



PHI101

Introduction to

PHILOSOPHY

Course Manual

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Introduction to Philosophy

PHI101



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

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Vice-Chancellor's Message

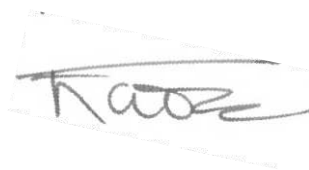
The Distance Learning Centre is building on a solid tradition of over two decades of service in the provision of External Studies Programme and now Distance Learning Education in Nigeria and beyond. The Distance Learning mode to which we are committed is providing access to many deserving Nigerians in 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 platform for the convenience of our students. It is in fulfilment 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.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Isaac Adewole', is enclosed within a faint rectangular border.

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.

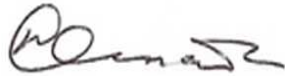
Apart from the responsibility for you to read this course material with others, you are also advised to seek assistance from your course facilitators especially academic advisors during your study even before the interactive session which is by design for revision. Your academic advisors will assist 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.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Bayo Okunade', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Professor Bayo Okunade

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Contents

About this course manual	5
How this course manual is structured	5
Course Overview	7
Welcome to Introduction to Philosophy PHI101	7
Course outcomes.....	7
Timeframe.....	7
How to be successful in this course	8
Need help?.....	9
Academic Support.....	9
Activities	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Assessments	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Bibliography.....	10
Getting around this course manual	12
Margin icons.....	12
Study Session 1	13
You Can't Escape Philosophy	13
Introduction	13
1.1 Reasons Why Philosophy is Inevitable	13
1.2 The Concept of Philosophy.....	17
Study Session Summary	20
Assessment.....	20
Study Session 2	21
Understanding Philosophical Problems.....	21
Introduction	21
2.1 Explaining Philosophical Problems.....	21
2.2 Characteristics of Philosophical Problems.....	21
Study Session Summary	23
Assessment.....	24
Study Session 3	25
Philosophy: Worldview or Critical Thinking?.....	25
Introduction	25
3.1 Philosophy as Worldview?	25
3.2 The Relationship between Philosophy as World View and Philosophy as Critical Thinking.....	28
3.3 Elements of Critical Thinking.....	29

Study Session Summary	31
Assessment.....	31
Study Session 4	32
Branches of Philosophy	32
Introduction	32
4.1 Questions to Branches of Philosophy	32
4.2 Branches of Philosophy	33
4.2.1 Metaphysics	33
4.2.2 Epistemology.....	34
4.2.3 Ethics	37
4.2.4 Logic.....	40
Study Session Summary	43
Assessment.....	43
Study Session 5	44
Appearance and Reality	44
Introduction	44
6.1 Distinction between What is Real and What Only Appears to be Real.....	44
6.2 Difference between Appearance and Reality.....	46
Study Session Summary	48
Assessment.....	48
Study Session 6	49
Scepticism and Knowledge	49
Introduction	49
6.1 Problems of Knowledge and Scepticism.....	49
6.1.1 What is Knowledge?.....	49
6.1.2 Scepticism.....	51
Study Session Summary	53
Assessment.....	54
Study Session 7	55
Citizen and State.....	55
Introduction	55
7.1 Formation of Society	55
7.2 Political Obligations of Citizens.....	58
Study Session Summary	61
Assessment.....	61
Study Session 8	62
Philosophy and National Development.....	62
Introduction	62
8.1 Relationship between Philosophical Enterprise and Politics of Governing a State.....	62
8.2 Contribution of Philosophy to National Development.....	64

8.2.1 The Nigerian Post-Independence Predicament.....	64
8.3 Foundation of Social Life.....	64
8.4 Significance of Philosophy to National Development.....	67
Study Session Summary.....	68
Assessment.....	68

References

78

About this course manual

Introduction to Philosophy PHI101 has been produced by University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre. All course manuals produced by University of Ibadan Distance Learning Centre are 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 Session outcomes.
- Core content of the Study Session with a variety of learning activities.
- A Study Session summary.
- Assignments and/or assessments, as applicable.
- Bibliography

Your comments

After completing Introduction to Philosophy 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.

CourseOverview

Welcome to Introduction to Philosophy PHI101

This course gives an understanding of the nature of philosophy; it also serves as the foundation for the development of the core skills—especially critical thinking, conceptualization, and sound judgment—which are essential for both private life and public affairs.

Course outcomes



Outcomes

Upon completion of Introduction to Philosophy PHI101 you will be able to:

- *understand* the nature of philosophy, as an human endeavour and academic discipline.
- *discuss* the development of philosophy.
- *appraise* how philosophy contribute to the meaning that we attempt to make out of our environment.

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?



As earlier noted, this course manual complements and supplements PHI101 at UI Mobile Class as an online course.

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, Off Salvation Bus Stop, Awuse Estate, Opebi, Ikeja, Lagos.

For technical issues (computer problems, web access, and etcetera), please send mail to webmaster@dlc.ui.edu.ng.

Academic Support



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 onlineacademicsupport@dlc.ui.edu.ng

Activities



This manual features “Activities”, which may present material that is NOT extensively covered in the Study Sessions. 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.

There are different forms of activities in this manual, ranging from reading activities, case studies, discussion activities. The use of activities is particularly based on learning outcomes and nature of content. Some

Study Sessions comes with discussion topics. You may discuss the Study Sessions at respective discussion boards on course website.

You may see dates for active discussion with tutor on course schedule. This course schedule is available on the course website.

Assignment



Assignment

This manual also comes with tutor marked assignments (TMA). Assignments are expected to be turned-in on course website. You may also receive TMAs as part of online class activities. Feedbacks to TMAs will be provided by your tutor in not more than 2-week 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.

Assessments



Assessments

There are two basic forms of self assessment in this course: in-text questions (ITQs) and self assessment questions (SAQs). Feedbacks to the ITQs are placed immediately after the questions, while the feedbacks to SAQs are at the back of manual.

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

You Can't Escape Philosophy

Introduction

In this Study Session, we will attempt to clarify what philosophy means by looking first at some of the reasons why a human being cannot escape the endeavour that we call philosophy.



Learning Outcomes

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

1.1 *explain* why philosophy is related to your life experience.

1.2 *discuss* the concept of philosophy.

1.1 Reasons Why Philosophy is Inevitable

Philosophy as a discipline is usually considered to be a useless and abstract discipline. Others see it as an exclusive, upper class course, which is suitable for those who are out of touch with reality. Most people also see it as a sceptical and distrustful subject that makes one anti-religious and anti-God. For the students, especially in Africa and particularly in Nigeria, philosophy does not in any visible way—unlike law, business management, economics, medicine or accountancy—promise a fulfilling future prospect necessary for survival.

In fact, I suspect you also have some of these ideas about the course you have chosen as your course of study. You ask yourself: What can philosophy do for me? What does it even mean? Where can I work with a degree in philosophy? If my future employers see “philosophy” attached to “public affairs”, will they not think I am an abstract person?

I can tell you that you are not alone in asking these questions. Majority of all the students in many of the philosophy departments in Nigeria also enter their first level with a series of similar questions in their mind. The indication of the poor regard that people give philosophy is revealed in the population of those who register for philosophy in the university. Experience shows that 98% of this student population only chose philosophy as a consolation so as not to lose their admission slot. The other 2% chose philosophy out of a lack of better discipline to choose or because they are not qualified for the “better” courses.

The truth, however, is that whether we like it or not, whether we understand it or not, and whether we want to do it reluctantly or excitedly, philosophy is inevitable and inescapable. And it is inevitable and inescapable because you are a human person who has been endowed

with the faculty to reason and question the world around you, and all the circumstances that surround you in that world.

According to Plato, one of the greatest of the Western philosophers, philosophy developed out of wonder and curiosity. This curiosity, according to Aristotle, Plato's disciple, pushes men to want to know what they do not initially know. Here, we have our first reason for saying that philosophy is inescapable: we have been constituted in such a way as to be regarded as curious beings who always desire to know what is hidden. As human beings we are always filled with the need to make sense of our surroundings, unlike the animals which really have no care beyond what their biological make up demands. For instance, I'm sure you'll be concerned about whether or not the rain falls, whether or not government increases taxes, whether or not you give birth, whether or not the world will end in a week's time, whether or not your parents die now or in five years' time, whether or not you ought to marry and have children, whether or not you should continue with the Distant Learning Programme, whether or not you are retrenched from work, whether or not you should take bribe in your office, whether or not being honest can make you rich and comfortable, whether or not your presently life is meaningful, whether or not you ought to be religious, whether or not there is heaven and hell, and so on.

Philosophy is therefore inescapable because as humans we always consciously or unconsciously attempt to make sense or meaning out of our environment. We are filled with the intrinsic *need to understand* the world in which we live and our place in that world. Unlike the animals with which we share certain fundamental traits—the need for food and shelter as well as the emotional need for love—human beings are the only species that are conscious of having an experience of what is going on around them. You are presently reading this book. But you are not only reading it, *you are also aware that you are reading it*.

We have just examined the first reason why you cannot escape philosophy in spite of your hatred for it as a supposedly difficult and abstract subject. This reason is that all human beings are created with the need to understand and make sense of the world in which they find themselves. We are all consciously or unconsciously interested in knowing why we are created at all and where we are heading. We want to know whether our lives are meaningful and what gives it that meaning. It is this reason that makes all of us “philosophers.” We shall now go on to look at the second reason why philosophy cannot be ignored or escaped or neglected.

ITQ

Question

- According to Plato, from which of the following can philosophy be said to have developed from?
 - A) Out of necessity.
 - B) Out of the desire of man to satisfy his ego.
 - C) The need to prove the existence of God.
 - D) wonder and curiosity.

Feedback

- The answer is not (A) because although philosophy is a necessity, it did not arise out of necessity; it is not (B) because philosophy did not arise out of man's desire to satisfy his ego; the answer is not (C) because although one of the concerns of philosophy bothers on the question of the existence of God, there are more questions and issues in philosophy than this. The answer is (D) because it is in a bid to answer the questions that arise out of the mystery and wonders of the world, according to Aristotle, that philosophy arose from.

The second reason why philosophy is inescapable is that philosophy determines fundamentally the quality and essence of our lives. This is because most of our actions and judgment in life are determined or influenced by our ideas and beliefs about the world and our place in that world. For instance, if I am a religious person, my being religious is a judgment I made based on my belief that there is more to this physical world than all the things we see around us. Again, if most of your actions are based on the Golden Rule ("Do unto others as you want them to do unto you"), then you are also acting under the belief that human action can be categorised into either good or bad actions.

However, most of the ideas that help us in understanding our place in this world and the meaning of our existence are ideas that are already floating around us. They are ideas that are already diffused into our culture and society. We get them in the beer parlour, from our parents, at the newspaper stand, from our friends, in the bedroom, at the barber's shop, from the mechanic workshop, in the school and the hospital, from churches and mosques, and so on. These ideas are at work anytime we express our hopes, fears, values, ideals, ambitions, beliefs, attitudes, and so on.

We can say, in other words, that these ideas are like the cold that we normally catch in the rainy season without being aware of where it comes from. We may not know who or what has given us the cold, but once we catch it, it becomes *our* cold, *my* cold. So also, most of us pick ideas and beliefs floating around us in our culture and society and make them our own. For instance, can you really pinpoint where you got your idea that all men are selfish in nature? Where did you get the belief that you should always keep your promises? Or the belief that women are inferior to men?



Tip

Reasons why philosophy is inescapable

- 1) all human beings are created with the need to understand and make sense of the world in which they find themselves.
- 2) Philosophy determines fundamentally the quality and essence of our lives.

The point we are making here is that if we look critically, we will discover that in our environment, there are philosophical assumptions, ideas, questions and issues that we deal with on a daily basis without recognising that we are already involved with philosophy. I will provide

about five examples of some of these experiences we have had or we may have.

- You visited a sophisticated industry where robots are employed to do the manual jobs. As you watch the robots go about the business efficiently and effectively, a thought popped into your head as to whether you are not also a robot that has somehow been programmed to do all you are able to do now.
- You have just heard that the Federal Government of Nigeria has increased the pump price of petroleum product again, and that petrol now goes for a N100. You were so angry you began to wonder whether you even have the right to obey the government especially when it comes to paying your tax.
- You called your children and warned them: "You must always tell the truth at all times, because truth pays." And one of them replied, "Daddy, how many truths do we have?" Another one asked, "Daddy, are all lies bad?"
- You just heard the news that the president pardoned sixteen criminal's who had been in prison for ten years. You became extremely concerned and turned to your friend: "Do you think ten years is enough to change a criminal? Your friend replied: "These criminals should have been killed." You were amazed and asked why. He replied, "Because the prison only makes them worse and hardened."
- Your wife (or anyone for that matter) woke up suddenly from her sleep in the middle of the night very afraid because she just had a terrifying dream. You tried to calm her saying, "it's just a dream. Relax." She looked at you and said, "It was so real. I am afraid." And you replied, "Dreams are not real. They only appear to be so."
- You confessed to your friend one day that the churches and mosques around you are becoming so noisy you wished there would be a law that prevents them from using speakers outside the place of worship. Your friend replied that the law will be unconstitutional because it would prevent the churches and mosques from enjoying the freedom of expression of the members.

Each of these examples raises one philosophical issue or the other. The first one raises the problem of whether or not we are actually free to do what we do. The second example raises the crucial problem we all face daily about whether we are ever justified to obey a government; especially, one which does not really care for its citizens. The third example is concerned with the fundamental problem of the nature of truth and lies. The fourth example raises a problem in the philosophy of law about the purpose of punishment whether it really reforms or deters. The fifth example touches on the problem philosophers have faced on the difference between what is real and what is not real. The last example provokes the problem of how best to govern a good society, and to regulate the freedom of its members.

We have said that philosophical ideas which assist us in making a sense of our existence and the world in which we find ourselves are usually

ideas we pick up from around us. We have also demonstrated some of the situations in which these ideas are used. The further point to make is that while most of us make use of these ideas most of the time, we seldom have the time to examine them more critically. Take the father or mother who told his children to always tell the truth. His likely answer to their questions would be: "Just do as I say and stop asking stupid questions!" or the husband who tells the wife that dreams are simply not real. Both of them will promptly go back to sleep even though the next day, the husband will mistake a stranger for someone he knew.

This tells us that though we may all be philosophers, who are concerned about their existence and the world we live in, we do not really *philosophise*. In other words, we take most of these ideas at face value without really taking the time to look at them deeply. One, we do not have a clear picture or understanding of those ideas and beliefs that we claim to be ours. We just hold and use them arbitrarily. Two, we do not take time to examine these ideas and beliefs to understand their strength, weakness and how reasonable they are.

The reason why we are philosophers who do not philosophise is usually that most of us have become used to our surroundings so much so that we have lost our sense of wonder. When was the last time you took time to look quietly at a beautiful flower (before rushing to work)? Do you always notice the sunset (without using it as the notice for dinner)? Have you ever taken the time to enjoy a good song? Or read a very good book? Have you had the time to stare at the birds? Or go to the beach and gaze at the waters? I'm sure you thought is likely to be: "I don't have the time!" If this is your final answer, then you have likely lost that sense of wonder and curiosity that examines and challenges the mystery, drama, beauty, pain and majesty of our existence. In this case, most of us are lost in our commonsense.

1.2 The Concept of Philosophy

When a student of philosophy or a professional philosopher is asked the three-lettered question, "what is philosophy" the standard reply is that philosophy has no simple definition. A student of philosophy may just look at you and expect that the reply should satisfy your curiosity. A professional philosopher may go on to give what will end up being an abstract, obscure and winding definition which also have the effect of making you uncomfortably silent.

