the backdrop of our understanding of being divided into necessary being and contingent beings. Whereas necessary being had as parts of its very nature both essence and existence as well as other attributes that are part of it necessarily but that is not the case for

contingent beings whereby we can in fact draw a line between its essence and its existence. That we can draw a line of distinction between existence and essence does not mean that we can have essence without existence or existence without essence since the two are complementary and inseparable. In fact, it is existence that gives meaningfulness to essence and it also limits it as well. It defines what essence is and what existence is. Whereas existence means that which is a reality or which has true, actual being; essence is that by which a thing is what it is. These views on the features of existence and essence are at a threshold at a time there is increasing desire and effort through science and technology to attempt a radical shift in the understanding of the human person through transhumanism and other related projects.

4.0 Conclusion

The study unit attempted to define and characterize essence and existence as one of the interesting metaphysical principles to explain reality or the beingness of reality. This has attended the interest of philosophers through the history of metaphysics. Essence simply means the ‘what’ of a thing or being while existence is the act of being exercised by beings. At the centre of this discourse is the fundamental attempt to understand the nature of being; necessary being or contingent beings. While necessary being exists necessarily contingent beings exist contingently; that is, their own existence is not necessary and they do not have as part of their nature both existence and essence. It adds to the contemporary challenge that such characterization is due to face increasing and growing advancement in science and technology aimed at transforming the human being in very radical and fundamental ways; that is, the project of trans-humanism for instance is a case in point.

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MODULE 10: CHANCE/INDETERMINISM AND CAUSALITY

Chance is often contrasted with necessity in which case the explication of these terms will shed some light on other important and related terms very often used in relation to these terms.

Unit 1: Chance/Indeterminism and Causality

This study unit undertakes a discursive expose on the terms chance/indeterminism and causality with a view to understanding how the terms are related and interrelated with one another and their implications for our understanding on the operations and workings of the universe and our place within it as such.

1.0 Introduction

How does the universe and what is contained there operate? Is or are there laws that are foundational to events and occurrences that occur in the universe? Is there a place for chance and its logic in the affairs and operations in the universe? What are the implications for adopting a view predicated on the logic of luck? Does it sit well or contradict those who believe or hold the view that the created order of the universe operates based on inexorable laws put in place by the creative power? If there are these laws, can we know them? Do we even need to invoke a creative power in order to have an understanding of the operations of the universe? What is the limit of these laws? Where does chance come in? Are things or events indeterminate? If they are determinate, what are these causes? What are the implications of these understanding for problems of freedom and determinism we have examined in one of the previous modules in this same course guide? These are some of the few questions that will inform and guide the following reflection undertaken in this study unit.

2.0 Objectives of the Study

The learning objectives for students in this study unit are;

- a. to help students learn what chance/indeterminate means;
- b. to facilitate understanding what causality means;
- c. to assist students appreciate our place within the larger universe;

3.0 Main Content

What is chance? Indeterminacy?

These terms are closely associated with the notion of causality especially when contrasted such that to really understand them would mean an explication of the easier term – causality. Hence, indeterminism technically as applied in philosophy means an event that has no cause. When there is not a cause for an event then chance becomes the only operational trope by which that makes sense or any meaning. The implication of this line of thinking therefore is that chance becomes the principle in place when there is absence of a cause. For example, the popular

sports betting that is increasingly becoming both interesting as well as a troubling culture among young people across Nigeria today. Suppose someone purchased a bet ticket and bets for Manchester City win just before the start of the final match that held during 2021 Champions League Cup Final Match between Chelsea and Manchester United. The game ended in favour of Chelsea to the shocking experience of loss of the fellow who purchased the ticket for a Manchester City win. Analyzing this scenario of the result and the subsequent loss of the ticket purchased largely underscore this understanding of chance and indeterminacy in relation to the absence of a cause/uncaused cause. In other words, when one ticket is bought for a game of finals and just a team is expected to win, one who gambles at the beginning of the game may have relied on the principle of chance to bet for a win for a club that eventually lost in the final match. This is the case because the game could have gone either way as the possible result was undetermined.

