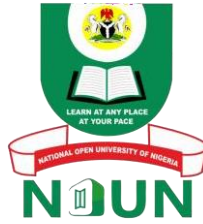


# NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA



## DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY FACULTY OF ARTS

### Course Guide for PHL413: METAPHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

<b>Course Code</b>	<b>PHL413</b>
<b>Course Title</b>	<b>Metaphysical Anthropology</b>
<b>Course Writer</b>	<b>Dr. Adeolu O. Oyekan</b> Department of Philosophy, Lagos State University (LASU), Ojo, Nigeria
<b>Course Editor</b>	<b>UNEDITED</b>

## **COURSE GUIDE FOR METAPHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY (PHL 413)**

### **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

This course introduces students to metaphysical concepts in anthropological studies. This course examines concepts such as body, soul, self-transcendence, personal identity, personhood and their relationship to the study of man. It seeks to examine the questions of metaphysics in order to unify the several investigations of human nature in an effort to understand individuals as creatures of their environment. This study discusses the meaning of concepts such as metaphysics, anthropology, and ontology and also, examines the various conception of the human soul from different cultural perspectives. The human soul which is regarded as the spiritual entity which makes man a living being is an interesting concept in anthropology as it depicts the non-physical aspect of man. Moving from this, this study discusses the question of identity, with particular attention to the meaning and sources of identity and the relationship between the concept of identity and other concepts such as permanence, continuity and self-transcendence. Lastly, this study examines the relationship between personhood and individual freedom and the human community.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

In order to achieve the primary aim of this course, the following objectives have been set:

- To understand the meaning, nature and theories of metaphysics, anthropology and ontology
- To discuss the concept of soul from different cultural and philosophical perspectives such as the Yoruba, Akan and ancient Greek philosophy
- To understand the question of identity and its relationship with other concepts such as permanence, continuity and self-transcendence
- To critically examine the relationship between individual, freedom and the community

### **WORKING THROUGH THIS COURSE**

For maximum efficiency, effectiveness and productivity in this course, students are required to have a copy of the course guide, main course material, download videos and podcast, and the necessary materials for this course. These will serve as study guides before lectures. Additionally, students are required to be actively involved in forum discussion and facilitation.

### **STUDY UNITS**

This course has 18 study units which are structured into 4 modules. Each module comprises of 3-7 study units as follows:

## **Module 1: Clarification of Concepts**

Unit 1: Metaphysics

Unit 2: Anthropology

Unit 3: Ontology

Unit 4: Mortality and Immortality

## **Module 2: Theories of Soul**

Unit 1: On the Concept of Soul

Unit 2: Soul in pre-Socratic philosophy

Unit 3: Soul in Plato's philosophy

Unit 4: Aristotle on soul

Unit 5: African Notions of Soul (Yoruba and Akan)

Unit 6: Soul in Ancient Chinese Thought

Unit 7: Soul in Hindu Philosophy

## **Module 3: The Question of Identity**

Unit 1- Identity: Meaning, types and sources

Unit 2- Identity and permanence

Unit 3- Identity and continuity

Unit 4- Identity and self-transcendence

## **Module 4- Individualism, Communalism and Personhood**

Unit 1- The concept of personhood

Unit 2- Individualism and communalism

Unit 3- Individual freedom in African community

## **REFERENCES/FURTHER READINGS/WEB SOURCES**

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## **PRESENTATION SCHEDULE**

This course has two presentations; one at the middle of the semester and the other towards the end of the semester. At the beginning of the semester, each student

undertaking this course will be assigned a topic by the course facilitator, which will be made available in due time, for individual presentations during forum discussions. Each presenter has 15 minutes (10 minutes for presentation and 5 minutes for Question and Answer). On the other hand, students will be divided by the course facilitator into different groups. Each group is expected to come up with a topic to work on and to submit same topic to the facilitator via the recommended medium. Both attract 5% of your total marks.

**NOTE:** Students are required to submit both papers via the recommended medium for further examination and grading. Both attract 5% of total marks.

## **ASSESSMENT**

In addition to the discussion forum presentations, two other papers are required in this course. The paper should not exceed 6 pages and should not be less than 5 pages (including references), typewritten in 12 fonts, double line spacing, and Times New Roman. The preferred reference is MLA 6<sup>th</sup> edition (you can download a copy online). The paper topics will be made available in due time. Each carries 10% of the total marks. To avoid plagiarism, students should use the followings links to test run their papers before submission:

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

Finally, all students taking this course MUST take the final exam which attracts 70% of the total marks.

## **HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS COURSE**

For students to get the most out of this course, she/he must:

- Have 75% of attendance through active participations in both forum discussions and facilitation;
- Read each topic in the course materials before it is being treated in the class;
- Submit every assignment as at when due; as failure to do so will attract a penalty;
- Discuss and share ideas among his/her peers; this will help in understanding the course more;
- Download videos, podcasts and summary of group discussions for personal consumption;
- Attempt each self-assessment exercises in the main course material;
- Take the final exam;
- Approach the course facilitator when having any challenge with the course.

## **FACILITATION**

This course operates a learner-centered online facilitation. To support the student's learning process, the course facilitator will, one, introduce each topic under discussion; two, open floor for discussion. Each student is expected to read the course materials, as well as other related literatures, and raise critical issues which she/he shall bring forth in

the forum discussion for further dissection; three, summarizes forum discussion; four, upload materials, videos and podcasts to the forum; five, disseminate information via email and SMS if need be.