Consider the following definitions:

- Philosophy is the attempt to understand the universe as a whole;
- Philosophy is an examination of man's moral responsibilities and social obligations;
- Philosophy is an effort to fathom out the divine intentions and the place of human beings with reference to these intentions;
- Philosophy is an effort to ground the enterprise of natural science;
- Philosophy is the rigorous examination of the origins, extent, and validity of human ideas;

- Philosophy is an exploration of the place of will or consciousness in the universe;
- Philosophy is an examination of the values of truth, goodness, and beauty;
- Philosophy is an effort to codify the rules of human thought in order to promote rationality and the extension of clear thinking;

These definitions tell us two fundamental things:

- The first is that philosophers come from different fields, backgrounds and experiences, and this fact informs the interests and concerns they will ultimately reflect upon.
- The second thing we should know is that though these definitions are vague and indefinite, especially for someone being introduced into his/her first philosophy course, we can deduce one significant fact about philosophy.



Philosophy is essentially a reflective or meditative activity on various areas of human experience.

For the Greeks, philosophy took its meaning from *philosophia* or the “love of wisdom.” Let us now see how we can arrive at a deeper understanding of the character of philosophy from this basic definition. Let us start with a funny question: If a philosopher is a *lover of wisdom*, what then is the connection between philosophers and lovers? What comes to your mind? Relationship! The search for the character of philosophy and philosophical understanding can be compared with being in an emotional relationship (Lawhead, 2002: xxvi).

When two people get together in a relationship, they are immediately confronted with a whole lot of problems that require their attention if they are going to make a sense out of that relationship, and give meaning to it. A successful relationship, therefore, requires that both of them continually work at it to keep up its excitements and explore each other’s personality. That relationship will begin to collapse the moment both of them relax and think the relationship has been figured out as something that does not require their input again. A philosopher is also a *lover of wisdom* who is always in an ongoing quest to explore new ideas, re-examine old ones and confront undiscovered dimensions of human experience.

We can therefore modify our initial definition of philosophy by seeing it as a *reflective or meditative human attempt to systematically and critically study human experience*. To see it as a human *attempt* is to buttress our earlier point (in lecture one) that we can never escape from philosophy. This is because the fundamental ideas by which we make meaning of our existence in this world are always in need of modification, justification, evaluation and improvement.

As we said in the first section of this Study Session, most of us can be characterised as philosophers, but we really don’t philosophise. This is because most of us have lost our sense of wonder and curiosity about our

existence and the mystery of what surrounds us. It is very easy for us, for instance, to use the word “philosophy” in so many situations without really understanding what is required of us. For example, if you’re a shop owner or a business person, you might say that your “philosophy of business” is: Never trust a person who comes to you for credit! If you were the chief executive officer of a firm, your “corporate philosophy” might be: To provide reliable products with good service. If you were a lawyer or a police officer, your “working philosophy” might be: Without law, there can be no liberty! If you were a football lover, your “sporting philosophy” might be: Winning is not the most important thing—it’s the only thing! If you were a house wife or a husband, your “matrimonial philosophy” might be: My wife/my husband, or nobody else!

The use of “philosophy” in the examples above refers to a general outlook, a policy or a principle that most of us hold as a guide to what we do or who we are. There is an important sense in which philosophy can be seen this way. This will be our concern in the next lecture four. The problem however is that most of us hold these general outlook, policy and principle without making the intellectual effort to examine the philosophical issues behind the claims we make. For the sporting fan, can we always afford to win even if the opponent is dear to us? For the business person, what is the role of trust in human endeavours? For the business executive, what does *good* service mean? For the lawyer or police officer, are all laws to be obeyed? And for the house wife or the husband, what is love? To really philosophise is to begin to examine the assumptions and issues that lie behind our general outlook, policies and principles to see which of the assumptions, beliefs and ideas can be rationally modified, re-evaluated or abandoned.

ITQ

Question

- From which field or discipline are philosophers drawn from?
 - A) The social sciences
 - B) The sciences
 - C) All disciplines
 - D) Logic.

Feedback

- From what you have learnt so far about philosophy, you would discover that philosophers are not drawn from the social sciences alone and so (A) cannot be the right option. It cannot also be (B) because philosophers are drawn from fields other than the sciences and it cannot be (D) because logic is an aspect of philosophy. The right option is (C) because since philosophy concerns itself with all aspects of human existence, then philosophers are also drawn from all walks of life or all disciplines.



Discussion Activity

Let's discuss! Why did you decide to study philosophy as a course?

[Reply on Study Session 1 forum page on course website.](#)

Study Session Summary



Summary

In this Study Session, you learnt that philosophy is essentially a reflective and meditative human attempt to systematically and critically study human experience. We also discussed the two reasons why philosophy is very significant in our day to day existence and therefore bound to happen for us as human beings. Firstly, we explained that we have been made in such a way that we possess the need to understand the world in which we live, the role that we have to play in that world, and the nature of our existence. Secondly, we explained that whether we know it or not, philosophical ideas shape our beliefs, assumptions, ideals, hopes, ambition, and fears. We get these ideas from all around us, but we adopt them as our ideas without any deep reflection on whether they are reasonable or not, useful or not. The first reason highlighted, makes all of us naïve philosophers. The second reason reveals that we are philosophers who do not attempt to philosophise because we have become familiar and comfortable with our existence and environment that we have lost our unique sense of inquisitiveness.

Assessment



Assessment

SAQ1.1 (tests Learning Outcome 1.1)

Based on your study in this session, how would you define philosophy?

SAQ1.2 (tests Learning Outcome 1.2)

Can you escape philosophy?

Study Session 2

Understanding Philosophical Problems

Introduction

In this Study Session, we will discuss how philosophical problems are generated. We will also examine the characteristics of philosophical problems.



Learning Outcomes

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

- 2.1 explain how philosophical problems are generated.
- 2.2 discuss some of the characteristics of philosophical problems.

2.1 Explaining Philosophical Problems



Reading

Time required:
40 minutes

Task

1. Read the article on “Philosophical problems: how do they arrive”, linked here ([Appendix A](#)).
2. What are the reasons why Bertrand Russell considered philosophical problems as intrinsically worthwhile?

Discussion

Your answer should include any of the following:

- a) Philosophical questions enlarge our intellectual imagination;
- b) Philosophical questions help in diminishing dogmatism in us;
- c) Philosophical questions help in rendering our mind great in view of the contemplation of the universe;
- d) Philosophical questions enlarge our conception of what is possible.

You may discuss further with your academic advisor on course forum.

2.2 Characteristics of Philosophical Problems

Philosophical Problems Involve General Ideas. What is the difference between these three questions: “What is religion?” “What is Christianity?” and “What is Catholicism?” of course, the questions increase in order of generality, starting with the last one. The most general of the questions is the first, what is religion? A philosophical problem is general because it covers a large territory and as many contexts as possible. They are questions that cannot be limited to a place or a context. When we ask the question, what is religion, we receive a lot of possible comments from sociologists, philosophers, theologians,

psychologists, atheists, Christians, Hinduists, and so on. All these possible answers make it a little difficult to achieve an adequate answer to the question. The same however is not so true about the other two questions.

Philosophical Problems are Fundamental Problems Involving Fundamental Ideas. Many of us walk through life with a lot of beliefs and ideas about how we ought to deal with our friends, how we should respond to those who need help from us, the role we should play in our parents' lives, the purpose of marriage and children, our relationship with our extended families, our obligation to the government, and so on. All these beliefs can only be coherent and meaningful if there is a framework of certain fundamental beliefs and ideas on which they hang. A fundamental idea or belief is one on which the truth of so many other specific ideas and beliefs rest. An idea is fundamental, that is, if that idea is the central foundation that gives meaning and coherence to all the other beliefs you may hold in life. For example, you may believe that you are in charge of your destiny, and that no one can help you better your own life because you hold the fundamental belief that there is no supreme being called God (or that this universe came into existence by chance). Again, it may be your attitude to always take things easy and calm because you hold the fundamental belief that whether we like it or not, there are some things in life that we cannot change, no matter how we try. However, we can only recognise these fundamental ideas and beliefs if we take the pain to critically reflect on the reason why we hold the beliefs and ideas we hold. Take the time (especially in your leisure time) to ponder on any of the random beliefs and ideas below and see whether you are able to arrive at a fundamental idea behind any of them:

- Philosophy is a useless course.
- Beauty is in the eyes of the beholder
- Women are inherently better managers than men
- One cannot truly think of nothing
- Dreams are gateway to another level of reality
- Without law, there is no liberty
- History always repeats itself
- All religions are basically the same
- Everyone has the right to live his/her life the way s/he likes
- Truth depends on what we think
- The most important thing in life is to know who you are
- Patience can cook the hardest stone

Philosophical Problems are not RESOLVABLE by Empirical Methods (through Science or Commonsense).

What is the difference between “What is holiness?” and “What is hunger?” The first question is an example of a fundamental, general question; the second one is a straightforward empirical question. A question is empirical if it can be answered by experience (either through observation or experimentation). Hunger, in this sense, is a physiological condition occasioned by the lack of food or other nourishment in the stomach. On the other hand, you will not get an answer to the question, what is holiness, if you go about examining holy people. The reason is

**Activity 2.1**

Time required:
10 minutes

that the concept of holiness is much broader and fundamental than that of hunger.

Task

Tick philosophical question(s) from amidst the following options:

- ☐ What is the capital of Cameroun?
- ☐ Is there a life after death?
- ☐ What does it take to gain admission to the UI DLC scheme?

Feedback

If you look at each of these questions critically, you will discover that only one of them satisfies the features of philosophical questions. Let us look at them, one after the other.

The first question, if you analyse it, can be answered using an empirical means. This is aside the fact that this question is not fundamental and neither is it general in nature. The third question is also not general in nature and it is not fundamental to human existence and such question can be answered empirically. This is unlike the second question which is fundamental in nature as it is a question that affects the foundation of our existence. Similarly, it is general in nature and such a question cannot be answered using an empirical method. Thus, the second question is the philosophical question among them.

**Activity 2.2**

Time required:
1 hour 15 minutes

Pick one of the philosophical problems raised here and discuss it with people, not necessarily your course mates. *See how the discussion reflects the said features of philosophical problems.*

Study Session Summary

**Summary**

In this Study Session, we discussed the nature of philosophical problems. We explained philosophical problems are generated and how we can recognise them. We defined a philosophical problem as a question about the meaning and truth of fundamental and general ideas and beliefs which cannot be resolved through empirical means. These philosophical problems are usually problems about meaning in the sense that they are generated when you discover some incompatibility and contradictions in the meaning and truth of some of the beliefs and ideas you hold. Finally, we examined the characteristics of philosophical problems, which includes:

- a) that they involve general ideas which go beyond specific territories and contexts;
- b) that they involve fundamental ideas on which our specific beliefs rest; and

- c) that these problems are not resolvable by empirical means.

Assessment



Assessment

SAQ 2.1 (tests Learning Outcomes 2.1 and 2.2)

What gives rise to philosophical problems and what are their features?

Study Session 3

Philosophy: Worldview or Critical Thinking?

Introduction

In this Study Session, we will attempt to discuss the relationship between the ideas and beliefs we hold and the nature of our existence in this world. We will also examine how philosophy functions as critical thinking, and how that function complements philosophy as worldview.



Learning Outcomes

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

- 3.1 present philosophy as a function of worldview.
- 3.2 describe the relationship between philosophy as worldview and philosophy as critical thinking.
- 3.3 explain the three dimensions of critical thinking.

2 1

3.1 Philosophy as Worldview?

In the first place, we will try to understand one of the fundamental roles that philosophy has played in history which gives us a further analysis of what it means. In the second place, we will also understand the role that philosophy plays in your understanding of who you are and what your place is in the universe.

It is very important to, again, summarise some of the important points we have made in the previous Study Session. In Study session two, we made the important point that whether we know it or not, most of us go through life with some kind of vague, incoherent and unstructured perspective on life that guides us about what to do in certain situation and circumstances. For instance, most of us just came to believe that “the right thing to do in any situation is what promotes my best interests.” And we hold on to such ideas even if the situation contradicts what we believe.

Our first contact with the word “philosophy” comes from this understanding of it as a general outlook on life, or as a principle that enables us to understand the directions we need to take in life. This is a very significant insight into what philosophy is, even though we do not understand it when we say, “my philosophy of life is...” We can now make a very important point: One of the most crucial preoccupations of philosophers over the centuries is in the formulation or construction of worldviews, or what you can call “philosophies of life.” In the sense we are going to explain soon, “worldview” and “philosophy” are

interchangeable. In other words, a worldview becomes the highest manifestation of philosophy. Or, the function of philosophy is to serve as the guide to life and action.

What is Worldview?

Here are some definitions that can help us:

- A point of view on the world, a perspective on things, a way of looking at the cosmos from a particular vantage point (Wolters, 1983: 5);
- A set of beliefs about the important issues in life;
- A general view of the world;
- A system of generalised views of the surrounding world and man's place in it, of man's relationship to the world and himself, and also the basic positions that people derive from this general picture of the world, their beliefs, socio-political, moral and aesthetic ideals, the principles by which they know and appraise material and spiritual events (Spirkin, online);
- A world view is a coherent collection of concepts and theorems that must allow us to construct a global image of the world, and in this way to understand as many elements of our experience as possible (Aerts et al, 2007: 8);
- The framework of ideas and beliefs through which an individual interprets the world and interacts with it (Wikipedia);
- Visions of the world or aspects of it, whose primary function is to provide a broad or general guide for perceiving, feeling and transforming reality (Oladipo, 2008: 13).



Tip

As a summary of all the suggested definitions, we can say that a worldview is a comprehensive set of ideas that helps you in explaining, at least: (1) the basic nature of the world in which you live; (2) your own basic nature; and (3) the sets of achievable goals you can possibly pursue in life, and the manner in which you should act in the world to achieve these goals.

Before we examine some characteristics of worldviews, we need to look at the seven fundamental questions that give birth to the need to construct worldviews. These questions include:

- What is the nature of the world? How is it structured, and how does it function?
- Why is the world the way it is, and not different? Where did the universe come from?
- Where are we going in the universe? What will be the fate of human and non-human lives in the universe?
- What are the kinds of futures open to us as human species in the universe, and how do go about choosing these futures?
- How are we as humans to act and create and transform the universe? What are the general principles that should guide the way we organise our actions in this world? What determines good and evil? What gives meaning to my life?

- f. How are we to construct the picture or image of the world that will yield a genuine answer to questions (a), (b), and (c)?
- g. From where do we begin to get these answers?

The answers to these questions are not answers an individual or a group can achieve in a day or even a year. Usually, a worldview builds up gradually from one's personal and private experiences and empirical conditions of living. The answers to these questions can come in bits and pieces until one achieves a picture of the universe and one's place and role in it.

The next question that is important is: Why must I seek the answers to these questions? Why must I strive to formulate a worldview? There are several reasons why you must construct for yourself a view of the world.

- 1) *The first reason is that a worldview gives you an insight into who you are as a person, what you value most in life, your needs, your purposes, your weaknesses and strength, and what you are and you are not capable of doing.* In this sense, we can say that you have not actually achieved any intellectual maturity until you have been able to formulate some kind of view about the world (or get some answers to the above questions, no matter how naïve or commonsensical).
- 2) *The second reason why a worldview is important is that human beings also need to understand the physical world they are interacting with.* Without an adequate and practical knowledge of our environment, it seems impossible that we will be able to act in any reasonable way. Essentially, worldview becomes a practical survival strategy for human beings in a world where they are weak and few compared with other animals i.e. the ants and termites (which are numerous), or the sharks and elephants (which are strong, tough and aggressive).
- 3) *The third reason why we need a worldview has to do with the psychological confidence, satisfaction, and happiness that a person derives from an understanding of his/her place in the universe, and where s/he thinks everything will end, someday.* Usually, religion or science serves this purpose in our lives. Worldviews give us the strength and courage to take on life troubles and surmount them.



Note

A final point before we conclude this section. A worldview is usually not a fixed framework of what the universe is and what we are. It reflects the dynamic nature of the world as a changing entity, the dynamic nature of man, and the dynamic nature of the cultures in which we find ourselves. Worldviews also reflect our partial and incomplete understanding of the universe. .



