PHI 206
Introduction to Metaphysics

Course Manual

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Introduction to Metaphysics

PHI206

University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre
Open and Distance Learning Course Series Development
Version 1.0 ev1

ISBN: _

General Editor: Prof. Bayo Okunade

Page layout, Instructional Design &UI Mobile Class Development by EDUTECHportal, www.edutechportal.org

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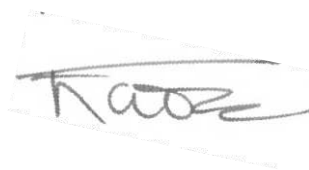
Vice-Chancellor's Message

The Distance Learning Centre is building on a solid tradition of over two decades of service in the provision of External Studies Programme and now Distance Learning Education in Nigeria and beyond. The Distance Learning mode to which we are committed is providing access to many deserving Nigerians in having access to higher education especially those who by the nature of their engagement do not have the luxury of full time education. Recently, it is contributing in no small measure to providing places for teeming Nigerian youths who for one reason or the other could not get admission into the conventional universities.

These course materials have been written by writers specially trained in ODL course delivery. The writers have made great efforts to provide up to date information, knowledge and skills in the different disciplines and ensure that the materials are user-friendly.

In addition to provision of course materials in print and e-format, a lot of Information Technology input has also gone into the deployment of course materials. Most of them can be downloaded from the DLC website and are available in audio format which you can also download into your mobile phones, IPod, MP3 among other devices to allow you listen to the audio study sessions. Some of the study session materials have been scripted and are being broadcast on the university's Diamond Radio FM 101.1, while others have been delivered and captured in audio-visual format in a classroom environment for use by our students. Detailed information on availability and access is available on the website. We will continue in our efforts to provide and review course materials for our courses.

However, for you to take advantage of these formats, you will need to improve on your I.T. skills and develop requisite distance learning Culture. It is well known that, for efficient and effective provision of Distance learning education, availability of appropriate and relevant course materials is a *sine qua non*. So also, is the availability of multiple plat form for the convenience of our students. It is in fulfillment of this, that series of course materials are being written to enable our students study at their own pace and convenience.

It is our hope that you will put these course materials to the best use.

Prof. Isaac Adewole

Vice-Chancellor

Foreword

As part of its vision of providing education for "Liberty and Development" for Nigerians and the International Community, the University of Ibadan, Distance Learning Centre has recently embarked on a vigorous repositioning agenda which aimed at embracing a holistic and all encompassing approach to the delivery of its Open Distance Learning (ODL) programmes. Thus we are committed to global best practices in distance learning provision. Apart from providing an efficient administrative and academic support for our students, we are committed to providing educational resource materials for the use of our students. We are convinced that, without an up-to-date, learner-friendly and distance learning compliant course materials, there cannot be any basis to lay claim to being a provider of distance learning education. Indeed, availability of appropriate course materials in multiple formats is the hub of any distance learning provision worldwide.

In view of the above, we are vigorously pursuing as a matter of priority, the provision of credible, learner-friendly and interactive course materials for all our courses. We commissioned the authoring of, and review of course materials to teams of experts and their outputs were subjected to rigorous peer review to ensure standard. The approach not only emphasizes cognitive knowledge, but also skills and humane values which are at the core of education, even in an ICT age.

The development of the materials which is on-going also had input from experienced editors and illustrators who have ensured that they are accurate, current and learner-friendly. They are specially written with distance learners in mind. This is very important because, distance learning involves non-residential students who can often feel isolated from the community of learners.

It is important to note that, for a distance learner to excel there is the need to source and read relevant materials apart from this course material. Therefore, adequate supplementary reading materials as well as other information sources are suggested in the course materials.
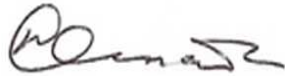
Apart from the responsibility for you to read this course material with others, you are also advised to seek assistance from your course facilitators especially academic advisors during your study even before the interactive session which is by design for revision. Your academic advisors will assist you using convenient technology including Google Hang Out, You Tube, Talk Fusion, etc. but you have to take advantage of these. It is also going to be of immense advantage if you complete assignments as at when due so as to have necessary feedbacks as a guide.

The implication of the above is that, a distance learner has a responsibility to develop requisite distance learning culture which includes diligent and disciplined self-study, seeking available administrative and academic support and acquisition of basic information technology skills. This is why you are encouraged to develop your computer skills by availing yourself the opportunity of training that the Centre's provide and put these into use.

In conclusion, it is envisaged that the course materials would also be useful for the regular students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria who are faced with a dearth of high quality textbooks. We are therefore, delighted to present these titles to both our distance learning students and the university's regular students. We are confident that the materials will be an invaluable resource to all.

We would like to thank all our authors, reviewers and production staff for the high quality of work.

Best wishes.

Professor Bayo Okunade

Director

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About this course manual

Introduction to MetaphysicsPHI206 has been produced by University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre. All course manuals produced by University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centreare structured in the same way, as outlined below.

How this course manual is structured

The course overview

The course overview gives you a general introduction to the course. Information contained in the course overview will help you determine:

- If the course is suitable for you.
- What you will already need to know.
- What you can expect from the course.
- How much time you will need to invest to complete the course.

The overview also provides guidance on:

- Study skills.
- Where to get help.
- Course assignments and assessments.
- Margin icons.

We strongly recommend that you read the overview *carefully* before starting your study.

The course content

The course is broken down into Study Sessions. Each Study Session comprises:

- An introduction to the Study Session content.
- Study Sessionoutcomes.
- Core content of the Study Sessionwith a variety of learning activities.
- A Study Session summary.
- Assignments and/or assessments, as applicable.
- Bibliography

Your comments

After completing Introduction to Metaphysics we would appreciate it if you would take a few moments to give us your feedback on any aspect of this course. Your feedback might include comments on:

- Course content and structure.
- Course reading materials and resources.
- Course assignments.
- Course assessments.
- Course duration.
- Course support (assigned tutors, technical help, etc.)

Your constructive feedback will help us to improve and enhance this course.

Course Overview

Welcome to Introduction to MetaphysicsPHI206

This course attempts to introduce students to metaphysics as the search for a theory of reality, an attempt to establish the general principles and precepts that must hold so as to distinguish appearance from reality. It should be stated here that the term, 'metaphysics' has been variously conceptualized in the historical development of the discipline. In modern philosophical usage, metaphysics refers general to the field of philosophy dealing with questions about the kinds of things there are and their modes of being. Its subject matter includes the concept of existence, thing, property, event; the distinction between particulars and universals, individuals and classes; the nature of relations, change, causation; and the nature of mind, matter, space, and time. Some of these concepts will form the discourse of the Study Sessions of this Course.

This course is a three unit course which supplements and complements PHI206 as an online course at the UI Mobile Class (www.dlc.ui.edu.ng/mc).

Course outcomes

Upon completion of Introduction to MetaphysicsPHI206 you will be able to:

Outcomes

- analyzewith the principles and precepts that must guide the understanding of reality.
- represent and examine those attitudes and worldviews and beliefs that form the core of any metaphysics.
- appraise theories, analyze problems and attempt solutions to metaphysical problems.

Timeframe

How long?

This is a 15 week course. It requires a formal study time of 45 hours. The formal study times are scheduled around online discussions / chats with your course facilitator / academic advisor to facilitate your learning. Kindly see course calendar on your course website for scheduled dates. You will still require independent/personal study time particularly in studying your course materials.

How to be successful in this course

As an open and distance learner your approach to learning will be different to that from your school days, where you had onsite education. You will now choose what you want to study, you will have professional and/or personal motivation for doing so and you will most likely be fitting your study activities around other professional or domestic responsibilities.

Essentially you will be taking control of your learning environment. As a consequence, you will need to consider performance issues related to time management, goal setting, stress management, etc. Perhaps you will also need to reacquaint yourself in areas such as essay planning, coping with exams and using the web as a learning resource.

We recommend that you take time now—before starting your self-study—to familiarize yourself with these issues. There are a number of excellent resources on the web. A few suggested links are:

- http://www.dlc.ui.edu.ng/resources/studyskill.pdf

  This is a resource of the UIDLC pilot course module. You will find sections on building study skills, time scheduling, basic concentration techniques, control of the study environment, note taking, how to read essays for analysis and memory skills ("remembering").

- http://www.ivywise.com/newsletter_march13_how_to_self_study.html

  This site provides how to master self-studying, with bias to emerging technologies.

- http://www.howtostudy.org/resources.php

  Another "How to study" web site with useful links to time management, efficient reading, questioning/listening/observing skills, getting the most out of doing ("hands-on" learning), memory building, tips for staying motivated, developing a learning plan.

The above links are our suggestions to start you on your way. At the time of writing these web links were active. If you want to look for more, go to www.google.com and type "self-study basics", "self-study tips", "self-study skills" or similar phrases.

Need help?

Help

As earlier noted, this course manual complements and supplements PHI206at UI Mobile Class as an online course, which is domiciled at www.dlc.ui.edu.ng/mc.

You may contact any of the following units for information, learning resources and library services.

Distance Learning Centre (DLC)
University of Ibadan, Nigeria
Tel: (+234) 08077593551 – 55
(Student Support Officers)
Email: ssu@dlc.ui.edu.ng

Head Office
Morohundiya Complex, Ibadan-Ilorin Expressway, Idi-Ose, Ibadan.

Information Centre
20 Awolowo Road, Bodija, Ibadan.

Lagos Office
Speedwriting House, No. 16 Ajanaku Street, Awuse Estate, Opebi, Ikeja, Lagos.
Tel: (+234) 08077593574

For technical issues (computer problems, web access, and etcetera), please visit: www.learnersupport.dlc.ui.edu.ng for live support; or send mail to webmaster@dlc.ui.edu.ng.

Academic Support

Help

A course facilitator is commissioned for this course. You have also been assigned an academic advisor to provide learning support. The contacts of your course facilitator and academic advisor for this course are available at the course website: www.dlc.ui.edu.ng/mc

Activities

Activities

This manual features "Activities," which may present material that is NOT extensively covered in the Study Sessions. When completing these activities, you will demonstrate your understanding of basic material (by answering questions) before you learn more advanced concepts. You will be provided with answers to every activity question. Therefore, your emphasis when working the activities should be on understanding your answers. It is more important that you understand why every answer is correct.

Assessments

Assessments

There are three basic forms of assessment in this course: in-text questions (ITQs) and self assessment questions (SAQs), and tutor marked assessment (TMAs). This manual is essentially filled with ITQs and SAQs. Feedbacks to the ITQs are placed immediately after the questions, while the feedbacks to SAQs are at the back of manual. You will receive your TMAs either as part of online class activities at the UI Mobile Class. Feedbacks to TMAs will be provided by your tutor in not more than 2 weeks expected duration.

Schedule dates for submitting assignments and engaging in course / class activities is available on the course website. Kindly visit your course website often for updates.

Bibliography

Reading

For those interested in learning more on this subject, we provide you with a list of additional resources at the end of this course manual; these may be books, articles or websites.

Getting around this course manual

Margin icons

While working through this course manual you will notice the frequent use of margin icons. These icons serve to "signpost" a particular piece of text, a new task or change in activity; they have been included to help you to find your way around this course manual.

A complete icon set is shown below. We suggest that you familiarize yourself with the icons and their meaning before starting your study.

Activity	**Assessment**	**Assignment**	**Case study**
Discussion	**Group Activity**	**Help**	**Outcomes**
Note	**Reflection**	**Reading**	**Study skills**
Summary	**Terminology**	**Time**	**Tip**

Study Session 1

The Meaning and Nature of Metaphysics

Introduction

We will start this course by examining the meaning and nature of metaphysics. We will also explore the importance of metaphysics and metaphysical theories. Finally, we will examine challenges of metaphysical theories.

Learning Outcomes

Outcomes

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

1.1 *define* and *use* correctly the term "metaphysics".

1.2 *appraise* the following metaphysical theories:
- materialism
- idealism

1.1 The Meaning of Metaphysics

MetaphysicsThebranch of philosophy that inquires into the general fundamental principles of reality.

In its detached sense, a position is considered 'metaphysical' if it seems complicated beyond comprehensibility, 'fanciful', or 'imaginary'.[1] In its strict sense, however, **metaphysics** is a branch of philosophy, which tries to answer the question, "What is reality?" It seeks to discover general normative criteria for what is real and how that differs from what may seem to be real but actually is not. The term is also employed to refer to the subject matter beyond the physical or things we see.[2] Historically, the discipline of Metaphysics is far the most ancient branch of philosophy, beginning with the pre-Socratic Milesian philosopher-scientists (sixth century B.C) who speculated on the "ageless", "deathless" substance underlying the changing temporal world. Some thought this was water; others air and still others felt there had to be more than one basic ingredient in order to account for the enormous variety of things in the world.

In its contemporary sense, metaphysics has come to be understood as an inquiry into the general fundamental principles of reality. In other words, it attempts to discover a general theory of reality – a framework of principles and methods or procedures by which we would be able to access reality. This is to assist us in identifying what is real and how this is distinguish from what appears to be real but is not real. Metaphysics

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[1] Cf. Richard H. Popkin and Avrum Stroll, *Philosophy Made Simple*, 2nd Edition, (New York: Broadway Books, 1993), p. 99ff

[2] Cf. Samuel E. Stumpf, *Elements of Philosophy: An Introduction* (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1993), p. 399

however is a branch of philosophy concerned with explaining the fundamental nature of being and the world. It attempts to determine the difference between appearance and reality. Traditionally, metaphysics attempts to answer two basic questions in the broadest possible terms:

1. What is there?
2. What is it like?

Tip

> Metaphysics is a philosophical science which deals with transcendental concepts such as being and one, that is "being as such".

A person who studies metaphysics is called a metaphysicist or a metaphysician. The metaphysician attempts to clarify the fundamental notions by which people understand the world; for example, existence, objects and their properties, space and time, cause and effect, and possibility. Some have understood the study of metaphysics as ontology, which is the investigation into the basic categories of being and how they relate to each other. Today, metaphysics is not seen simply as the attempt to identify the first causes or to be concerned merely with the existence and nature of God, but is also seen as an attempt to clarify issues concerning the distinction between mind and body, the immortality of the soul, and freedom of the will.

1.1.1 Metaphysical Questions

The metaphysician turns his attention to broad questions which are raised in his mind by our daily experiences. What every metaphysician tries to do is to form a comprehensive view of reality and then organize this view into a system of ideas or concepts.

Reflection

> Can you provide responses to the bewildering variety of questions that raise metaphysical issues:
>
> - Is there anything that must be absolutely true of anything that exists?
> - What are properties?
> - Must anything that exist stand in some relation to something else?
> - Can there be things that exist that are not in time?
> - Is there anything that is not part of the spatio-temporal world?
> - What is the nature of numbers?
> - What is the nature of time?
> - What are the laws of nature?
> - What is it for something to be an actual entity?
> - Is change really possible?
> - Can there be things that are in principle unobservable?

- Can there be aspects of reality that are in principle unknowable?

- What constitutes identity over time?

- Does the physical universe depend upon the existence of an immaterial creator?

- Is the self a bundle of experiences?

- Does nature include immaterial souls?

- What is consciousness?

- Are humans free?

- Is metaphysics possible?

1.1.2 Importance of Metaphysics

Metaphysics tries to give us knowledge of how we fit into the universe. The motivation to pursue metaphysical knowledge is sometimes perceived simply as a quest for knowledge for its own sake. This pursuit satisfies man's wonder and the quest "to know, and not for any utilitarian end", for this knowledge, says Aristotle, "alone exists for its own sake".[3] In concrete terms, however, as we go through our daily life experiences it is most useful for us to separate what is real from what appears to be real but not actually real, otherwise we would be living a risky life. For instance, we need to be able to distinguish real friend from one who appears to be a friend but not a real friend; real food from poison that appears to be real food, genuine drug from fake drug, genuine currency from fake currency and a genuine stranger in need of assistance from a fraudster. All these are guided by an acquisition of the general principles of reality.

1.2 Metaphysical Theories

The encounter of the world around us is always through the prism of some theory or metaphysical frameworks. In other words, when we attempt to understand the nature of things around us, it is always through some beliefs to which we ascribe. In line with this, if a philosophical history of the attempt to understand the nature of reality can be constructed; such a framework would be characterized by the materialistic or idealistic attitude in understanding reality.

It would be useful however, for the purpose of understanding the subject matter of metaphysics, to draw a definitive distinction between the notion of 'external world' and 'reality'. This is essentially for the purpose of clarity. The notion of the external world refers to the world around us as we can see and relate with or encounter. This would include the physical world or material world, institutions, relationships and conditions. This in sum is part of reality. In other words, reality is larger than the external

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[3] Samuel E. Stumpf, *Elements of Philosophy: An Introduction* (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1993), p. 400

world, because it includes the external world and all other things that we do not see or that are not visible, whether events or phenomena or beliefs or challenges and predicaments, giving us joy or pain, evil or good, life or death, existence or non-existence, the possibility of life beyond the physical world. All these are included in the notion of reality.

The history of Western philosophy has been largely a struggle between two characterizations of reality: materialism and idealism. The fundamental question of metaphysics, which is "what is reality?" has therefore received a number of answers or responses that can be grouped into these theories.

1.2.1 Materialism

In it general understanding, **materialism** is the metaphysical theory which says that reality is matter and matter is reality. For anything to be real to the materialist, such as mind, or consciousness, it must be reducible to, and explainable in material terms.[4] In other words, it is the belief of the materialist philosopher that if we are to reduce reality to its basic component, what we would have is matter. What this means is that tables and trees, stones and all other physical bodies which are made of matter are more real than those things that are not compose of matter. In this sense, in our evaluation of our daily experiences and in our assessment of our human relations, material manifestations are most real. Therefore, for the materialist, religious beings, such as God, spirit, angels, the human soul, that do not admit of material manifestation cannot be said to be real. Materialists include the atomists, the empiricists and natural scientists, psychologist and sociologist in the social sciences, and a host of other atheistic persuasions, which do not have a place for non-material entities in their beliefs. Radically opposed to this is Idealism.