Without going into the details of the argument for and against chance or indeterminacy as it is also of specific interest to physicists, mathematicians and scholars on probability theories, suffice it to note that the idea of chance or indeterminacy is not only problematic but quite inconsistent with developments and advancements taking place and happening in modern science. Einstein's remark that God does not play dice is a pointer to the robust understanding of the workings of nature - Newtonian laws for example which provided a deterministic account of the laws that govern motion in the universe and the obvious successes this have had for the space science and exploration, amongst others.

How can we Describe Causality? - Various Ways of Understanding Causality

If we take for granted that the world in which we live; that is, the universe is deterministic to some extent then it is very sensible to take for granted the relations between cause and effect to explain the causal relations that underpin the notion of causality. While a cause generally taken to precede the effects in the temporal context, there are, however, some cases wherein the two; that is, cause and effect can be contemporaneous. An example of this is the movement of the towing vehicle causing the towed vehicle to move, (Omoregbe 25).

According to Omoregbe (25), a cause is that which brings about a certain effect. In other words, a cause is that by which something (an effect) is produced. While attempting to provide an account for the possibility of change, Aristotle enumerates four causes. They are; the formal cause – determines what a thing is; the material cause – that out of which a thing is made; the efficient cause – by what a thing is brought about; and the final cause – the end or purpose for which it is brought about.

In contemporary usage however, the term “cause” seems to be used more often for

one type of the causes, namely, the efficient cause – by what a thing is brought about or into existence. This has become an important part of the scientific enterprise based on the two fundamental assumptions upon which the notion of cause as responsible for effect does make any sense. Two of those assumptions take granted the fact that the world is an orderly one; governed by laws. The thinking is that the universe is not just a chaotic universe where anything can happen. These two basic assumptions presupposed in scientific reasoning include; the fact that nature is uniform and the fact of universality of causality – these two assumptions are at the centre of the inductive model of reasoning deployed in the sciences.

Against the backdrop of the foregoing, there are other building blocks that rely on the presuppositions above to characterize our understanding of causality. The idea of necessary connection between cause and effect; whereby, whenever any effect is observed, there must be a cause closely related and responsible for the effect we notice or observe. Thus, there cannot be any event or effect without a cause since they are necessarily connected or related. David Hume was the first modern philosopher to raise objections to this assumption and characterization of the necessary relation held or believed to be between a cause and an effect or event. This has become the classic Hume's problem or the problem of induction generally a theme that students would expectedly have the opportunity for more detailed assessment in another course – Philosophy of Science.

Hume on Causality (Necessary Relations/ Contiguous Relations)

For David Hume, we do not have any experience of the assumed necessary connection between a cause and effect rather what we have that has become a part of thinking and talking of the relationship are merely as a result of habitual disposition of the mind to constantly associate the relation just because these stuffs occur contiguously; that is, we usually observe that they happen very often in sequence. Hume also undermined the presupposition we hold about the fact of the uniformity of nature because according to him, there is no way to prove the fact of the uniformity of nature. For example, there is no guarantee that the future will follow the order of the past or resemble the past in perfect manner. Having undermined the two assumptions at the heart of the principle of causality and therefore the operations of the laws of nature, many philosophers thus prefer to adopt a more appealing term that leaves out the idea of intrinsic or necessary connection between cause and effect.

Thus, the term sufficient reason or sufficient condition now is adopted to foreground an effect to take place or to be produced. Cause is no longer seen in terms of intrinsic or necessary connection between cause and effect but when there

is a sufficient condition present, an effect can be observed though not necessarily. It is important to state that this idea of causality is largely material and physical within the western thought system that may not necessarily be an exhaustive characterization of it in other cosmologies. For example, in African cosmology, the notion of causality is not necessarily material or physical as within some worldviews where there can be extra-physical modes of causes for certain effects however controversial.

3.0 Summary

The study unit examined the meaning of chance/indeterminacy and causality. It notes that chance or indeterminacy is the absence of cause or uncaused cause for an event or effect. The notion is however very problematic as it is complex and of interest to experts in sciences such as physics, mathematics and probability sciences. A universe characterized as orderly and somewhat deterministic does not seem to align with the assumptions of chance or indeterminacy to operate because there are laws of nature that guide the operations and events in nature. The notion of causes developed and enumerated by Aristotle were highlighted and how only one form of it; that is, the efficient cause is now associated with causality in modern thinking/science.