Reflection

From the foregoing, we can observe that worldviews need constant reflection and revision. The problem, however, is that we do not even have the time to reflect on some of the beliefs we hold as part of our worldview. We therefore go about life

with a lot of true and false beliefs about ourselves and the universe we live in. such an unstable worldview would not only hinder the way we act, it will eventually leave us confused about how we see ourselves and the world around us.

ITQ

Question

- Which of the following definitions does not define a worldview?
 - A) A general perception of the world.
 - B) A way of looking at the world from a point of view.
 - C) A framework with which an individual views, interprets, and interacts with the world.
 - D) A method with which philosophers confuse other disciplines.

Feedback

- If you look at the options critically, the first three options are a way of defining what a worldview is. It can be referred to as a general conception of the world (option A); it can also be referred to as a way of looking at the world from a perspective (option B); it can be a framework for conceptualizing the world (option C); but it is definitely not a method with which philosophers confuse other disciplines (option D). So, the answer is 'D'.

3.2 The Relationship between Philosophy as World View and Philosophy as Critical Thinking

Let us begin this section with the crucial point we made at the end of the last section. The point is this: since most of us do not have the time nor the discipline to reflect on the beliefs and ideas by which we make meaning out of the universe and order our actions and behaviours, we take our worldview for granted (that's if we even have one already). Further, we go through life with an excess of contradictory ideas and beliefs which are mostly wrong and false. This inability to reflect on our beliefs and ideas gives us the impression that these beliefs are fixed and unchanging.

As important as worldviews are, they only provide us with a partial knowledge of ourselves and the universe. This is so because the universe is so vast and enormous that we can never hope to attain more than a limited and often inadequate understanding. The best that we can do then is to ensure that the ideas and beliefs that enable us cope with the challenges of life are re-examined critically from time to time in the light of new knowledge and information about the world and our existence.

In the last section, we conceived of philosophy in a very broad manner as being interchangeable with the concept of worldview. In this section, in order to understand the function of philosophy as critical thinking, we need to make philosophy a little narrower than the way we conceive it in

the last section. In other words, philosophy as worldview helps us in addressing the questions of values and meaning, and in making sense of our world and our existence in the light of these questions. Philosophy as critical thinking, on its own, helps in sharpening this picture of the universe and of our existence by providing our own justification for the ideas we hold. Providing your own reason for holding a belief means you don't depend unthinkingly on any authority i.e. parents, mentors, religious leaders, elders, etc.

Imagine that you are putting on glasses that are blurred and hence cannot see clearly. Or imagine that you are driving a car in a very heavy downpour of rain. The effect on both instances is that you will not be able to see your surroundings very clearly. Your ability to see very well depends only on either cleaning the glasses or using the windshield wipers on your car. This is exactly the function of philosophy as critical thinking. In giving us clarity, philosophy as critical thinking helps in examining how all our ideas and beliefs hang together in one unified and coherent form. This is why H. S. Staniland defines philosophy as the "criticism of the ideas we live by" (1979: 3). The criticism of the ideas by which we make sense of our sense therefore requires that we rationally and critically reflect and examine these ideas in order to determine whether they are suitable for our use or not. It requires that you reveal the assumptions that lie behind some of your beliefs to see whether these assumptions can survive deep reflections on them.

ITQ

Question

- What can you say about H.S. Staniland's definition of philosophy as the '*criticism of the ideas we live by*'.

Feedback

- You will have come across H.S. Staniland's definition of philosophy in this section (3.2). What the definition infers is that philosophy is all about our worldview and a critical analysis of how we come about them as well as how sustainable they are. The ideas we live by are our worldview and what philosophy is concerned about is a criticism of these ideas so that they can be validated as viable.

3.3 Elements of Critical Thinking

In examining a worldview, critical thinking demands that you test the worldview for three elements: factual adequacy, logical coherence and explanatory capacity. Let us explain these elements in turn:

Factual Adequacy

- This requires that you ask whether your worldview agrees or disagrees with relevant known facts and experience about what the belief is all about. For instance, if you believe that the world will end one day, does that belief take into consideration the scientific facts about the origin and the end of the world. Does it agree or disagree with these facts?

Logical Coherence

- This requires that you examine whether the set of beliefs that makes up your worldview are in support or are contradictory. If they fundamentally complement one another, then you have a coherent and logical worldview. If they are contradictory, then either that one of the beliefs may be false, or most of them may be false. You therefore have an illogical and incoherent worldview. For instance, it is contradictory to believe (a) that beauty is in the eye of the beholder; and (b) some works of art are superior to others. Or, (a) that we are all responsible for our actions; and (b) the punishment of criminals is inhuman.

Explanatory Capacity

- This refers to the ability your worldview has to show how the entities of the universe are related or how they interact. It is this capacity of worldviews to explain that makes it possible for us to understand and interact smoothly with the physical world. It also enables us to shape and transform the universe to suit our aspirations and goals.

Philosophy as critical thinking involves two other dimensions that are important for you to understand in relation to the analysis of our worldviews. These are the dimensions of conceptual analysis and the reconstruction of ideas. Let us look at them in turn.

Our beliefs and ideas are sometimes confusing and contradictory because we do not take careful notice of the words and concepts that we use. If, for instance, I do not have a clear understanding of the meaning of freedom, I may hold the belief that “all people are free to do what they want.” **Conceptual analysis** involves your ability to give a precise and definite meaning to the words you use in speaking about your beliefs. It also involves your ability to establish a logical relationship between a particular word and other words. What, for example, is the relationship between the concept of freedom and that of punishment? When you get the idea of conceptual analysis right, then you are in a position to avoid saying one thing and meaning another!

The other dimension of critical thinking is the **reconstruction of ideas**. After critically and conceptually scrutinising the ideas and beliefs that make up our worldview, it is important that we also attempt to generate better visions and pictures that will serve as further guide to life. Critical thinking and conceptual analysis may require that we sometimes abandon or reject some of our ideas and beliefs. Reconstruction of ideas requires

that we rebuild the structure of our worldview by adopting some of other beliefs and ideas that would fit the structure of our worldviews better than the ones we have abandoned. For example, imagine you are a Christian who holds the belief that human life is futile and vain. This belief may lead you to reject the Nigerian habit of spending extravagant amount on burying the dead. In the place of that rejected idea, you may adopt the Islamic perspective which requires that a corpse must be buried on the day of death and without any excessive display.



Assignment

1. Review at least five scholarly definitions of worldview online.
- 2a. What is your worldview?
- 2b. Subject your worldview to critical analysis and see if it is not inconsistent with other beliefs you hold.

See course calendar for schedule date of course contribution.

Study Session Summary



Summary

In this Study Session, we had taken a step further in our attempt to understand what philosophy is. We said that one of the major preoccupations of philosophers over the ages is the formulation of worldviews of guide to life. We defined a worldview as a comprehensive set of ideas that explains the nature of the universe, your own fundamental nature and the kind of goals that are achievable in your relationship with the universe. We also examined how philosophy can further help us in strengthening the vision of the universe and our role and place in that universe. We said that philosophy can do this through the task of critical thinking as well as conceptual analysis and the reconstruction of ideas. We said that this task of philosophy, involves examining our ideas and beliefs rationally and critically without unduly depending on any authority. Finally, we added that to achieve this critical thinking, it is necessary that we look at the factual adequacy of the belief, its logical coherence and its explanatory capacity.

Assessment



Assessment

SAQ 3.1 (tests Learning Outcomes 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3)

- I. What is the meeting point between philosophy and worldview?
- II. How is philosophy as worldview connected to philosophy as critical thinking?

Study Session4

Branches of Philosophy

Introduction

In this Study Session, we will explore the branches of philosophy. These branches are: metaphysics, epistemology, ethics and logic.



Learning Outcomes

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

- 4.1 *discuss* the nature of philosophical questions.
- 4.2 *describethe* branches of philosophy.

4.1 Questions to Branches of Philosophy

The questions that philosophy asks are so many and varied that there is the need to divide these questions into different categories. We should note that those fundamental questions that are important in the formulation of worldviews are also the questions that each of the branch of philosophy deals with. Dividing them into categories only serves the significant purpose of enabling us to separate the questions so that we can better approach the task of constructing the worldview from an intelligible and less confusing perspective. Consider the list of the fundamental problems we generated in Study Session three. Perplexing? However, they may appear in a better light once we are able to put them in certain clusters according to the similarity of their concerns. What we call the branches of philosophy is just the unfolding of the critical questions that go into the making of our worldviews.

There are three fundamental questions; out of all the many we highlighted earlier on, that form the core of any worldview: What is ultimately real? How do we know this reality and justify it? If we know this reality, how then should we live our lives meaningfully and with value? These three questions equally form the core branches of philosophy: Metaphysics, Epistemology and Ethics. Logic is also a legitimate branch of philosophy. However, its concern is also part of the epistemological subject matter. In other words, logic is about testing our reasons and reasoning process to ensure they are justified especially in our attempt to know what is real.

Question

- In Study Session 3, we examined the components of worldview. Can you outline the three fundamental questions that form the core of any worldview?

Feedback

- The three fundamental questions are :
 - 1) What is real?
 - 2) How do we know this reality and how is it justified?
 - 3) Having known this reality, how do we live a meaningful life?

4.2 Branches of Philosophy

We will now look at each of the branches of philosophy, and their core questions.

4.2.1 Metaphysics

Let us begin with some general definitions of what metaphysics is:

- The philosophy of being and existence;
- The knowledge that goes beyond the possibility of experience and beyond nature, which renders nature possible;
- “metaphysics sets itself more systematically and unusually than any other science, to ask what after all is meant by being real”;
- The aim of metaphysics is to account for all there is;
- Metaphysics examines the real nature of things as opposed to their apparent constitution;
- Metaphysics studies the basic constituents of the world by investigation into the nature of reality;
- Metaphysics is the exploration of the most general features of the world.

All these definitions simply tell us that metaphysics is simply the theory of reality, or what is real. This makes it the most comprehensive of all enquiries that human beings are involved in. This is because the most basic or fundamental question anyone can ask about anything is: What is? This question is an inquiry into the most ultimate principles that lie beneath all that exists, observable or not.

What is it then that motivates us to ask about the reality of things? What motivates philosophers to inquire into the nature of what is real? Consider a minor example. Imagine that you are woken from a deep sleep by a persistent noise. The first unconscious thing you do is to try and place what the noise is and where it is coming from. If you are able to do this, you are all right. If you are not able to fit the noise into anything you have known, then you become somewhat troubled. Your confusion does not come because you are hearing a persistent noise around 3 am; you are confused mainly because the noise does not seem to have a place in the classificatory scheme of all the noises you know. You are not even certain it is a “noise.” Metaphysical problems arise when we are not able

to perceive immediately how the things around hang together. We become more confused when what we normally take to be true reveal some inconsistency and contradiction on a closer look.

Let us look at a more serious example. Commonsense tells us that we have minds and bodies. We believe the mind is not physical but the body is. Commonsense further tells us that both the mind and the body relate with each other. For instance, where you are sitting reading this book, you can decide (decision is a mental function) that you want to stand up, and then you really stand up. You can decide to close your eyes, and then your eyes close. When you come into contact with a sharp object, your body passes a message to your mind that the object is causing pain, and you quickly remove your hands.

We take these commonsensical facts for granted until we begin to ask questions: Since the mind is not physical, where is it located? What kind of entity is a mind if it hidden to all our sensory organs? Again, if it is not physical, how is it possible for it to affect the body which is physical? How is it also possible for the body which is physical to affect the mind? (To really understand these questions, consider the possibility of the air lifting a heavy stone). After considering these questions, we discover that we are no longer comfortable with what commonsense tells us about what is real. On your own, try ruminating on this metaphysical problem: *If a tree falls in the forest, will that tree make any noise if there is nobody there to hear it?*

The beginning of Greek philosophy was marked by the attempt of the early Greek philosophers to answer the question: What is really there? This question can be interpreted to mean: What is that ultimate stuff or material from which everything existing is made? This question was the result of their observation of so many things around them, and their attempt to read some kind of pattern or design into what they have observed. Some of them concluded that everything that is real is made up of water; some other argued it is air; some other still argued it is a combination of earth, water, fire and air.

With this understanding, we can now re-categorise some of our earlier questions that are metaphysical: What is the universe? Is it made up primarily of matter? Or, does it also contain non-material things like spirits? How can I know and explain what the universe contains? What is ultimately real? Are there other kinds of reality apart from the physical world? What is time? What is space? What is mind? What is matter? What is the relationship between the two? Why are we in this world at all? Were we created by God or we are just part of purely natural processes without any divine element? Is there a God? If so, what sort of being is God? What is the nature of God? What kind of creature am I? Do we have a soul that will survive the death of our bodies? Or, do we cease to exist totally once our bodies die? Is there a life after death? Are we free to determine our actions, or are these actions determined by other forces beyond our control?

4.2.2 Epistemology

There is an agreement on the basic definition of epistemology:

- Epistemology is concerned with the nature, origin, scope, possibility, and limit of human knowledge.

The word epistemology comes from two Greek words: *episteme* (meaning “knowledge”) and *logos* (meaning “theory”). Conveniently, then, epistemology is often called the *theory of knowledge*. This branch of philosophy is a necessary one that follows behind metaphysics. This is because if we eventually agree on what we count to be real and unreal, the next obvious question we must ask is: How do we get to know what is real (as different from what is not real). In other words, by saying some things are not real, we are implying that there are some things which are real. How do we go about making that distinction? That is the function of philosophers we call epistemologists. The three chief questions that concern epistemology are: What is knowledge (or what does it mean to say “I know”)? How do we get knowledge? Can what we call “knowledge” be so sure that we cannot doubt it?

When you talk in ordinary conversation, you make distinction between *what you believe* and *what you know*. You also believe that one is stronger than the other. When you say “I believe that so and so”, what you intend to tell us is that there is the possibility that what you believe at that point may turn out to be false. However, when you say, “I know that so and so,” what you mean is that what you claim you know is true and cannot be faulted. This distinction between what you know and what you believe is based on the assumption that there are so many things we can claim to know in the world. You can name some of them: you think you *know* that there is presently a book in front of you; that you are a man/woman; that you are alive; that $2 + 2 = 4$; that the sun rises in the east and sets in the west; that Abuja is the capital of Nigeria; that Obama is the current president of the United States; that the earth moves round the sun; that PHCN is epileptic; and so on. The question is: Can you really be certain that you know all that you claim to know?

So many people have claimed similar knowledge in the past which turned out to be wrong or false. Like so many people, you also take some of these claims for granted without any attempt at reflecting on them to see whether or not they can withstand some deep scrutiny. Take an example. One of your basic knowledge claims is that you are alive and conscious now. This implies that you are not sleeping or dreaming. If you are asked how you know that you are not sleeping. You may be surprised at that question and may be replied: “Of course, I’m not! My eyes are wide open, I can see you before me, I am also conscious of everything around me. Therefore, I can’t be sleeping or even dreaming.” It would definitely appear that you have given a very good answer. Let’s see whether your answer can withstand critical examination.

Almost everyone dreams. I want you to remember your most vivid dream. This dream would have to be so real that when you woke up, you were so disoriented and confused it took you a while to understand where you were. It could either be that you were so sad the dream is gone or you were very happy it ended. Now, what caused your confusion about the dream? You were certainly confused because the dream was so real to you while it lasts. You actually thought it was happening! The question then is: If your dreams have been so real as to be similar to reality, how

do you know you are not presently in a very elaborate dream from which you will wake up very soon? You cannot appeal to your sense for two reasons. One, your senses were also available to you when you dream. You see, feel, smell, taste and hear things around. Two, your sense have deceived you in the past. How do you know they are not deceiving you now?