Historically speaking, materialism is the oldest philosophical tradition in Western civilization. Originated by a series of pre-Socratic Greek philosophers in the 6th and 5th centuries before the Christian era, it reached its full classical form in the atomism of Democritus and Epicurus in the 4th century BCE. Epicurus argued that reality consisted of invisible and indivisible bits of free-falling matter called atoms randomly colliding in the void. It was on this atomic hypothesis that the Roman poet Lucretius wrote the first masterpiece of materialist literature around 50 BCE, the philosophical poem De RerumNatura, or, as it is usually translated, The Nature of Things. Already in Lucretius' great poem, we can see one of the hallmarks that distinguish materialism from every other comprehensive philosophy produced by European civilization before the 20th century: its insistence on direct observation of nature and on explaining everything that happens in the world in terms of the laws of nature.[5] In other words, from the beginning materialists have always

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[4] C.f. Bernard V. Lightman, *The Origins of Agnosticism: Victorian Unbelief and the Limits of Knowledge* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Univ. Press, 1987), p. 25

[5] Cf. Richard C. Vitzthum, "Philosophical Materialism," http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/richard_vitzthum/materialism.html, retrieved on 17th Dec., 2012-12-17

based their theory on the best scientific evidence at hand, rather than on some putative 'first philosophy' waiting to be discovered through abstract philosophical reasoning. The tendency is clear in the second masterpiece of materialist literature, Baron Paul d'Holbach's*La Systeme de la Nature* (*The System of Nature*), which appeared in France in 1770. D'Holbach bases his mechanical determinism on Newtonian physics and Lockean psychology, arguing that every event in nature, including all human thought and moral actions are the result of an inexorable chain of causation rooted in the flux of atomic motion. Like Lucretius, he insists there is no reality other than matter moving in space, as Newton theorized in his laws of motion and gravity. D'Holbach also attributes all thought to images impressed on the mind's *tabula rasa*, or blank slate, in wholly mechanical fashion according to these same laws of motion, as Locke had argued. So too with the third pre-20th-century masterpiece of materialist literature, Ludwig Buechner's 1884 edition of *Kraft und Stoff*, translated *Force and Matter*. Trained as a scientist, Buechner, like Lucretius and d'Holbach, saturated *Force and Matter* with the best science of his day, including cutting-edge theories and discoveries in physics, chemistry, geology, and biology, which of course incorporated Darwin's theory of evolution.[6]

Yet, neither Lucretius and d'Holbach, nor Buechner claimed that materialist philosophy was an empirical science. They all realized it rested on assumptions that were ultimately *meta*scientific, though never meta*physical* in the Aristotelian sense. That is, the assumptions of materialism reached *beyond* empirical science, though never beyond *physical reality*. These meta-scientific assumptions were, first of all, that material or natural reality formed an unbroken material continuum that was eternal and infinite.[7] Nature had no beginning or end. It was an eternal, self-generating and self-sustaining material fact without any sort of barrier or limit zoning it off from a nonmaterial, non-physical, or supernatural type of being. The only foundational being there was, was material being, and some kind of natural substance underlay all visible phenomena. Lucretius called this endless fact of material being the "All," and with d'Holbach and Buechner concluded it lacked any plan or purpose and consisted of blindly opposing forces locked in an ultimately self-cancelling, cosmic equipoise or gridlock. Of course these assumptions implied, secondly, the lack of any governance or management of the universe by any sort of transcendental intelligence.

ITQ

Materialism is the view that, because onlyphysical matter and its properties exist, mindsare merely manifestations of matter and arereducible to physical features. (True / False)

Feedback to ITQ

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[6] Cf. *Ibid*

[7] Cf. *Ibid*

- True. Metaphysical materialists claim thateverything (including minds or ideas) isultimately a physical or bodily thing.

From the start, materialism has been implicitly atheistic, though its atheistic implications were not fully spelled out before d'Holbach did so in his *System*. Materialism has always viewed atheism merely as a necessary consequence of its premises, not as a philosophically important end in itself. Thirdly and last, materialism has always assumed that life is wholly the product of natural processes. All human thought and feeling emerges from the non-living, inorganic matrix of physical nature and ends at death. Lucretius believed that thoughts and feelings were literally made up of a film of very fine atoms that peeled away from objects and recombined in the brain. D'Holbach believed that thoughts and feelings were the end product of chains of physical causation rooted in atomic motion. Buechner believed that thoughts and feelings were electrical impulses somehow shaped by the human nervous system into coherent patterns.[8] So materialism has always inferred its theories from the best empirical evidence at hand and has as a result always had its meta-scientific hypotheses scientifically confirmed, because the basic assumption of valid science has also always been that nature is governed by coherent, discoverable physical laws.

Note

At this point it would be useful to attempt an understanding of an orientation in metaphysics, usually referred to as realism. Materialism is a type of realism. In addition realism can also manifests itself in a type of idealism as it shall be shown very soon. In general realism is the philosophical position in metaphysics which holds that the external world exists independently of our consciousness or our minds. In other words, the subject matter of realism is not dependent on the individual. Rather it exists out there. And so, the material world falls squarely within the ambit of the realist theory. It is in this sense that materialism is a type of realism. Furthermore, and as shall be seen soon, idealism holds that reality is dependent on the mind. However, in Plato's theory of forms, the ideas, forms and universals that constitute Plato's world of forms are essentially speaking, objective, and therefore not dependent on the human mind. This, itself is a type of idealism – objective realism or objective idealism. Thus, universal concepts such as truth, good, justice, right, and other cognate expressions are of objective realism, since their reality would not depend on the perception of the individual.

1.2.2 Idealism

Idealism is a metaphysical theory that holds that ideas are 'the real'. In other words, when reality is reduced to its lowest terms, what we have are ideas; it is the attitude that places special value on ideas and ideals as products of the mind, in comparison with the world as perceived through the senses.[9]Since ideas are of the mind, the idealist beliefs that reality is mind dependent. Put differently, it does not deny the existence of tables

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[8] Cf. *Ibid*

[9] Cf. Paul Lagassé , "Idealism" *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, 6th ed. ed. by P. Lagassé (The Columbia University Press, 2012)

and trees, stones and bodies, but that their reality depends on the human mind. As one of its greatest proponent, George Berkeley once said, "to be is to be perceived", and since to be perceived is of the mind, reality is of the mind.

The notion of Idealism is with several related meanings. It comes via *idea* from the Greek *idein* (δεν), meaning 'to see'. In ordinary use, it generally suggests the priority of ideals, principles, values, and goals over concrete realities. In this sense, idealists are understood to represent the world as it might or should be, unlike pragmatists, who focus on the world as it presently is. In philosophy, idealism refers to the group of philosophies which assert that reality, or reality as we can know it, is fundamentally mental, mentally constructed, or otherwise immaterial. In this regard, any philosophy that assigns crucial importance to the ideal or spiritual realm in its account of human existence may be termed 'idealist'. We can state here that this idealist thesis is present in other aspects of human learning other than metaphysics. In epistemology, for instance, idealism manifests as scepticism about the possibility of knowing any mind-independent thing; in a sociological sense, idealism emphasizes how human ideas – especially beliefs and values – shape society.[10] As an ontological doctrine, idealism goes further, asserting that all entities are composed of mind or spirit.[11] Idealism thus rejects physicalist and dualist theories that fail to ascribe priority to the mind. An extreme version of this idealism can exist in the philosophical notion of solipsism.

Furthermore, Metaphysical idealism is an ontological doctrine that holds which reality itself is incorporeal or inexperiential at its core. Beyond this, idealists disagree on which aspects of the mental are more basic. Platonic idealism, for instance, affirms that abstractions are more basic to reality than the things we perceive, while subjective idealists and phenomenalists tend to privilege sensory experience over abstract reasoning. Epistemological idealism is the view that reality can only be known through ideas, that only psychological experience can be apprehended by the mind. Subjective idealists like George Berkeley are anti-realists in terms of a mind-independent world, whereas transcendental idealists like Immanuel Kant are strong sceptics of such a world, affirming epistemological and not metaphysical idealism. Thus Kant defines idealism as "the assertion that we can never be certain whether all of our putative outer experience is not mere imagining." However, not all idealists restrict the real or the knowable to our immediate subjective experience. Objective idealists make claims about a trans-empirical world, but simply deny that this world is essentially divorced from or ontologically prior to the mental. Thus Plato and Gottfried Leibniz affirm an objective and knowable reality transcending our subjective awareness – a rejection of epistemological idealism – but propose that this reality is grounded in ideal entities, a form of metaphysical idealism. Nor do all metaphysical idealists agree on the

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[10] Cf. John J. Macionis, *Sociology*, 14th Edition (Boston: Pearson, 2012), p. 88

[11] Cf. Daniel S. Robinson, "Idealism", *Encyclopaedia Britannica*,
http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/281802/idealism

nature of the ideal; for Plato, the fundamental entities were non-mental abstract forms, while for Leibniz they were proto-mental and concrete monads.

To be sure, transcendental idealists like Kant affirm idealism's epistemic side without committing themselves to whether reality is ultimately mental; objective idealists like Plato affirm reality's metaphysical basis in the mental or abstract without restricting their epistemology to ordinary experience; and subjective idealists like Berkeley affirm both metaphysical and epistemological idealism.

Beginning with Immanuel Kant, German idealists such as G.W.F. Hegel, Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, and Arthur Schopenhauer dominated 19th-century philosophy. This tradition emphasized the mental or "ideal" character of all phenomena, birthed idealistic and subjectivist schools, ranging from British idealism to phenomenalism to existentialism. The historical influence of this branch of idealism remains central even to the schools that rejected its metaphysical assumptions, such as Marxism, pragmatism, and positivism.

Challenges to Materialism and Idealism

It must be noted that the two theories of reality, materialism and idealism, are not without challenges. For materialism, for instance, to say that everything that is real must be explainable materially, or manifest itself in material terms, is to say that everything including human actions must be subject to natural laws. By this thinking, our actions are not within our control, which implies that we are not free since our actions are according to natural laws. To say this is to mean that we are not responsible for our actions and cannot be held responsible for them. We have no choice, but to act the way we do, and therefore, there is no place for praise or blame, and no place for reward or punishment. This would have very serious consequences for the way we live and relate with one another. Furthermore, it would mean that the entire world, as well as reality is a gigantic machine with no place for God who is generally conceived as non-material. Finally, the human mind would be reducible to brain, a material aspect of the person. If this is so, what do we say of 'the mind' of God? Idealism, on the other hand, has it that 'to be is to be perceived'. If this is so, if anything is to be considered real, it must be in the mind of a being. Therefore, if the external world exists, it must be that we perceive it, and if everyone in the world was dead then God would perceive this. The question that looms large here, however, is this, who perceives God for him to be? For George Berkeley, God is the only being that perceives himself. This response, however, is not acceptable to the thoroughgoing materialist such as Karl Marx and the positivist.

Discussion Activity

What is the missing dimension in materialism and realism?

Post your findings on Study Session one forum page on course website.

Study Session Summary

Summary

In this Study Session, we examined the meaning and nature of metaphysics. We identified some basic questions of metaphysics; and we noted that the knowledge of metaphysics is required for everyday life experience and for navigating the world of appearances so as to locate those things that are real, and therefore attain a more stable life condition. We also examined the two broad metaphysical theories of reality: materialism and idealism.

Assessment

Assessment

SAQ1.1 tests Learning Outcome 1.1

i. The question "What does it mean for something to exist?" is different from the question "What does it mean for us to know that something exists?" The difference between the two questions highlights the difference between two branches of philosophy, namely:

   a) epistemology and aesthetics.

   b) epistemology and logic.

   c) axiology and metaphysics.

   d) metaphysics and epistemology.

True / False

ii. To ask whether a thing (e.g., the number "1" or an immaterial mind) really exists is to engage in a metaphysical enquiry.

iii. Insofar as metaphysics is concerned with the fundamental principles of the nature of reality, it raises questions about whether God exists or why there is anything at all in the universe.

SAQ1.2 tests Learning Outcome 1.2

i. Idealism explains physical reality as a function of thought just as materialism explains thought as a function of matter. In this way both theories can reduce the physical or the mental to one monistic account, only by assuming a basic ontological distinction, between:

   a) appearance and reality.

   b) truth and falsity.

   c) reason and experience.

   d) rationalism and empiricism.

ii. An objection has been raised against reductive

materialist:though the attempt to give a purely physical description of so-called mental states (e.g., having ideas) might have some merit, such an account does not seem to be able to explain emotional and social states (e.g., being in love and being married). How do you think a materialist will respond to this objection?

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Study Session 2

Being, Essence and Existence

Introduction

In this Study session, we will discuss the concept of being, essence and existence. The Study Session will also attempt to examine what is meant by the expression 'being as being', after which essence and how it is distinguished from existence will be examined.

Learning Outcomes

Outcomes

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:
2.1 *explain* the concept of being.
2.2 *discuss* the notions of essence and existence.

2.1The Meaning and Nature of Being

Being The fact that "a thing is".

Essence The "what-ness" of a thing.

ExistenceThereality of a thing.

Reality is usually appreciated with regards to **being**, **essence** and **existence**. The notion of essence and existence are contained in the idea of being. Being can be referred to as the 'is-ness' of a being, that is, the notion of being has to do with the fact that a thing is, as opposed to non-being. Essence is the 'what-ness' of a thing while existence is an instantiation or the facticity of a thing. The notion of essence is known to be thoroughly intertwined with the notion of existence. Essence is *that* which is *the thing in itself*: the reality of a thing. This is different from an instantiation or predicate which are manifested in features and properties of the thing. Thus in attempt to understand separately the two notions, a debate has ensured as to which comes or precedes the other: Is it that essence precedes existence or the other way round? In other to understand this debate, it would be useful to attempt an examination of the essence of 'essence' and the existence of 'existence'.

A robust discourse of reality is perhaps best represented in the notions of 'Being', essence and existence. In the mediaeval period, we have Thomas Aquinas discourse of Being as a proto-type. For Aquinas, the act of Being ('actusessendi') is essence. Essence is the actuality of existence, which is potentiality of being.

Hint

Metaphysics, as it was first thought of by Aristotle, was conceived as a science, though different from other particular sciences, first by raising the question of the first and most universal causes and secondly by taking as its subject of consideration being simply as being in its most universal and in its most concrete sense as present in experience. The implication of this is that being must be taken as analogous from the very beginning of the

investigation, in the sense that it would raise this science to a higher kind of unity according to an order of different degrees of being as they relate to a primary analogate as the one to which all relate more or less distantly. To enter more deeply into this analogous subject of consideration one must further distinguish transcendental properties that follow being in its analogous and transcendental sense. As such, and according to Olivia Blanchette in "Analogy and the Transcendental Properties of Being as the Key to Metaphysical Science", predication by analogy and the transcendental qualities of One, Unity, Truth and so on, are the tools for investigating the nature of being as being.

In Aristotle we find a statement concerning what is to be the beginning of the investigation of metaphysics: "there is a science that considers being as being and whatever pertains to it according to itself." Furthermore, Aristotle says that "this science," namely the science of being as being, "is not the same as any of those spoken of as partial. For none of the others looks universally to being as being, but cut off a part of it and consider what goes with this, as the mathematical sciences do." The thing to note here is that particular sciences are said to be about being, but not simply being as being. What they consider is only a part of being, and there can be as many of them as we can think of parts of being to inquire into, like physical being, biological being or economic being. None of them considers being as being. They all presuppose being and go on to render an account of some aspect of being they have determined to inquire about. What remains to be done after these sciences is to render an account of being simply as being, for that too must not go unexamined or unaccounted for.

It should be noted, moreover, that in determining the subject of metaphysical inquiry in terms of being as being, it has not been restricted to any particular kind of being, not even to any sort of immaterial or divine being. We are not in any way referring to being in the abstract way Parmenides did as absolute sameness with itself or even Plato did as the really real, somewhere separate from the world of becoming. We are referring to being as it is present concretely in experience.

2.2 Essence and Existence

Essence is the chief characteristic quality, or necessary function, which, makes a thing what it uniquely is. Existence, as defined by Sartre, precedes essence; that is people have no giving identity until they have made specific decision, have chosen their work, and have thereby defined themselves. This is a mode of philosophy which focuses on the individual person instead of searching for truth in distinct universal concepts; as such, existentialism (from exist) is concerned with the authentic concern of concrete existing individuals as they make choices and decisions in daily life.

It is evident that material substances exist contingently. They come into being and they pass out of being. While they exist, their existing is not what they are. Thomas Aquinas, for instance, accepting Boethius' position avers that it is self-evident that what a thing is and its existing differ (*diversumestesse et id quod est*). Material things depend upon causes to exist, both to become and to be. According to Aquinas only in God is it the case that what he is (essence) and his existence, are

identical: that is, God is existence. The phrase Thomas uses to express this is *ipsumessesubsistens*. Of course this is paradoxical. Existence is the instantiation of a substance, not itself something subsistent. This is true with material substances. But when we ask what we mean by saying that God exists, we have to negate aspects of material existence in order to avoid speaking of Him as if he were a contingent being. With a position as this, Thomas faces the task of explaining how best to speak of the immaterial substances which are less than God and superior to material substances, that is, angels. Put differently, this is on the basis that for a material thing to exist is for its form to inhere in its matter. But what is it for a pure form to exist? Since immaterial substances less than God are dependent on the divine causality in order to exist, existing cannot be what they are, of their essence. In short, in angels too there is a distinction of essence and existence. Thomas notes that a created separate substance is what it is and not another thing: that is, it has the perfection it has, but not unlimited perfection. It is a being of a kind, not being as such. Form thus operates as a restriction on existence as such. In God alone is there unrestricted existence; he is existence, *ipsumessesubsistens*. And here we have an argument for the fact that God's essence is his existence. And yet it remains true that while we know the fact, we do not know the why of the fact because the knowledge of God's essence remains unknown to us.[12]

As stated in the 'Introduction to this Study session, a debate on whether essence precedes existence or the other way round has been the concern of a number of philosophers. Thus, for the Existentialist, such as Jean-Paul Sartre, existence precedes essence, while for Rationalists, such as Plato, Descartes, Leibniz, essence precedes existence. The proposition that existence precedes essence is a central claim of existentialism, reverses the traditional philosophical view that the essence or nature of a thing is more fundamental and immutable than its existence.[13] To existentialists, human beings – through their consciousness– create their own values and determine a meaning for their life because, in the beginning, the human being does not possess any inherent identity or value. By posing the acts that constitute him or her, an individual makes his or her existence more significant. This idea can be found in the works of the nineteenth century philosopher, SorenKierekegaard, but was explicitly formulated by the philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre in the 20th century. His close confidant, Simone de Beauvoir also uses this concept in her feminist existentialism to develop the idea that 'one is not born a woman, but becomes one.

In western philosophy, Sartre flips over the traditional position that essence precedes existence by arguing in his 1946 lecture "Existentialism

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[12] Cf. McInerny, Ralph and O'Callaghan, John, "Saint Thomas Aquinas", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Winter 2010 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL =
<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2010/entries/aquinas/>.

[13] See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra Gentiles*, Pars 3:1, *Summa Theologiae*, Pars 1:1

is a Humanism", that for humans, existence precedes essence. To Sartre, the idea that "existence precedes essence" means that a personality is not built over a previously designed model or a precise purpose, because it is the human being who chooses to engage in such enterprise. Therefore, to Sartre an oppressive situation is not intolerable in itself, but once regarded as such by those who feel oppressed the situation *becomes* intolerable. So by projecting my intentions onto my present condition, "It is I who freely transform it into action". When a man says that "the world is a mirror of his freedom", he mean that the world obliges him to react, to overtake himself. When it is said that man defines himself, it is often perceived as stating that man can "wish" to be something - anything, a bird, for instance - and then be it. According to Sartre's account, however, this would be a kind of bad faith. What is meant by the statement is that man is (1) defined only insofar as he acts and (2) that he is responsible for his actions. To clarify this it can be said that a man who acts cruelly towards other people is, by that act, defined as a cruel man and in that same instance, he (as opposed to his genes, for instance) is defined as being responsible for being this cruel man. Of course, the more positive therapeutic aspect of this is also implied: one can choose to act in a different way, and to be a good person instead of a cruel person. Here it is also clear that since man can choose to be either cruel or good, he is, in fact, neither of these things *essentially*.[14]

In all, to claim that existence precedes essence is to assert that there is no such predetermined essence to be found in humans, and that an individual's essence is defined by him or her through how he or she creates and lives his or her life. As Sartre puts it in his "Existentialism is a Humanism": "man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world – and defines himself afterwards." We would conclude this discussion by saying that the arguments of both camps in this debate are persuasive.

Study Session Summary

Summary

In this Study Session, we focussed on the meaning and nature of being as being, and then essence and existence. We characterized or defined what is meant by the expression 'being as being', after which essence and how it is distinguished from existence was examined.