## **MODULE 1: CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS**

Unit 1: Metaphysics

Unit 2: Anthropology

Unit 3: Ontology

Unit 4: Mortality and Immortality

## **UNIT 1: METAPHYSICS**

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3.1 Nature and scope of metaphysics
- 1.3.2 Theories of metaphysics
- 1.3.3 Metaphysical problems
- 1.3.4 Logical Positivism and the Elimination of Metaphysics
- 1.4 Summary
- 1.5 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 1.6 Possible Answers to SAE

### **1.1 Introduction**

This unit attempts a conceptual clarification of the term “metaphysics” from the epistemological and historical standpoint. This unit also attempts to examine major theories of metaphysics and some of the problems discussed in metaphysics.

### **1.2 Learning Outcomes**

This unit will help students:

- to understand the nature and scope of metaphysics
- to understand the theories of metaphysics
- to understand some metaphysical problems

### **1.3.1 Nature and scope of Metaphysics**

The word “metaphysics” comes from two Greek words “meta” and “physika” which literally means “after or behind the books on nature”. It has been suggested that the term was coined by Andronicus of Rhodes, a first century CE editor who assembled various selections of Aristotle’s treatises on first philosophy and named them metaphysics. This suggests that “metaphysics” as a field of inquiry attempts to study phenomenon about the natural or physical world. (Inwagen, 2007) Metaphysics is the branch of philosophy studies the fundamental nature of reality. It is that branch of philosophy that deals with the first principles of things such as abstract concepts like being, identity, substance, causality etc. Metaphysics attempts to unravel the meaning behind human existence and reality. It seeks to answer in an abstract and general manner, the questions: What is reality? What is the basic constituent of reality?

Metaphysicians often claim that there is a significant difference between physics and metaphysics as physics investigates the natural world of experience while metaphysics questions the various aspects of reality that transcend experience. According to Keith Campbell (1976), “the very task of metaphysics sets itself, is to pierce the veil of appearance to pass beyond how things seem, to reach to the basic, inner and perhaps hidden part of the world.” This suggests that metaphysics as a field of inquiry attempts to penetrate beyond the study of experience and



obtain knowledge about what lies beneath. Metaphysics therefore studies phenomenon like change, reality, causality, time, identity, substance and attribute etc. (Schlesinger. 1981: 229-230)

Metaphysics is a branch of philosophy that is concerned with the ultimate reality. This is what the ancient Greek scholars such as Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes were after in Ionia. They were mostly concerned about the cosmos. They wanted to know what was behind the change and flux characterized in nature. In other words, they were said to be asking the question of what is behind the flux experienced in the universe (Omorgbe;1996).

A person who studies metaphysics is called a metaphysician. The metaphysician attempts to clarify the fundamental notions by which people understand the world, e.g., existence, objects and their properties, space and time, cause and effect, and possibility. A central branch of metaphysics is ontology, which is the investigation into the basic categories of being and how they relate to each other. Another central branch of metaphysics is cosmology, which is the study of the origin (if it has one), fundamental structure, nature, and dynamics of the universe. Some include epistemology as another central tenet of metaphysics but this can be questioned.

Prior to the modern history of science, scientific questions were addressed as parts of metaphysics which was known as natural philosophy. Originally, the term "science" (Latin *scientia*) simply meant "knowledge". The scientific method, however, transformed natural philosophy into an empirical activity deriving from experience unlike the rest of philosophy. By the end of the 18th century, metaphysics had begun to be called "science" to distinguish it from philosophy. Thereafter, metaphysics denoted philosophical enquiry of a non-empirical character into the nature of existence.

The primary aim of metaphysics is to inquire into the nature of things in the universe. Metaphysics is divided into two aspects: cosmology and ontology (Cayne;1992). While the former is more concerned with the world and how the world has come to be the way that it currently is, ontology deals with being. Ontology is concerned with man and his existence in the universe. Being has birthed several philosophers and led to various theories. It asks question on the nature of human existence and this may be raised even in the present day. Some of the more popular scholars that have contributed to this problem in metaphysics are Parmenides, Aristotle, Arthur Schopenhauer, Heidegger, Sartre and all the likes.

The nature of Being is a perennial topic in metaphysics. For instance, Parmenides taught that reality was a single unchanging Being. The 20th century philosopher Heidegger thought previous philosophers had lost sight of the question of Being

(qua Being) in favour of the questions of beings (existing things), so that a return to the Parmenidean approach was needed. An ontological catalogue is an attempt to list the fundamental constituents of reality. The question of whether or not existence is a predicate has been discussed since the Early Modern period, not least in relation to the ontological argument for the existence of God. Existence, that something is, has been contrasted with essence, the question of what something is. Reflections on the nature of the connection and distinction between existence and essence dates back to Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, and later found one of its most influential interpretations in the ontology of the eleventh century metaphysician Avicenna (Ibn Sina). Since existence without essence seems blank, it is associated with nothingness by philosophers such as Hegel.