This example brings out clearly the significance of epistemology in our overall worldview. It is concerned with our claims to knowledge and the methods we employ in arriving at what we claim to know. Epistemology serves as the standard of evaluating our knowledge claims so we would be better able to differentiate between true claims and false claims. Most of the claims we make are about the physical world around as well as claims about the people we are in relationship with: friends, spouses, enemies, government officials, neighbours, children, and so on. Imagine that you have put in about twenty years into a marriage and it turned out you were completely wrong about your wife/husband. Imagine that you so trust your friend with your life's secret and it turns out s/he was actually an enemy acting like a friend. Imagine that without any adequate criteria to differentiate between truth and error, you assumed that a building is strong...and the same building almost collapsed on you! Further imagine that your neighbour whom you thought to be a good friend turned out to be a robot in spite of all your uncritical assumptions that s/he is actually human!

This tells us that the degree to which your epistemology is correct is the degree to which you will understand reality and the world around you. It is also the degree to which you can use that knowledge to promote your life and goals. How many people however have some form of theory of knowledge? Do you have a theory of how to move from belief to knowledge? If you are asked what it means to know what you claim to know, what would be your answer?

Let us see whether you can be led to some kind of answer. If I ask you how you know that there is a book presently in front of you, your answer would be that you can see and touch the book. This answer tells us that our senses are very important in getting information about the world around us. Yet, these senses are not usually correct. You sometime mistook the smell of Jollof rice for that of suya. You have also confused a stranger for someone you thought you knew. Your eyes tell you the sun is a small disc in the sky, yet we know the sun is much bigger than the earth. If you take the world at face value, we would end up making so many serious and irreversible mistakes that would make life itself unbearable. At best, what the sense could give us should be called opinion or belief rather than knowledge. So, if I ask you what is in front of you, rather than saying "I know it is a book," you should rather say "I believe it is a book." How then do you move from this belief to knowledge?

It has been suggested that knowledge is a combination of three elements: truth, belief and justification (or reasons for the belief). When you say, "I know that there is a book in front of me now," for us to know that it is a piece of knowledge, (a) it must actually be true that there is a book in front of you (if it is something else, then you can't claim it is a book); (b)

you must actually believe that there is a book in front of you (it is not correct to say “I know there is a book in front of me, but I don’t believe it”); and (c) apart from the book being there in front of you, and your belief that it is there, you must also have a reason for believing that the book is there. If I ask you, how do you know that the book is in front of you, you can’t reply “I just know.” There must be some reasons which assure you that the book is really in front of you.

We can now go on to see which of our earlier questions are epistemological in nature: How can I know the reality outside of me? How do I know anything at all? What is knowledge (or what does it mean to know anything at all)? What is truth? Do the senses tell us anything about the world? Is sense experience (through my five sense organs) the only source of knowledge and truth? Or, are there other ways of knowing? If God exist, can we prove he/she/it exists? Are there ways of arriving at truth apart from the senses and human reason? How do we recognise what is good and what is bad?

4.2.3 Ethics

Again, let us start with some basic definitions of what ethics is:

- The study of moral standards and how they affect human conduct;
- The branch of philosophy which helps in clarifying moral terms and concepts;
- The branch of philosophy which teaches us how to live the good and happy life in the society;
- The aspect of philosophy which investigates human conducts in so far as such conducts can be said to be right or wrong;
- The systematic study of the fundamental principles of morality;
- It gives general guidance concerning what to do, what to seek, and how to treat others.

Ethics, also known as moral philosophy, is perhaps the most accessible and human of all the branches of philosophy. This is simply because it is concerned with the rightness and the wrongness of our actions and behaviours. It is very significant in human life because we are living in the human society where our behaviours and actions are so different from the next person that without any guide/standard, conflicts and anarchy become inescapable. We can therefore escape or reduce these conflicts by setting down certain moral rules by which our relationships are managed and organised. On the other hand, your own action as a person would be random, directionless and without value if there are no yardstick to measure your actions. You would not even have any idea of which goal or ambition to pursue and how to pursue it.

Ethics deals with human value, but not the entirety of all the values that exists. There are political values as well as values relating to art and other beautiful things. Ethics is only concerned with human moral value; that which is worthwhile for us as human to pursue by way of our actions and behaviours. It examines the value we place on action and the reason for our actions. Your *action* stands for the process of doing something in order to achieve a goal. You will agree also that the way we behave and act has some connection with the kind of person we are or our character.

In this sense, ethics is also concerned with the analysis of our character and how that influences our action. The word “ethics” comes from the Greek word *ethos* which means “character” or “manners.”

There are three fundamental dimensions from which we can understand the work of ethicists. The most important is the attempt to determine the rightness and wrongness of human actions. This dimension of ethics is called *normative ethics*. Ethics in this sense is an attempt to come up with a rational and defensible theory about what makes any action right or wrong. If I steal yam from another person’s farm in order to save my family from impending starvation, is my action right or wrong? To answer this ethical question, an ethicist wouldn’t just say, “yes, it is right,” or “of course, it is a wrong action!” Rather, s/he would come up with general principles upon which to base all wrong actions and all right actions which would serve as guides for anything we want to do.

There are several principles which such an ethicist could consider. First, s/he could say for instance, that the rightness and wrongness of any action should be judged in terms of the consequences of that action. Thus, if my stealing the yam saves the lives of my children and wife, it must be a right action. If I didn’t steal the yam and my family perished, then my action must be a wrong one. Another principle the ethicist might choose is that the rightness or wrongness of any action is determined by the nature of the action itself, and not its consequences. Thus, my stealing the yam to save my family from starvation and eventually death would be a wrong action because stealing is wrong in itself, whatever consequence comes out of it. An example of the first principle is to say that an action is right if it promotes my best interest alone sometimes to the detriment of others. If an action neglects you, then it must be a wrong action. This is called ethical egoism. You would rather call it self-centeredness. These principles or standards then act as guide for you whenever you are faced with a particular decision to make.

We have examined the dimensions of issues we can find under ethics. First, we saw that ethics has to do with the formulation of those principles upon which we can decide the rightness or wrongness of an action. This could either be the consequence of an action or the nature of that action itself. Before we look at the second issue, let us briefly consider a further point. Ethicists are also interested in the question of whether or not the moral principles we have been talking about apply to everybody equally or whether it is the situation that determines the rightness or wrongness of an action. Can we say, for example, that abortion is right because in a particular case, it prevented the death of the mother? Or, is abortion wrong in all cases without exception? Is marrying one’s sister right in one is culture and wrong in another? Or, is it wrong everywhere?

The second dimension of the issues that ethicists deal with has to do with the analysis of the concepts and terms that we use in making ethical judgments. Moral judgment refers to the activity of judging whether or not an action, a person, something or an institution has a moral attribute. The problem, however, is that many of us make this kind of judgment without a proper understanding of what we are saying. For example, if you say, “Don is a good person” or “The government is doing the right thing,” what are you really saying? What do you mean by “good” and

“right” as well as “wrong” and “bad”? The dimension of ethics that considers the issue of where our moral terms and principles come from, and what they mean, is called *meta-ethics*. There are three questions that come under meta-ethics.

The first question is: Are moral standards and principles dependent on the agreement of human beings or are they existing on their own? The first possible answer to this question is that moral values and standards are objective and can be found either in God’s command or in nature. We therefore know that stealing is wrong or that keeping promise is right because God has implanted that command in all human beings irrespective of colour or culture. The second answer to the question is that moral standards are not God’s commands, but are just what societies have approved to be either right or wrong. If I say “kissing your wife in public is wrong”, I say that because my society frowns at it. If an American says ‘kissing your wife in public is right,’ then that American society approves kissing in public.

The second question in meta-ethics is: What motivates human beings to be moral? Or, why should I be moral? Why should I behave right and good? Let us look at the three possible answers that have been suggested for these questions. The first answer is that we are motivated to be moral because we have been endowed with an inner sense of right and wrong; which tells us naturally and automatically the right way to achieve happiness in life. The second answer is that we are motivated to be moral because we are selfish beings always looking for what is in our own interests. If I lead an old woman across the road, I actually have a selfish reason behind what I did. The third answer is that it is either our emotions or our reason that motivates us to do good or right things. If you decide to walk about naked on the streets, then you must have a reason for doing it.

The third question in meta-ethics is: What is the meaning of “good,” “right,” “wrong,” “immoral,” “moral,” “bad,” “ought,” and so on? This aspect of meta-ethics is purely linguistic. To answer this question, some would say that when we use these concepts, we are only expressing our emotion and desires about something. If you say, for instance, “You ought to give money to the motherless babies’ homes,” what you are really saying is “I like giving money to motherless babies’ homes, you should also do so.” In other words, you are only trying to make me like what you like. Others argue that when you use these terms, you are not referring to your emotions at all, but to certain natural qualities like pleasure.

The last dimension of the issues that ethics is concerned with is the resolution of specific moral dilemmas and controversies that human beings face daily in life. A moral dilemma is a certain situation which requires making a choice between two opposing courses of action. Each of these courses of action has good reasons in support of it. For example, you borrowed a cutlass from a friend yesterday with a promise to return it whenever he would request for it. Today, the friend comes to you very furious, and asks for the cutlass. You know he has the intention of killing someone with it. You are then faced with a moral dilemma: if you give him the cutlass, you are assisting him to kill; if you do not give him, you are breaking a promise. You have good reasons for giving him the

cutlass, and you also have good reasons for not giving him at all. Which is the best course of action to take? Applied ethics is that dimension that enables you to make a right decision in this situation. It combines the strategy you have gained in normative ethics and meta-ethics to analyse such issues like abortion, euthanasia, infanticide, suicide, cloning, genetic engineering, organ transplant, artificial insemination, sex change, surrogate motherhood, capital punishment, embryo research, stem cell research, death, racial discrimination, war, the environment, animal rights, and so on.

Finally, let us now look at those questions that are ethical in nature: Do we have any obligation to help other people? Or, are we obliged to follow the dictates of our own interests? Am I justified in obeying the state? If yes, when am I justified in disobeying? What makes a law a good law? How do we determine what is good and what is bad? What is good? What is evil? Is there an objective standard of good and bad? Or, are we the determinant of whether our actions are good or bad? Does our morality depend on religion? How should we live? What makes a life a good life? What are the virtues of a human being? Shall we aim at happiness or at knowledge, virtue, or the creation of beautiful objects? If we choose happiness, will it be our own or the happiness of all? Is it right to be dishonest in a good cause? Can we justify living in opulence while people are starving elsewhere in the world? If conscripted to fight in a war we do not support, should we disobey the law? What are our obligations to the other creatures with whom we share this planet and to the generations of humans who will come after us?

4.2.4 Logic

What is logic? Let us consider some few definitions:

- It is the study of propositions and their use in argumentation;
- It is concerned with reasoning, and especially the distinction between good reasoning and bad reasoning;
- It is the general theory of the proposition;
- It is the theory of reasoning;
- It is the science dealing with the principles of valid reasoning and argument;
- It is the study of the rules of right reasoning;
- It is the study of the laws of thought.

There are two courses in this course dealing with logic. Thus, we will not go into any serious detail in this Study Session. Let us start with the point that logic did not originally begin as a legitimate branch of philosophy. It started only as a tool (*organon*) that assists the philosophers in fashioning an orderly and clear understanding of the problems and questions they are dealing with. Aristotle rejected logic as one of the theoretical sciences like mathematics, physics and metaphysics. Its only relevance is that it is a tool which these sciences use in facilitating their research. It was only later that logic started acquiring the status of a discipline, a branch of philosophy, with its own subject matter. However, like we said earlier, this subject matter cannot be entirely divorced from that of epistemology. If epistemology is concerned with our knowledge of reality, the concern

of logic is how we successfully justify between good reasons and bad reasons.

Logic is fundamentally about arguments. An argument is made up of propositions or declarative statements, which can be true or false. If you say, for instance, “Obama is the first black president in the US,” you have uttered a statement that can be true or false. Logic essentially is an attempt to understand certain kind of relation that holds between propositions. One set of proposition in an argument is called the *conclusion*. The conclusion stands for a particular claim you make with a statement. When you say, “Fashola is the best governor in Nigeria,” you are making a particular claim with your sentence. When we all speak, we make all manner of claims and assertions that insist that something is either true or false. In logic, these claims are called conclusions. The other set of proposition in an argument is called the *premise* (or premiss). The premise serves as the reason you have for supporting the claim you have made. Take the “Fashola” example again. If you claim that Fashola is the best governor in Nigeria, then your premise or premises would be the reasons you have to support that claim. Your reasons could be: (a) he is not a politician like the rest of the office holders; (b) his achievements are loud and clear; (c) he is humble and unassuming; and so on.

Logic is therefore concerned with the examination of the logical relation between the set of propositions we call the conclusions and the set of propositions we call the premises. If the premises support the conclusion 100%, then we say that your argument is a *deductive argument*. If your premises only support your conclusion to some degree less than 100%, then we say that your argument is an *inductive argument*. Logic is also concerned with certain errors in reasoning, which are called fallacies. A *fallacy* is a bad argument or an argument that does not follow the correct reasoning method.

Let us make a last point about the concerns of philosophy as a whole. Metaphysics, epistemology, ethics and logic are considered to be the primary or traditional branches of philosophy. However, philosophy is also made up of a whole set of other concerns that we can call the “Philosophy of ...” For instance, the philosopher is concerned with the work of the historian and especially the historian’s claim about the past. The philosopher is also concerned with politics, especially (a) the claim that politics can be regarded as a science; and (b) the concern of how we can order our human society in order to live a good life. The other areas of human endeavours that the philosopher is concerned with are: Law, education, science, religion, psychology, economics, business, computer, language, literature, culture, environment, art, and so on.

All these disciplines and vocations are called *first order* disciplines. To be first order implies that they have a particular and specific range of subject matter they are dealing with. Philosophy is also in this sense a first order discipline. However, philosophy transcends being a first order discipline in the sense that it can also be called a *second order* discipline. In this sense, philosophy extends the method of critical analysis to the examination of the first order subject matter of these other disciplines.

ITQ

Question

- How do you explain philosophy as a second order discipline?

Feedback

- We expect that you have an understanding of what a first order discipline is before you can even talk of a second order discipline. By first order discipline, we are connoting that philosophy and its core branches have certain subject matter which they deal with. By second order, we are talking about the application of philosophical tools to the analysis of other first order disciplines. For example, we have what we call philosophy of science, philosophy of law, etc. All these are situations of applying philosophy to the subject matter of other disciplines.



Activity

Time required:
20 minutes

Question

What are the concerns of branches of philosophy?

Discussion

From what we told you in this study session, there are four main branches and these include metaphysics, epistemology, logic, and ethics.

You will discover that we mentioned that metaphysics is the queen of all science. This is because of what its focus is on reality. Whatever the definition you may give, it must reflect metaphysics as the theory of reality regards of the fact that there is no consensus as regards the definition of metaphysics. We expect you to raise some of the philosophical questions that pertain to this branch of philosophy.

Epistemology is another branch of philosophy and it is regarded as the theory of knowledge. It investigates the process of cognition among humans. By this, we mean that epistemology is concerned with all the problems of acquisition and justification of knowledge. Traditionally in philosophy, three qualities are expected to be present for any claim to graduate as knowledge and these are truth, belief, and justification (the adequacy of these three will be studied in PHI 201). We expect you to raise some of the philosophical questions you have learnt in this course that are epistemological in nature.

Logic, from our discussion in this study session so far, is concerned with the principles of valid inferences. By this, we mean the logical connection between the premises and the conclusion in an argument. What this tells you is that logic is involved in arguments. Importantly, we expect that you will take into consideration in your definition that logic did not start out as a branch of philosophy but that it was used as a tool by philosophers in the project of analysis.

The fourth branch of philosophy is ethics. You may define this branch of philosophy as that which deals with the morality of our actions as

humans. It is concerned with the value that we place on human actions as well as the reason for our actions. One of the branches of ethics is meta-ethics which is concerned with the general questions about the nature of morality as well as the meaning of the moral concepts that we use.