Assessment

SAQ 2.1 (tests Learning Outcome 2.1)

For Aristotle, kinds or species of thingsare distinguished from one

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[14] Cf. Joseph S. Catalano, *A Commentary on Jean-Paul Sartre's Being and Nothingness* (University of Chicago Press 1985), p. 81

Assessment

another in a waythat is different from how things in the samekind or species are distinguished from oneanother. How?

SAQ 2.2 (tests Learning Outcomes 2.1 and 2.2)

How do you contrast the meaning and nature of BEING to ESSENCE and EXISTENCE?

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Study Session 3

The Problems of Universals and Particulars

Introduction

In the previous Study Session, we discussed the notion of being, essence and existence. In this Study session, we will examine the notions of universals and particulars. In doing so, we will review the age-long debate known as the problem of universals and particulars.

Learning Outcomes

Outcomes

After you have studied this session, you should be able to:

3.1 *describe* the notions of universals and particulars.
3.2 *explain* the meaning of general (universal) terms.

3.1 Concepts of Universals and Particulars

Categories A collection of things with the same properties.

Universal The general properties of a category of things (i.e. a collection of things with the same properties).

Particulars Terms of relating specific things in a group / category, for instance, a dog in a group of other animals; another example is a puppy or Alsatian in a category of dogs.

In our engagement with reality or our contact with the external world, things are grouped into **categories**. These categories are **universals** and **particulars**. It is rather easy for us to observe particular objects in the world, particular things in our everyday experience; particular tress, particular houses, particular men and women, friends, and so on. We observe shapes and sizes of objects and things, we observe qualities and quantities as we go about our daily experiences. There are many particular dogs and there are many particular goats, tables and other objects. Each dog is different from the other one although they are all dogs. From this, a basic or crucial question that emerges is: Is there not something that is universal, transcendental, fundamental, to all dogs – some sort of 'dogness' or 'doghood' – that is common to all these dogs no matter their differences and variations that make them all dogs? Universals are said to exist over and above all particulars. The question, however, that arises is this, which one gives birth to the other? Is it that we encounter the particulars and therefore come up with the idea of the universals? For instance, is it that we encounter particular cats and therefore come up with universal 'catness'; or is it that particular cats are derived from the idea of universal 'catness'? These questions are as old as philosophy itself and still beg for answers.

According to Bertrand Russell, particulars are entities which can only be subjects or terms of relations; and cannot be predicates or relations. A particular is naturally conceived as a *this* or something intrinsically

analogous to a *this*; and such an entity seems incapable of being a predicate or a relation. As such, universal is referred to as anything that is a predicate or a relation.[15] Furthermore, a universal is what particular things have in common, namely characteristics or qualities. In other words, universals are repeatable or recurrent entities that can be instantiated or exemplified by many particular things. The problem of universal arises from attempts to account for the phenomenon of similarity or attribute agreement among things.

Reflection

> Metaphysicians working on questions about universals or particulars are interested in the nature of objects and their properties, and the relationship between the two.

Some understanding of metaphysics is ontology, the study of 'being' or what exists. We can classify what *sorts* of things exist. Start, for example, with whales, which are mammals, which are animals, which are living things. Each whale is an individual thing, a 'particular'. Each class – of whales, animals, and so on – contains many particular things, but we usually suppose that each of these classifications has 'internal unity', that is, that the class is not formed by some arbitrary imposition. Living things are examples of physical things, which are all 'particular things'. What each class has in common – 'being a whale', 'being a mammal', and so on, – identifies a *property* or quality of particular things: all whales have the property of being a whale in common, while whales and elephants have in common that they are mammals. Our language commonly identifies particular things as subjects and properties by predicates. Predicates indicate (at least) two types of property – qualities but also relations; for example, 'to the north of', 'larger than' and so on. These relations are also something particular things have in common, but now in ordered pairs: for instance, whales are larger than mice (in this example, the ordered pair is whale and mice; and the relation is 'larger than'). Can we, therefore, say that properties (qualities and relations) 'exist', though obviously in a different way from particulars? 'Being a mammal' and 'is larger than' do not sound like they refer to 'things' – they are not *nouns*. However, we do have nouns that do not refer to particular things, but to what they can have in common: 'size', 'blue', 'honesty', 'rarity', and so on. So it seems that there are two sorts of things – particulars and properties. Some philosophers think of properties as '*universals*'. Words and phrases that refer to universals apply generally, to more than one thing; words that refer to particular things pick out just that one thing.

NominalistA person who argues that only particulars exist in meanings.

A **nominalist** argues that only particulars exist in any meaningful sense. Universals do not exist separately or independently from particulars: words for 'universals' do not refer to any distinct *thing*. There is no (one and the same) thing, for example, 'blue', 'being a whale', that is exemplified by two different particulars. Instead, the particulars simply

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[15] Cf. Bertrand Russell, "On the Relation of Universal and Particulars," *New Series*, v. xii. 1912, pp. 5-6

resemble each other, and we pick this up in thought and language. Certainly, there are blue things – the sky, blueberries; these exist. But 'blue' itself does not exist. Because a number of particulars resemble each other in a certain way, we call them all 'blue'. William of Ockham, Berkeley and Hume all argued for this position.

3.2 Meaning of General (Universal) Terms

3.2.1 Nominalism and Resemblance

If we adopt nominalism, what do general terms mean? If universals do not exist, do they refer to nothing at all? Or, how do they get their meaning? There are two popular options. The first is that general terms mean the set of all those particular things to which they apply, for example, 'blue' means 'all blue things'. There is, however, an objection to this claim. Many general terms such as 'honesty', are often used in ways that does not allow us to substitute 'all honest people'; that is, 'honesty is the best policy' has not successfully been paraphrased in a way that refers only to sets of particular honest people. Surely it is simpler to say that 'honesty' refers to the universal, honesty. Again, those things are blue can change – so the set of all blue things can change. But this doesn't change the *meaning* of 'blue'. So the meaning cannot just be the set. Third, two predicates, for example, 'has a shape' and 'has a size', can apply to *exactly* the same set of things, but have different meanings. The second option avoids these objections: general terms mean the concept, the abstract idea. We notice the resemblance between two or more particulars in our sense experience; we then abstract from our experience to form an abstract idea and this gives the general term its meaning. Generalizing this account, nominalists argue that 'universals' are nothing but mind dependent classification systems; they simply reflect how we think.

ITQ

- According to Nominalists, we arrive at the concept of universal by a process of ----------
  a) realization
  b) abstraction from particulars
  c) conceptualization
  d) none.

Feedback

- If you have chosen B, then you are right.
  If you have considered options A and C, then you have taken the realists position that we arrive at universals from forms or ideas.

The discussion thus far leaves us wondering where our classification system came from. What makes blue things blue? If it is *just* that we apply the term 'blue' to them, then what explains our concept? If there is nothing in virtue of which blue things are blue, our concept is completely arbitrary. The obvious answer for the norminalist is that blue things are blue because they resemble other blue things. What we have picked out with the term 'blue' is a pattern of resemblance. This pattern explains our

concept. However, we should try to not explain this pattern of resemblance by appealing to a universal that those particulars share. There is no universal 'blue' in virtue of which blue things resemble each other. Their resembling each other is metaphysically fundamental. In this regard, Bertrand Russell objected that nominalism ends up contradicting itself.[16] The resemblance between particulars – for example, the similarity in colour – is a universal. The charge of the realist in this regard is that the Nominalist has focused too much on qualities, and forgotten relations. Resemblance is not a quality like 'being blue'; it is a relation between particulars: x resembles y. But relations are just as much universals as qualities; the relation of 'looks the same colour as' holds between many particular blue things.[17]

Can nominalists argue, therefore, that the relation is just an abstract idea, since they argue that we form the abstract idea by *noticing the resemblance* – that is held to be real and comes before the idea? Put differently, are we bound to accept the reality of at least certain types of universal, viz, those relations that form patterns of resemblances? To this, nominalists respond that when two things resemble each other, the only things that exist are the two things that resemble each other. There is no third thing, 'resemblance', in addition. For the realist, however, the opposite is the case regarding the nature of properties and relations. As such, realists argue that universals or general ideas exist independently of the particular they inhere. It would be a point in the attempt to explicate the position of the realist to examine the philosophy of Plato considered one of the most explicate in this regard.

3.2.2 Realism and Universals

Plato argued that since more than one thing can be beautiful, beauty is a property of beautiful things share in common. Beauty manifests itself in all the different things, in all the different ways, we call 'beautiful' But beauty itself is not a particular thing, and Plato argued that it must be something distinct from particular things. For instance, all particular beautiful things could also be destroyed, yet that will not destroy beauty itself. Universals, therefore, exist independently of particulars, outside space, time, and the changing world of sense experience. While many realists about universals do not accept Plato's arguments or his claim that they exist completely independently of particular things, they do accept two points:

1. 'one-over-many': universals are general, so that many particulars can exhibit the same universal;
2. 'instantiation': what the particulars have in common is the universal – what makes all the things that are whales is the

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[16] Cf. Bertrand Russell, *Problems of Philosophy* (London: T. Butterworth Limited, 1936), p. 96

[17] Cf. C. M. Macleod & E. M. Rubenstein, "Universals" *Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*, Published in Dec. 2005

property of 'being a whale'; universals explain what they have in common.

The basic argument in favour of realism is that without universals, we cannot explain or understand our abilities to recognise, categorise and generalise about particulars. Since our classifications are not arbitrary, and to explain the phenomenon of similarity, we therefore need universals. Similarity is a matter of two (or more) particulars exemplifying *one and the same* property. This explains the ability to recognise 'new' existing things. If someone has never encountered *this* particular (for example, this chain), how can they identify its properties? In this regard, it becomes convenient to say that because they have encountered these very properties before, in other particulars, they can identify the properties. We should not say that *part* of a universal; for instance, the colour blue, exists in one object and a different part in another object. First, it is odd to think that 'blue' has parts. Second, we want to say that the *same* universal is exemplified by the two objects – referring to parts would undermine this. So we should say that the colour 'blue' exists wholly in each blue thing.

ITQ
  o Which of the following does not express Plato's theory?
      a) Ideas as universals are the real originals.
      b) Universal ideas can be copied by the perceptibles.
      c) Substantial forms are not the material world of change known to us through sensation.
      d) Properties are abstract objects, to which particular objects bear special relations.

Feedback
  • All the options in fact maintain Plato's theory on FORMS.

Realism also faces two problems with how particulars and universals relate to each other.

  • First, Aristotle argued that Plato's realism faces an infinite regress. Plato claims that particulars instantiate universals. 'Instantiation' is therefore a relation between the particular and the universal. But relations are universals. So the particular and the universal are both related to another universal, 'instantiation'. Whatever this relation is will also be a universal. One response is to deny that instantiation is a universal (just as nominalists answered Russell by denying that 'resemblance' is a relation).
  • Second, *how* do particulars 'instantiate' universals? How does a whale 'have' or 'exemplify' the property of 'being a whale'? This seems particularly challenging for Plato's theory, because universals are outside space and time. Other realist theories claim that universals are part of the spatio-temporal world (see below), though this does not tell us what instantiation is.

We use general terms in explanations all the time. Realism argues that if they were dependent on our minds, rather than referring to universals, the explanations would not work. Take change for instance; when a particular changes, the particular persists; it is the same thing, but it has changed. So what has change? The obvious answer according to the realist is that the

Tip

changed is due to the particular; the particular is however still identifiable because of the universal that inheres in it. The nominalist alternative is to say simply that the change observed in a particular only *describes* the change; it does not *explain* it. From the foregoing, it can be surmised that the place of universals in explanation provides the realist with answers to two common objections:

1. Do all predicates refer to universals? The realist's response is negative on the ground that only those universals that appear in explanations (or perhaps 'causal explanations') exist; other predicates (such as 'witch') are 'merely' ideas.

2. How do we know about universals? The realist's response is through empirical means, we experience the particulars that instantiate Universals.

Discussion Activity

Do you agree that universals do in fact exist as distinguishable entities, that is, the world is made up only of particulars?

Post your view on Study Session three forum page on course website.

Study Session Summary

Summary

In this Study Session, we examined the notions of universals and particulars. We presented universals as the general forms of things in the world, sometimes referred to as essences. We went further to examine the problem of which one gives rise to the other. We raised the question on whether it is the general notions that give birth to particulars or whether particulars conglomerate to give the impression of universals.

Assessment

Assessment

SAQ 3.1 (tests Learning Outcomes 3.1 and 3.2)

Fill the blank spaces in the statements below.

i. _____ argues that because a number of particulars resemble each other in a certain way, we call them all 'blue'.

ii. _____ presents that particular objects are not objects of knowledge.

iii. _____ argue that universals or general ideas exist independently of the particular they inhere.

iv. To the _____, when two things resemble each other, the only things that exist are the two things that resemble each other.

v. Universals do not refer to any distinct thing is an arguement of the

_____.

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Study Session 4

The Problems of Personal Identity

Introduction

In the previous Study Session, we discussed the relationship between universal and particulars. In this Study Session, we will examine the problem of personal identity. In doing this, we will discuss the meaning of personal identity, and the problems of personal identity.

Learning Outcomes

Outcomes

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

4.1 *distinguish* personal identity from mere characteristics.

4.2 *discuss* the problems of personal identity.

4.1 Conceptualizing the Problem of Personal Identity

Reflection

Who am I? What am I? How am I? Such are the questions that fill personal identity. Do you have an answer?

One of the most central issues discussed in metaphysics as a discipline has to do with the problem of personal identity. By way of definition, the problem of personal identity has to do with the question of what it is that inheres in a person from the time the person was born to the time he or she dies at old age, that makes him or her the same person. In other words, it is believed that certain essential nature of every individual persists or insists or inheres in that individual and it is that nature or feature that makes the person the same through time and space. How do we identify this defining, determinate and definitive feature of each individual? It does not only identify the person through time and space but distinguishes each individual from the other. And so the question is what personal identity is?

Personal identity can be seen from the point of view of the questions that arise concerning human being by virtue of their being *persons*. Many of these questions are familiar ones that occur to nearly all of us now and again: What am I? When did I begin? What will happen to me when I die? Questions such as these constitute the core of the problem of Personal identity and have occupied the attention of thinkers for some time. And so, personal identity has been in discussion since the origins of Western philosophy, and most major figures have had something to say about it. The problem has often begun with a question, what is a person?

Many philosophers define 'person' as something that has certain special mental properties. Locke, for instance, famously said that a person is thinking intelligent being that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing, in different times and places." Presumably this implies that something is a person at a given time if and only if it has those mental properties then.

4.1.1 What are the Problems of Personal Identity?

The problem of personal identity is not understood as a single problem; but rather a wide range of loosely connected questions. However, the problem of personal identity centers on the notion of *person*: that is, how is the word, person to be understood. In discussing the question of personhood, questions raised include; what is it to be a person? What is necessary, and what suffices, for something to count as a person, as opposed to a non-person? What have people got that non-people have not got? This amounts more or less to asking for the definition of the word *person*. More specifically, we can ask at what point in one's development from a fertilized egg there comes to be a person, or what it would take for a chimpanzee or a Martian, or an electronic computer to be a person, if they could ever be. In discussing the problem of personhood, we often speak of one's 'personal identity' as what makes one the person one is. Your identity in this sense consists roughly of what makes you unique as an individual and different from others. Or it is the way you see or define yourself, or the network of values and convictions that structure your life. This individual identity is a *property* (or set of properties). Presumably it is one you have only contingently: you might have had a different identity from the one you in fact have. It is also a property that you may have only temporarily: you could swap your current individual identity for a new one, or perhaps even get by without any.

In examining the question of person identity still, the notion of persistence requires some attention. In this regard, what does it take for a person to persist from one time to another – that is, for the *same* person to exist at different times? What sorts of adventures could you possibly survive, in the broadest sense of the word 'possible', and what sort of event would necessarily bring your existence to an end? What determines which past or future being is you? Suppose you point to a child in an old class photograph and say, "That is me"; what makes you that one, rather than one of the others? What is it about the way she relates then to you as you are now that makes her you? For that matter, what makes it the case that anyone at all who existed back then is you? This is the question of personal identity over time. An answer to it is an account of our persistence conditions or a criterion of personal identity over time (a constitutive rather than an evidential criterion).

Historically this question often arises out of the hope (or fear) that we might continue to exist after we die – Plato's *Phaedo* is a famous example. Whether this could happen depends on whether biological death necessarily brings one's existence to an end. Imagine that after your death there really will be someone, in the next world or in this one, who resembles you in certain ways. How would that being have to relate to you as you are now in order to *be* you, rather than someone else? What would the Higher Powers have to do to keep you in existence after your

death? Or is there anything they could do? The answer to these questions depends on the answer to the Persistence Question.[18]

The Persistence question stretches over to the Evidence question; though it is necessary that they be distinctly understood. In this sense, what it takes for you to persist through time is one thing; how we might find out whether you have is another. If the criminal had a similar facial appearance or were you identical twin, the courts may conclude that he is you. But even if that is conclusive evidence, having the same facial appearance as your identical twin is not *what it is* for a past or future being to be you: it is neither necessary nor sufficient for someone else could have the same facial appearance just like yours. With respect to the Evidence question, questions that are raised include; how is it possible for us to find out who is who? What evidence bears on the question of whether the person here now is the one who was here yesterday? What ought we to do when different kinds of evidence support opposing verdicts? One source of evidence is first-person memory: if you remember doing some particular action, or at least seem to remember, and someone really did do it, then that person is probably you. Another source is physical continuity: if the person who did it looks just like you or even better if she is in some sense physically or spatio-temporally continuous with you, that is reason to think she is you. However, which of these sources is more fundamental? Does first-person memory count as evidence all by itself, for instance, or only insofar as we can check it against publicly available physical evidence?

What sort of things, ontological speaking, are you and I and other humans? What is our basic ontological nature? For instance, what are we made of? Are we made up entirely of matter, as stones are, or partly or wholly of something else? If we are made of matter, what matter is it? (Just the matter that makes up our bodies, or might we be larger or smaller than our bodies?) Where, in other words, do our spatial boundaries lie? More fundamentally, what fixes those boundaries? Are we substances – ontological independent beings – or is each of us a state or an aspect of something else, or perhaps some sort of process or event? One possible answer to this broad question is that we are biological organisms. Another is that we are part-less immaterial substances – or compound things made up of an immaterial soul and a material body. Hume suggested that each of us is "a bundle of perceptions". A more popular view now is that we are material things "constituted by" organisms: you are made of the same matter as a certain animal, but you and the animal are different things because what it takes for you to persist is different. Another is that we are temporal parts of animals. There is even the paradoxical view that there is nothing that we are: we don't really exist at all.

Having looked at some of the questions about problem of personhood in the questions regarding Persistence and Evidence, the question that arises now is it what matters in identity? That is, what is the practical importance of facts about our identity and persistence? Why should we care about it? Why does it *matter*? Imagine that surgeons are going to put

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[18] Cf. CarstenKorfmacher, "Personal Identity", *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, published May 2006

your brain into my head and that neither of us has any choice about this. Will the resulting person – who will presumably think he is you – be responsible for my actions or for yours? Or both?Or neither? Suppose he will be in terrible pain after the operation unless one of us pays a large sum in advance. If we were both entirely selfish, which of us would have a reason to pay? The answer may seem to turn entirely on whether the resulting person would *be* you or me. Identity itself matters practically. But some deny this. They say that someone else could be responsible for your actions. You could have an entirely selfish reason to care about someone else's well-being for your own sake. Perhaps what gives me a reason to care about what happens to the man people will call by my name tomorrow is not that he *is* me, but that he is then psychologically continuous with me as I am now, or because he relates to me in some other way that does not imply that he and I are one. If someone other than me were psychologically continuous tomorrow with me as I am now, he would have what matters to me, and I ought to transfer my selfish concern to him.