### **1.3.2. Theories of Metaphysics**

There are various theories of metaphysics, however, in this unit, we shall examine four major metaphysical theories namely idealism, materialism, monism and dualism. Idealism is a metaphysical theory that asserts the central role of the ideal, mind or the spiritual in the interpretation of experience. This position holds that reality exists essentially as spirit or consciousness and that whatever exists as reality can only be known as chiefly mental and as ideas in the mind. George Berkeley summarizes the basic tenet of idealism as “to be is to be perceived” that is, whatever must exist or constitute reality must be perceived in the mind. (Altmann, 2014) Major advocates of idealism are Plato, George Berkeley, Benedict Spinoza, Friedrich Hegel etc.

Materialism is a metaphysical position that is directly opposed to idealism. Materialism is a position that states that the basic constituent of reality is matter and that reality can primarily be known as material forms and processes. This theory holds that matter is the fundamental substance in nature and all things, including mental states and consciousness, are results of and reducible to material interactions. This view holds that all things such as existence, reality and human behaviour are made up of or reducible to material substances. Philosophers who advocate this view include Gilbert Ryle, John Dewey, and JJC Smart etc.

Monism is a metaphysical theory which asserts that all things including human existence can be explained in terms of a single reality or substance. Monism posits that only one substance exists (e.g. matter or mind) and every other thing derives from a single substance. (Edwards, 1998) Dualism is a metaphysical theory which holds that reality can be expressed in two fundamental categories or principles namely mind and matter. This theory holds that reality consists of two substances namely the mental and the physical and that although these substances are radically different, yet they sometimes interact. Major proponents of dualism include Rene Descartes and Gottfried Leibniz. There are three basic aspects of understanding metaphysics: idealism, materialism and dualism.

Idealism holds that there is no external world; all there are are minds and “ideas” in the mind. Perception, on this view, is simply the process of experiencing a certain particularly vivid sort of idea. (Note that “idea” is here used in an extended sense—it covers all mental phenomena.) There is thus no problem about how we know about external objects. Very few philosophers hold this position today, although it enjoyed surprising popularity during the nineteenth century (Huemer, 2002:27-8).

Materialism is a form of philosophical monism which holds that matter is the fundamental substance in nature, and that all phenomena, including mental phenomena and consciousness, are identical with material interactions (Wikipedia, 2015).

Materialism is closely related to physicalism, the view that all that exists is ultimately physical. Philosophical physicalism has evolved from materialism with the discoveries of the physical sciences to incorporate more sophisticated notions of physicality than mere ordinary matter, such as: spacetime, physical energies and forces, dark matter, and so on. Thus the term "physicalism" is preferred over "materialism" by some, while others use the terms as if they are synonymous (Wikipedia, 2015).

Dualism from the Latin word duo meaning "two" denotes the state of two parts (Cayne, 1992:214). The term 'dualism' was originally coined to denote co-eternal binary opposition, a meaning that is preserved in metaphysical and philosophical duality discourse but has been more generalized in other usages to indicate a system which contains two essential parts.

Moral dualism is the belief of the great complement or conflict between the benevolent and the malevolent. It simply implies that there are two moral opposites at work, independent of any interpretation of what might be "moral" and independent of how these may be represented. The moral opposites might, for example, exist in a world view which has one god, more than one god, or none. By contrast, ditheism or bitheism implies (at least) two gods. While bitheism implies harmony, ditheism implies rivalry and opposition, such as between good and evil, or bright and dark, or summer and winter. For example, a ditheistic system would be one in which one god is creative, the other is destructive.

Alternatively, in ontological dualism, the world is divided into two overarching categories. The opposition and combination of the universe's two basic principles of yin and yang is a large part of Chinese philosophy, and is an important feature of Taoism, both as a philosophy and as a religion

Alternatively, dualism can mean the tendency of humans to perceive and understand the world as being divided into two overarching categories. In this sense, it is dualistic when one perceives a tree as a thing separate from everything surrounding it. “This form of ontological dualism exists in Taoism and Confucianism, beliefs that divide the universe into the complementary oppositions of yin and yang” (Girardot, 1988:247). In traditions such as classical Hinduism, Zen Buddhism or Islamic Sufism, a key to enlightenment is "transcending" this sort of dualistic thinking, without merely substituting dualism with monism or pluralism.

### **1.3.3 Metaphysical Problems**

There are many philosophical problems that are considered metaphysical problems. Some of the metaphysical problems in philosophy include the mind-body problem, the problem of appearance and reality and the problem of identity among others. The mind-body problem is a problem which debates the relationship between thought and consciousness in the human mind and the brain. This problem arises from the question: What constitutes a human person? Generally, the human person is conceived as an entity that is made up of two fundamentally distinct substances namely the mind and the body. However, some philosophers (e.g. Rene Descartes) have argued that although the human person is made up of two different substances namely the mind and the body, yet, these two substances interact and influence each other. Rene Descartes, a French philosopher argued that minds and bodies are distinct kinds of substance. Bodies, he opines are spatially extended and perishable while minds, in contrast, are unextended thinking substances and yet, these two substances causally interact. (Skirry, 2010) However, the question which forms the basis of the mind-body problem is: how do two radically different substances causally interact?

The problem of appearance and reality revolves around the attempt to define what is ultimately real as opposed to what is merely apparent or visible. This problem holds that sometimes in our daily lives, we assume many things which, on a closer scrutiny, are found to be of apparent contradictions. This problem therefore attempts to seek the basis for incorrigible certainty on which human experiences can be solidly built. The problem of identity concerns the questions about the basic features or traits that characterize a person such that if those traits are removed, an individual ceases to be the same person. (Garrett, 1998) The problem of identity deals with philosophical questions that arise about individuals by virtue of their consciousness and unique features. The problem of identity therefore interrogates questions such as who am I? What does it mean to be a person? What am I? Etc.