We also expect you to note in your answer that aside these traditional branches of philosophy, philosophy is concerned in a whole lot of other human endeavours including arts, literature, photography, law, politics, business, etc.

Study Session Summary



Summary

In this Study Session, we discussed some of the basic questions that help us in formulating our worldviews. The classification of these questions is what we call the branches of philosophy. We examined the four branches of philosophy: Metaphysics (the theory of reality), Epistemology (the theory of knowledge), Ethics (the theory of morality), and Logic (the theory of reasoning). We also made the final point that apart from this traditional subject matter of philosophy, there are so many areas of human endeavours that philosophy is interested in. These areas include: politics, science, art, religion, computer, psychology, economics, law, language, literature, culture, education, history, environment, business, and so on.

Assessment



Assessment

SAQ 4.1 (tests Learning Outcome 4.1)

What is the nature of philosophical questions?

SAQ 4.2 (tests Learning Outcome 4.2)

Fill in the blank spaces with appropriate terms in the abridged “Orientation Talk on Philosophy Programme” below:

You will discover that we mentioned that A is the queen of all science. This is because its focus is on reality. B is another branch of philosophy and it is regarded as the theory of knowledge. It investigates the process of cognition among humans. By this, this branch of philosophy is concerned with all the problems of acquisition and justification of knowledge.

C is concerned with the principles of valid inferences. By this, we mean the logical connection between the premises and the conclusion in an argument.

The fourth branch of philosophy is D. You may define this branch of philosophy as that which deals with the morality of our actions as humans. It is concerned with the value that we place on human actions as well as the reason for our actions.

Study Session 5

Appearance and Reality

Introduction

In the previous Study Session, we explored the branches of philosophy. In this Study Session, we will examine appearance and reality as most fundamental philosophical problems.



Learning Outcomes

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

- 5.1 *distinguish* between what is real and what only appears to be real.
- 5.2 *state* the difference between appearance and reality.

5.1 Distinction between “What is Real” and “What Only Appears to be Real”

At one time or the other, you must have made a distinction between what is real and what is not real (or what is fake). You’ve said, for example, “Appearance can be deceptive!” And you don’t stop just at this distinction alone; you’ve also based some of your important decisions on that difference between what is real and what is not real. For instance, some of us married those who eventually married because we thought we were able to identify the difference between who that man or woman is and who s/he is not.

When you look at a person or a thing and you comment to your friend, “appearance can be deceptive, watch out!” you meant to say that behind what your friend is seeing, there is something deeper which points at who that person is or what that thing is. When you describe something or somebody as fake, you meant to let us know that there can be someone or something that is real. The problem, however, is that are we always able to make that distinction? Are we always able to differentiate between what is real and what only appears to be real but is not?

We live our lives with a lot of assumption about things and people we think we truly believe to be real. Of course, you believe your wife/husband to be the real man or woman (and that you did not marry another person); you believe that the table in front of you is very real; you believe that the food you just finished eating was real; you believe that the sun is really in the sky; you believe that if you look out the window, you see so many buildings around you; you believe that you presently

have on some clothes (and so, you are not naked); you believe that fire is really hot and can be quite painful if touched; and so on.

If I ask how you come to be sure about all these things, you may simply give me a puzzling look and may be say, “of course, I know them. Commonsense says these things are *really* there.” One of your reasons for knowing them may be that these things and people have been part of your immediate experience for a long time. When I say “immediate experience,” I am using a philosophical term. By this term, I mean the experience that our senses give to us without anything standing in between. If I put on a sunshade, for example, I can’t say that I have an *immediate* experience of the book in front of me because the sunshade stands in between my eyes and the book. But if I remove the sunshade, I begin to see the book in front of me immediately. So, most of the examples we highlighted in the preceding paragraph are things we come to know immediately, especially by sight. Your husband or wife is always present to your senses; you see the sun everyday; your hands enabled you to put on your clothes; your sight, smell and taste “told” you about the food you just ate; your eyes give you the testimony about the other buildings surrounding where you are now; your sense of touch tells you fire is hot and painful; and so on.

Yet, with all these, your sense of certainty begins to waver when you remember that there are so many times that these very senses we put so much trust in have in fact deceived us into believing something is so when it is really not so. Let me share a “philosophical story” that will illustrate the nature of this problem.



Case Study

Illustration

A man took a journey to his farm very early in the morning, as early as 3 am in order to be able to get much work done before the sun rises. When he was very close to the farm, he noticed something white moving ahead of him just before he crossed the small stream that flows through his farm. He was so afraid because, he reasoned, what else could be that white and moving in the bush ahead if not an evil spirit or goblin. He stood rooted to the spot, waiting for the goblin to walk away after accomplishing its business. He became very uneasy when the goblin refused to leave. Apparently, he could not also go on his way. He was like that until around 5 am when other farmers started appearing. They also “saw” the spirit and became rooted to the spot with the same resolve to wait out the spirit. They believe that eventually, the spirit would move since it would not want to see the daylight. Eventually, it dawned enough for them to see the spirit. To their utter amazement, they discovered the “spirit” was only a piece of white cloth caught among the shrubs and moving gently with the breeze!

Analysis

When the man first saw the cloth around 3 am, he was convinced, on the evidence of his sight, that it was a spirit. He even persuaded others into thinking they saw the same thing, thereby taking their sight for granted. The problem therefore is this: *Is it always reliable to believe what our senses tell us?* You can turn your mind to some of those instances when your senses—sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste—have also deceived you into believing something was so when it really was not so. Did you come up with two or three such instances? Well, you may argue, what’s the big deal? We make these mistakes all the time. Why must I put my mind to something so abstract and useless? Why should I be concerned with the difference between

appearance and reality?

5.2 Difference between Appearance and Reality

There is one fundamental reason why the distinction between appearance and reality is very important. This reason is that there is a need to be very cautious and careful in the assertions we make about our experience. This is because our experience does not always provide us with the knowledge about the real nature of things.



Case Study

Illustration

Mr. Tim has been your colleague for close to twenty years. He came to you one day with a form of attestation for a loan of N50, 000 from the cooperative. You gladly signed the form for him with the assumption that you knew who Mr. Tim really is (in essence, that's what the form is asking you to attest). One day, about eight months later, the cooperative officials knocked on your door and demanded you pay on Mr. Tim's behalf because he had absconded with the money.

Reflection

Would you say you really knew who Mr. Tim was, when you were attesting his form? If you insist that it is normal to make such mistakes, then you would be ready to bear the often costly consequences of such mistakes.

We have looked at the problem and the significance of the appearance and reality distinction in our day-to-day existence. The next thing to do is to better understand the definition of reality and appearance. Simply put, reality refers to what it means for anything to be or to exist. It is the totality of all things that are real in the universe. A thing is real if its existence does not depend on our perception or thinking of it. In other words, if we say that the table in front of you is real, what we are saying is that the table will always be there independent of whether or not you are seeing and touching it. The ultimate test of what is real therefore is that it is available for verification by others. If the existence of things changes according to our perception of them, then we cannot really say those things are real. A good example is colour. The nature of colour is dependent on a number of factors like light and darkness, angle, distance, and so on. Colour, in this sense, could therefore be characterised as an appearance because its reality is dependent on our thinking and perception.

ITQ

Question

- Why do we need to understand the difference between appearance and reality?

Feedback

- From what you have studied so far, you will understand that the main reason why we need to understand that not all what appears to be real is real indeed is to help us be cautious in accepting all that is presented to us. We become more careful and cautious.

The definition of reality and appearance raises several serious problems that will be obvious very soon. Let us take a very simple example. The table you are reading on now. That table will obviously satisfy the criterion for reality: (a) your immediate experience of seeing and touching it tells you the table is really there; (b) it is also certain that it will continue to be there even if you are in the room or reading on it; and finally, (c) it can equally and easily be verified by any other normal person as a table. Yet, with all these criteria, can we say we have really captured what it means for anything to be real?

Looking at it, you can say that it is brown, rectangular, and dull when you look at it. But when you touch it, it is smooth and hard. When you tap it, it gives a certain sound. If any other normal person enters your room now, s/he would also acknowledge that the table has those features you have identified. It seems also certain that the table must be real and you are certain it is real. If you look closely now, problems begin to surface about your assurance that the table is really what you considered it to be. Consider the colour very well. On closer look, you discover that some part of the table, especially those that are closer to the light, appear brighter and whiter than the rest. The distribution of the colour pattern on the table also changes the more I move to different part of the room. This tells us that if there are about three people in the same room examining the table from different angle, they will see different colour pattern on the same table. If you put a colour-blind person into the room, s/he will see a completely different colour on the table. The significance of this becomes clear if a painter were to paint the same table from three different angles. You will definitely see three different tables. What then is really the colour of the table? Can we even say it has a particular colour at all?

Consider the table's texture. To your naked eyes, it certainly appears smooth and clean. However, if you place the surface of the table under a microscope, you are confronted with the roughness of the surface which your eyes can't normally see. What then is the real texture of the table, the one your eyes can see, or the one visible behind the microscope? The same problem confronts you when you look at the shape of the table. According to commonsense, the "real" shape of the table is certainly rectangular. But that shape is given to you from a particular point of looking at the table. If the real shape is rectangular, then it should look rectangular from any angle in the room. Again, the significance of this becomes clearer if you were an artist sketching the table from various angles. Thus, the sense only succeeds again in giving us what is only an appearance about the table and not what the real table is.

Can you give an illustration to show the thin line between what is real and that which only appears to be real?

Discussion

Yes you can! An example is this:

When you are travelling on a tarred road, you will discover that if you look ahead of you, it seems as if the road ahead is wet with water but you will discover that when you get there, the road is dry. Your senses have only deceived you.



The problem now is: What is then the real table if all we have considered are appearances? Our usual commonsense approach is that we move from these appearances about the shape, colour, sound and texture to infer that there is a real table in front of us. Are we even justified to conclude that there is a real table different from what our senses tell us? Is it even possible to know things as they really are apart from the testimonies of our senses? By this experiment, we have disturbed our definition of what constituted reality and what constituted appearance. If we are not able to know, for instance, the real nature of the table, then we are left with only appearances. Yet our commonsense tells us that the table we are seeing right in front of us now is the real table. An added problem is that it is not all appearances (like that of the table) that we should trust. Some appearances are false. For instance, the appearance of water on the road when you are travelling in the sun is false. Even if you eventually shrug your shoulder and think that what we have done is not really important, you have gained one crucial insight: Never take your senses for granted!

Study Session Summary



Summary

In this Study Session, we confronted one of the most important problems of philosophy. This is the attempt to differentiate between appearance and reality; between what is real and what is not real. We said that this distinction is very important for us because in spite of appealing to this distinction in our day to day conversation, we rarely reflect on its deeper meaning and significance. Its significance lies in the fact that we usually make this distinction between what is real and what only appears to be real based on the testimony of our five senses. Finally, we discussed the differences between the reality and appearance.

Assessment



Assessment

SAQ 5.1 (tests Learning Outcomes 5.1 and 5.2)

Since there is a difference between what is real and what appears to be real, what then do you consider as the relationship between appearance and reality?

Study Session 6

Scepticism and Knowledge

Introduction

In this Study Session, we will discuss scepticism and knowledge as philosophical problems. We will also attempt to answer the question of what it means to know anything, and whether our knowledge can be doubted.



Learning Outcomes

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

6.1 explain the problems of scepticism and knowledge.

6.1 Problems of Knowledge and Scepticism

The problem of scepticism and knowledge arises from the attempt to answer one fundamental question: Do we have any knowledge in this world that is so certain that nobody can doubt it? (Russell, 1978: 3) I know you can readily think of so many things you can claim to know with assurance. You also have numerous beliefs which guide what you should do and what you ought not to do. Further, you believe that out of all these beliefs, you know how to separate between those beliefs which you consider to be true and those you consider to be false. The question however is: Do we know with certainty that those beliefs we consider to be true or false are actually true or false? If we do know with certainty, how did we arrive at this certainty? A more fundamental question is: How do we even know that we know anything? What does it mean to know something?

6.1.1 What is Knowledge?

Let us consider some statements about knowledge:

1. The government knows that politics sometimes hinders the common good;
2. I know how to use the laptop;
3. The barber claims to know the president of the United States;
4. He is knowledgeable in mathematics and statistics;
5. I know that God exists;
6. The man and the woman have known each other for the past ten years;
7. Everybody knows that the capital of Nigeria is Abuja;
8. The DL students know that they will pass their courses;
9. We all need to know what life is all about
10. She claims to know Canada.

There are several things that we can say about all these knowledge claims. Let us first eliminate those that are really not claims to knowledge. In examples 8, “know” is interchanged with “believe”, so we cannot say it constitute a real case of knowledge because they do not know yet whether they will pass their course. They are just exercising faith. In example 9, “know” is used for the need for “understanding” of the meaning of something. Examples 2 and 4 refer to the skill that one possesses in being able to do something. Examples 3, 6 and 10 refer to the familiarity or experience of a place or people. Examples 1, 5 and 7 represent certain information about facts that we are aware of.

All these examples help us to classify knowing into three fundamental categories: knowledge by acquaintance (or, *knowledge of*: things, places and persons); knowledge of a skill or a special ability or the performance of a task (or, *knowledge how*); and knowledge of certain facts (or, *knowledge that*). We will not be bothered here about the relationship between these three types of knowledge. The important point to make is that out of the three categories of knowledge highlighted above, the most important for philosophers is knowledge that (or what can also be called *propositional knowledge*). The reason for this is simple. Take knowledge how for example. It is possible for a person to possess the knowledge of how to cure diabetes using herbal means without being able to convey what he knows to anybody. Knowledge that, however, assumes the possession of specific information, which people can convey to others to be judged true or false. For example, if I have lived with friend for five months, can I assert that I know him? Yet, most of us uncritically assert: “I know him very well.” We even assert ‘I know Obasanjo’ without ever meeting with him!

Propositional knowledge is interesting for the epistemologist because when we claim the knowledge of a fact or information, there is a prospect of a mistake in what we have claimed. There is a possibility that the evidence we propose to back up our claim may not be adequate or relevant to support the claim. Propositional knowledge implies the possession of a piece of information that is not open to falsehood. In other words, any claim to know that so and so must be so certain, definite and reliable that it cannot be doubted. If I claim to know that $2 + 2 = 4$, then it must not turn out that this is not so. But when we say we know that so and so, what is it that we know? There is a consensus in epistemology that knowledge derives from our beliefs. As human beings, we believe many things. We believe that the world will end one day; we believe that a man is stronger than a woman; we believe that most crimes are committed by men; we believe that there is God; we believe that the email is faster than the post mail; we believe that we shall die before our children; we believe that we live long to transcend our present condition; we believe that night follows day and day follows night; and so on. The problem however is not with what we believe. The philosophical problem is: Which of my beliefs is to be counted as knowledge? In other words, which of my beliefs are true and which are false? Which of them can I depend on to live my life meaningfully?

ITQ

Question

- What are the three fundamental categories of knowing?

Feedback

- In classifying knowing, we can talk of knowledge by acquaintance which is also called knowledge of. We can also talk of knowledge how and this concerns knowledge of a skill and we can also talk of propositional knowledge or knowledge that or knowledge about certain facts.

This question is fundamental because for something to count as knowledge, that thing must first be true. You cannot claim to know what is obviously false. For instance, you can say you have knowledge when you believe that the world is flat rather than spherical. If I believe that there are people living in the sun, and that belief is not true, then I can't claim any specific knowledge that there are people living in the sun. The second point about knowledge is that if we claim to know that something is so or not so, then we must believe what we claim to know. This point emphasises the idea that belief is just an aspect of knowledge. It sounds awkward if you say, "I know that Man U will defeat Arsenal by three goals, but I don't believe it."