The Persistence Question

Let us turn now to the Persistence Question. Few concepts have been the source of more misunderstanding than identity over time. The Persistence Question is often confused with other questions, or stated in a tendentious way. The question is what is necessary and sufficient for a past or future being to be you. If we point to you now, and then describe someone or something existing at another time, we can ask whether we are referring to one thing twice, or referring once to each of two things. (There are precisely analogous questions about the persistence of other objects, such as dogs.) The Persistence Question asks what determines the answer to such questions, or makes possible answers true or false. The Persistent question is about *numerical identity*. To say that this and that are numerically identical is to say that they are one and the same: one thing rather than two. This is different from *qualitative identity*. Things are qualitatively identical when they are exactly similar. For instance, identical twins may be qualitatively identical – there may be no telling them apart – but not numerically identical, as there are two of them: that's what makes them twins. A past or future person need not be, at that past or future time, exactly like you are now in order to be you – that is, in order to be numerically identical with you. You do not remain qualitatively the same throughout your life. You change: you get bigger or smaller; you learn new things and forget others; and so on. So the question is not what it takes for a past or future being to be qualitatively just like you, but what it takes for a past or future being to be *you*, as opposed to someone or something other than you.

The confusion of qualitative with numerical identity is one source of misunderstanding about the Persistence Question. People sometimes ask what it takes for someone to *remain the same person* from one time to another. The idea is that if I were to alter in certain ways – if I lost most of my memory or my personality changed dramatically, or I underwent a profound religious conversion, say – then I should no longer be the person I was before. The question of what it takes for someone to remain the same person is not the Persistence Question. It is not even a question about numerical identity. If it were, it would answer itself: I necessarily

remain numerically the same for as long as I exist. Nothing could make *me* a numerically different person from the one I am now. For someone existing tomorrow to be numerically different from me is precisely for him *not* to be me. Nothing can start out as one thing and end up as another thing – a numerically different one. This has nothing to do with personal identity in particular, but is simply a fact about the logic of identity.

Accounts of Our Identity through Time

Almost all proposed answers to the Persistence Question fall into one of three categories. The first is the Psychological Approach, according to which some psychological relation is necessary or sufficient (or both) for one to persist. You are that future being that in some sense inherits its mental features – beliefs, memories, preferences, the capacity for rational thought – from you; and you are that past being whose mental features you have inherited in this way. There is dispute over what sort of inheritance this has to be – whether it must be underpinned by some kind of physical continuity, for instance, or whether a 'non-branching' requirement is needed. There is also disagreement about what mental features need to be inherited. Most philosophers, writing on personal identity since the early 20th century, have endorsed some version of the Psychological Approach. The Memory Criterion mentioned earlier is an example. Advocates of the Psychological Approach include Johnston (1987), Garrett (1998), Hudson (2001), Lewis (1976), Nagel (1986, 40), Noonan (2003), Nozick (1981), Parfit (1971; 1984, 207), Perry (1972), Shoemaker (1970; 1984, 90; 1997; 1999), and Unger (1990, 2000).

A second idea is that our identity through time consists in some brute physical relation. You are that past or future being that has your body, or that is the same biological organism as you are, or the like. Whether you survive or perish has nothing to do with psychological facts. Call this the Somatic Approach. (It should not be confused with the view that physical evidence has some sort of priority over psychological evidence in finding out who is who. That has to do with the Evidence Question.) Its advocates include Ayers (1990), Carter (1989), Mackie (1999), Olson (1997), Peter van Inwagen (1990), and Williams (1970). It may be supposed that the truth lies somewhere between the two: we need both mental and physical continuity to survive, or perhaps either would suffice without the other. Both the Psychological and Somatic Approaches agree that there is something that it takes for us to persist – that our identity through time consists in or necessarily follows from something other than itself.

A third view, Anti-criterialism, denies this. Mental and physical continuity are evidence for identity, it says, but do not always guarantee it, and may not be required. No sort of continuity is both necessary and sufficient for you to survive. The only correct and complete answer to the Persistence Question is the trivial statement that a person existing at one time is identical with a being existing at another if and only if they are identical.

The Psychological Approach

Most people feel immediately drawn to the psychological approach. It seems obvious that you would go along with your brain if it were transplanted, and that this is so because that organ would carry with it your memories and other mental features. This would lead the recipient to believe that he or she was you. And why should this belief be mistaken? This makes it easy to suppose that our identity over time has something to do with psychology. It is notoriously difficult, however, to get from this conviction to a plausible answer to the Persistence Question. What psychological relation might our identity through time consist in? We have already mentioned memory: a past or future being might be you if and only if you can now remember an experience she had then, or vice versa. This proposal faces two objections, discovered in the 18th century by Seargeant and Berkeley, but more famously discussed by Reid and Butler.[19] First, suppose a young student is fined for overdue library books. Later, as a middle-aged lawyer, she remembers paying the fine. Later still, in her dotage, she remembers her law career, but has entirely forgotten not only paying the fine but everything else she did in her youth. According to the memory criterion the young student is the middle-aged lawyer, the lawyer is the old woman, but the old woman is not the young student. This is an impossible result: if x and y are one and y and z are one, x and z cannot be *two*. Identity is transitive; memory continuity is not. Second, it seems to belong to the very idea of remembering that you can remember only your own experiences. To remember paying a fine (or the experience of paying) is to remember *yourself* paying. That makes it trivial and uninformative to say that you are the person whose experiences you can remember; that is, that memory continuity is sufficient for personal identity. It is uninformative because you cannot know whether someone genuinely remembers a past experience without already knowing whether he is the one who had it.

One response to the first problem is to modify the memory criterion by switching from direct to indirect memory connections: the old woman is the young student because she can recall experiences the lawyer had at a time when the lawyer remembered the student's life. The second problem is traditionally met by replacing memory with a new concept, 'retro-cognition' or 'quasi-memory', which is just like memory but without the identity requirement: even if it is self-contradictory to say that I remember doing something I did not do but someone else did, I could still 'quasi-remember' it.[20] Neither position gets us far, however, as both the original and the modified memory criteria face a more obvious problem: there are many times in my past that I can't remember or quasi-remember at all, and to which I am not linked even indirectly by an overlapping chain of memories. For instance, there is no time when I could recall anything that happened to me while I was dreamlessly sleeping last night. The memory criterion has the absurd implication that I have never existed

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[19] See Perry, *Personal Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975)

[20] Cf. T. Penelhum, *Survival and Disembodied Existence* (London: Routledge, 1970), pp. 85-86

at any time when I was completely unconscious. The man sleeping in my bed last night was someone else.

A better solution appeals to causal dependence.[21] We can define two notions, psychological connectedness and psychological continuity. A being is *psychologically connected*, at some future time, with me as I am now just if he is in the psychological states he is in then in large part *because of* the psychological states I am in now. Having a current memory (or quasi-memory) of an earlier experience is one sort of psychological connection – the experience causes the memory of it – but there are others. Importantly, one's current mental states can be caused in part by mental states one was in at times when one was unconscious. For example, most of my current beliefs are the same ones I had while I slept last night: those beliefs have caused themselves to continue existing. We can then define the second notion thus: I am now *psychologically continuous* with a past or future being just if some of my current mental states relate to those he is in then by a chain of psychological connections. Now suppose that a person *x* who exists at one time is identical with something *y* existing at another time if and only if *x* is, at the one time, psychologically continuous with *y* as it is at the other time. This avoids the most obvious objections to the memory criterion. It still leaves important questions unanswered, however. Suppose we could somehow copy all the mental contents of your brain onto mine, much as we can copy the contents of one computer drive onto another. In addition, suppose this process erased the previous contents of both brains. Whether this would be, a case of psychological continuity depends on what sort of causal dependence counts. The resulting being (with my brain and your mental contents) would be mentally like you were before, and not like I was. He would have inherited your mental properties in a way – but a funny way. Is it the right way? Could you literally move from one human animal to another via "brain-state transfer"? Advocates of the Psychological Approach disagree.

Discussion Activity	In this session, our focus of discussion will be on two related questions:
	1) What is the relationship between an individual and its characteristics?
	2) Do you think you create your own identity? How?
	Post your response on Study Session four forum page on course website.

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[21] Cf. S. Shoemaker, "Personal Identity: A Materialist's Account", in *Personal Identity*, ed. by Shoemaker and Swinburne, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), pp. 89-90

Study Session Summary

Summary

In this Study Session, we discussed the problem of personal identity. We identified the problem of personal identity. We also examined various attempts at resolving this problem. We concluded by arguing that although a number of proposals could be persuasive as represented here, it is difficult to arrive at what could be regarded as necessary and sufficient reasons for that which could be said to persist in a person that makes him the same person over time.

Assessment

Assessment

SAQ 4.1 (measures Learning Outcome 4.1)

What question of personal identity is of most interest to you, and why?

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Study Session 5

The Mind-Body Problem

Introduction

In this Study Session, we will explore the concept of mind-body problem; we will examine theories of mind-body, andsome of the merits and demerits of these theories. Similarly, we will also discuss the concept of problem of other minds as well as different theories propounded by philosopher to explain the concept.

Learning Outcomes

Outcomes

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

5.1 *explain* the mind-body problem.

5.2 *discuss*at least two of the theories of mind.

5.3 *point out*the issues involvedin the problem of other minds.

5.1 Conceptions on the Mind-Body

Generally, most human cultures, societies and traditions have a rather dualistic conception of the human person. In this understanding, the human person is made up of the body and soul or the mind. This is represented in, for instance, ancient Greek culture, where the atomist believed that the soul is made up of fine atomic particles, bottled up in the body as long as the person lives. At death, however, the soul escapes from its 'imprisonment' in the body. In the Jewish tradition, the life of the soul is contained in the blood. For this reason, the blood is drained out before the body of an animal can be eaten. However, the eighteenth century modern philosopher, Rene Descartes is regarded as the first to present a systematic account of the person with regards to the content of the human person. For Descartes the human person is made up the body and the mind. The body is material, physical, extended, that is, occupying space, divisible, destructible and fundamentally a substance. According to Descartes, the body is not responsible for human thinking, and so he calls it a non-thinking substance. The mind, on the other hand, is not only a substance like the body, but unlike the body it is not material, unextended, invisible, and therefore, indestructible. For Descartes, the essence of the mind is to think. He therefore refers to it as unextended thinking substance. The mind-body problem therefore emerges from this conception of the mind and the body. For, the mind and the body are not only opposed in categories, but for Descartes they interact, hence his position is called Interactionist Dualism.

The mind-body problem can be understood at two levels. The first level is the conception of the mind as an unextended substance. For anything to

be a substance it must be capable of independent existence, and to access this feature of independent existence of a substance, such a thing must be separable from other substances. Put differently, such a thing must be individuatable. Now, if the mind is not locatable in space or unextended, how is it possible to individuate it among other substances? It may be regarded as 'a non-substantial substance', an 'immaterial matter' – a contradiction in terms.

The second level of the mind-body problem is: how can two substances of opposed ontological categories interact? In other words, an immaterial, unextended, invisible substance called the mind cannot interact with a material extended physical body. Although, Descartes attempted in anticipation of this problem to propose a thesis of the 'pineal gland', it did not help matters much. For if the pineal gland is the meeting point of the mind and the body, the question will still be raised: what is the nature of this bridge?

5.2 Theories of Mind

In attempt to resolve the mind-body problem, philosophers have proposed a number of theories. The theories can be grouped under two broad headings.
1. Dualism
2. Monism

5.2.1 Dualism

As mentioned above, Interactionist dualism or dualist interactionism is perhaps the most popular theory of mind as it is found represented in nearly all human cultures. However, professional discussions in the philosophy of mind, regard Cartesian interactionism as the "Official Position", as it is considered in some quarters as the most systematic representation of the mind-body relation. For Descartes the mind is characterized by immaterialism, invisibility, unextendedness and a thinking substance. In this sense, every human act of thinking, deliberating, desiring, wishing and hoping, doubting and pondering, all take place in the mind as forms of consciousness. In the opinion of Descartes, since the human person, aside from the activities just mentioned, carries out other functions with the body, such as carrying objects and occupying space, these could not be the functions of the mind since the functions are of the body.

The Cartesian interactionism, however, has it that the mind and the body interact at a point behind the brain, which Descartes called the 'pineal gland'. Attempt to understand and analyse Cartesian dualism brought to the fore the first expression of what is known as the mind-body problem, which is, how can two opposed ontological categories interact? This question stands over and above the problem of characterizing the mind in Descartes' words as an unextended thinking substance. It is in the bid to resolve the Cartesian dilemma that philosophers presented other theories such as Occasionalism and Epiphenomenalism, which of course has their internal contradictions.

Occasionalism

This can be referred to as one of the more popular traditional account of the development of the mind-body debate in the seventeenth century, which is the theory that God alone is the true causal agent, in whose operations are included all the phenomena of nature. According to the story usually told, some early modern thinkers, committed to Descartes's philosophy, and to mind-body dualism in particular, were unable to explain how two substances so radically different in essence could interact. Since unextended thought and matter as pure extension have absolutely nothing in common, and thus no means by which they might be able to 'engage' one another, it becomes inexplicable, and even inconceivable, how a body can be the cause of mental events – thoughts, sensations – and how a mind can cause motions in the body with which it is united. When confronted with such a problem, the story runs, Cartesians asserted that no such interaction really takes place. Rather, what appears to be true causal interaction is really God's constant activity in producing thoughts on the occasion of certain bodily motions and motions in the body on the occasion of certain volitions in the mind, all in accordance with general laws established before-hand. On this reading, occasionalism is first and foremost an *ad hoc* response to the mind-body problem as it is faced by Cartesian dualism.

It is clear that those seventeenth-century thinkers who did have recourse to a thoroughgoing occasionalism did so not only in order to account for apparent mind-body interaction, but to account for apparent causal relations among bodies as well. Nicolas Malebranche, for example, in both *The Search After Truth* and *Dialogues on Metaphysics*, argues that it is no more conceivable how one body can move another than how a body can be a true cause of thoughts in the soul or how volitions in the soul can move the body.[22] However, some Cartesians call upon occasionalism only in order to answer questions about interaction between bodies. Louis de la Forge, one of the more important expositors and followers of Descartes in the mid-seventeenth century, insists that "the will can well be the efficient cause of all the things we notice to depend on it in this alliance between mind and body," although he does reduce mind-body interaction to a "mutual correspondence and concourse and reciprocal dependence" in the states of the two substances. It is only when he comes to the question of how one body moves another body that he employs the constant and necessarily efficacious activity of God. It is, however, important to note that the three most important thoroughgoing occasionalists of the seventeenth century did not even believe that there was any special mind-body problem that needed resolving. Malebranche, Cordemoy, and Arnold Geulincx all denied that the mind and the body causally interact in any real sense, and likewise for bodies among themselves. But they did so not for any reasons which we should recognize as deriving from a scepticism or concern about how two

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[22] Cf. George Boas, "Cordemoy and Malebranche" in *Dominant theme of Modern Philosophy, A History* (New York, 1957), p. 103

substances differing essentially can interact. In fact, whatever reasons they do present for denying mind-body interaction and, consequently, for calling upon God to effect the necessary changes either derive immediately from identical reasons at work against body-body interaction; or, if they are reasons specific to mind-body relations, do not derive from problems or inconsistencies perceived to be inherent in Cartesian ontological dualism.

Epiphenomenalism

This, too, is a version of dualism, rejecting reduction of the mental to the physical. Unlike other dualist theories, however, it denies that conscious mental states are ever causes. It is never pain that makes us wince, nor anger that makes us shout: these are the effects of certain neural state. Put differently, epiphenomenalism is a theory concerning the relation between the mental and physical realms, regarded as radically different in nature. The theory holds that only physical states have causal power, and that mental states are completely dependent on them. The mental realm, for epiphenomenalists, is nothing more than a series of conscious states which signify the occurrence of states of the nervous system, but which play no causal role. For example, my feeling sleepy does not cause my yawning — rather, both the feeling and the yawning are effects of an underlying neural state. Mental states are real, and in being conscious we are more than merely physical organisms. Nevertheless, all our experiences, thoughts and actions are determined by our physical natures. Mental states are actually as smoke from a machine seems to be, mere side effects making no difference to the course of nature. What has led philosophers to propose a theory which is such an affront to common sense? The rise early in the seventeenth century of the conception of the physical realm as a closed system, in which the forces of material nature are the only influences that determine the course of events, when combined with the naturalistic view that human beings are a part of material nature, and governed by its laws, seems to leave no room for a realm of mental states having a role in fixing the course of events. With the demise of vitalism regarding the forces governing animate life, the case for the physical causal closure of the material realm seemed compelling.

Instances of reference to the concept "epiphenomenalism" leading to the development of the theory can be traced. To begin, the term "epiphenomenon" — meaning a secondary symptom — was first applied to consciousness in 1890 by William James, but the position which he was attacking had already existed for some time. Simmias, in Plato's *Phaedo*, asserts that body stands to mind as a musical instrument stands to its "harmonia" (85e3 —86d4). If we interpret the latter as meaning the music produced by an instrument, Simmias' theory has epiphenomenalist overtones. In the eighteenth century Charles Bonnet discussed in his *Essai de Psychologie* (1735) a theory according to which 'the soul is a mere spectator of the movements of its body', though it 'believes itself to be the author of them', while the body 'performs of itself all that series of actions which constitutes life'. In 1865 Shadworth Hodgson's *Time and Space* provided the first full formulation of epiphenomenalism. "States of consciousness", he wrote, "are not produced by previous states of consciousness, but both are produced by the action of the brain; and,

conversely, there is no ground for saying that states of consciousness react upon the brain or modify its action." In 1870 Hodgson became epiphenomenalism's first explicit supporter. Thomas Huxley soon followed; and his 1874 essay "On the Hypothesis that Animals are Automata, and its History", with its famous phrase "we are conscious automata", is the classic statement of the theory. In the twentieth century epiphenomenalism was not widely supported, although George Santayana and C.D. Broad both have epiphenomenalist leanings, and John Lachs vigorously defended the theory. In 1970 Keith Campbell proposed a "New Epiphenomenalism", which combines aspects of epiphenomenalism with the view that mental states are brain states. Where classical epiphenomenalism asserts that mental states are non-physical and causally inert, the new epiphenomenalism asserts that mental states are causally potent physical states of the brain, but that in addition to their physical properties some of these states possess phenomenal properties or *qualia* which are non-physical and non-causal.

In all, for epiphenomenalism to be a doctrine distinct from both dualism and materialism, it must involve a very strong conception of causality as productive power or efficacy. No "Humean" or regularity theory of causation will be sufficient. For the epiphenomenalist admits that many conscious states are regularly followed by other conscious states or by actions, yet denies that the former ever causes the latter.