The notion of causality was defined as the causal relations between cause and effect; sometimes a cause preceded an effect, and some other times they happen at the same time. The presuppositions that are assumed for this to be the case especially in providing an account of how the universe operates were identified to include the universality of causality and the fact of the uniformity of nature. Some other terms associated with causality such as constant necessary connection between causes and effects were identified. These assumptions and terms were criticized by the classic intervention of David Hume that undermined the plausibility of the logic of inductive reasoning at the heart of modern science and our common sense thinking and way of talking about the world/universe popularly regarded as Hume's problem in philosophy.

In place of the problematic nature of the use of necessary connection, philosophers and scientists now adopt a less problematic phrase – sufficient reason or sufficient condition to be satisfied before an event is produced or can be observed. It again noted that the notion of physical causality may not be a universal feature for all as in some other cosmologies such as the African thought, there can be extra-physical causal claims to certain operations or events or effects however controversial – paranormal operations for example.

4.0 Conclusion

The study unit examined the notion of chance/indeterminacy and causality. It

identified the four causes outlined by Aristotle, and the now adopted version of cause in modern science – the efficient cause. It also outlined the basic characterization of causality and related terms while noting the assumptions upon which there are causal relations between cause and effect. It touched on the problem associated with the idea of necessary connection and how humans came about the formulation. In place of the problematic nature of the idea of necessary connection, sufficient condition or sufficient reason has been adopted as a less problematic phrase to capture what the conditions that are to be met before we observe an effect or expect certain events to take place.

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MODULE 11: THEORIES OF TIME

Topics central to this module will include the following: Time and space, consciousness; Time in various cosmologies (African, Western and Eastern); Time, permanence and change; Temporality and Eternity. Thus, at the end of this module students will be well acquainted with the metaphysical discourses and debates around the theme of time and space. While this objective may be quite broad and ambitious, the immediate interest is to simply introduce the basics of the debate and expose the trajectories of how these themes are conceptualized in the various cosmologies without necessarily wading into so much details that is peculiarly and more appropriately within the scope of philosophy of science.

Unit 1: Notions and Nature of Time and Space

How is time and space to be conceived and understood has remained very problematic in the history of (metaphysics) philosophy and other scientific disciplines. While the pair has continued to intrigue scholars, we continue to use these terms to capture our daily experiences of what happens in and around our world/universe and our place in such events. The terms space and time are not simple to define. It is also difficult to show what the real meanings of the terms. The focus here is however to provide the contributions of thinkers on what space and time in the context of metaphysics mean and outline some of the implications. The approach therefore will be expository.

1.0

Introduction

Time or space in ordinary parlance is not so problematic. For example, when one is asked about what time of the day by tapping someone's wrist warrants the respondent simply checking his or her wristwatch to say what time it is. With regards to the notion of space in common parlance, imagine a scenario where one wants to board a vehicle from point A to point B. One flags down a taxi to ask if there is still some space left in the vehicle in order to join the vehicle. The driver responds by stating that the vehicle is filled up having on boarded the maximum number of passengers that the vehicle can contain. It implies there is not any more space left to contain the would-be traveler from point A to point B in the said vehicle and so will not be able to join the said vehicle. Another practical example is when one defines matter as anything occupies space; say, a bag of rice weighing 25 kilos and the space it takes up in the entire storeroom. It implies other things can no longer be put into the said storeroom because of lack of space.

In other words, the space has been taken up by the large 25kg bag of rice. These examples seem self-evident and axiomatic in terms what time and space connotes. However, when we enter into the realm of metaphysics, the philosophical and scientific nature of the problem then emerges for us. The study unit seeks to provide some basic characterization of the various efforts and attempts to capture what space and time mean in the history of metaphysics. It also examines some of the implications of the understanding of space and time for consciousness. In addition the study unit will provide brief survey of the various regional and contextual readings of time in Western, African and Eastern cosmologies. Finally, it will touch upon the notion of time, permanence and change as well as temporality and eternity.