Lastly, for us to accept that you know that so and so, then you must give us certain reasons why you believe that so and so. Though knowledge is really an aspect of belief, it goes beyond belief in the sense that what counts as knowledge is: belief plus evidence for what we are claiming. If this evidence is not there, or is not adequate or does not support the claim, then we cannot say we have any knowledge. If I ask you why you know that Man U will beat Arsenal, and you reply, "I just know," then we cannot really say that you know that Man U will defeat Arsenal. Thus, to claim the knowledge that so and so is the case, what you claim to know must first be true, you must believe in what you claim is so and so, and you must have a reason or evidence for believing that so and so is the case.

6.1.2 Scepticism

But, is it possible to know something in such a way that the knowledge cannot be doubted? Is it possible to justify or give evidence for our beliefs in such a way that they will not be false? There are some that hold the claim that there is none of our beliefs that can be justified in such a way that they will not be false. These people are called the sceptics; and their position is called scepticism. Scepticism is the position that we can never have enough certainty in our claim to knowledge. Scepticism comes in two forms: Universal scepticism and limited scepticism. *Universal scepticism* is the claim that we can never know *anything* for certain. This sceptic argues that human beings cannot have any kind of knowledge of anything because none of our beliefs are ever justified. These beliefs are never justified because there would always be reasons to doubt the reasons we give in support of them. This position is however

a very difficult one to hold because it already presupposes that there is at least one thing that we can know. In other words, if I claim that we can't know anything for certain, then I am also claiming that I know something for certain: What I know for certain is that we can never know anything for certain.

Limited scepticism, on the other hand, escapes this self-defeating nature of universal scepticism in that it holds the position that some of our knowledge claims—especially in science, religion and ethics; or about memory, perception or the external world—are really not justified, and hence cannot be held with certainty. This type of scepticism focuses our attention to specific issues and areas of human endeavours. For instance, the limited sceptic can query whether we can know for certain that the external world exists. Can you know for certain that the table in front of you or the book you are reading actually exists?

Philosophical scepticism, in general, questions the reasons, evidence and justification that we have for believing what we claim to believe. The fundamental challenge of the sceptic is not about the standards we employ to prove the truth of our claims. Rather, the challenge the sceptic poses is whether or not those standards are appropriate in supporting our claims. If I ask how you know that there is a table right in front of you, your answer is likely to be that you can see and feel the table. Your answer assumes that the senses are adequate to prove that we know something. But my next question would be: How do you know that your eyes are telling you the truth about what you are seeing? If you agree that your eyes have deceived you once, how are you then sure that they are not presently deceiving you? Can you place your certainty in something that has deceived you many times in the past?

All this may seem like a trivial, impracticable and fruitless issue to you. How can I not know that I am holding a book in my hand right now? How can I not know that my TV is on if it is on? How can I not know that I am awake now and not dreaming? To even ask these questions only shows that you have not really come to term with the fundamental nature of your own self as a human being. Scepticism comes from the Greek word *skeptikos* meaning “an inquirer,” someone who is always searching for truth. Such an inquirer is someone who is not easily satisfied with claims that are not backed up with sufficient evidence. In this sense, we are all sceptics because we all also raise doubt about things that are perplexing to us and around us: We ask whether the Federal Government is sincere about giving Nigerians constant electricity; we ask whether we can adequately raise our children to be good citizens; we ask whether the rain will fall; we ask whether democracy can survive the corruption in Nigeria; we ask whether God exists and whether He notices our sufferings and agonies; we can ask whether we can pass our exams; we ask whether the world will end one day; we ask whether the sun will collide with the earth in orbit; we ask whether AIDS is real and deadly; and so on. We raise all manner of doubtful questions about things and assumptions that are not consistent with what we believe. According to Owolabi, scepticism is very significant in human life because:

“Scepticism as an idea connotes the critical spirit: the tendency of not being easily satisfied with simple or superficial evidence and striving to accept only incorrigible beliefs that are absolutely certain (2000: 55)”.

Thus, scepticism is significant in two respects: (a) it helps us not to accept claims and dogmatic statements that are not supported with evidence; and (b) it also motivates us to reflect on our own claims so as to make only those claims that we can support adequately with genuine evidence.

Imagine getting an email saying that you have just won ₦3m. The email further requires that you deposit ₦50,000 in a certain account in order to claim your winnings. What would be your immediate response? I suspect that response would be an immediate doubt: How did I come to win an amount I did not play for? Then, if you want to explore your curiosity the more, you may want to play along with the scam message to see how it will turn out. Once you refuse to take the email (or any other thing for that matter) on face value alone, we can say you are a sceptic. The whole essence of scepticism is just that: to help us in scrutinising our claims and the claims of others before we decide to take any action on them.

ITQ

Question

- How will you differentiate between universal skepticism and limited scepticism?

Feedback

- The difference between the two is concerning the scope of each of them. Universal skepticism holds that we cannot know anything for sure. On its part, limited skepticism holds that we can know some things for certain.

Study Session Summary



Summary

In this Study Session, we discussed what knowledge is all about, what it means “to know” something, how we can differentiate between what counts as belief and what counts as knowledge. We learnt that though knowledge is an aspect of belief, it goes beyond belief in the sense that to have knowledge about anything, it must be made up of our belief and the evidence we have to support that belief. We also saw the sceptical challenge to those things we claim to know for certain. In conclusion, we saw that scepticism is essential for us in two relevant senses. One, it gives us the critical spirit to scrutinize the claims that others make for their beliefs; and two, it also motivates us to scrutinize our own claims before we go on to act on them.

Assessment



Assessment

SAQ 6.1 (tests Learning Outcome 6.1)
Can we know anything for sure?

Study Session 7

Citizen and State

Introduction

In this Study Session, we will look at the relationship that exists between the citizens and the society in which they find themselves. We will also examine the kind of obligation and duties they owe each other and under what circumstances such obligation can and should be broken.



Learning Outcomes

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

7.1 *define* and use correctly the following terms in bold:

- **society**
- **state**
- **government**
- **citizen**

7.2 *discuss* the formation of a society.

7.3 *explain* the nature of political obligation.

7.1 Formation of Society

Imagine that all the rules and regulation guiding our conducts in the family, in the homes, in the schools, in markets, in driving, in promise keeping, in banking, in facts in the entire society and in human relationship generally are suddenly removed and we longer have any law, both moral and legal. What consequences do you foresee? There will be unbridled anarchy resulting from the breakdown of the society as we know it. This would mean that people now have the capacity to do what they like as they like and when they like. Most importantly, it means that a person can now become the law-giver, the law-interpreter and the law-executor in his/her own case. For instance, if another person offends you, you are the one to determine the magnitude of the offence, the nature of the punishment and the execution of the punishment.

In such a situation of lawlessness, there are several things that we can note. The first is that there are some people, especially the powerful and the unjust, who will have undue advantage in oppressing and dominating others who are not so powerful. The second thing to note is that even those who are weak and just will eventually find a way to retaliate any wrong and unjust treatment against them. Now imagine what will happen: A powerful man decides to take the wife of a less powerful man simply because he likes the woman and he has the means to take the woman by force. The husband of the woman, because he is weak, also goes about

looking for others who find themselves in a similar situation. These people also get together to retaliate against the powerful man since they have also derived strength in number. The result of this is that life becomes very fearful and dangerous. It becomes a situation of the war of everybody against everybody where anything can happen to you.

This is a real assessment of what men can do in a situation where there is no law or regulation that will hinder them from getting what they like, whether that thing they like is good or bad. Imagine that one day, you found a magic ring that has the power to make you invisible to everybody. What are the things you are likely to do with that ring? Would you not consider seriously the prospect of visiting the bank? The other side of the case is that no man wants to get injured as a result of their often unjust action. Take a robber, for example. S/he desires to take the items of property that don't belong to him or her, yet s/he is reluctant to go to prison if caught. Thus, while most of us recognise that it is good for us individually to be unjust in our actions; we also recognise or possess the common knowledge that it is bad for us individually to suffer. However, we know that if we act unjustly, we will certainly suffer. What do you consider to be the right way out of this problem of liking to live unjustly but not wanting to suffer for it?

One possible way to resolve the problem is to resolve individually to restrain our unjust desires, and to also agree with others to restrain their own unjust desires and seek after justice in our relationship with one another. The result of such an agreement or contract between people of different background, desires, outlooks and orientations is what we now call the society. Such a contract or agreement will be important because in spite of our desire for unjust actions, we also recognise that we have so many needs which we don't have the capacity to fulfil ourselves. We need other people to assist us in fulfilling those needs. If we continue in our lawlessness, then it becomes difficult to get anyone who will be able to help us. We therefore have two fundamental reasons why the evolution of the society became very significant for us to live in. The first is that no one wants to continue in a state of fear and insecurity. The second is that we all need one another to fulfil our basic needs in life.

ITQ

Question

- Why is society vital to the existence of man?

Feedback

- It is a known fact that no man is self-sufficient. What this means is that we need others in order to be able to fulfil our needs and yearnings in the world in which we find ourselves. Hence, society becomes a very important aspect of our lives. Besides this is the need to integrate law and order into the world so that chaos and violence will be avoided as this would have been the case were men to be living as atomic beings.

This is the origin of what we now know as the human society. By "origin" we should think that the situation we have sketched above is

what really led to the creation of the society, or that there really was a point in history when people were involved in a war of everybody against everybody and therefore they had to enter into a contract. What we mean by “origin” is that if we look at the society today but without its laws and regulation, then we can imagine that it came into existence because we all agreed to live together without constantly fighting one another.

What then is a Society?

The word “**society**” comes from the Latin word *socius* which stands for “companion,” and *societas* which translates as “companionship.” The term is a broad one that brings together all animals species that relate socially. For instance, bees and termites are also called social animals because they relate socially. However, **human society** refers to the network of relationship that brings people together in a particular community as companions in progress. It also refers to a set of individuals and/or institutions in some relationships brought about by the necessity for interdependence. Thus, we can talk of institutions like the family, church, mosque, the market, trade unions, and so on. In a human society, an action becomes a *social action* when the meaning behind that action involves a relation to another person’s behaviour. And a *social relationship* becomes situation in which several people adjust their behaviour to each other in the light of the meaning they give to these behaviours. In other words, a social relationship refers to the situation of the mutual awareness of the ways we see one another as belonging to the same society. An important aspect of these relationships is the existence of a shared normative framework of rules and norms that define what constitutes correct thought, behaviours and actions.

We can therefore take it as a fact that there is no society without individuals who act on the basis of their beliefs, desires, perception, values and ideals. This therefore tells us that the society is not as free of conflicts as we may be thinking. These conflicts are definitely not as extensive and threatening as what we find in what we have called the state of nature, but they are still there nevertheless. This is because when society emerged, it did not prevent individuals from acting on their preferences and beliefs especially with regards to those resources available for their well-being in the society. These resources are available but scarce vis-à-vis the number of people who needed them. The problem for the government (and, we should say, philosophers too) is how to mediate this conflict in the society in such a way that people will not revert back to the state of nature. For instance, the social and political philosopher would be concerned with asking: What social organisation or framework is necessarily to assist in the allocation of these scarce resources?

With this last question, we come to the importance of politics in the organisation of the society. According to Aristotle, one of the greatest of the Greek philosophers, man is essentially a political animal. What does it mean to be a political animal? What Aristotle was alluding to is the propensity of men to *politicize* their social relationship. This refers to those activities of people with respect to the allocation of scarce resources, power, rights, duties, obligations, liberties, liberties, benefits and sanctions (Oke, 2001: 9). Here, we have our first indication into the

nature of politics in the human society: It refers to do with the control of people within the confines of organised power. It deals with the institutions and structures of command and control; a manipulative distribution mechanism. Politics in this sense is the “authoritative allocation of values, being a form of activity which focuses on the quest for competitive advantage in various social situations” (Ibid, 10).

Politics in this regard has the same root meaning with “policy” and “police”. A policy refers to a programme of action adopted by a person, a group or a government; the police is itself an organisation for maintaining law and order. Politics and policy are both “plans of actions” involving the idea of organising or directing other men, the police is the organisation for carrying out that plan. Politics essentially, therefore, is a policy making activity which reaches “its completion in the search for a regime, that is to say, for the method by which rules of organisation and direction are determined” (Aron, 1978: 23). Thus, when men successfully politicize their social relationship, few people make policy decisions on behalf of the many with regards to the distribution of the scarce resources of the society. These few people are called the **government**. The many are called the **citizens**.

Now, let us regard the question: How do we organise the human society? There are several answer to this question manifested in the forms of organisation several societies have appropriated to organise their own society. In this sense, we can talk of the monarchical society; the aristocratic society; the democratic society; the oligarchic society; and so on. However, the most pervasive and popular answer to the question of how to organise the human society in today’s world is democracy. And the most fundamental assumptions of democracy are: (a) the people understand what is best for them or what is in their own interest; and, therefore, as a result, (b) they should be allowed to decide the issue of governance on their own.

Democracy derives from the Greek word *demokratia* (a combination of *demo* and *kratein*) meaning the “rule of the people”. Abraham Lincoln entrenched the meaning of this word with his definition of democracy as: the government of the people, for the people and by the people. It is only within a democratic society that the distinction between the government and the citizens becomes meaningful. These are concepts that possess significant meaning as to the relationship that ought to exist between those who govern and those who are governed. Citizenship refers to the legal status of an individual which gives the person some rights to exercise against the state. These rights include fundamentally the right to live in the state as well as participate in the political processes like voting and being voted for. On the contrary being a **subject**, rather than a citizen, implies that a person owes allegiance to a political sovereign but does not possess the right to participate in the political system.

7.2 Political Obligations of Citizens

To be called a citizen of a state means that one has entered into a relation of rights and duties with the state as well as with other citizens. This is what is called *political obligation*: This implies a moral duty to obey the

rules and regulations of the country of which one is a citizen. While this may not be a problem, the real problem for political philosophers is this: Why are the citizens of a state bound to support and comply with the requirements of their political authorities and institutions? Why must I, as a citizen of a state, obey the law of that state? Why must you pay your tax? The other side of the question is this: Under what condition am I free to disobey the government and its institutions? The question of why I must obey the law has been one of the central questions of political philosophy. The question is very significant because the obedience of the citizens is very important as the foundation of a stable political order. Yet, if the citizens must obey their political authorities, then there must be adequate reasons why they must do so. Why can't I just live my life the way I want rather than being constrained by rules and regulations? Why can't I beat the red light if I am in so much hurry?

Most of us at one time or the other has been compelled to ask these questions. However, as soon as we ask the question, I suspect that we intuitively recognise why we may not be able to do as we like. For instance, if everybody is in a hurry and we all beat the traffic light with impunity, what kind of society are we going to have? But why must we obey? If you were asked this question, I'm sure you can supply one or two answers. For example, you could answer that we obey the law because the state, through the law enforcement agencies (i.e. police) has the ability to force us to obey. Another person could answer the question by saying that we obey the law because we are used to obeying the law from birth. But are these answers sufficient for what we call our moral duty to obey the law? In other words, apart from the precautionary and habitual reasons for obeying the laws of the state, why must I, in conscience, obey the laws of the state? To be under an obligation means being tied or constrained to do something from a sense of duty rather than fear. Most of us feel that we are obliged to take care of our ageing parents not because we fear them or because we are in the habit of taking care of them. We take care of them because we have a duty to do so. Do we have the same duty to obey the demands of the political authorities and institutions of our country?

The most popular answer to why we obey the law is that our obedience derives from the theory of consent. The fundamental premise of this answer is that individuals are initially free in their natural state before the existence of the state. But such natural freedom human beings possessed would be the cause of anarchy if it is not regulated. Imagine that all the laws and regulation guiding us in the society were removed? Human beings will act as they deem right and in accordance with their conscience. The consequence will only be instability. Thus, according to this answer, we decided to obey the laws of the state because we consented to obey them. After all, living with relative stability is much better than living in anarchy! This theory assumes that the state came into existence as a result of a form of hypothetical agreement among the citizens to obey the laws rather than continue in a state of anarchy and chaos. Let us call this the individualist theory of political obligation. It is individualist because it argues that we are obliged to obey the state simply because of some optional individual action of consent or agreement we have with the state in which we live. Does this theory

explain how actual political societies work? Our answer must be negative. This is because it would seem that consent does not explain our attachment to a state. I suspect that if given the choice, most of us as Nigerians would have abandoned the Nigerian state for a better place. Most of us don't even agree with most of the rules and regulations binding us.