5.2.2 Monism

One of the most popular monistic conceptions of mind is behaviourism. Behaviourism refers to the movement in psychology and philosophy that emphasized the outward behavioural aspects of thought and dismissed the inward experiential, and sometimes the inner procedural, aspects as well. It is a movement harking back to the methodological proposals of John B. Watson, who coined the name. Watson's 1912 manifesto proposed abandoning introspectionist attempts to make consciousness a subject of experimental investigation, only to focus instead on *behavioural* manifestations of intelligence. B. F. Skinner later hardened behaviourist strictures to exclude inner physiological processes along with inward experiences as items of legitimate psychological concern. From the foregoing, it is evident that behaviourist view the mind as behaviour. In other words, the behaviourist believes that every form of consciousness can be explained in terms of behaviour. For instance, anger consciousness must be reducible to anger behaviour, hunger consciousness must be explained in terms of hunger behaviour, love consciousness can only be understood through love behaviour, to mention but a few. By this understanding, to access a given state of mind, whether anger or hunger or love or resentment or welcoming attitude, what is needed is to exact an adequate stimuli and the person would elicit a given form of behaviour. What this means is that any form of consciousness must be identified in a form of corresponding behaviour and the absence of any such corresponding behaviour obviously indicate the absence of the form of consciousness. This view is held in the social sciences that have tried to understand human social behaviour in scientific modes. It is also assumed in our everyday interactions and social relations; for how else are you to explain fear consciousness without fear behaviour? In

spite of this rather persuasive strength of the behaviourist conception of consciousness and our acceptation of it in our everyday life, it is also generally manipulable and therefore, not full proof in terms of error and ineffectiveness. For instance, we do know that the only way for us to ascertain whether a man has the knowledge of a particular skill is to respond appropriately when so challenged. But is it not possible, for instance that one could hold back his response, not eliciting any behaviour even when stimulated? Can one not have fear consciousness without exhibiting it in fear behaviour or can one not have anger, hunger and love consciousness without exhibiting any of these in corresponding behaviour? What this means is that a state of consciousness can exist independently of any behaviour. Furthermore, it is possible to put up certain forms of behaviour without any corresponding inner state of consciousness as we may have it in pretentions and imitations or mimicking. All these challenges seem to show that there is more to consciousness than external behaviour. It was in the bid to solve this problem that some twentieth century philosophers came up with the thesis that the mind is the brain and the functions of the mind, such as thinking, deliberating, wishing, wondering, and so on, are electro-physical processes in the brain. This is what is referred to as the mind-brain identity theory which regards the mind as the brain.[23]

Identity Theory

The identity theory of mind holds that states and processes of the mind are identical to states and processes of the brain. Strictly speaking, it need not hold that the mind is identical to the brain. Idiomatically we do use 'She has a good mind' and 'She has a good brain' interchangeably but we would hardly say 'Her mind weighs fifty ounces'. As such, it could be seen that identifying mind and brain is a matter of identifying processes and perhaps states of the mind and brain. Consider an experience of pain, or of seeing something, or of having a mental image. The identity theory of mind is to the effect that these experiences *are* just brain processes, not merely *correlated with* brain processes. Some philosophers, however, hold that though experiences are brain processes they nevertheless have fundamentally non-physical, psychical, properties, sometimes called 'qualia'. With regards to this, the identity theory could be taken in some sense to be a denial of the existence of such irreducible non-physical properties. In other sense, some identity theorists give a behaviouristic analysis of mental *states*, such as beliefs and desires, but others, sometimes called central state materialists, say that mental states are actual brain states. Identity theorists often describe themselves as 'materialists' or 'physicalists'. The identity theory dates back to U.T. Place's 'Is Consciousness a Brain Process?' (1956) and H. Feigl 'The "Mental" and the "Physical"' (1958).[24]

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[23] See Jack C. Lyons, "In Defense of Epiphenomenalism", *Philosophical Psychology*, Vol. 19, No. 6, Dec. 2006, pp. 767-794

[24] See Jack C. Lyons, "In Defense of Epiphenomenalism", *Philosophical Psychology*, Vol. 19, No. 6, Dec. 2006, pp. 767-794

In his theory of the mind-body relation, Place spoke of constitution rather than of identity. One of his examples is 'This table is an old packing case'. Another is 'lightning is an electric discharge'. Indeed the latter example was spoken of by Place in his earlier paper 'The Concept of Heed' (1954), in which he took issue with Ryle's behaviourism as it applied to concepts of consciousness, sensation and imagery. Place remarked:

> The logical objections which might be raised to the statement 'consciousness is a process in the brain' are no greater than the logical objections which might be raised to the statement 'lightning is a motion of electric charges'.

It should be noticed that Place was using the word 'logical' in the way that it was used at Oxford at the time, not in the way that it is normally used now. One objection was that 'sensation' does not mean the same as 'brain processes. Place's reply was to point out that 'this table' does not mean the same as 'this old packing case' and 'lightning' does not mean the same as 'motion of electric charges'. We find out whether this is a table in a different way from the way in which we find out that it is an old packing case. We find out whether a thing is lightning by looking and that it is a motion of electric charges by theory and experiment. This does not prevent the table being identical to the old packing case and the perceived lightning being nothing other than an electric discharge. Feigl and Smart put the matter more in terms of the distinction between meaning and reference. 'Sensation' and 'brain processes may differ in meaning and yet have the same reference. 'Very bright planet seen in the morning' and 'very bright planet seen in the evening' both refer to the same entity Venus. Of course these expressions *could* be construed as referring to different things, different sequences of temporal stages of Venus, but not necessarily or most naturally so.

Place's very original and pioneering paper was written after discussions at the University of Adelaide with J.J.C. Smart and C.B. Martin. Smart at the time argued for a behaviourist position in which mental events were elucidated purely in terms of hypothetical propositions about behaviour, as well as first person reports of experiences which Gilbert Ryle regarded as 'avowals'. Avowals were thought of as mere pieces of behaviour, as if saying that one had a pain was just doing a sophisticated sort of wince. Smart saw Ryle's theory as friendly to physicalism though that was not part of Ryle's motivation. Smart hoped that the hypotheticals would ultimately be explained by neuroscience and cybernetics. Being unable to refute Place, and recognizing the unsatisfactoriness of Ryle's treatment of inner experience, to some extent recognized by Ryle himself,[25] Smart soon became converted to Place's view. In this he was also encouraged and influenced by Feigl's '"The Mental" and the "Physical"'. Feigl's wide ranging contribution covered many problems, including those connected with intentionality, and he introduced the useful term

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[25] Cf. Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1949), p. 240

‘nomological danglers’ for the dualists’ supposed mental-physical correlations.

5.3 Problem of Other Minds

The problem of other minds has to do with the question as to whether other people have minds. Of course, it is not difficult or problematic for an individual person to know that he or she has a mind. At least, every individual knows that he or she deliberates, wonders, ponders, has memory and so; and these are functions of the mind or mental attributes of the human person. Furthermore, every individual feels pain, that is, experience pain sensations, feels anger, entertains fear and so on. However, though these are ascribable to one's own-self, it is very problematic to ascribe it to others. For instance, how do I know that others feel pain without, for instance, pain behaviour? Or, that others deliberate or think while sitting quietly without manifesting any corresponding behaviour; In short, how can I explain or know that other persons have minds? This is particularly so as the only way to show or to explain the fact of others having minds is to argue from the point of view of inference; that is, from the fact that I have a mind I infer that others have minds. But it would be clear here that this inference cannot be a conclusively establish truth. In other words, is it not possible that I have what others do not have? It is also argued sometimes that we can establish the truth of others having minds from the fact that they behave in particular ways when stimulated. But we do know also that the fact that others put up the behaviour of pain or anger or fear does not say necessarily that the agent has those inner realities of pain consciousness, anger consciousness or fear consciousness; for, we do know that people can pretend or copy others. And so to manifest certain behavioural tendencies does not necessarily affirm a particular state of consciousness. Thus the problem of other minds is the scepticism that is found in a profound depth of the person that drives him to argue that he does not know if others have minds. It will be stated here that this problem actually emerges as an epistemological problem rather than an ontological one.

The problem of other minds cannot be discussed without reference to the mind-body dualism of Descartes, because it is this mind-body problem created by Cartesian dualism, which in Richard Rorty's words, "have intertwined to produce tangle with other related problems,"[26] and one of such related problems is the problem of other minds. We are by now familiar with the Cartesian methodic doubt in his search for an indubitable foundation for knowledge. His aim was to set aside all his former beliefs in which he could find some grounds for doubt. First, he attacked the principles upon which most of his former opinions were founded, the senses, since the senses sometimes deceive us. Then he doubted those ideas given by demonstrative reasoning such as mathematics and logic, because we are sometimes mistaken in reasoning.

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[26] See Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988)

What is more? He doubted objects of his immediate experience because he felt a malignant demon could have been deceiving him. However, he arrived at one thing he could not doubt – the fact that he was doubting or thinking or the fact of his consciousness.

Going further, he held that since his ability to doubt or think or be deceived by a demon depended on the fact that he existed, he concluded with the phrase "I think therefore I am." However, since he discovered his being via the attribute of thinking, he held that 'he' or the 'I' was necessarily a thinking being (*res cogitans*). And since, for Descartes, the attribute of thought does not belong to the extended body, Descartes identified it with the mind. But to the question, "For how long do I exist?" Descartes replied "for as long as I think". As he puts it in the *Meditations*: It might perhaps happen if I totally cases thinking that I would at the same time completely cease to be.[27] This, I think, is the crux of what many scholars have identified in Descartes, as solipsism – the theory that one can have knowledge only of oneself, or the view that one lives in a completely self-enclosed world, the external world and other people being currently figments of imagination. If Descartes position is rightly interpreted as solipsism, then the question that necessarily comes to mind is this: do not other persons also exist in the sense in which Descartes existed? Of course, Descartes cannot claim to be a Robinson Crusoe. If others exist as well, then it follows that they too have minds. If this is further accepted, then the more tasking question will be: what are the possibilities of our having knowledge of other minds in the same way in which we also have knowledge of our minds? This is the question at the centre of the problem of other minds.

Of course, the problem of other minds is not only whether other people have minds, but goes beyond to include the problem of our knowledge of other minds. As A.H.B. Allen puts it:

> The passionately determined belief that there are other minds is of a general character. There is combined with it a healthy practical scepticism whether we can ever know for certain in particular cases what others are thinking, just as they must be equally uncertain about us.[28]

J. L. Austin captures the problem in clearer terms when he said: "I may say I believe other minds exist, but that does not mean that I know them all." He went on to explain that in philosophical discourse, the existence of our alleged belief is not challenged but the existence of our alleged knowledge is challenged.[29] Apart from tracing the problem of other minds from Descartes position, common sense experience confirms the

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[27] Cf. Rene Descartes, *Meditations* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1968), p. 46

[28] Cf. A. H. B. Allen, "Other Minds" in *Mind*, Vol. LXI, No. 61, (1952), p. 67

[29] Cf. J. L. Austin, "Other Minds" in Anthony Flew (ed.) *Logic and Language* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1973), p. 75

plausibility of such a problem. Louis Arnaud Reid wrote that "nothing seems plainer than that we are, each one of us, in a society consisting of other people of the same species as ourselves and nothing seems more completely certain than that other people exist and that we know that they do."[30] If other people exist, then they must also have minds not unlike our own, but the problem is that we cannot claim to discover the individual characteristics of such minds.

A. H. B. Allen recasts the problem in this way:

> Each of us is passionately convinced that his individual mind is not the only mind in the world living in a fundamental isolation but that there are other conscious minds existing before us and will continue to exist after us.[31]

Philosophers have not all subscribed to the same rigid analysis of the problem of other minds; hence several theories have been propounded to explain this problem. Three of such theories will be discussed here.

5.3.1 The Analogical Theory

This theory is closely linked or associated with behaviourism. The theory holds that each of us derives his knowledge of other minds from the observation of other human organisms: I observe that there are a number of bodies which resemble mine and concludes that each of these bodies is animated by a mind more or less like me. I myself, am a behaving body and I know when I behave in certain ways that I am thinking certain kinds of thought. Arguing from analogy, when I perceive similar manifestations on the part of another body, I assume that the body is likewise animated, that is, feeling and thinking in some such way as I know from my experience.

5.3.2 The Linguistic Theory

This theory holds that one's evidence for the existence of other minds is derived primarily from the understanding of language. Language here is used in a wide sense to include not only speeches and writings but also signals such as waving a red flag and, gestures such as beckoning and pointing. The suggestion here is that our evidence for the existence of other minds comes from communication situations.

5.3.3 The Intuitive Theory

This theory maintains that each of us has a direct and intuitive apprehension of other minds, just as we have of our own or that at least we intuitively apprehend some other minds on some occasions, for instance, in a conversation or a quarrel. However, some advocates of this

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[30] L. A. Reid, *Ways of Knowledge and Experience* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1961), p. 49

[31] A. H. B. Allen, "Other Minds" in *Mind*, Vol. LXI, No. 61, (1952), p. 54

theory proceeded to take a further step by saying that the problem was mis-stated. To such advocates, instead of assuming that every man would first have a direct introspective awareness of himself before going on to justify his beliefs concerning other selves, what comes first in the historical order is consciousness of one's neighbour. Consciousness of oneself comes up only later after considerable mental development, and even in some cases, perhaps, say in the idiot or primitive savage, it never comes up at all. Their position here is that when I do come to know my own mind, I only come to know it by contrast with my neighbour's mind which I must have already known.

Study Session Summary

Summary

In this Study Session, we examined the meaning and nature of the mind-body problem. This problem arises as the result of certain views of the French Philosopher, Rene Descartes. We noted that the problem involves answering the questions, 'What is the fundamental nature of mind and body?' and 'How are mind and body related? We made an attempt at representing and examining what is understood as the Problem of other minds. We examined some of these theories. We concluded by bringing to the fore some of the intractable challenges inherent in what is now referred to as the problem of other minds.

Assessment

Assessment

SAQ 5.1 tests Learning Outcomes 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3

Mind-body interaction and the knowledge of other minds are problems for dualists like Descartes because they raise a number of questions. Can you give two typical objections to dualism?

SAQ 5.2 tests Learning Outcome 5.2

True / False?

  i.   In B. F. Skinner's version of behaviourism, external behaviours are more real than the internal minds or mental events that the behaviours mirror or parallel.
  ii. Beinghuman means nothing more than behaving incertain ways that we recognize as human. Thefact that humans behave and think in regularor predictable ways indicates thatconsciousness or thought itself should beunderstood as the external or observable sign ofunperceivable mental activity.

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Study Session 6

Free Will and Determination

Introduction

In this Study Session, we will examine the notion of free will and determinism. We will also discuss forms of determinism and distinguish determinism from other related concepts.

Learning Outcomes

Outcomes

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

6.1 *explain* the basic concepts of determinism, free will, reason and causes.

6.1 Concept of Free Will and Determinism

It would be necessary at this outset to differentiate between **determinism**, fatalism, and pre-determinism. Since the main point of this Study session is determinism, the examination of the notion shall be reserved for latter discussion in the Study session. Fatalism is different from determinism in the sense that fatalism is the position that says that what will be will be. And so for a fatalist who is about to take a boat across the river and is advised to learn how to swim in case of any boat mishap would respond that if he is fated to die by drowning learning how to swim is useless and if he is fated not to die by drowning learning how to swim is not necessary. Pre-destination or pre-determinism, as it is sometimes preferred, is the position that says that one has been pre-arranged to take some particular course and have particular consequences. This pre-arrangement is in the hands of some forces, powers or providence. All these are different from determinism or universal causation.

Tip

> **Fatalism** is the position that says that what will be will be.
>
> **Pre-determinism** is pre-destination; it is the position that says that one has been pre-arranged to take some particular course and have particular consequences due to the hand of some forces or providence.
>
> **Free will** is the position that human actions are guided by reason.

This study of **free will** and determinism is centred on the connection between events and their causes. By events here is meant natural phenomena and human actions. It would be useful to begin our discussion with an analysis of the notion of determinism. The idea of determinism derives from the idea of causality or causation. In other words, by determinism, it is understood that every event has a cause and like events

have like causes. What this translates to is that all events including human actions are backed by causes. To say this is to say that if A is the cause of B, then whenever A occurs, B must follow, and whenever B occurs A must have taken place. And since causation is guided by natural law, it means that A causing B is guided by natural law, such that whenever A occurs B cannot but follow. Therefore, B is a necessary consequence from A, or A is a necessary and sufficient condition for B. It is against this background understanding of the notion of determinism that free will emerges as a problem. For, every event has a cause and every such event must necessary follow its cause, and given that human action is an event, then it cannot but follow its cause. What this means is that such human actions are out of necessity and are not within the control of the human actor. This is so because the human actor is not free given the natural laws controlling events. If such human actors are not free then they cannot choose. This is however, opposed to the general belief that humans are moral and rational agents, able to make choices after deliberation and consideration of options, and therefore responsible for the actions carried out. But if by the principle of determinism, human actions are products of causes, the actions are similar to the actions of erosion, wind, and fire, for instance. However, we do know that behind human actions are not causes; behind them are reasons. And we do know that reasons are not causes.

By this understanding of the notion of freewill in relation to human reason, human actions are not guided by natural laws or laws of nature, although they are guided by reasons. The difference between reasons and causes can be explained as follows: The relationship between causes and effects is that of a necessary one, such that once we have the cause the effect necessary follows. On the other hand, the relationship between reasons and human actions is not a necessary one because one can have a reason A and carry out an action B, or the same reason A, in a different circumstances, can carry out the action C, or no action at all; and an action can be preceded by different reasons at different situations. Furthermore, the cause of an effect is usually distinct and separable from the effect, whereas the reason for action can be part of the action itself. For these reasons, behind actions are intentionality and voluntary considerations. This is why it is usually assumed that a man is responsible for his actions because actions are intentional. By intentional, it is meant that he has considered the reasons and acted thereupon. Such is the rationality of an action.

Determinism is, roughly speaking, the idea that every event is necessitated by antecedent events and conditions together with the laws of nature. The idea is ancient, but first became subject to clarification and analysis in the eighteenth century. Determinism is deeply connected with our understanding of the physical sciences and their explanatory ambitions, on the one hand, and with our views about human free action on the other. Traditionally, determinism has been given various, usually imprecise, definitions. This is only problematic if one is investigating determinism in a specific, well-defined theoretical context; but it is important to avoid certain major errors of definition. However, we can take the theory to imply that "the world is governed by (or is under the sway of) determinism if and only if, given a specified way things are at a

time t, the way things go thereafter is fixed as a matter of natural law." As such, it can be inferred that the roots of the notion of determinism surely lie in a very common philosophical idea: the idea that everything can, in principle, be explained, or that everything that is, has a sufficient reason for being and being as it is, and not otherwise. In other words, the roots of determinism lie in what Leibniz named the "Principle of Sufficient Reason". But since precise physical theories began to be formulated with apparently deterministic character, the notion has become separable from these roots.

Determinism is often taken to mean simply causal determinism: an idea known in physics as cause-and-effect. It is the concept that events within a given paradigm are bound by causality in such a way that any state (of an object or event) is completely determined by prior states. Determinism as a philosophical position states that for everything that happens there are conditions such that, given those conditions, nothing else could happen. Different versions of this theory depend upon various alleged connections, and interdependencies of things and events, asserting that these hold without exception. Determinism rarely requires that perfect prediction be practically possible – only prediction in theory. Deterministic theories throughout the history of philosophy have sprung from diverse motives and considerations, some of which overlap. They can be understood in relation to their historical significance and alternative theories. In this regard, the opposite of determinism is some kind of indeterminism (otherwise called non-determinism). As such determinism is often contrasted with free will. However, it is important to note that determinism should not be confused with self-determinism of human actions by reasons, motives, and desires. Thus, within numerous historical debates, many varieties and philosophical positions on the subject of determinism exist. This includes debates concerning human action and free will. Below are some of the more common viewpoints meant by, or confused with 'determinism'.