2.0 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study unit for the students are:

- a. to explain the notion of space and time;
- b. to understand the nature of space and time;
- c. to identify the basic characterization of time (and space) in various cosmologies;
- d. to underpin the import of the notion of time for concepts of change, permanence, temporality and eternity.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Time and Space as a problem in Metaphysics

Is it ever possible to imagine that there might have been a time before there were any events and that there may eventually be time after which there will be no events? Possibly yes, and if yes, then it is again possible to contemplate same about space in the sense that there might have been space with no objects – for time as well. These provocative remarks are crucial in helping us to think deeply about how fundamental these terms are for us. Can we fully ever fathom the whole gamut of the questions that such reflections implicate? I think not. For example, what sort of thing is space and what sort of thing is time? Do both terms mean the same thing or mean different things? And whether we can conceptualize the full import of one without the other is an example of such questions.

In some sense space and time have been conceptualized as comprising of continua; that is, consists of continuous manifolds, positions in which can be occupied by substances and events respectively, and which can have existence in their own rights. Such a naturalistic view point obviously creates some immediate problems associated with space and time in the

context of metaphysics. It is in virtue of the occupancy of such positions that events and processes are to be seen as taking place after each other and substances are to be seen in certain spatial relations.

In the classical era, the relational perspective dominated the understanding of space and time. In this perspective, the idea of void was used to capture the notion of space to describe intervals between bodies in which there are no bodies. These thinkers viewed the place of a thing in terms of the containing body of that thing, that is, in terms of the relation between the thing and whatever it is in. Accordingly, Aristotle uses place interchangeably for space as the limit of the first unmoving containing body. Thus, spatial and temporal intervals are potentially divisible infinitely but time intervals can also be potentially infinitely extendable; since time is the measure of motion in respect of before and after and there always has been and always will be motion or change. Since time is closely associated with motion or change means that there are at least event-less intervals between events.

This relational view did not end in the classical era as we see in Leibniz during the modern period who postulated that space is an order of coexistence as time is an order of successions. Space itself is an ideal thing so that space out of the world must be imaginary; similarly for time. Space is simply that which comprehends all places; it is that wherein the mind conceives the application of relations. Also in Locke, we see the same trend whereby, space and time are extrapolatable from spatial and temporal relations having these properties, which we perceive as obtaining between things and events. In Newton, however, we find that both space and time are considered to have their own natures, without any dependence on anything else, and they constitute continua such that one part of either continuum is indistinguishable from another such part. Any differences that we take to exist are due to the things that occupy places and events that happen at moments; they are not due to space and time themselves. For, according to him, Absolute, true and mathematical time, of itself, and from its own nature flows equably without relation to anything external, and by another name is called duration. This is so because Absolute space, in its own nature, without relation to anything external remains always similar and immovable, (Hamlyn 127-129).

What are the implications of the discussion of these themes so far? One major problem with space and time is whether space and time have properties of their own independent of the objects and events that they contain. More so, when space and time are conceived as merely relations, it does definitely lead to a problem

about what it is that is thereby related? According to Hamlyn (131) any

extended object is spatial, and its spatiality must on the relational view of space, consist in relations between elements. But if those elements are themselves spatial the same argument must apply to them; the only way to stop the regress that is generated by that is to suppose that the objects related by spatial relations are themselves non-spatial.

Kant rejects the relational view that underpinned the Newtonian and Leibnizian characterization of space and time. In its place therefore, he argued that the notion of forms of intuition is paramount in understanding what is space and time. Space and time make up forms having an intimate connection with perception and have no place outside that context. To speak of a form of intuition is to make reference to the form which perception or objects of perception must take. They are not merely intuitions as they themselves are a priori intuitions. To put the matter in another way, to think of space and time is not to think merely of ways of thinking about the world; it is to think of how the world actually is. Moreover, space and time are something actual, not merely possibilities, so that, whether or not they have physical properties in their right, they are themselves something in their own right. In that case, it is in virtue of space and time being what they are that things and events can stand in the kind of spatial and temporal relations that they do. Space and time do not consist of either actual or possible relations between things and events; they determine what relations of that kind are possible. Thus, conceived, it is logically possible that space and time should have existed without things and events to occupy them

While we can quickly talk about the passage of time without something particularly similar or more appropriate to speak of space in the same manner; time also has one dimension while space is often characterized as three dimensional with physical events presupposing both space and time whereas mental events presuppose directly only time; the following propositions hold for both space and time; a). Space is not an empirical concept which has been derived from outer experiences b). Space is a necessary a priori representation which underlies all outer intuitions c). Space is not a discursive or general concept of relations of things in general d). Space is represented as an infinite manifold.