Another theory assumes that we obey the laws of the state because we are by nature social beings rather than being individuals. In other words, according to this theory, we can't realise our identities as social beings except we become members of the political community or the state. The plans, purposes and values we have as human beings are provided for us by the roles that we play in the society in which we find ourselves. It therefore follows that if we are what we are by our membership in a state, then we are by that fact obliged to do what the state requires. We are obliged to obey the rules of the society or state because this is part of what it means to be a member of such a state. That is: Who we are in a social context is an indication of we are obliged to do. Let us call this the communitarian theory of political obligation. It is communitarian because it argues that we are obliged to obey the state simply because of the fact of our identity as social beings who can't become who they really are except they become members of a state. The obvious problem with this theory is that it leaves us little choice as to whether or not we can disobey the laws of the state especially if they are unjust laws.

The third theory of political obligation (or the theory of the *absence* of political obligation) begins from the premise that there is actually no duty to obey the laws of a state or its political authorities. The fundamental reason for denying political obligation, according to this theory, is that no state exists that is legitimate enough or has the right to demand the obedience of its citizens. On the contrary, all states exist to limit the freedom of the individuals. And any state which limits what the individual can and can't do is by that fact illegitimate. Let us call this the anarchist theory of political obligation. It is anarchist because it argues that no individual is ever entitled or bound to obey the laws of any state which in the long run only limit the freedom the individual has to act only in accordance with his or her moral judgements. While this theory appeals to our intuitive desire to exhibit our freedom as individuals to behave as we like in accordance with our conscience, it leaves the possibility of instability open. Such instability arises from the clashes of what all of us will consider being right or wrong.

If the theories of political obligation don't really explain satisfactorily our obligation to the political community, how then do we explain (a) our actual obligation to the states in which we find ourselves and our obedience to the rules and regulations of the states? (b) our anger and irritation at being so constrained by laws from exercising our freedom to do what we like? Can we achieve a theory that explains the meaning of political obligation? Or such a theory is not possible?

ITQ**Question**

- Mention some of your political obligations to the State.

Feedback

- We have a long list of political obligations and so it depends on that which you have decided to choose. Amongst them are: the duty to be law-abiding, duty to pay your tax, duty to respect your national symbols, amongst other things.

Study Session Summary

**Summary**

In this Study Session, we discussed the problem of the relationship that exist or ought to exist between the individual and the society. We examined the meaning of the society and how the society came into existence as a means of regulating the desires, preferences and needs of the individuals. We asked the question: If individuals are relevant to the constitution of the society and the state, and the state is also relevant to the betterment of the lives of the individuals, what ought to be the mode of relationship between the two components? We explained what democracy assumes as a certain kind of relation between the government and its citizens. This we called the relation of political obligation. Political obligation assumes that the citizens have the moral duty to obey the demands of the political institutions and authorities of the state in which they reside. We then went on in this Study session to examine the justification for obeying the laws of the state. We considered the individualist, the communitarian and the anarchist theories of political obligation.

Assessment

**Assessment****SAQ7.1 (tests Learning Outcomes 7.1 and 7.2)**

What is the importance of politics to the formation of a society?

SAQ7.2 (tests Learning Outcome 7.3)

What do you understand by the political obligation of the citizens?

Study Session8

Philosophy and National Development

Introduction

In this Study Session, we will attempt to take the argument that philosophy is also significant for the national development of any state.



Learning Outcomes

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

- 8.1 *describe* the relationship that exists between the philosophical enterprise and the politics of governing a state.
- 8.2 *explain* what national development entails.
- 8.3 *explain* at least one of the conditions necessary for laying the foundation of social life.
- 8.4 *discuss* the significance of philosophy to national development.

8.1 Relationship between Philosophical Enterprise and Politics of Governing a State

Plato, one of the important Greek philosophers, once argue that until philosophers become kings or kings become philosophers we can never witness peace and development in a state. Why did he make this statement? The most important reason is to draw attention to the fundamental role that philosophy and philosophers can play in the national development of any nation.

Philosophy is usually regarded, especially in the consideration of prospective future, as one of the most useless courses one can offer in the university. In this regard, it will be extremely difficult to see how such a course can contribute to the development of a country, where you have science, agriculture, law, medicine, engineering, economics, accountancy, business administration, and even political science or sociology. Thus, if it is difficult for philosophy to put bread on my table, how can it help in moving a nation forward?

We made two important points in the first Study Session. The first point is that so many people have so many wrong ideas about what philosophy is and what philosophers do. Many people consider philosophy to be a godless enterprise and philosophers as people who don't believe anything even the existence of God. Some others believe that philosophers are those who have nothing better to do than to argue and argue about pointless issues with no relevance. The second point we made is that philosophy is inescapable and inevitable in human existence. In this

Study Session, we will begin to understand how inescapable philosophy can also be in the national life of a state. According to Olusegun Oladipo, “...the philosophical mansion is not simply a house of words, which guarantees its occupants an opportunity for a permanent possibility of conversation. Rather, it is a theoretical observatory, which provides a vantage position from which to have a clearer, even deeper, view of the human condition” (2008: 1).

How does philosophy enhance our view of the human condition? Richard Rorty, the American philosopher, understands the meaning and function of philosophy not really as consisting in the capacity to “know things as they really are—to penetrate behind appearance to reality” (1999: xiii) which, for him, leads to some of the numerous philosophical problems we have today (i.e. appearance and reality, mind and matter, etc.). Rather, Rorty argues that philosophy is a quest not for knowledge as an end in itself, but a knowledge as a means towards greater human happiness; a genuine human capacity which enhances “our ability to trust and to cooperate with other people, and in particular to work together so as to improve the future” (Ibid.).

The question of how best to organise the human society in such a way that people can live the good life, is one of the basic problems of political philosophy. It is also one of the most critical problems that plural societies face today in a world that is becoming more global and more complex. A *plural* state is any state in which the people are deeply divided along religious, linguistic, ethnic and cultural lines. Nigeria, for example, is multi-linguistic (i.e. there are more than 600 languages), multi-ethnic (i.e. there are equally the same number of ethnic groups), and multi-religious (i.e. there are at least more than three religious affiliations). Thus, one of the important functions of philosophy, for Oladipo and Rorty, is how that universal capacity human beings have to philosophise can assist us, first in improving our sense of human solidarity; and second, in helping us to craft the social hope that will enhance our sense of living together in spite of our religious, cultural, linguistic, and ethnic differences.

ITQ

Question

- How does philosophy enhance our view of the human condition?

Feedback

- We can bring out two points in this area. The first is that through the philosophical spirit, we will be able to enhance our ability to live together regardless of our ethnic diversities and the second point is that through philosophy, there is a hope that we will come to an understanding of the need to stay together in spite of our differences.

8.2 Contribution of Philosophy to National Development

The first contribution of philosophy to national development therefore comes from its function as a means to self-understanding; the definition or redefinition of who a people are and what they can be. To understand this function of philosophy, we need to first consider the Nigerian predicament.

8.2.1 The Nigerian Post-Independence Predicament

Nigeria got her independence from Britain in 1960. After 50 years of independence, most of us as Nigerians are convinced that there is something radically wrong with this country. For one, we know that unlike some other countries which gained independence around the same time i.e. Ghana and South Africa (much more later), Nigeria has failed to utilise the immense human and material resources at her disposal to make giant strides that will adequately qualify her as the true “Giant of Africa.” As a result of this, electricity has been epileptic, the roads are deathtraps, infrastructures are terrible, the health care system is dilapidated, and education only produces half-baked human capital. Generally, governance is not affecting the mass of Nigerians. Most of us will also agree that the problem with Nigeria is the problem of leadership. From 1960 to 2010, the Nigerian state has had to deal with one bad leader after the other.

For Prof. Oladipo, the critical problem arises from the Nigerian leadership orientation which predisposes us to constantly battling with superficial national issues at the expense of the fundamental ones. For instances, most of us have at one time or the other read in the newspapers about issues like prostitution, same-sex marriages, rotational presidency, religious identities and problems, the health of the president, tenure for public office holders, and so on. These issues, though important, can’t be compared with such other fundamental issues like that of social justice (in Niger Delta), social order, an appropriate value system for a developing country, poverty and the issue of wealth creation and distribution, unity in diversity, realising the common good, and such other fundamentals (Oladipo, 2008: chap. 5).

8.3 Foundation of Social Life

We can therefore begin to read the trouble with Nigeria as really that of our lack of the foundations for social life which serve as the basis for a composite, all-round development of any country.

What are the foundations of social life? These foundations refer to those conditions that human beings require to live a conducive life in the society in which they find themselves. These conditions are basically three: (a) the adaptation to external human and physical environment; (b) provision of human bio-social needs; and (c) the establishment of the requirements necessary for social cooperation. The first condition requires that human beings adjust to whatever physical environment they

find themselves in order to ensure their own survival. Such an interaction with the environment would involve the people achieving shelter, clothing and feeding in, for example, an environment dominated by mountains (i.e. Panama), or ice (i.e. Iceland), or thick forest (i.e. the Amazon), or oceans (i.e. Japan), or sand (i.e. Saudi Arabia). Apart from this, there is also the complementary need to adjust to the human environment. This requires that the individuals in a particular society be protected through adequate care and support especially those who are weak and vulnerable like the aged, the sick and the young ones.

The second condition for a conducive social life involves the provisions of such bio-social needs at three levels. The first level include: the need for food, clothing and housing. The second level includes cultural needs like the need for social and cultural identity i.e. the idea of who and what we are. The third level of needs include the psychic needs like the need for self-dignity, sexual expression, and so on. Finally, the last condition for social life has to do with the orderly coordination of the affairs of society in such a way as to make social cooperation possible. Oladipo therefore concludes that from all we have said above, it should be clear that:

...human survival and human flourishing in contemporary times clearly require science and technology as means of understanding, controlling and transforming nature. However, it is also clear that the goal of social sustenance and progress cannot be pursued in any significant manner without securing some basic elements of social organisation, particularly social institutions and the values that sustain them (Oladipo, 2008: 81).

This point is very important because of our popular feeling that in all the disciplines, we can only reckon with the sciences, the technologies and perhaps the managements to the exclusion of the humanities and the social sciences. This biased thinking is also myopically captured in the formulation of the Nigerian *National Policy on Education* which gives a larger funding ratio to the sciences over the humanities. This is because the humanities are considered to be utterly useless to not only an individual's future prospect, but also a country's national development.

From the above, it would be very difficult to build a society on science and technology where there is a collapse of social values and institutions. These two are significant because social institutions—consisting of political institutions, economic institutions, cultural institutions and kinship institution—help human beings in building and cementing their social life. These institutions on their part are held together by certain values which inform their functions. Values refer to the estimated worth of something, the principle or standard which guides a group or an individual, or the ideals which represents the fundamental end or purpose an individual or group pursues. These could include the value of trust, honesty, reciprocity, tolerance, compassion, etc.

It should not be difficult for you as a Nigerian to see that these values are lacking in the Nigerian society. It is also not difficult for us to know that the social institutions in Nigerian are collapsing. To be sure, just think of

the educational system from the primary to the tertiary level. You also need to think of the attitude of government workers and ordinary citizens like you and me to government work. What happens if you get an employment in the local government? Will you not be joyous? Thus, again, for Oladipo, when we talk of national development,

[Our] focus should be on the extent to which the institutions of a given society enhance the capacity of the people, as individuals and as a social collective, to secure the condition for the persistence of social life... (2008: 82).

And in order to enhance such national development—the capacity for citizens to realise social happiness—it becomes important to think about freedom and decency as two important variables in national development.

Freedom refers to the presence of those conditions in the society which enhances an individual's ability to realise their goals in life, as well as the provision of adequate security to enjoy these conditions. When you are living in a society and there are no constraints to your self-realisation as an individual or as a group, then we can say you are free. If you consistently find it difficult to become the kind of person you want to be in life because of certain difficulties made possible by the social arrangements in a country, then we can't say you are actually free. This therefore implies that for you to be really free, there must be some level of "social efficiency" that ensure that certain things can be taken for granted in the society: We should be able to assume that our transportation will work efficiently, that electricity will be available, that ATM machines will not commit "electronic robbery", that we can complete our education at the stipulated time, that we can achieve a genuine health care at reasonable cost, that phones will work, and so on. Freedom also entails that there won't be any reason for any individual to depend on others for survival because of economic or political deprivation. For instance, the situation of workers in Nigeria today, even those working in the universities, is that they have been reduced to an existence of perpetual expectations of arrears and loans. In other words, once there are no arrears owed them by the government or loans from cooperative societies, then workers can't really fashion a project for themselves and on their salaries alone. In this sense, we can't really say they are free. They are captives of the economic and political situation of the country.

Decency is also another variable for measuring national development. This has to do with the behaviours or attitudes of the people in a society which conform to the accepted and acceptable standard of what is right, what is modest, what is civil, what is wholesome, what is dignifying, and what is respectable. It refers to the level to which these values which enhance social cooperation are fully entrenched in any society. For instance, imagine you are driving on a lonely road and saw a stranger flagging you at a distance. What is likely to be your reaction? You speed away, of course! Why will you speed away? Well, for one, you don't know the person. And secondly, you don't trust him or her not to be harmful. Thus, the absence of trust in our society is one of the problems that makes social organisation of our society inefficient. In this respect,

Nigeria is a norm-less society; a society defined by a lack of acceptable norms or values by which we can direct the way we think and perceive events around us.

8.4 Significance of Philosophy to National Development

In Study Session One and Two, we argue that philosophy is a reflective and critical thinking about life and existence. In this regard, Kwasi Wiredu comments that ‘The function of philosophy everywhere is to examine the intellectual foundations of life, using the best available modes of knowledge and reflection for human well-being’ (1980: 62). We have done in the preceding two or three pages is examining the foundation on which a decent and free society can be erected to facilitate an enabling national development. In this sense, according to Socrates, an unexamined life is not worth living. Yet, the function of philosophy goes beyond social criticism of those conditions that will ensure the well being of the people. It is also the task of philosophy to stimulate “reflective and critical thinking about the concepts and principles which we use to organise our experience in morals, religion, in social and political life, in law, in history, and the natural sciences” (J. Olubi Sodipo, cited in Fadahunsi and Oladipo, 2004: 16).

ITQ

Question

- What are the two variables for measuring national development?

Feedback

- The two variables are freedom and decency. Freedom refers to the provision of those conditions which enhances the well-being of the citizens as well as a protection for the enjoyment of those conditions. Decency is the level to which the values (such as dignity, respect for others, modesty, care for others, respect or the rights of others and recognition of their ‘humanness’) which promote social cooperation are entrenched in the society.

The existence of the “philosophic spirit” therefore becomes a crucial necessity in any national development. The philosophic spirit refers to the human capacity to critically and reflectively challenge the structure of existence, of knowledge and of ideas and ideals in order to determine their tenability for coping with life. This spirit therefore ensures that citizens are always ready to examine and challenge the basis of national existence. This is because the philosophic spirit is an orientation which requires that we always ask for the justification of whatever is considered to be valid or right or good. The philosophic spirit will ensure that we no longer pass the responsibility for our failure either as a nation or as individuals to God or the devil. The philosophic spirit also ensures that we take the full responsibility for our self-actualisation as individuals and as a state. This will help the society, in the long run, to pay attention to the fundamental issues—rather than the superficial ones—in the

economy, in public administration, in politics and in culture. And further, the society can also begin from this critical and reflective foundation to begin the task of reconstructing those ideas and institutions that can serve as adequate guide for organising the society.