On a general note, most philosophical theories of determinism are framed after the idea that reality follows a sort of predetermined path. Causal or Nomological determinism and Predeterminism propose that there is an unbroken chain or prior occurrences stretching back to the origin of the universe. The relation between events may not be specified, nor the origin of that universe. Causal determinists believe that there is nothing uncaused or self-caused. Quantum mechanics poses a serious challenge to this view. Historical determinism can also be synonymous with causal determinism. Necessitarianism is related to the causal determinism described above. It is a metaphysical principle that denies all mere possibility; there is exactly one way for the world to be. Leucippus claimed there were no uncaused events, and that everything occurs for a reason and by necessity. Fatalism, as already stated at the introduction to this Study session, is the idea that everything is fated to happen, so that humans have no control over their future. Notice that fate has arbitrary power. Fate also need not follow any causal or otherwise deterministic laws. Types of fatalism include Theological determinism and the idea of Predestination, where there is a Supreme Being who determines all that humans will do. This may be accomplished either by knowing their actions in advance, via some form of omniscience or by decreeing their

actions in advance. With the development of Christian theology, there arose a concept of a Being (God), who is among other things, perfectly good, omniscient and omnipotent, and upon whom the entire world and everything in it are absolutely dependent for existence and character. Such a Being is the necessary cause of the universe. In other words, all happenings in the universe are caused or determined by him.

Other forms of determinism have been postulated; these include; ethical determinism, physical determinism and psychological determinism. It would be appropriate to make a few comments on the above forms of determinism.

6.1.1 Ethical Determinism

This theory of determinism can be linked to Socrates, who argued centuries ago that everyman always chooses what seem best to him and that no man can set as the object of his choice, something that seems evil or bad to him. Plato agreed with this view and holds that no man who knows what is good can possibly choose anything else. Thus, wrong doing or the pursuit of evil must always be either involuntary or as a result of ignorance. In other words, if one knows the good, he automatically seeks it. The theory of determinism evident in this ethical intellectualism is that "man's voluntary actions are invariably determined by an apparent good; hence all their actions are determined by this if by nothing else."

6.1.2 Physical Determinism

This theory of determinism was inspired mainly by the development of physical science, particularly in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. The idea in this theory is that all things in nature, men included, behave according to the inviolable and unchanging laws of nature. This conception of determinism undermines the thinking that human actions and other events are determined by moral considerations or by an external immutable God and began thinking of them as determined by external and immutable laws of nature.

6.1.3 Psychological Determinism

This version of determinism as applied to human beings sees human behaviour as the unconstrained and unimpeded behaviour that is caused by an act of will, motive or some other inner event. These acts of will and other inner causes are considered as mental within the agent.

Before we examine the debate between determinism and freewill, it will appropriate to look at freewill. Ordinarily, we use the word 'free' in many ways. When I say for instance that the road is free, I mean there is little or no traffic to hamper my movement. When a judge says a man is set free, it means he is no longer liable and can move freely without security escorts. Study session-free period means no Study session will be conducted within that period (Bah, 1997). All of these understandings refer in a way to the concepts of freedom and freewill. But the two concepts should not be confused. While freewill is the power of self-determination or the power to act as one chooses or pleases freedom

refers to the ability or liberty to act without restraint or inhibition. Freedom therefore refers to the absence of restraints and/or constraints. In this regard, I am therefore free to the extent to which no human being interferes with my activity. This conception of freedom is normally referred to as negative freedom. There is also the notion of positive freedom, which is identical with the full realization of the individual's potentialities, together with his ability to live actively and spontaneously. Thus, while negative freedom is talking about 'freedom from', positive freedom refers to 'freedom to'. The idea of freewill can be construed to have developed out of the attempt to reflect on these notions of freedom. As such, freewill means the power to 'will to act' as one chooses, independent of both external and internal determinants. The idea of freewill presupposes therefore the issue of choices and alternatives. But the issue of whether one can actually 'will to act' independently of his ideas, instincts, habits, wishes and aspirations is a different issue altogether.

Put differently, freewill is a philosophical term for a particular sort of capacity of rational agents to choose a course of action from among various alternatives. Philosophers have debated this question for over two millennia, and just about every major philosopher has had something to say about it. What most philosophers suppose is that the concept of freewill is very closely connected to the concept of moral responsibility. Acting with freewill, on such views, is just to satisfy the metaphysical requirement on being responsible for one's action. The significance of freewill, however, is not exhausted by its connection to moral responsibility. Freewill also appears to be a condition on desert for one's accomplishments (why sustained effort and creative work are praiseworthy); a condition on the autonomy and dignity of persons; and a condition on the value we accord to love and friendship. Philosophers who distinguish freedom of action and freedom of will do so because our success in carrying out our ends depends in part on factors wholly beyond our control. Furthermore, there are always external constraints on the range of options we can meaningfully try to undertake. As the presence or absence of these conditions and constraints are not (usually) our responsibility, it is plausible that the central loci of our responsibility are our choices, or "willings." The main perceived threats to our freedom of will are various alleged determinisms: physical/causal; psychological; biological; theological. For each variety of determinism, there are philosophers who (i) deny its reality, either because of the existence of freewill or on independent grounds; (ii) accept its reality but argue for its compatibility with freewill; or (iii) accept its reality and deny its compatibility with freewill. There are also a few who say the truth of any variety of determinism is irrelevant because freewill is simply impossible.

In all, every human action if rational is intentional and voluntary. It must be mentioned here however that, although all voluntary actions are intentional, not all intentional actions are voluntary. Thus, a full judge-able human action must be both intentional and voluntary and therefore fully rational. As such, this problem seems to revolve about determining how far a belief in human freedom is consistent with our experience, our knowledge, and our views about human nature.

Study Session Summary

Summary

In this Study Session, we examined the notion of determinism and freewill. We examined the idea of freewill against the background understanding of the notion of determinism. We distinguished determinism from fatalism and predestination. We concluded by bringing to the fore the implications of determinism when accepted as guiding principles for human actions and separated the notions of reason from causes.

Assessment

Assessment

SAQ 6.1 tests Learning Outcome 6.1

Fill the columns below with the appropriate forms of determinism(ethical determinism, physical determinism, and psychological determinism).

i. _____	man's voluntary actions are invariably determined by an apparent good
ii. _____	What will be will be. Life is a function of nature.
iii. _____	Man is propelled by motivation.

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Study Session 7

Justification for our Belief in the Existence of God

Introduction

In this study session, we will discuss people's belief in the existence of the Supreme Being (God). We will also examine different arguments for HIS justification and the critics against the existence of God. Finally, we will discuss the doctrine of reincarnation.

Learning Outcomes

Outcomes

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:
7.1 *explain* the general belief of the existence of God.
7.2 *discuss* the basis for the belief in phenomenon of reincarnation.

7.1 Belief in the Existence of God

GodA being conceived as the creator and ruler of the universe.

One of the most widespread beliefs is the belief in a Supreme Being, to whom all beings owe their existence, but whose own existence depends upon nothing else. This study on the justification for our belief in the existence of **God** focuses on the attempt to account for, and so affirm the existence of a Supreme being. The more rational way to proceed in this regard is to go from that which is more evident to that which is less evident. Thus, the arguments that will be studied here include some of those that dominated philosophical thinking in the history of philosophy, particularly in the medieval era, and still influence philosophies dealing with this question.

It should not be out of place, indeed it should be expected that intelligent man is able to arrive at a Supreme Being to whom he must stand for creation, confirmation, and protection. Obviously, such a being must not only have the features that place him above the human category, but indeed, that put him at a supreme position to man and other existence.

First, God, the name of this being in certain cultures, is supreme. The question, however, is in what term is He (God) supreme. In other words, what do we mean by God is supreme? Of course we know that he is supreme in power; that is, he is omnipotent. He is also supreme in his ability to do good and cannot will evil; that is, he is omnibenevolent. The Supreme Being is omniscient, that is supreme in ability to know. All these are senses in which God is supreme. However, his being

omnipotent, omniscient and omnibenevolent creates a challenge for the belief in a being who is all-knowing and not willing evil. This is due to the presence of evil in the created world, for if God is omnipotent it is agreeable if he is omnibenevolent since there is evil in the world, or if he is omnibenevolent it will be difficult to understand how he will be omnipotent since there is evil in the world. It would be pertinent to state, at least, some of the arguments to justify the belief in God. Though there are other arguments put forward to justify the belief in the existence of God, such as the Five Arguments of Thomas Aquinas, the attention in this Study session would be to look at the argument from Design and the Ontological argument.

7.1.1 Argument from Design

The argument from design (or as it is called, the teleological argument) is one of the most discussed arguments that has been used to justify a belief in the existence of God; this argument is essentially an inductive argument. It is an attempt to construe the universe, or at least certain characteristics of the universe, as being like certain things humans have designed and created, so that we can inductively infer from this evidence of design that there is a designer or creator like the intelligent designers of human artifacts but, obviously, much more intelligent than intelligent beings.

The two most celebrated versions of the argument from design are found in Hume's Dialogues on Natural Religion and the fifth way of Aquinas. Aquinas states his version as follows:

We see that things which lack knowledge, such as natural bodies, act for an end, and this is evident from their acting always, or nearly always, in the same way, so as to obtain the same reason. Hence it is plain that they achieve their end, not fortuitously, but designedly. Now whatever lacks knowledge cannot move toward an end, unless it be directed by some being endowed with knowledge and intelligence; as the arrow is directed by the archer. Therefore some intelligent being exist by whom all natural beings are directed to their end; and this being we call God.

In Hume Dialogues on Natural Religion, he presents Cleanthes – one of the Dialogues' fictional characters – as stating the argument thus:

Look around the world: Contemplate the whole and every part of it: You will find it to be nothing but one great machine, subdivided into an infinite number of lesser machines, which again admit of subdivisions, to a degree beyond what human sense and faculties can trace and explain. All these various machines, and even their most minute parts, are adjusted to each other with an accuracy, which ravishes into admiration all men, who have ever contemplated them. The curious adapting of mean to ends, throughout all nature, resembles exactly, though it much exceeds, the production of human contrivance; of human design, thought, wisdom, and intelligence. Since, therefore he effects resemble each other, we are led to infer, by all the rules of analogy, that the causes also resemble, and that the Author of nature is somewhat similar to the mind of man, though possessed of much larger faculties, propositioned to the grandeur of the work, which he has executed. By this argument a posteriori, and by this

argument alone, do we prove at once the existence of a Deity and His similarity to human mind and intelligence.

7.1.2 The Ontological Argument

The ontological argument is one of the most interesting of all the arguments for the existence of God. Derived from the Greek word "ontos" which means "being," the ontological argument tries to show that a proper understanding of what it means for God to be or exist will demonstrate that he must exist. The ontological argument has often been said to ascertain God's existence by a philosophical sleight of hand or a ruse of words. From the time of St Anselm in the eleventh century, to the present, it has been endlessly discussed. There have been two classical statements of the argument, one by St. Anselm and the other by Rene Descartes. We shall consider Descartes' own first because it is the simpler of the two and brings out more directly one of the central points of concentration.

In his stead, Descartes argues that:

> wheneverI choose to think of the First and Supreme Being, and as it were bring out the idea of him from the treasury of my mind, I must necessarily ascribe to him all perfections, even if I do not at the moment enumerate them all, or attend to each. This necessity clearly ensures that, when later on I observe that existence is a perfection, I am justified in concluding that the First and Supreme Being exists.

Descartes' version of the Ontological argument can be put simply as:

1. All perfections are properties of the supreme being

2. Existence is a perfection; therefore,

3. The Supreme Being has existence; that is, the supreme beingexists.

Although the first premise is usually granted, the second premise has come under several attacks. One of such attacks has been to argue that if existence is a perfection, then it is a property or characteristic some things have and some things do not have; and if existence is a property of things, then the word 'existence' is a predicate, because properties of things are referred to by predicates. But the word, 'existence' is not a predicate, so that existence is not a perfection. The obvious reply to this objection is that existence is a predicate, because it can be predicated of a subject in a sentence. However, the reply goes on to add that 'existence' is not a descriptive predicate; that is, it is not a predicate that can be used to describe things; it is not a predicate that can be used to refer to some property things might have. If it can be shown that 'existence' is not such a predicate, then there is good reason to conclude that existence is not a property and, therefore, not a perfection. The classical and perhaps strongest attempt to show that 'existence' is not a predicate is based on the objection made by Immanuel Kant. This has been considered by many to be the objection which once and for all refuted Descartes' version of the ontological argument. The crucial part of his objection

centres on the concept of a real predicate, that is, according to Kant, a predicate is that 'which determines a thing.' In other words, a real predicate is one that can be used to help define what something is. It is, then, what we can call a defining predicate. Kant argues as follows:

Being is obviously not a real predicate; that is it is not a concept of something which could be added to the concept of a thing. It is merely the positing of a thing, or of certain determinations, existing in themselves. Logically it is merely the copula of a judgment. The proposition, 'God is omnipotent,' contains two concepts, each of which has its object – God and omnipotence.... If, now, we take the subject (God) with all its predicates (among which is omnipotence), and say 'God is,' or 'There is a God,' we attach no new predicate to the concept of God, but only posit the subject in itself with all its predicates, and indeed posit it as an object that stands in relation to my concept.

Although inchoate forms of the ontological argument can be seen in earlier thinkers like Saint Augustine of Hippo, the first clear formulation of the ontological argument came from Saint Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109). Anselm argued that once it is understood what it means to speak of God, then it would be clear that God must exist. This would be like once one knows what it means to speak of a triangle, it is clear that it must have exactly three sides. Anselm's logic is laid out in his book, The Proslogion. Those who deny God's existence, if they knew that they were saying, actually know enough to prove God's existence according to Anselm. For even those who reject theism must have an idea or a definition of God. Anselm suggests that God is 'a being which none greater can be conceived.' So, atheists must say that the idea of God, a being which none greater can be conceived, exists only as an idea in their minds but not in reality. At this point, Anselm thinks he has the atheist in a compromising position. For atheists say this being which none greater can be conceived exists only as a refuted idea in their head, but if God exists only as an idea in their heads then a greater being can be conceived, namely one that exists not just in the mind but one that exists in reality. Therefore, God must exist. Otherwise, we speak nonsense when we say God does not exist. Just like we would say someone did not understand the idea of a triangle who said it has four sides. Anselm's argument might look like this formally:

1. God is a being which none greater can be conceived.

2. Even an atheist claims God exists as an idea in the mind.

3. However, God would be a better being if he existed in reality, not just as an idea.

4. Therefore, God must exist in reality, not just as an idea.

Anselm's argument can be viewed as an attempt at providing a reductio ad absurdum of the atheist's position, by showing that the supposition that God does not exist in reality leads to an absurdity. However, in reply to Anselm, Gaunilo, a contemporary of Anselm, in effect, tries to provide a reductio of Anselm's argument. Gaunilo in fact suggests an explanation for what he takes to be the failure of Anselm's argument: Anselm's idea that God exists in the mind. Gaunilo charges that our understanding of the definition "that being than which no greater can be conceived" is merely

verbal, and that this is where the argument goes wrong. Gaunilo was concerned that Anselm was defining God into existence. His challenge showed that if one defined a perfect island as an island which none greater could be conceived, then, it too must exist. However, it is ridiculous to believe that a perfect island must exist because it is defined this way. Likewise, Gaunilo claimed it seems ludicrous to believe Anselm proved God's existence with this definition. The reply Anselm gave to Gaunilo seems to clarify how his ontological argument follows. Anselm replied that his proof uniquely applies to God for only a necessary being would have the greatest conceivable existence. For any given island, there can always be a better one. For example, consider the existence of the tallest possible man in Ibadan. No matter how tall you imagine one man, it is always possible to imagine another man at least an inch taller. Thus, it is nonsense to speak of the tallest possible man in Ibadan, and this conclusion will be the case for all finite and material beings. God is exempt from this fallacy because he has necessary existence and would qualify as the greatest of all possible beings. So, Anselm claimed his argument remains unscathed by Gaunilo's criticism.

7.2 The Doctrine of Reincarnation

It is a great idea that repeated lives here on earth are possible, repeated incarnations for the purpose of a more rapid advance and a necessary redemption of the more base reciprocal actions, which is sometimes regarded synonymous with the forgiveness of sins. A person is a spirit and the physical body serves as address, the cloth the spirit wears while it is on earth. These statements take us to the very heart of the belief in reincarnation. In other words, just as an earth-human changes his clothes, so the human spirit changes its physical body in the process called death. But the spirit, the owner of the body leaves on after discarding the body. And here lies the fundamentals of reincarnation.

According to Stephen Lampe, the belief in reincarnation is simply the acceptance of the knowledge that a human spirit, in one continues existence, is given the opportunity to come to the earth more than once. The human spirit takes on a different human body on each occasion. This process is repeated until the human spirit, it is believed in some cultures, attains that degree of maturity as well as inner purity, which ensures that the earth no longer can hold it back from its assent towards it spiritual home. This simply, according to Lampe, is the key to the unravelling of many mysteries, the explanation of the inequalities, apparent injustices, that worry so many well-meaning people. Reincarnation also holds the key to the understanding of some exceedingly important aspects of cultures in the world.

The doctrine variously called transmigration of souls, metempsychosis, palingenesis, rebirth, and 'reincarnation' has been and continues to be widely believed. Although some of these terms imply belief in an immortal soul that transmigrates or reincarnates, Buddhism, while teaching rebirth, denies the eternity of the soul. The word rebirth is therefore the most comprehensive for referring to this range of beliefs. In one form or another, the doctrine of rebirth has been held in various cultures. It was expressed in ancient Greece (Pythagoras, Empedocles,

Orphism, Plato, and later, Plotinus); among some Gnostics and in some Christian heresies such as the medieval Cathari; in some phases of Jewish Kabbalism; in some cultures of tropical Africa; and most notably in such Eastern religions as Jainism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Sikhism. Some European philosophers, notably Arthur Schopenhauer and J. M. E. McTaggart, have incorporated the doctrine into their metaphysics. The origin of the doctrine of rebirth as a religious belief is obscure. There is evidence, both in Greece and India, that it was not characteristic of early Aryan cultures. It is virtually certain that in India it goes back to prehistoric times; it was then taken up by Brahmanic religion and appears as a new doctrine in the Upanishads. Views vary about the scope and mechanism of rebirth. It is part of Indian thought, for instance – but not of African beliefs – that men can be reborn as animals and even as plants (not to mention as gods and spirits). Rebirth can take place not merely on Earth but also in a multiplicity of heavens and purgatories. Thus, although the prevalent belief is that rebirth occurs immediately upon death, this does not entail immediate earthly reincarnation, a feature that helps to make rebirth theory incapable of empirical disproof.