3.4 Time - space and consciousness

We think of ourselves and the role we play in the universe in manners that suggests that we think of ourselves or possibly events as moving from the past, through the present, into the future or of events as coming towards us from the future and receding behind us into the past. Another way of regarding the matter is to think of events as progressively coming into being, and this has become known as temporal becoming. There is however

controversy whether it is objective or subjective.

3.5 Time in Other cosmologies

What we have tried to capture above can of course be simply the mode and manner in which space and time is conceived within the Western philosophical tradition or cosmology to be somewhat linear consisting of the past, present and future and so would not need repeating here. Hence, the next two sections will highlight briefly the basic thinking of how time is understood in the African and Eastern cosmologies.

3.5.1 Time in African worldview

There has been quite a host of ways to describe and capture the notion of time in the African context which is of course problematic in many ways that space would not allow us to explore here. Suffice it to note that it is key to point out that there is the traditional African society and the contemporary African society; the former is peculiarly uninfluenced by western thinking and the latter with all the trappings of western influences. This notion of time in an African context is different from the notorious idea of “African time”. This notorious phrase has pejorative connotations by stating of the poor attitude and tardiness of Africans which generally is predicated by a relaxed attitude to time keeping. In this brief part of the section, the effort is not to debate the foregoing notorious phrase but to highlight what the metaphysical outlook to time is within the context of African thought/cosmology.

According to Mbiti, time in African traditional thought is generally two dimensional – having a long past very often associated with significant events and the idea of a present with the idea of the long future missing or absent given that time is composed of a series of events. This characterization was argued by Mbiti in his popular text, “African Religion and Philosophy”, where he examines the East African context and deploys the Swahili terms of *sasa* (now-existential period) and *zamani* (encompasses the past and the lived experiences of the present or about to happen experiences of the present). This view has severely been criticized by a host of scholars to the extent that to defend the Mbitian notion of time as representative of the notion of time in African thought would be a great disservice to African philosophy, a course students will encounter at some point in their programme for the award of Degree in the discipline. It must be said, however, that one can safely state as Iroegbu (60) that Africans have a more relative, natural, humane and co-existential perception of time. They have close ties to the land as life-means and ancestral contact locus. One’s past and one’s future are existential, linked at times to the curious level of predestination and mediocrity. They are more tied to the rhythm of nature.

Against this backdrop, the cyclical notion of time is not entirely absent in some African cosmologies. For example, the *abiku* phenomenon and the doctrine of reincarnation seem to suggest a cyclical notion of time, which seems not fully developed but through further research can be tasked to exhume via ethno-philosophical conversations. Students can be encouraged to share their various cultural worldviews of these themes as a way of also challenging students to begin to see around them possible areas where some of these deeply abstract reflections can be contextualized within their own cultural milieu. Again, there is also the phenomenological experience that seems to suggest one sees a cycle of repetition of similar or nearly closely related scenarios that flashes through one's virtual consciousness do seem to suggest a cyclical notion of time or events or circumstances happening around us and in the world.

3.5.2 Time in Eastern Thought/Cosmology

Against the backdrop of the universal experience of the reality of time, cultures and people of the East and South Asia to include; India, Japan, China, Korean and others have a well-developed and pervasive system of thought that not only addresses time and how time is understood in their cultures but also what the entire universe means to them and their attempt to produce a well-documented account of these events. Rather than the popular sense of linear notion of time in Western thought, the model of time popular in Eastern philosophy is fundamentally cyclical the past is also the future, the future is also the past, the beginning also the end. The notion of the cycle of life – birth, death and rebirth or the cycle of seasons— are all part of the broader cycle of existence. Thus, within such a comprehensive system of thought, whereas space and time are rather abstract in the western thought, in the Eastern thought, they are quite concrete experiences and realities in human culture as everything is deeply related and connected with everything else in the entire universe.