### **1.3.4 Logical Positivism and the Elimination of Metaphysics**

The logical positive school developed around 1920s in Austria. It was a group formed by leading philosophers of science, mathematics, linguists, scientists etc.

They met in Vienna and hence they are also known as the Vienna Circle. This group has the following persons as members, A.J. Ayer, Bertrand Russell, Moritz Schlick, Ludwig Wittgenstein and many others. The group was concerned with the analysis of language and meaning. Ayer for instance puts it that “a philosopher that cannot master language is like a mathematician that cannot handle numerals” (Ayer;1952). They announced that the central task of philosophy is to assist the scientists with the language they need to communicate their discoveries. Logical positivism is convinced that science has taken up all the facts and that there is none left for the use of philosophy any more (Stumpf;1979).

They used mainly the idea of cognitive meaningfulness and the verification principle to make their ideas of science distinct from other disciplines. A statement is either analytic or else speaking nonsense. This group of scholars had the sole intention of demarcating the sciences from non-sciences and they saw metaphysics as a non-science whose language they cannot accommodate. Hence they said that every word must correspond to a fact and every fact must be verifiable and since the metaphysical enterprise cannot be able to accommodate some certain kinds of fact and since the language of metaphysicians are not verifiable, metaphysics as a discipline ought to be erased. Simply put, the verification principle implores that every statement or matter of fact must correspond to something tangible (Stumpf;1979). In other words, the verification principle implies that every state of affair should be corroborated and should also be confirmed before the truth or falsity of such propositions expressing such state of affairs could be ascertained. Popular minds here are: Moritz Schlick, Rudolf Carnap, Alfred Jules Ayer, Hans Reichenbach, Friedrich Waismann, Herbert Fiegl etc. These are the prominent figures in the Vienna Circle. The Circle or club was established in Vienna. The Circle was interested in demarcating science from non-science (Alozie 2004:40).What arguments did these minds converge against metaphysics?

It should be recalled that the destructive criticisms of metaphysics may be traced to David Hume who had called for burning of books on the subject in the following words:

When we run over libraries, persuaded of these principles, what havoc must we make? If we take in our hand any volume; of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance; let us ask, Does it contain any abstract reasoning containing quantity or number? No. Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence? No. Commit it then to the flames: for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion (Hume 2007:lvi).

In a related development, Moritz Schlick opines that the metaphysician "...seeks vain illusion" (1926:117). This was exactly echoed by Rudolf Carnap in the following words:

Our claim that the statements of metaphysics are entirely meaningless, that they do not assert anything,... how could it be explained that so many men in all ages and nations among them eminent minds, spend so much energy, on metaphysics if the latter consisted of nothing but mere words, nonsensically juxtaposed? (Carnap 1959:36).

Alfred Jules Ayer (1952), one of the staunch arch enemies of metaphysics had proposed the *Verification Principle* which ruled out statements whose propositions cannot be observed. Anthony Kenny articulates in the following words:

The great weapon in this attack was the Verification Principle. This, in its original form, ruled that the meaning of a proposition was the mode of its verification. Such a view of meaning enabled one to rule out of court as meaningless all statements which could neither be verified nor falsified by experience. Faced with a dispute about the nature of the Absolute, or the purpose of the Universe, or Kantian things-in-themselves, the Positivist could expose the emptiness of the quarrel by saying to the warring metaphysicians: 'What possible experience could settle the issue between you?' (Anthony 2006:369).

From all of the foregoing excerpts, it does not require much thinking to conclude that these scholars have amassed an all-out destructive criticism against metaphysics.

It must be stated that the verification principle of Alfred Jules Ayer is not even peculiar to him. He borrowed the idea from William Ockham's Razor but with very minor modifications. Ockham had insisted that "entities should not be multiplied beyond necessity" and this is what some scholars have used to reject metaphysical ideas. But is this really important? Do we have to bite the finger that has fed our intellectual yearning for over several millennia? Can we say we can truly eliminate metaphysics from our schema of intellect? What are the problems with the attempt to eliminate metaphysics?

## Self-Assessment Exercise

1. The idea of metaphysics may be traced in the work of which of these scholars? (a) Barnabas (b) Aristotle (c) Plato (d) Kant
2. Which is not a metaphysical problem? (a) Mind (b) Artificial Intelligence (c) Universals (d) problem of memory
3. Metaphysics can generally be divided into cosmogony, cosmology and \_\_\_\_\_

### 1.4 Summary

In this unit, we have examined the meaning, nature and scope of metaphysics. Metaphysics is a branch of philosophy that studies the basic constituent of reality. Metaphysics attempts to answer two fundamental questions: What is there? What is it like? Metaphysicians carry out their inquiries through some theories such as idealism, materialism, monism and dualism. Also, some of the problems that metaphysicians attempt to solve are the mind-body problem which concerns the relationship or interaction between the mind and the body, the problem of appearance and reality which concerns the search for ultimate reality and the problem of identity which concerns questions about the basic characteristics which makes a person what he is. In a nutshell, this unit has been able to:

- Metaphysics is gotten from two Greek words *meta* and *physika*
- Metaphysics is the study of the basic constituent of reality
- Major metaphysical theories include idealism, materialism, monism and dualism
- Metaphysics attempts to resolve the problems of identity, appearance and the mind-body problem.