In the Buddhist Tibetan Book of the Dead, however, a transitional period (bardo) of forty-nine days between death and rebirth is postulated. During this state the individual is translated to a realm where he perceives the divine secrets; for the impure, these are so frightening that they flee back to earth and are reborn. In Indian thought, there is a fairly large amount of speculation about the embryological mechanics of rebirth. Thus the Samkhya school of Indian philosophy holds that the mental aspect of a person bears the impression of previous deeds (karma) and that it accordingly becomes associated with a particular fetus. But since during the period of fetal development the growing body is not capable of supporting the mental aspect, a "subtle" (un-observably refined) body is postulated. Thus the continuous element throughout rebirth and until liberation is the mental aspect associated with the subtle body. In Buddhism it is held that the fetus results from the interaction of the sperm and material in the mother. These combine in a suitable way when associated with conscious states, as a further element in the process, to produce the right sort of individual to fit previous karma. Broadly speaking, then, rebirth theory implies that the genetic endowment of a person does not fully determine his early development but that a mental or spiritual factor associates itself with a suitable organism at conception. Thus karma is often taken to function through the homing of a soul upon a morally and physically appropriate fetus.

McTaggart, in urging the belief in reincarnation, uses the analogy of chemical affinities. A number of arguments in favour of the theory that has been propounded; they can be classified as metaphysical, empirical, and theological. It is convenient to record here those arguments that do not depend too closely on metaphysical conclusions peculiar to particular philosophers, such as the argument for rebirth as accounting for knowledge of the Forms, as in Plato, and the complex metaphysical argument in McTaggart that depends in part on his theory of causation. In Indian sources, two main metaphysical arguments have been employed. It may be noted that there has been relatively little explicit discussion of the issue in Indian philosophy, since no school was concerned with denying

the doctrine, except the materialist school, which was extinct by medieval times. As such, in Indian philosophy, a Buddhist argument can be expressed as follows: all states have prior causes; some conscious states are not caused by bodily states; therefore the first physically uncaused state of an individual must have a prior nonphysical cause. But the existence of God is not admitted; hence there must be an empirical conscious state prior to conception and birth. This argument applies indefinitely in a backward direction through previous births. It may be noted that the argument is consistent with the Buddhist denial of an eternal soul, since the mental states of an organism are no more permanent than the physical ones.

Again, there is a Hindu argument from the eternity of the soul, which has been used in modern times by Radhakrishnan. Souls are eternal, but the normal condition for a soul is to be associated with a body. Hence it is likely that the soul in the past and future has a virtually everlasting succession of bodies. Thus metaphysical arguments attempting to establish the eternity of the soul have been taken to imply pre-existence as well as post-existence of the soul. The empirical arguments to back this are as follows; (i) Children have instinctive capacities, which suggests that there must be learning prior to birth. Similarly, it is sometimes argued that the phenomenon of child geniuses, indicate prenatal training. (ii) Some people claim to remember past births. This claim is commonly made in the East for yogis and persons of deep spiritual insight, such as the Buddha and Buddhist saints. (iii) The déjà vu experience and claims to knowledge of people and places that are not based on previous experience in this life have been cited as indicating rebirth. A counterargument is used against the objection that most people have no memories of such previous lives: Death is a traumatic experience (and so is birth), likely to cause amnesia.

In all, rebirth, associated with karma, provides a solution to part of the problem of evil, since inequalities and sufferings are the result of people's past deeds. As such, the doctrine of rebirth provides the possibility of a long process of self-perfection, which harmonizes well with the religious vision of the world as a theatre for moral striving. The following are the objections that have been or can be brought against the arguments for reincarnation. The objections to the argument are, first, the concept of emergent characteristics obviates the difficulty in explaining the cause of psychical states, although perhaps at the expense of being obscure. Second, the first premise (that all states have prior causes) is arguable, and it might be that non-physically caused mental states are simply not caused. Third, the existence of God cannot be ruled out. The plausibility of the argument depends on the plausibility of arguments for the eternity of the soul. Further, in Indian religious thought there is the possibility of mokoa, or nirvana, a state of liberation in which there is no more rebirth. Consequently, it is inconsistent to hold that embodiment is necessary to souls. The Buddhist denial of a permanent self – occasioned the criticism that there is nothing carried over to another life that would ensure individual continuity – the reply being that, on the Buddhist analysis, the individual in his present life is only a series of events, so that there is no essential difference in considering a succession of lives as constituting an individual series. The following are objections to the

empirical arguments. Modern biology can sketch alternative explanations of instinct and genius in children. Although some people seem to remember past lives, the evidence is not so unambiguous as to be conclusive; and if saintliness is a condition for remembering previous births, it would be difficult to verify such a memory – it would be hard to conduct an "experiment" in becoming a saint. Similar problems arise with the evidence of déjà vu experiences. As to whether death is a traumatic experience, there is no evidence. The creation of souls by God is compatible with the argument concerning the indivisibility of the soul; but in any case the argument depends on a soul body distinction that may not be acceptable. The argument that rebirth explains the existence of evil could not by itself be conclusive, since the problem of evil exists only for those who believe in a good God.

A similar consideration applies to the argument that rebirth allows for the possibility of self-perfection. Although believers in rebirth have scarcely touched on the matter, the theory of evolution also presents considerable difficulties to the traditional doctrine of a virtually infinite series stretching back into the past. In Indian mythological cosmology, however, there are periodic destructions of the cosmos, and during these periods embodied souls continue to exist latently; no doubt a similar assumption may deal with the above biological difficulties by arguing that before the emergence of life, souls existed latently, or in other parts of the cosmos. The problem remains, however, that this account would not be easily, if at all, checked by empirical evidence. The hypothesis of reincarnation presents interesting problems about personal identity. If personal identity is analysed in terms of memory, there would seem to be only a vacuous distinction between saying that A is reborn as B and that A and B are separate persons. C. J. Ducasse, however, has argued that memory of any given life may be regained at some time or other in the series, and this would hold the series together. If bodily identity were held to be necessary to personal identity, rebirth could scarcely be meaningful, as it involves causal action at a distance in the transition from A's death to B's birth or conception.

We would conclude this Study session by stating that beyond the need for the justification of the belief in reincarnation, beyond the quest for evidences to prove its reality or otherwise, the idea of rebirth has a pragmatic role in the cultures where it is held. Using the theorization of rebirth among the Esan people of southern Nigeria as a pilot, it here argued that the idea of rebirth plays a psychosocial, therapeutic function of comfort and healing for those traumatized by the death of a loved one. This is similar to, even more reliable than, the role of photography in preserving cherished memories. This agreement here does not, therefore, mean to join issues in the myth-reality or truth-falsehood debate on rebirth among scholars but attempts to establish the role of reincarnation, like photography, in bringing the past into the present. In all, it is argued that in the traditional culture of Esan people, the doctrine of reincarnation is regarded as a psychological therapy. It can be further argued that reincarnation or rebirth and the entire systems of belief it represents produce a similar effect as that of photography: comforting people and healing their memories. This position, one dares to say, is to the Esan people as it could be for any other member of any human society.

Discussion Activity	Is there a God in time and space?
	Post your response on Study Session seven forum page on course website.

Study Session Summary

Summary

In this Study Session, we examined the difficulties in the analysis of the attributes of the Supreme being. We examined some arguments presented in favour for our beliefs in this Supreme being (God).Critique of some of the arguments presented in justification for our belief in God was also discussed. Also, the idea of reincarnation or rebirth was discussed. It is to be noted that the debate concerning the veracity of reincarnation, like most philosophical problems, is rather unending. However, we considered the pragmatic function of the belief in reincarnation. This function, it locates in the psycho-social therapeutic nature of the doctrine

Assessment

Assessment

SAQ7.1
Which of the following arguments of the Supreme Being says that a proper understanding of what it means for God to be or exist will demonstrate that he must exist

   a)   Argument from Design
   b)   The Ontological Argument
   c)   The proper argument of God
   d)   Ontological- Design Argument

SAQ 7.2

In a short way, describe the doctrine of reincarnation

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Study Session 8

African Metaphysics

Introduction

In this Study Session, we will explore some African Metaphysical worldviews. Africa comprises of numerous nations and ethnic group with various metaphysical views and ideas, therefore, three cultural groups in Nigeria will be used as a case study in this Study Session. We will examine the concept of Ori in Yoruba context, the idea of the universal among the Igbos and the Esan conception of being.

Learning Outcomes

Outcomes

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

8.1 *analyze*metaphysical worldview in relation to African culture.

8.1 African Metaphysical Worldviews

Although the theme of this study is African Metaphysics, it would be necessary to state from the onset that at least for two reasons it would be inappropriate to speak of African Metaphysics as Metaphysical speculations for all Africans. One reason is that we usually do not speak of European Metaphysics or American Metaphysics, neither do we speak of Asian Metaphysics, as common to all Asians, or European or Americans as the case may be. In the same vein, we do not speak of American Mathematics or French Physics or English Chemistry. These are universal conceptualization and to compartmentalize them is to debase the essence of the notions. A second reason why we should avoid the use of African Metaphysics is that there are no perceptions of reality that are common to all African people, whether in Algeria or in Nigeria, whether in Liberia or in Ghana. Thus there are no common conceptions of reality to Africans for the Yorubas as well as for the Igbos, for Huntus and Tutis, for the Ewes in Ghana and the Zulus of South Africa. And so, this study shall attempt a specification of the use of certain notions, such as death and life, such as Ori and Chi and Ehi, among the Yorubas, the Ibos, and Esans respectively.

Let us begin this Study Session by first examining the notion; worldview. A worldview has been referred to as how people perceive and explain their world, or the ways things are or change in their environment. According to Kalu (1978) and Kraft (1979) a worldview can be understood in terms of a unified picture of the cosmos explained by a system of concepts, which order the natural and social rhythms, and the

place of individuals and communities in them. In other words, a world-view reflects people's basic assumptions about, and perceptions of the universe, which give orientation and value to their lives. A people's worldview stands for their source of explanations for the ways things are in the world, including their theories of illness, death, and misfortunes, and how human afflictions and problems can be resolved. Indeed as Animalu (1990) sees it, a worldview or cosmological framework refers to a people's way of organizing their activities which explain the how and why of daily existence. According to Animalu, worldviews are products of experiences so pregnant with drama that such experiences give rise to symbols or totems of some sort. The symbols give rise to thought or creative intelligence (ako-na-uche) and creative intelligence gives rise, in turn, to the customs and codes of the society, which are so internalized, from childhood onwards, that they go unquestioned as a way of life.

Although the term "worldview" has been used in a fairly wide sense, it is not a term that admits of any easy and standard definition. So, it would be proper to state that the term would be used here to refer to a "system of beliefs that are interconnected in something like the way the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle are interconnected. That is, worldview is not merely a connection of separate, independent, unrelated beliefs, but is instead an intertwined, interrelated, interconnected system of beliefs." A point to note regarding worldviews is that they are beliefs held based on some sort of evidence as against the presumption that they may be benefit of reasons or evidences. However, it will be stated here that we have direct evidence foe a surprisingly small number of the beliefs we hold. For most of our beliefs (may be almost all of them), we believe them largely because of the way they fit in with a large package of interconnecting beliefs. In other words, we believe what we do largely because of the way our beliefs fit into our worldview.

Every one of us looks at the world through their own lens, a matrix of culturally inherited qualities, family influences and other life experiences. This lens, or window, truly determines what you bring to every discussion. As such, we would do well to get in touch with our own operative worldview. It is there anyway, so you might as well know what this highly influential window on reality is. It is what really motivates you; your de facto worldview determines what you pay attention to do and you do not notice at all. It is largely unconscious and it drives you to do this and not that. It is surely important to become conscious of such a primary lens, or we will never know what we do not see and why we see other things out of all perspective. It is important to note that differing worldviews have its peculiar model for explaining various phenomena. It will probably not be easy for you to name your operative worldview objectively. It is the grid of your deepest experience. Your operative worldview is not largely the product of rational or deliberate choice. You absorb it from your parents, from your first years of life and from your formative years in general. In some cases, it is altered by a deeply influential person, book or experience. It is true that even the most enlightened people see their world from a certain defined cultural perspective. But they also see beyond their own biases to something transcendent, something that crosses the boundaries of culture and individual experience.

Understood within a cultural setting, such as the Igbo, it is possible from their worldview, to explain reality, life and the human environment, and predict space-time events, and finally exert control over them. In this way, the force of Igbo religion as of any other religion or ideological system rests with the cosmology, which undergirds it. In the case of the traditional Igbo, all forms of individual and group religious practices occur within the broad outline of their worldview. Particular belief systems, such as the basis for the ritual naming of a child, the OkukuOnye-Uwa ceremony, and death and burial rites and other traditional values and practices emanate from and are validated by it. It is not only religion, but also most other aspects of Igbo traditional socio-cultural life that come under the influence of Igbo worldview.

8.1.1 Igbo Idea of the Universe

The Igbo people have a religious conception of the universe. They see their world as made up to two planes: the physical and the spiritual. Igbo worldview, however, abhors the tendency to a digital categorization of things. They believe that there is a dual-traffic and interaction between the inhabitants of the two worlds. In this way, the understanding among the Igbo is that spiritual beings and cosmic forces are highly intermingled. The activities of spiritual beings and forces often directly impinge on the affairs of humans in the human world. This fundamental religious outlook on life continues to adjust itself each time, to the changing circumstances of the life experiences of the people. In Igbo religious worldview, the human world is three-dimensional – the sky; the earth, intricately woven with water; and the spirit/ancestral world. Each of the three dimensions operates as a viable reality or a place of habitation; with all three interconnected or contiguous and continuous in a non-hierarchical manner. This means that in such a worldview, although the Supreme Being is believed to live in the sky and major divinities such as Lightning, Thunder, Sun, and Moon are near Him, there is nothing to suggest that the ancestors who live in the ancestral world are inferior. Supporting the earlier observation, Ejizu asserts that:

Analytically, a structure of Igbo perception of the universe in terms of space presents a picture of three-tiered arrangement in consonance with popular intuition. There is the sky above, Igwe, then, the earth, Ala, and finally, we have the under-world, Ime-Ala. Each of these layers is thought to be densely inhabited.

Perceiving the world in this way, Igbo cosmology understands the sky as the Supreme Being's (Chukwu's) palace. He is believed to dwell there with a host of powerful divinities and primordial beings like Anyanwu (the Sun god), Amadioha (the god of thunder), Igwe, (the sky god). In the same way, some local major divinities are equally believed to live in the sky as well. The earth- surface is seen as the abode of human beings, the earth deity, minor divinities and personified nature forces. Finally ancestral spirits, myriads of disembodied spirits and other personified forces some of which are malevolent and capricious to the living, populate the underworld.

One important characteristic of this spatial ordering of reality in Igbo worldview is the due recognition extended to the exalted position and

power of the preternatural order and supersensible beings over humans and the material order. Yet, humans and their world are located at the centre of the traditional Igbo cosmic structure. This is because human life, for the Igbo, although received from God, is the greatest good to be fostered. In this way, Igbo traditional world-view is seen as heavily anthropocentric. In it, the activities of the various categories of spirits as well as the happenings in the other realms of the universe are seen as meaningful insofar as they relate to human life and the general welfare of humans in the environment.

Furthermore, in Igbo worldview, the human world is perceived as a mirror of the spirit world. In this way, the traditional Igbo cosmology inspires and sustains a religion that is this-worldly affirming. Seen in this way, and knowing that human life and the general welfare of the human world are the central focus of attention, the primary thrust of most religious activities among the Igbo, is geared towards the enhancement of human life and the promotion of human being's total well-being. Thus influenced by such anthropocentric cosmology, slaves used to be buried alive with their masters so as to continue serving them in the spirit world. In such a cosmology the human world itself is seen as an alive or dynamic universe that humans share with a host of malevolent human spirits (such as witches and sorcerers); guardian spirits of various professions such as hunting, fishing, farming, and so on; animal spirits; evil spirits; and the Earth Goddess. In this perspective, a filial relationship is believed to exist between the Earth Goddess and the water spirits, called Mami Water. Such Igbo worldview further reflects the fact that Igbo deities are arranged spatially in four levels as follows:

(i) Sky – male
(ii) Earth – female
(iii) Water – female
(iv) Ancestral – male

The structure shows that in Igbo religious worldview, male deities predominate in the first and fourth levels while female deities dominate in the second and third levels as seen earlier. The deities in the sky, such as lightning, thunder, and sun, who live near the Supreme Being, are males while the earth and water under the purview of the Earth Goddess and Queen of the Coast are females. In addition, female ancestral rituals exist, but most rituals are male, as if the females lose their identity at death. In Igbo worldview, human existence is perceived as precarious in the effort to tap the resources of good spirits to ward off the machinations of evil spirits. In this way, the socio-political and economic aspects of life of the Igbo are predominated by a highly spiritualized and religious world. In it, relations to kin, neighbours, and spirits are seen as at once a source of security and often that of affliction and distress. Some of the negative implications of the kind of precarious world-view which the Igbo evolved include the prevalence of the element of fear of countless hosts of spirits and cosmic forces in the people's religious experience. People feel constantly threatened by all sorts of supersensible forces. Supporting this estimate Ezeanya observes:

We notice that the unflinching fidelity to the various religious practices is motivated not so much by the love of the divinities or ancestors as the fear of the consequences that might result from failure to perform certain rituals demanded by the gods.

For the same reason, charms and other protective consciousness are particularly helpful in defending oneself against unpredictable malevolent spirits and their agents. A related problem with this aspect of Igbo cosmology is the tendency among the Igbo, to manipulate and bargain with the gods as an integral feature of their religion. It is this point that Kalu was making when he observes that:

A votary would variously plead with patron gods, placate evil spirits and end by threatening the god that if he failed to perform, his grove would be over-grown with grass. After all, what use could there be in a god or a charm, which failed to yield dividends on the amount of energy and money, spent on it.

A tendency similar to the given orientation is the widespread exercise of divination and other forms of oracular practices as the traditional Igbo endeavour to decipher the dispositions of the spirits and nature forces in order to predict and control them. In Igbo religious worldview, key areas, such as land, river, hills, forests, caves, are believed to be controlled by female deities. Such sites are also connected with agriculture, fertility, morality, mores, beauty, and blessings. Yet among the Igbo, yam is regarded, as the king of crops and one of the indices for assessing a man's wealth is the number of yam tubers he has in his barn. The importance of yam in the economic and social life of the Igbo guaranteed the religious prominence of Ifejioku (yam god) in many Igbo communities. It also accounts for the dominant presence of yam as a ritual object in many Igbo religious ceremonies such as the Igbo naming ceremony, the OkukuOnyeUwa ceremony, and Abamn'Obi ceremony as will be presented in subsequent reports by this same author. Consequently, the god of yam is accorded primacy of place among the people, and yam cultivation is a male occupation. Many religious rites are centred around the cultivation and harvesting of agricultural products. According to Oguagha:

In Igboland, an elaborate ritual ceremony preceded the harvesting and consumption of the new yam. In such a ceremony, the senior elder of each lineage is expected to offer sacrifices at the shrine, which is followed by a feast. It is after the ceremony that new yams are declared fit for consumption.