3.6 Time, permanence and change

Time, permanence and change are part of the activities and features associated with the universe and all its constitutive elements including the human person. Whereas things happen and things or events occur that bring about the process of change some other aspects seem to remain in the state of permanence. The problem then becomes how one can account for both the fact of permanence as well as change at the same time in the universe.

3.7 Temporality and Eternity

The terms temporality and eternity are not easy terms to be given concise definitions that can convince many people given that the fundamental nature of the universe in respect of its origin and the explanatory account seem

rather problematic and controversial. Thus, the kind of meaning these terms evoke can only make sense when one settles the prior question of the proper account of the question of origin and nature of the universe in terms of whether the universe has a beginning and an end in view towards which the order of the universe is tended. For theistic metaphysicians who take for granted the created order; that is the universe to be created by God, these terms may not be as problematic as they would for those who do not share the same intellectual or religious orientation and convictions.

Iroegbu (112) writes that if spirituality places God outside space or place, Eternity places Him outside time. He is thus supra-temporal, existing in the everlasting now; that is, God's eternity as endless duration without change or end. It follows that the term eternity is in reference to time frame that refers to the idea that suggests without a beginning and an end unlike what is everlasting (that which may have a beginning but does not have an end). However, it is important to state briefly also that there are some materialist view of the world that sees everything especially the world as totally matter which can neither be created nor destroyed (the world is said to be eternal, as it has always been in existence and will continue to be) and so the eternal characterization can also be used to qualify such a view of the universe. Thus, the eternity of God flows directly from His essence as infinite. From the theological understanding of eternity as proposed above, the term temporality when contrasted with it can then be said to be what is time bound; in terms of it having a beginning and an end. In other words, something that is within time and measurable to the extent that its beginning and end point can be ascertained. For example, the being of the human person or other living things that come into material existence at some point and then dies at a time of its end.

3.0

Summary

This study unit has examined the notions of space and time. It began by presenting how less problematic these terms are in common parlance. The unit provided a historical account of the contributions of thinkers on the nature of space and time.

It ran through the classical era to the modern era. In doing this, the relational perspective that perceives space and time to be relationally meaningful which influenced the thoughts of some modern philosophers were highlighted. It also identified the Kantian view that considers space and time as forms of intuition. In fact, intuitively *a priori* as a much more comprehensive account than the relational model by highlighting the

implications of what the Kantian notion achieves; specifically, by facilitating the possibility of thinking beyond and before space and time. In addition, the study unit also touched upon the various notions of time in various cosmologies; specifically, the Western, African and Eastern cosmologies. Some general characteristics of these cosmologies include: the linear notion very much present in the western cosmological thought. That is, Westerners seem to have a theoretical, mathematical, utilitarian concept and deployment of space and time. The cyclical character of time as replete in Eastern cosmology and slightly echoed in African cosmologies was described. In African cosmologies there seem to some attunement to nature and the events associated with the existential experiences of nature. Examples, of such can be seen in the kind of names given to people during wars, famine or reign of particular kings in various African societies.

4.0

Conclusion

on

The study unit examined space and time as an intriguing problem in metaphysics that also is of interest to experts in the sciences as well. It deployed the exploratory and exhumation methods in providing an account of space and time in the history of philosophy. It began by looking at the relational notion of space and time and how this same way of understanding space and time was taken over in the modern period. It was Kant's intervention that considered space and time as radical forms of intuition that gave a reading of space and time in ways that both could exist without any form of temporal or spatial relations. It also examined the terms of eternity and temporality to mean outside of time and space yet exist of necessity (God) and the idea of contingency to give a sense of meaning to the temporality when used in reference to reality itself different from our way of characterizing reality.

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Resource

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (<http://Plato.Stanford.edu>) is an online resource of substantial entries that typically have helpful bibliographies. Entries undergo periodic revision and update.