### 1.5 References/Further Readings/Web Sources

- Altmann, M.C. (ed.), (2014). *The Palgrave Handbook of German Idealism*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
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## **1.6 Possible Answers to SAE**

1. (a); 2. (d); ontology



## **UNIT 2: ANTHROPOLOGY**

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Learning Outcomes
- 2.3.1 Defining Anthropology
- 2.3.2 Branches of Anthropology
- 2.4 Summary
- 2.5 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 2.6 Possible Answers to SAE

### **2.1 Introduction**

In this unit, we shall examine the nature, scope and fields of study in anthropology. Anthropology is often regarded as the scientific study of man and its behaviour and over the years, the discipline has been widened to include other areas of study like sociology, archeology and psychology among others.

### **2.2 Learning Outcomes**

By the end of the lesson, students should:

- be familiar with the nature and scope of anthropology
- identify specific fields of study in anthropology
- identify the focus of physical/biological anthropology

### **2.3.1 Defining Anthropology**

The word “anthropology” is derived from two Greek words, *anthropos* (man) and *logos* (study). Anthropology, therefore, means the scientific study of man or human beings. Anthropology can be defined as a field of study which studies man and his behaviour. Anthropologists are interested in all aspects of the human species and behaviour, in all places and at all times, from the origin and evolution of the species through its prehistoric civilizations and down to its present civilization. (Hill, 2020) Anthropology is regarded as both a biological and social science as it deals with man as a member of the animal kingdom and with man’s behaviour as a member of the society. It is also considered as a branch of sociology as it describes human, human behaviours and human societies all around the world.

William Havilland (1975) defines anthropology as “the study of human kind everywhere, throughout time which seeks to produce useful generations about people and their behavior and to arrive at the fullest possible understanding of human diversity. Gwynne and Hicks (1994) define anthropology as “the study of people and all the things they do, think, say and make.” Jary and Jary (1995) define anthropology as “the study of human beings, divided into the branches of biologically oriented, physical anthropology and social oriented, social anthropology.” Anthropology can therefore be described as “the science of

humanity,” which studies human beings in aspects ranging from the biology and evolutionary history of Homo sapiens to the features of society and culture that decisively distinguish humans from other animal species.

### **2.3.2 Branches of Anthropology**

Anthropology as a field of study encompasses diverse subject matters and is thus regarded as a collection of more specialized fields. The distinct fields of research in anthropology include: (1) physical anthropology which studies the biological process and endowment that distinguishes Homo sapiens from other species, (2) archaeology which studies the physical remnants of past cultures and former conditions of contemporary cultures, usually found buried in the earth, (3) linguistic anthropology which studies the unique human capacity to communicate through articulate speech and the diverse languages of humankind (4) social and/or cultural anthropology which studies the cultural systems that distinguish human societies from one another and the patterns of social organization associated with these systems and (5) psychological anthropology which studies the relationships among culture, social structure, and the human being as a person (Ingold, 2002).

Physical anthropology is the systematic study of human as a biological organism. It studies the present day human variation in the world. In his book, cultural anthropology, Conrad Kottak (2012) identifies five preoccupation of physical anthropology namely: pale anthropology which studies human evolution as revealed by fossil record; human genetics which studies the ways in which different genetic characteristic (e.g. body structure, color, shape) are passed from generation to generation; human growth and development which investigates how and why contemporary human populations differ in biological and physical characteristics; human biological plasticity: which studies how human bodies adapt to change under stress and the study of the biological evaluation behavior and social life of apes and other nonhuman primates.

Archeology is the branch of anthropology that studies material remains usually from the past to explain and describe human behaviour. Archeologists study tools and enduring relics to trace out cultural changes and reconstruct our understanding of the past and the present. Cultural anthropology studies human behaviours and cultures by describing their universality, particularity and generality. Linguistic anthropology studies languages, communication patterns and writing form both in the past and at present. Linguistic anthropology is further divided into three parts namely historical linguistics, social linguistics and descriptive structural linguistics (Brown et al, 2020).

## Self-Assessment Exercise

1. What is the branch of anthropology that studies material remains usually from the past to explain and describe human behavior? (a) philosophy (b) anthropology (c) archaeology (d) biology
2. Anthropology has how many sub-divisions? (a) 4 (b) 5 (c) 3 (d) 2
3. Who defines anthropology as “the study of human kind everywhere, throughout time which seeks to produce useful generalizations about people and their behavior and to arrive at the fullest possible understanding of human diversity? (a) Gaviland (b) Havilland (c) Philomachus (d) Polermachus

## 2.4 Summary

In this unit, we have examined the nature and scope of anthropology as well as the branches of anthropology. Anthropology is the scientific study of human beings. Anthropology is often regarded as a discipline that is partly scientific and partly humanistic in nature. Anthropology has five major fields of study namely archeology, cultural, physical, linguistic and psychological anthropology. In a nutshell, this unit has been able to:

- Anthropology is derived from two Greek words, *anthropos* and *logos*
- Anthropology is the scientific study of man or human beings
- Anthropology has five major branches namely archaeology, cultural, physical, linguistic and psychological anthropology.
- Linguistic anthropology can be further divided into three parts namely historical linguistics, social linguistics and descriptive structural linguistics.