8.1.2 Ori and Destiny in Yoruba Cosmology

Ori, in the Yoruba language, as noted above, means head. What has it got then to do with destiny? Ori is an important part of the make-up of the human person. Emi and okan are the others. Ori, like okan, has a dual meaning. It refers to the physical head, which is considered vital to the physical status of a person. It is, for instance, the seat of the brain. But when a typical Yoruba talks about ori, she is, more often than not, referring to a non-physical component of her person. For there is a widely received conception of an ori as the bearer of a person's destiny as well as the determinant of one's personality. How does this element come into the picture? There is a common agreement in the tradition and in its literature about the makeup of the human being. According to this tradition, the human being is made (created?) by the combined effort of the god Obatala, the maker of the physical body, and Olodumare, the Supreme being, who gives emi, the life-force or soul. Emi is a non-

material force responsible for life. Its presence ensures life and its absence means death. But the emi is itself immortal, and it may reincarnate in another body. The problem this belief raises for the concept of destiny will be discussed later. Okan, the other component of the human person, also has a dual nature, being material and non-material. In its former nature, it is the heart; in its latter nature, it is the mind, as a center of consciousness responsible for thinking, desiring, wishing, deliberating, etc. As such, its contents include ero (thought), ife-okan (desire), eru (fear), and so on. After Olodumare has put the emi in place, the newly created body-plus-emi proceeds to the house of the god Ajala, the potter of ori, to get an ori. Ori is the bearer of each person's destiny. This, as previously noted, is not the same as the physical head; though, for a reason that has to do with the important role of the latter in the life of a person, it is taken as a symbolic representation of an inner head, which is then taken to be the bearer of destiny. This inner head is ori-inu, or simply ori. Therefore, though ori is not identical with destiny, it is its bearer and, as such, the controller of a person's life. Destiny is the preordained outcomes of life, wound and sealed up in the ori. Every human being is believed to have an allotment, and it determines what they will be in life.

The Significance of Destiny: Addressing the Question of Rationality

The belief in destiny has a special place in the world-view of the Yoruba. Like the way chance and causality are conceptualized, which is in terms of personal idioms connoting the activities of gods and other spiritual entities, the belief in destiny fits perfectly well into the Yoruba traditional system of thought. Furthermore, if one explores it carefully, one discovers its rationale. There is no doubt that the belief serves a purpose. It is to assure human beings that they have a role to play in the world, even if it is an assigned role. There is implied, further, the assurance that they are not alone, all by themselves, because that role has been endorsed by the deity. There is, finally, the assurance that their lives have a meaning, which is encoded in the message of destiny. Two lessons are, accordingly, drawn. First, people should not worry unduly about failure, since that may be their destiny. But, second, since destiny may be just an indication of potentiality, they should not be complacent either. The belief also suggests to us that the Yoruba have some anxiety about situations that are beyond the control of anyone, and are keen on providing some psychological cushion against the rough and tumble of life. From the last paragraph, one may concede that the belief in destiny has its rationale. But a further question is in order: Is the belief rational? This is the question posed by the late Peter Bodunrin. As he puts his argument:

Showing why a people hold a particular belief is not sufficient to show that the belief is rational. Given any social practice one can always find a reason for it . . . an explanation of an event in terms of the motives of a person or a god is rational only if evidence is given for the existence of the person or god, or sufficient reasons given why their existence must be assumed and arguments adduced as to why the person or god should be supposed to be implicated in the particular event. Surely, to show that a

belief arises from emotional needs, if this is in fact true, can hardly be construed as having shown it to be rational.

Bodunrin's point is that a traditional belief, like any other belief, must be evaluated from a philosophical point of view. No one can fault this demand. All that we have said about destiny providing meaning for people's life may be true, but the question must still be posed: how rational is the belief? This may be addressed from various perspectives. I will identify three. First, is the belief coherent? That is, are its internal components consistent with one another? Second, is the belief consistent with other beliefs the people hold about the world? Third, is the belief or theory compatible with reality (practice), as we experience it? To the first issue, from our discussions above, it seems obvious that there is a tension between the various components of the belief in destiny. On the one hand, there is a tension between the idea of a predestined life and the idea of individual responsibility. It is similar to the relation between the belief in determinism and free will. If we assume a changeable destiny, then we may draw an analogy between destiny and soft determinism, which is consistent with free will. One may then suggest that destiny is also compatible with responsibility. But this only moves the problem of incoherence to another arena. Here it is instructive to quote from Barry Hallen:

A Yoruba will say that once destiny is ''fixed'' by Olorun it cannot be changed. It must take place. Nevertheless on other occasions the same person will say that it is possible to ''miss'' the destiny one has been apportioned, in the sense of becoming confused and lost during one's lifetime and doing things for which one is not at all suited. Or an external force can interfere with one's destiny. Neither of these is entirely consistent with the belief that once destiny is fixed, it is unalterable and must take place.

This surely appears to be an example of inconsistently held beliefs within a single structure of beliefs, and as far as Bodunrin is concerned, it must be seen and evaluated as such. But Hallen does not; hence Bodunrin objects to Hallen's account. For Hallen, the inconsistency is only there if we look at the Yoruba belief from the perspective of a Westerner. He sees the various beliefs that may be called upon when an explanation is required as comparable to the various partitions that are ranged along the wings of a stage and may be swung into position depending upon the demands of the next scene. Each partition corresponds to a certain belief. There are other belief-panels in the wings that would be inconsistent with it if they were brought into play simultaneously. But this does not happen (except in very exceptional circumstances) because when a certain kind of problem occupies stage centre the same partition is always moved out to serve as its explanatory background. Bodunrin is not pleased with this approach, which he sees as ''a good account of why the Yorubas do not find it odd to live with inconsistent beliefs.'' But, as he puts it, ''Hallen's account can hardly be construed as showing that the Yorubas hold consistent views on destiny as expressed in their concept of ori; rather his account explains why the Yorubas do not see any inconsistencies in their belief system. But this does not remove the inconsistency''. The question is what kind of argument is there to remove the apparent inconsistency? The question of the belief in the alterability of destiny is fundamental to the theory. The issue we have raised in this connection is whether this

belief is compatible with the idea of a fixed and unalterable destiny. Now, one way out of the apparent dilemma is to see the belief in an unalterable destiny as fatalism, and to argue that this is not the Yoruba position. Many scholars have argued this way. Thus Moses Makinde has drawn a distinction between strong destiny, which he identifies as fatalism, and weak destiny, which he identifies as the Yoruba concept of ori. If fatalism entails inalterability, weak destiny, as in ori, does not. Therefore, the argument goes, there is no inconsistency in the belief. Another argument is that even the strong notion of destiny is open to alteration, as far as the Yoruba are concerned.

According to this interpretation, the concept of ase (special divine edicts) is superior to that of ori or ayanmo (destiny) because it issues from Olodumare. The point here, then, is that Olodumare can effect a change through ase once a supplication is made and accepted. The fact that the Yoruba act as if they believe that destiny is alterable would seem to support this interpretation. The second issue has to do with whether the belief is consistent with other beliefs the Yoruba hold about the world. A list of major Yoruba beliefs about the world will include at least the following. There is God; there are Orisas (minor gods); death is inevitable; work is the cure for poverty; good character is beauty; it is the king of all talismans; moderation is the source of honour and respect, etc. From this list of beliefs, can it be said that there is one that is inconsistent with the belief in destiny? Again, it would appear at first that the belief that ori is the determinant of success or failure is inconsistent with the belief that works is the cure for poverty. However, as observed above, the Yoruba acknowledge the importance of hard work in the realization of a good destiny. This is why ese (leg) and owo (hand) are brought into the picture. The meaning of this is that both the hand and the leg are important instruments in the realization of one's destiny. Therefore, it might appear that there is no conflict between the two beliefs. With respect to character, it has also been observed above that one of the ways in which one's destiny may be altered is through one's own character. Of course, one may question how one's character could contribute to the altering of one's destiny, since it is supposed to be a component of the destiny in the first place. It is however not clear how this is an adequate answer to this problem within the structure of the belief.

The third issue is whether the belief or theory is compatible with reality or practice, as we experience it. For instance, since the theory of destiny suggests that one has a preordained allotment before coming into this world, one possible practical implication is resignation. Yet in practice, no one adopts a philosophy of resignation. Does this suggest, then, that the theory is incompatible with our practice? Again, one way of addressing this issue may be to call attention to the complexity of the theory of destiny with its in-built correctives. Destiny does not, even in theory, imply resignation, one might argue, because the notion is one of potentiality. A potentiality is something that still has to be fulfilled. Second, one may argue that, since destiny is only a potential, one cannot, even in theory, consistently adopt a philosophy of resignation until one has made persistent efforts without success. But, of course, there are other beliefs in the system, which reject measuring success in terms of wealth or position. Furthermore, as discussed above, it may also be pointed out that the theory of destiny allows for the concept of ase (divine

edicts) with the consequence that even a strong notion of destiny is liable to alteration with the involvement of Olodumare (God). Therefore, the theory is apparently not inconsistent with practical efforts to avert failure. It seems, then, that what is needed is a thorough analysis of the full logic of the theory. Then, one can expect a better fit between the theory and practice of destiny.

8.1.3 The Esan Metaphysics

In what could be referred to as an Esan traditional ontology, there exists a world of two realms of existence – the visible and invisible; independently real and intrinsically linked to form a whole. The beings existing in these two realms of a single existence are lively and active in varying degrees because they are vitalized, animated, or energized by an ontological principle or essence which some authors have referred to as force, which is given by the Supreme Being **Osenobulua**. In Esan Language, Force is given different names though having a similar meaning. It is either called *orion* (force), *etin* (strength), or *ahu* (energy or power). Thus, for example, the name, *Etionse*, or *Orionlen*, means "God's strength" and "a person's life force" respectively.

According to C. E Ukhun, *ahu* is not some form of physical causality because it does not belong to the physical order. It is metaphysical, inaccessible to scientific or empirical verification. *Ahu* is not believed by the Esan to be an idea in the head; it is real and personified in beings. The idea the Esan people have of it and its manifestations is caused by it. Therefore, *ahu*, seen as the ontological principle of existence in Esan traditional thought, is the route to understanding the interaction and harmony that exist among entities in the Esan community. In the Esan structure of being, beings can be positioned in a hierarchical order based on the degree of vitality or force they possess. The Supreme Being stands as the "ground of being", who vitalizes or gives force to all that is; he is the apex. He is followed by the divinities, both primordial and deified, ancestors, other spiritual forces, the person, and natural objects or things.

Osenobulua is an Esan name used exclusively to refer to the Supreme Being who stands as ontologically ultimate to any other entity in the structure of being. The ontological supremacy of Osenobulua is made palpable in the literally translation of the name; Ose-no-bu-lua, which means "the Supreme-who-creates/builds-the-house", that is, the source, creator and sustainer of the universe, of life, of being. As such, to the Esan the Supreme Being is all powerful, perfect and just. Recognize his majesty and mightiness; the Esan do not approach the Supreme Being directly but through intermediaries. This is the mark of respect and reverence for him. It is like the king-subject relationship in traditional Esan where the king (Onojie) is not approached directly but through an intermediary. In the relationship between the Esan and Osenobulua, intermediaries, such as Osun (deity of the family), Olokun (deity of the river) and so on, therefore play a vital role. The belief in the existence of the divinities is a major feature of the traditional thought of the Esan people. The divinities stand next in relation to the Supreme Being in the hierarchy of forces. In Esan ontology, this category of beings is sub-divided into two: (i) the primordial divinities and, (ii) the deified divinities. The primordial divinities are called "children of the Supreme

Being" (Imon-Osenobulua). They are spiritual forces brought into being with regard to the divine ordering of the universe. They are ministers of the Supreme Being with derived powers, and the Supreme Being assigns each of them a portfolio. Deified divinities, on the other hand, are Esan heroes and founding fathers who have contributed immensely to the founding of the people and are believed now to be in a position to influence their lives positively by relating their problems to the Supreme Being.

In Esan tradition, ancestors are referred to as Enebiemanvade, which literally translates as "our fathers". For the Esan, the ancestors are members of the community who have properly departed the physical realm of existence to the non-physical. They are those who have completed their course here in the land of the physically living and have gone to the spiritual abode of the physically dead. An essential point to note, however, is that not all who die becomes a ancestor in the Esan tradition, as in most African Tradition. For one to become an ancestor, he must have lived a community-accepted or culturally accepted life-style, must have lived to an old age, must have children to honour his death, and must have died a good death as distinct from bad death where the person's death comes mysteriously either by an anti-wickedness divinity like Idigun or under unexplainable circumstances. The next in the hierarchy of being of the Esan is the **Manipular Forces**. In the Esan tradition, there exist some supernatural forces that are neither divinities nor ancestors, but they either manipulate or are manipulated in such a way that they become beneficial or harmful to the physically living. They are manipulated in sorcery, witchcraft and magic for certain ends. These manipular forces include roaming spirits (particularly of the improperly dead) and evil supernatural forces like witches and wizards. Hence, they are commonly referred to as elimin (spirit) or alimin-ebe (evil spirits). Ontologically, the person is seen by the Esan as a composite whole of a number substances: material, immaterial and even quasi-material substances. The person is made up of egbe (physical body), elimin (spirit), okho (mind), Uhimin (destiny) and ehi (destiny guardian). All of these put together does not yet become the person, though, not until a spark of God's or the Supreme Being's energy or force vitalizes or energies the composite and gives it life. This underlying essence of a person, this life force the Esan calls orion (a person's force) or etin (strength).

Discussion Activity	What makes African metaphysical worldwivew?
	Post your response on Study Session Eight forum page on course website.

Study Session Summary

Summary

In this Study Session, we examined a discourse of what can be referred to as African metaphysical worldviews. We adopted A Selection of a number of worldviews among groups in Africa – The Igbos, the Yorubas and the Esan culture. We examined the Esan conception of Being. We concluded by establishing grounds of common ideals among these cultures. We argued that apart from these varieties of conceptions by groups in Africa, it is extremely difficult to conceive of a generally acceptable conception to all African experiences.

Assessment

Assessment

SAQ8.1 (tests Learning Outcome 8.1)
   i. What are the basic features of worldview?
   ii. Which of the African metaphysical worldwivews do you find as most interesting? And why?

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Notes on Self Assessment Questions (SAQs)

Study Session 1

SAQ 1.1

    i. If you have chosen option D, you are correct. The question "What does it mean for something to exist?" is the focus of metaphysics; while "What does it mean for us to know that something exists?" captures epistemology.

    ii. True

    iii. True

SAQ 1.2

    i. Option A is the correct answer. Both idealism and materialism are theories that attempts to explain metaphysics (the distinction between appearance and reality).

    ii. The response of the materialist may sound too scientific, in that, artistic, emotional, and social pronouncements nonetheless refer to nothing more than bodies in motion.

Study Session 2

SAQ 2.1

The essence or form of a thing distinguishes it from other kinds or species, but its matter distinguishes it from other members of the same species.

SAQ 2.2

BEING can be referred to as the 'is-ness' of a being. The notion of being has to do with the fact that a thing is, as opposed to non-being. On the other hand, ESSENCE is the 'what-ness' of a thing while EXISTENCE is an instantiation or the facticity of a thing.

Study Session 3

SAQ 3.1

    i. Nominalist
    ii. Realist
    iii. Realist
    iv. Nominalist
    v. Nominalist

Study Session 4

SAQ 4.1

We do not know which of the question is actually of most interest to you. Your explanation should however provide answer to the questions bordering on your selected choice.

Who am I? We often speak of one's "personal identity" as what makes one the person one is. Your identity in this sense consists roughly of what makes you unique as an individual and different from others. Or it is the way you see or define yourself, or the network of values and convictions that structure your life.

Personhood question. What is it to be a person? What is necessary, and what suffices, for something to count as a person, as opposed to a non-person? What have people got that non-people haven't got?

Persistence question. What does it take for a person to persist from one time to another—that is, for the *same* person to exist at different times? What determines which past or future being is you? Suppose you point to a child in an old class photograph and say, "That's me." What makes you that one, rather than one of the others? What is it about the way she relates then to you as you are now that makes her you?

Other possible questions of interests are presented below.

Evidence question. How do we find out who is who? What evidence bears on the question of whether the person here now is the one who was here yesterday? What ought we to do when different kinds of evidence support opposing verdicts? Which sources is more fundamental in providing your identity proof?

What am I? What sort of things, are you and I and other human people? What is our basic nature? For instance, what are we made of? Are we made up entirely of matter, as stones are, or partly or wholly of something else? If we are made of matter, what matter is it? (Just the matter that makes up our bodies, or might we be larger or smaller than our bodies?) Where, in other words, do our spatial boundaries lie? More fundamentally, what fixes those boundaries? Are we substances—metaphysically independent beings—or is each of us a state or an aspect of something else, or perhaps some sort of process or event?

How could I have been? How different could I have been from the way I actually am? Which of my properties do I have essentially, and which only accidentally or contingently? Could I, for instance, have had different parents? Are there possible worlds just like the actual one except for who is who—where people have "changed places" so that what is in fact your career is mine and vice versa? Whether these are best described as questions about personal identity is debatable.

What matters in identity? What is the practical importance of facts about our identity and persistence? Why should we care about it? Why does it *matter*? Imagine that surgeons are going to put your brain into my head and that neither of us has any choice about this. Will the resulting person—who will presumably think he is you—be responsible for my actions or for yours? (Or both?Or neither?) Suppose he will be in terrible

pain after the operation unless one of us pays a large sum in advance. If we were both entirely selfish, which of us would have a reason to pay?

Study Session 5

SAQ 5.1

We don't know what you have presented, but your answer may include the following:

i. how can a purely spiritual thing known only through introspection affect and be affected by a purely material thing known only through sensible observation?
ii. how can a person know what is going on in someone else's mind or even whether other minds exist?
iii. how can a human being, considered as one mind-body unity, have a body which is determined by physical laws and still have a mind or soul that is free?

SAQ 5.2

i. False. In fact, according to the hard behaviorism of B. F. Skinner, it is misleading (and, in fact, wrong) to talk of minds or mental events (e.g., having ideas or intentions) because such things *simply do not exist*.

ii. False. The fact that humans behave and think in regular or predictable ways indicates that consciousness or thought itself should be understood as the *observable behaviour patterns (macro-events)*.

Study Session 6

SAQ 6.1

i. Ethical Determinism
ii. Physical Determinism
iii. Psychological Determinism

Study Session 7

SAQ7.1

The correct option is B. In fact, the ontological argument has often been said to ascertain God's existence by a philosophical sleight of a ruse of words.

SAQ 7.2

Your response should note the following points:

• Reincarnation is the belief that a human spirit, in one continued existence, is given the opportunity to come to the earth more than once.
• The human spirit takes on a different human body on each occasion.
• This process is repeated until the human spirit lapses.

Study Session 8

SAQ 8.1

i. The basic features of a worldview are expressed inKalu (1978) and Kraft (1979) writings, they present a worldview as a unified picture of the cosmos explained by a system of concepts, which order the natural and social rhythms, and the place of individuals and communities in them. In other words, a world-view reflects people's basic assumptions about, and perceptions of the universe, which give orientation and value to their lives.

ii. We do not know which of the African metaphysics on worldview is (most) interesting to you. Each of the African metaphysic's worldview, however, has its peculiarity which makes it unique. Some of these peculiarities are noted below:

Igbo Idea of the Universe

The Igbo people have a religious conception of the universe. They see their world as made up to two planes: the physical and the spiritual. Igbo worldview, however, abhors the tendency to a digital categorization of things. They believe that there is a dual-traffic and interaction between the inhabitants of the two worlds.

Ori and Destiny in Yoruba Cosmology

The belief in destiny has a special place in the world-view of the Yoruba. The Yorubas believe of an ori as the bearer of a person's destiny as well as the determinant of one's personality.Every human being is believed to have an allotment, and it determines what they will be in life.

Esan Metaphysics

In Esan traditional ontology, there exists a world of two realms of existence – the visible and invisible; independently real and linked to form a whole. The belief in the existence of the supernatural forces (Supreme being and manipular beings) and divinities are major features of the traditional thought of the Esan people.