It is in these crucial senses that philosophy can serve as the critical elixir that can help in the attempt to bring the Nigerian society back to life, and furthermore to reactivate the lives of the individual as a compass in understanding life and its ups and downs.

Study Session Summary



Summary

In this Study Session, we argued that philosophy is not only significant to the improvement of the lives of the individuals (as we have tried to demonstrate in the preceding Study Session), but also in the advancement of national existence. We noted that while scientific and technological advancements are crucial to the development of any country; no country can neglect the development of its social institutions as well as the values which strengthen them. We concluded that philosophy is a critical and reflective endeavour which ensures that our ideas, principles, institutions and social arrangements are subjected to serious rational challenge in order to prove their plausibility as well as ensure the reconstruction of the basis on which social life can be reconstructed for good living. It is this philosophic spirit that philosophy contributes to the idea of national development.

Assessment



Assessment

SAQ 8.1 (tests Learning Outcomes 8.1, 8.2, and 8.4)

What role can philosophy play in national development?

SAQ 8.2 (tests Learning Outcome 8.3)

Discuss one condition necessary for laying the foundation of social life.

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Feedbacks on Self Assessment Questions (SAQs)

SAQ 1.1

You would have observed that several definitions abound for philosophy. Importantly, your answer is expected to make reference to the act that *philosophy took its meaning from two Greek words, philo and Sophia which means the love of wisdom*. Also, your definition of philosophy must contain a reference to it as a reflective as well as critical exercise which understudies human experience or as H.S. Staniland would say, ‘Philosophy is the criticism of the ways we live our lives by’.

SAQ 1.2

In a question as this, we expect you to apply what you have studied in this study session. For you to answer the question effectively, you must understand the central role that philosophy can play in our daily existence and going-arounds. Although we do not know your opinion as regards this question, however, we have shown you that you cannot avoid philosophy by pointing out two reasons.

The first reason is that as humans, we always want to understand the world in which we live in. We want to seek answers to certain mysteries or difficulties about our existence. We ask questions such as, “Who am I?”, “What is my place in the world?”, “Why am I here?”. The understanding of questions such as this goes a long way in helping us understand our person and our place viz-a-viz the world in which we live in. This is where philosophy, as a critical and reflective exercise, comes in. Philosophy helps us to answer these questions and give our lives a meaning.

Another reason why we cannot escape philosophy is because our understanding of the questions we raised earlier will determine the quality and essence of our lives. Hence, if we want the quality of our lives to be improved, we would need to employ philosophy. Just as Socrates said that, ‘An unexamined life is not worth living’, philosophy allows us to critically consider our lives and this helps us live it well.

SAQ2.1

In answering this question, we expect you to tell us how philosophical problems arise and what they are all about. You will do well by mentioning some of the philosophical problems you have encountered in this study session.

We know for sure that you have some beliefs which you hold on to in life. Interestingly, these beliefs could be contradictory and it is at the point of the discovery of these contradictions that philosophical problems are generated. Philosophical problems are questions about the truth and meaning of fundamental ideas and beliefs that we hold and which are not

resolvable by empirical tests or study. These questions cover all of our existence. What then are the features of these philosophical problems.

One of the features is that it involves general ideas which are not context-bound. The second is that they involve fundamental ideas and lastly, they are not resolvable by empirical test. You are expected to develop each of these points.

SAQ3.1

What this question requires is that you must understand what is meant by philosophy as worldview and philosophy as critical thinking and then try to marry the two ideas.

Your explanation of worldview must take into cognizance the fact that it relates to our viewpoint of the world. Philosophy comes in as a guide when you are to formulate your worldview. This is because we need to worldview to chart our course in life. You must also put into consideration what gives rise to worldview and this is because we come up with a worldview as a way of responding to certain questions that come up in our existence as humans. Your answer must also take note of the reasons why we need a worldview. These reasons are because it help us to understand our person, understand our world, as well as gives us a courage in our handling of the situations.

Critical thinking requires the thorough consideration of an issue. Importantly, critical thinking involves the exercise of conceptual analysis at hand and a reconstruction of the ideas involved. With critical analysis, we are able to subject our viewpoint of the world to scrutiny. Thus, your answer must note that we cannot develop an adequate worldview that we need in the world.

SAQ 4.1

In your answering this question, we expect you to apply what you learnt in the previous Study Session (that is, critical thinking).

Philosophical questions, from what you must have discovered so far in this study session, are fundamental parts of your formation of your worldview. They are fundamental in nature and they help in shaping and pruning what your worldview. These questions are thus what informs the different branches into which the philosophical discipline is divided into.

SAQ 4.2

- A. Metaphysics
- B. Epistemology
- C. Logic
- D. Ethics

SAQ5.1

We are sure you would have a picture of what it means for something to be real and another to appear to be real. We are sure you understand that what appears to be real is not the same thing as that which is real. You can give examples to support this. There are times that you are inside your room and you rush outside to see who it is that is calling you only to discover that no one was calling you in the first place. There are times

you are in a car or bus and you look ahead of you and it seems as if you saw water on the road ahead only for you to get there and see the road dry. These examples will help drive home your point as regards the difference between appearance and reality. What then is the relationship between them?

We cannot understand the essence of reality without that of what is a mere appearance. We expect you to note the primal place that the five senses take in our apprehension of the outside world and the fact that many times, these senses have deceived us. You can cite examples to that regard. Besides this fact is the place of viewpoint. Take the tale of five blind men who went to touch an elephant and each was asked after what an elephant looks like. One said the elephant looked like a wall (he touched the side of the elephant), another said it looked like a tree (he touched the legs), another also said it looked like a rope (he touched the trunk), and so on. In view of the place of perspective in the perception of each blind man, what then is the real elephant.

Another instance you can imagine is the similitude between the state of dream and the state of reality. The two of them look so much alike that it is possible for your senses to present mere appearances or dreams as reality. As a matter of common sense, we employ our senses in our detection of reality but we have come to know that we cannot rely on these senses of ours to detect reality as it has deceived us. It is possible that you have created the imagery in your mind. Maybe your mind created these things and so does not exist independently of your perception. Common sense wise, you would deny this possibility because you would say that even when you are not there, the elephant, in the case of the blind men, still exist.

This points to the fact that there is a meeting point between appearance and reality. Each serves as the yardstick for determining the other. What is real serves as the basis for discovering appearance and appearance serves as the basis for discovering what is real.

SAQ6.1

In answering this question, we expect you to tell us what knowledge is and scepticism is. You should give a background information on what you understand by knowledge and skepticism.

From what you learnt in this study session, you would understand that we can classify knowledge into three forms and these are knowing of, knowing how, and knowing that but our interest in philosophy is the notion of knowing that because aside conveying the idea of possessing information, it also connotes that the information can be conveyed to people such that the truth or falsehood of the claim can be ascertained. In epistemology, to know that requires that three conditions must be in place. The first is that there must be a belief. In other words, if you claim to know that Lagos is bigger than Ibadan, then you must believe that Lagos is bigger than Ibadan. The second condition is that the belief must be true. The third condition is that the believer must be justified in believing that which is believed. In other words, he must be able to account for the belief by way of explanation.

Skepticism is the belief that denies the possibility of knowledge. The skeptists hold that we cannot explain that which we believe and so cannot lay claim to knowledge. There are two versions of skepticism. The Universal skepticism is the view that we cannot know anything for sure. The implication of this is that even the position of the universal skepticism cannot then be taken for certain too. The second version is the limited skepticism which holds that some of our beliefs cannot be known for sure.

The skeptists proffer arguments to support their denial of knowledge. Chief among their arguments is the fallibility of our senses and the fact that we cannot separate the state of dream from the state of reality. However, our interest is to see how skepticism is important to the acquisition of knowledge.

Skepticism helps us to be wary of what we accept or believe. We come across deception in its raw form in all that we do. People appear to us as one thing but are something else in the real sense. Hence, skepticism helps us to subject the claims of others to us to scrutiny so as to pick out the lies and deception in it. Aside this, it also help us to subject our own claims too to scrutiny so as to avoid misrepresenting ourselves to people.

SAQ7.1

This question requires you to give us an insight as to what a society is and what gave rise to it. In addition, you are expected to take a cursory look at what the role of politics is within a society.

You will agree with us that no one can be a Robinson Crusoe i.e. no one can survive on his own without relating with other people within the society. What this points us to is the fact that no man is self-sufficient. Hence, the need to interact with one another. In the course of our relating with one another we are also aware of the fat that we cannot survive in an atmosphere where there are no laws. This is because each man begins to do that which he wishes to do without any form of restraints. The implication will be that the week will suffer and the powerful will not have rest. The end of such will be chaos unleashed. Thus, a society is formed because it helps in eliminating the insecurity that would have ensued were there not to be a society. In addition, since no one is self-sufficient, we need others to actualize our potentialities.

This society does not exist in vacuum as it uses a government as the machinery for administering the society and its citizens.

Politics comes in because it decides ‘who get what, when, and how much’. Another definition of politics takes it as ‘the authoritative allocation of values’. In view of these definitions, politics plays a part in the distribution of the resources of the state among its citizens. Politics concerns both the allocation of rights and duties within the framework of the state. The government, as the machinery of the state, does this on behalf of the state.

SAQ7.2

The decision to stay within the society by you connotes a tacit acceptance to stay with other humans like. It depicts an agreement you have entered with these persons to abide by the rules and regulation binding on all as

well as enjoy certain rights. These duties that you owe the society are what we call political obligation. The interest of philosophers in this regard is the question of why citizens should obey the rules and regulations of the state. Different positions have been advanced in this regard.

The first is what is called the Individualist theory. From what you learnt in this study session, you will discover that men agreed to come together to form a society in view of the dangers that lie in allowing each to exercise his natural rights without restraints. Such scenario poses grave danger and each individual accepted to lay down his rights for the interest of the state. In the light of this, each man consented to the fundamental norms that guide the society and so we are duty-bound to obey the rules if we do not want the state to plunge into anarchy. We expect you to make a critique of this theory.

Another explanation on why we obey the law is that given by the communitarian theory. The theory posits that we obey the law because we are social beings by nature and so we are naturally fitted into the society. By being fitted to the society, we are obliged to obey the laws of the land. Put differently, we cannot realize and actualize ourselves outside the society and if we understand this, we would realize the need to keep the state from anarchy which would result from the breakdown of law and order. Thus, it is our obligation to obey the law.

A third theory is the anarchy theory. Anarchist believes that the state does not exist for the interest of the citizens as it sets out to limit the freedom of the people. Thus, no state has enough legitimacy such that people will be obliged to obey its laws. Anarchists believed in the unrestrained exercise of the rights of the citizens and so condemn the state as it is an instrument for limiting such right.

SAQ8.1

A question as this requires you to apply all that you must have learnt in this course. We expect you to tell us what national development is and the role that philosophy can play in ensuring this.

Your definition of national development is expected to take into consideration the different indices of development which includes scientific and technological advancement, infrastructural development, better living condition, a working educational system, amongst other things.

Your analysis of the role of philosophy in ensuring national development should be an application of the role of critical thinking in philosophy. Critical thinking allows you to thoroughly and in-depthly subject views, ideas, and policies to proper scrutiny such that wrong decisions are avoided or averted. This definitely will make the system better and aid development. We expect you to espouse your ideas widely and critically.

SAQ8.2

If you look at this study session, you will find out that we mentioned three basic conditions for laying the foundation of social life. Thus, we expect you to take one of these three conditions and discuss it. The first condition is the adaptation to the external world. The second condition is

the provision of the bio-social needs of the people while the third condition is the establishment of the conditions that promote social cooperation. So which of these three did you discuss in your answer.

If yours is the first, we expect you to mention the need for men to adapt themselves to whatever environment and be able to make for themselves shelter, food and other necessary. It also involves the provision for protection of the weak and vulnerable persons in the community.

If yours is the second, we expect you to mention the need to make available the basic needs that would life worth living. Basic needs such as shelter, food, clothing, a suitable working environment among other things are expected to be mentioned. But aside the basic needs, you should also mention the provision of cultural and psychic needs of the people.

If you choose the third condition, we expect you to mention the need to create a suitable environment that would promote social cooperation.

Appendix A

How do Philosophical Problems Arise?

Imagine that you believe, like most people, that all human beings are selfish in nature. Of course, most of us have a very good reason for holding this belief. This belief, for most of us, is generated by our experience with other people. Imagine that you also believe, as a married person, that marriage is essentially about commitment. By “commitment” you mean that the kind of loyalty and responsibility demanded by marriage and child rearing goes beyond any reason that may benefit only you. Again, you also have adequate reasons for holding this belief. Yet, both beliefs seem to contradict each other. Would you have married your spouse if s/he told you that s/he only wanted you for selfish purposes, say, sex? Another example is that most men believe that women are inferior to men. Yet, most of them also hold the belief that behind every successful man, there is usually a woman. Are all women the same? If so, what is their nature? Is that nature similar to the nature of men? If not, what makes the natures different?

Philosophical problems arise as a result of the many contradictory beliefs and ideas that we hold. The moment you begin to discover some inconsistency in your beliefs and ideas, and you further take the pain to reflect on these contradictions in your beliefs, you are likely to discover some serious philosophical problems underneath. To hold inconsistent or contradictory beliefs or ideas should be disturbing for the reason we highlighted earlier. If two beliefs are contradictory, then both cannot be true at the same time; one of the beliefs must be false and mistaken (Schick and Vaughn, 1999: 5). It seems to me that one cannot hold a viable picture of the world and how we relate to that world based on mistaken and false beliefs, don’t you agree? Going through life with faulty and mistaken beliefs is much like erecting a mighty building on faulty foundation. Once we realize that our beliefs are inconsistent, it is likely that we are in the presence of a philosophical problem. The first example above raises the problem: what is the nature of man?

We can define a philosophical problem as involving “questions about meaning, truth, and logical connections of fundamental and general ideas that cannot be answered by the empirical sciences” (Woodhouse, 1994: 2). These questions include: What is the universe? Is it made up primarily of matter? Or, does it also contain non-material things like spirits? How can I know and explain what the universe contains? What is ultimately real? Are there other kinds of reality apart from the physical world? How can I know these realities? How do I know anything at all? What is knowledge? What is truth? Is sense experience (through my five sense organs) the only source of knowledge and truth? Or, are there other ways of knowing? What is time? What is space? What is mind/ what is matter? Why are we in this world at all? Were we created by God or are we just part of purely natural processes without any divine element? Is there a God? If so, what sort of being is God? If God exists, can we prove he/she/it exists? What is the nature of God? What kind of creatures am I? Do we have a soul that will survive the death of our bodies? Or, do we cease to exist totally once our bodies die? Is there a life after death? Are

we free to determine our actions, or are these actions determined by other forces beyond our control? Why am I in this world? Do we have any obligations to other people? Or, are we obliged to follow the dictates of our own interests? Am I justified in obeying the state? If yes, when am I justified in disobeying the state? What makes a law a good law? What is the purpose of the state? What makes a government legitimate? What is the proper limit of government's power? How do we determine what is good and what is bad? What is evil? What makes anything beautiful or ugly? Is there an objective standard of good and bad? Or, are we the determinant of whether our actions are good or bad? Does our morality depend on religion?

These problems compel us to confront our dogmatic and complacent acceptance of our ideas and beliefs without adequate justification. According to Bertrand Russell, even without finding answers to these problems and questions, they are intrinsically worthwhile on their own because:

these questions enlarge our conception of what is possible, enrich our intellectual imagination, diminish the dogmatic assurance which closes the mind against speculation; but above all because, through the greatness of the universe which philosophy contemplates, the mind also is rendered great and becomes capable of that union with the universe which contributes its highest good (1978: 94)

We have looked at philosophical problems and we have attempted to examine how they are generated. We shall now look at the characteristics of philosophical problems. We shall consider four characteristics of philosophical problems.

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