## 2.5 References/Further Readings/Web Sources

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## **2.6 Possible Answers to SAE**

1. (c); 2. (b); 3. (b)

## **UNIT 3: ONTOLOGY**

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Learning Outcomes
- 3.3.1 Ontology: Meaning and Types
- 3.3.2 African Ontology
- 3.3.3 Explanatory Powers in African Ontology
- 3.4 Summary
- 3.5 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 3.6 Possible Answers to SAE

### **3.1 Introduction**

In this unit, we shall examine the meaning and methods of ontology as a branch of metaphysics. Ontology can be defined as the study of being and existence. It is that branch of philosophy that studies the meaning of existence, being, substance and attributes. Ontology discusses issues such as the existence of God, personal identity, the concept of the soul etc. As a way of making the discourse on ontology as comprehensible, this unit considers African ontology as a paradigm and some of the explanatory powers therein.

### **3.2 Learning Outcomes**

By the end of the lesson, students should be able to

- explain the meaning of ontology
- explain types of ontologies
- identify some major ontologists in the history of philosophy
- examine and identify some unique characteristics of African ontology

### **3.3.1 Ontology: Meaning and Types**

Ontology can be defined as the branch of philosophy that studies concepts such as existence, being, becoming and reality. It is the inquiry into the existence of entities in the most fundamental way. The word ontology is derived from two Greek words *onto* (being or that which is) and *logos* (study). Ontology therefore means the study of what there is. (Hofweber, 2020) Many philosophical problems in philosophy such as the mind-body problem, the problem of appearance and reality, the question on the existence of God, the problem of evil etc. are considered ontological problems in the sense that they deal with the existence or non-existence of a particular object or thing.

Ontology provides the criteria for distinguishing different types of objects into categories such as concrete, abstract, existent, non-existent, independent or dependent. According to Raul Corazzon (2021), we can distinguish ontology into three parts namely formal, descriptive and formalized ontologies. Formal ontology was introduced by Edmund Husserl. Formal ontology is a tool that examines the logical features of predication and of the various theories of universals. It is the

result of combining the intuitive, informal method of classical ontology with the formal, mathematical method of modern symbolic logic, and ultimately of identifying them as different aspects of one and the same science. (Cocchiarella, 1991, 640) Descriptive ontology concerns the collection of information about objects that can be dependent or independent. Formalized ontology deals with the construction of formal codification in a formal language with the goal to provide an unbiased view on reality. (Simons, 2015) Major ontologists in the history of philosophy include Parmenides, Franz Brentano, Gottlob Frege, Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, W.V.O. Quine etc.

### **3.3.2 African Ontology and its Explanatory Power for Phenomena Occurrences**

Ontology is that aspect of metaphysics that studies the nature of beings in the actual world (Cayne, 1992: 462). When we talk about the idea of being from the African perspective, it is usually the case to look at the religious beliefs of the people where the ideas of the world are deeply enshrined (Anyanwu, 1984). While chronicling the beliefs aggregate of African traditional religion, Bolaji Idowu lists the following in the order of superiority: Belief in God, Belief in Divinities, Belief in Spirits, Belief in ancestors, and the practice of magic and medicine (Idowu, 1973). None of these beliefs stand in isolation. All of them are intertwined thereby giving a coherent and logical depiction of the universe and how the divine relates with it. How is this possible? As a way of providing answers to these questions, this study will employ traditional *Yoruba* ontology.

It will be helpful to commence with the admission that belief in the Higher God, *Olodumare* among the *Yoruba* is grounding. In his rendition, Bewaji insists that the reality of *Olodumare* is not a matter for argument or debate as replete in the Western tradition. On the contrary, the belief in *Olodumare*'s existence is held to be foundational. He amplifies:

The existence of *Olodumare* is not geotactic, nor is it dependent upon any human whim. This, perhaps, explains why no elaborate arguments of proofs are thought necessary for the existence of God in *Yoruba* religion. The starting point of wisdom among the *Yoruba* is the acceptance of the *de facto* existence of Deity (Bewaji, 2007: 369).

Furthermore, one must also note that belief in the existence of *Olodumare* stresses the *Yoruba* belief in two planes of existence namely, *Orun* ('spiritual abode') and *Aye* ('physical world'). *Aye* is believed to have been created by *Olodumare* with the assistance of the *orisas* (subordinate deities) who reside with him in *Orun* (Oyelakin, 2013: 87). This belief also establishes the idea of a never-ending

complimentary binary between *Aye* and *Orun* (Onwuanibe 1984: 191). It is in a similar spectrum that Margaret Drewal (1992: 14) explains:

The Yoruba conceive of the cosmos as consisting of two distinct yet inseparable realms—*ayé* (the visible, tangible world of the living) and *orun* (the invisible spiritual realms of the ancestors, gods, and spirits). Such a cosmic conception is visualized either as a spherical gourd [calabash], whose upper and lower hemispheres fit tightly together, or as a divination tray with a raised figured border enclosing a flat central surface.

It is therefore important to realise that *Olodumare* is not a *Deus remotus*, who is far off or like Aristotle's God who bears no relation or interaction with the world. *Olodumare* has been passed on as creator as well. Bolaji Idowu informs that *Olodumare* '...is known as *Eleda* – 'the Creator', 'the Maker' (Idowu 1962: 39). He is the Origin and Giver of Life, and in that capacity He is called *Elemi* – 'the Owner of Spirit', or 'Owner of Life' (Idowu 1962: 39). In the words of John Bewaji: "the evidence that *Olodumare* is the creator of everything is displayed in virtually all accounts of the relationship between *Olodumare* and the Universe. Where He did not directly cause or create, He instructed the divinities to create and He supervised. So, He both created the good and the bad, well-informed and the deformed, the rainy season and the drought..." (Bewaji, 1998: 8).

There are at least two facts that must not be wished away at this juncture. Firstly, no one directly witnessed the whole creation process. Hence, instead of saying *Olodumare* created, this study will admit that the Higher God plays the role of guaranteeing order in the universe. Secondly, what is to be gleaned is that *Olodumare* had never been alone. The Higher God has always been with the primordial divinities, who have duties and responsibilities affixed to them for the smooth running of the universe. Some of these divinities are: *Orunmila*, *Obatala*, *Ajala*, *Sango*, *Esu*. These facts attest to the cardinal truth in Process-relational philosophy which is: "God is not before all creation, but with all creation" (Whitehead, 1978: 521). Olusegun Oladipo (2004: 329) corroborates this inference when he puts that if *Olodumare* "made the world out of pre-existing materials, then it follows that he had always been part of the world-order. And, if this is the case, He cannot be said to exist beyond the world."

It needs little elaboration that "the divinities were the first creations of *Olodumare*; and that they were created by Him in His capacity as *Eleda*, for the primary purpose of assisting Him in the management of the planetary system" (Akintola, 1999: 52). In the words of Olarenwaju Shitta-Bey what this is suggestive of "...is

that the divinities were created by *Olodumare* to assist...That they are to assist suggests that they are deputising *Olodumare*, which make them all the deputies of *Olodumare*” (Shitta-Bey, 2013: 79). Worship and ritual is directed toward *Olodumare* through the divinities. This approach is similar to the Biblical injunction where Jesus the Messiah announced thus: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the father excepted through me” (John 14: 6). Apart from the divinities, there are also spirits with malevolent and benevolent capacities, depending on proper mollification. But before engaging with the spirits, some points need to be stated regarding the number of divinities in the *Yoruba* thought system.

Adebowale Akintola in this regard reveals that: “According to *Ifa* tradition, there are four hundred and one (401) divinities in the *Yoruba* pantheon. Two hundred and one (201) of these are classified as higher (or benevolent), while the other two hundred (200) are lower (malevolent) divinities” (Akintola 1999: 55). One will wonder the supposed ‘*Ifa* tradition’ that Akintola has in mind when his claim is juxtaposed with Bolaji Idowu’s who cites an *Ifa* verse contrary to Akintola’s position. For Idowu (1962: 39):

*Praise to the 400 divinities of the right hand (the benevolent)*

*Praise to the 200 divinities of the left hand (the malevolent)*

*Praise to the 460 divinities*

*Who line the very road of heaven*

Two points are deducible from the foregoing malevolent and benevolent forces assisting *Olodumare* with the management of the world. The first is the lack of consensus regarding the numbers of the *orisas*. The second is that there are benevolent and malevolent deities that make the notion of evilness and goodness admissible and comprehensible for the traditional *Yoruba*, as they do not go about to pose the philosophical problem of evil puzzle that is rife in the Western tradition. Why is this so? How does the *Yoruba* thought system admit without contradiction, the reality of evilness and goodness in the universe? Discourse about the *ajogun* is now paramount

The *ajogun* are popularly termed as the calamitous spirits and enemies of humankind. A more sympathetic terminology is *eniyan*. They are legion, and are led by eight warlords: *Iku* (Death), *Àrùn* (Disease), *Ofo* (Loss), *Egba* (Paralysis), *Oran* (Trouble), *Epe* (Curse), *Ewon* (Imprisonment), *Eye* (Affliction) (Ogunnaike, 2015: 389).

What is to be gleaned is that in traditional *Yoruba* theology there is no entity equivalent of the Devil/Satan. More so, *Olodumare* the Higher God is not perfectly adorned with superlatives of knowledge, love and power vis-à-vis the Abrahamic God and this is why the philosophical problem of evil does not



infiltrate the thought system. This underscores the persistence of relational and persuasive power in traditional *Yoruba* theology. This is true because for the *Yoruba*, “both ire (goodness) and ibi (evilness) are not separated as two distinct realities, but rather seen as one of two sides” (Fayemi, 2012: 314). It is more like a binary but not dialectical. Evil is a result of the visitation of the malevolent forces when an entity fails to conform to the ideal of order which is signified chiefly by *Olodumare*.

Interestingly, African ontology, as discussed from the traditional *Yoruba* view point provides understanding concerning how these ancient Africans understand both the celestial and terrestrial events. In addition, they have also been the need to explain the reason why things are the way they are from this backlog. Much as there are replete instances for explaining reality, our analysis of how African ontology explains reality will be carried out in the next section.

### 3.3.3 Explanatory Powers in African Ontology

The contention of this section is to give two instances where the urge to explain events in the phenomena using the understanding of African ontology which we have briefly exposed in the previous section. So within the sub-sections that follow, we are going to use the idea of cause and effect as well as the ability to control rainfall to deepen our knowledge of African ontology.

**Causality in African Metaphysics:** Since we have already discussed the meaning and nature of causality in the Western understanding through relying on David Hume in the previous study, we shall now give attention to the understanding of the concept from the African perspective.

We begin with the claim that causality is a central dogma when we consider the idea of African science. In this connection, Chris Akpan (2010) identifies one fundamental method of traditional African science. This is the method of causality with an underlying mythico-religious dimension. In discussing causality as a method of science, Akpan points to the essential role that causality plays in the nature and character of traditional African science. In his general analysis of causality, Akpan first simply makes a sweeping generalization of the role of causality in Western science by stating how the Western scientist strives to give a causal explanation to things within the physical universe (Akpan, 2010: 15). Akpan’s intention is to show that causal inevitability of natural phenomena underlies every scientific research (Afisi, 2016: 66). In making a clear distinction on what makes causality in African science different from what is obtainable in the West, Akpan notes that caution must prevail in not confusing the idea of causal explanations with the idea of causality. He points out that though there are differences in agents of causation, as well as assumptions behind causative patterns, there is no fundamental difference in the idea of causality, whether in the

West or in Africa. Causality still simply means “A causes B” in both contexts (Afisi, 2016: 66). We however disagree with Akpan on this subject. His examination of African science using the principle of causality lacks serious and reliable analysis especially when looked at from the angle of African ontology.

John Sodipo (2010: 91) is credited for emphasizing the ontological connection between an event and its non-empirical cause. Specifically, when the Western mind thinks that an event is caused by the other, Sodipo (2010: 91) maintains that the African even goes further to consider the works of some non-empirical forces within the African ontology as reasons for the action to have taken place. The African, according to Sodipo even when he understands that the fall of the tree may have been caused by lightening goes further to even examine the possibility of such a reality being understood from the workings of ontological realities like the malevolent forces which we considered in the preceding section. For Sodipo, these realities, even when they are non-empirical are usually given more priority over the empirical factors.

So as Akpan argues, even when the Western and African mind both believe in causal factors in the phenomena, it is also clear that the latter goes beyond the physical and invite the non-physical for the reason why some states of affairs are the way they are. Whether or not this thinking is guided by habit or custom as Hume would say is beyond the contention of this essay. Our point is to show that in the explanation of causality in African ontology, the non-physical ontological realities also play a part.

In order to have a better understanding of how causal factors, both physical and non-physical are crucial for African ontology, we shall examine the reality of rainmaking which is replete in many traditional African communities.

**Rainfall ‘Control’ in African Ontology:** The ability to control and divert rainfall is both tied to the non-physical aspects of African ontology as well as the Afro-ontological perception of the idea of causality which we have already explained in the foregoing sub-section.

In African traditional societies, through incantations and symbols, rain is prevented or diverted. Observably, as “the rain-maker burns certain leaves and sprinkles water, using sacred objects, especially rain-stones, words are uttered that go to effect the desired result, namely, rainfall” (Aja, 1996: 117). These traditional rain-makers monopolize and shroud this sort of knowledge in secrecy and often use it for business purposes or for witch-hunting their perceived enemies. Usually, they have agents, who go around informing them of venues and times for ceremonies and they extort money from the hosts of these ceremonies. Otherwise, they (rain-makers) would mess up any ceremonies if they are not paid.

Regrettably, this knowledge is left in utter secrecy and this informed the reason for Africa's continuous epistemic backwardness. There are other areas of Africa's knowledge system, where this culture of epistemic secrecy abounds. These include African traditional orthopedics, African traditional mystical travelling (acts of vanishing and reappearing), African traditional witch-crafting and so on. However, it is the case that there are ways that explanations which are non-physical may be given to the ability to control rainfall. This is essential in the characterization of the unique feature of African ontology when drawn parallel with Western notion of causation and ontology.

### Self-Assessment Exercise

1. The African version of causal explanation is \_\_\_\_\_ (a) mystical (b) celestial (c) physical (d) selective
  
2. What is that aspect of metaphysics that studies the nature of beings in the actual world? (a) Ontology (b) Cosmology (c) Anthropology (d) Psychology

### 3.4 Summary

In this unit, we have examined the meaning of ontology. We explained that ontology is gotten from two Greek words *onto* and *logos* which translate to mean the study of being. Ontology therefore studies being and existence. Ontology can be distinguished into three parts namely formal, descriptive and formalized ontologies. In a nutshell, this unit has been able to:

- Ontology is a branch of philosophy that studies being and existence
- Ontology is gotten from two Greek words onto and logos
- Parmenides and Aristotle are major ontologists in the history of philosophy
- Discuss African ontology and two examples of explanatory powers

### 3.5 References/Further Readings/Web Sources

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from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/ontology-metaphysics>

### **3.6 Possible Answers to SAE**

1. (a); 2. (a)

## **UNIT 4: MORTALITY AND IMMORTALITY**

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Learning Outcomes
- 4.3.1 Mortality and Immortality
- 4.3.2 Mortality and Immortality in an African Culture (Yoruba)
- 4.3.3 Some Arguments against Immortality
- 4.3.4 Some Arguments for Immortality
- 4.4 Summary
- 4.5 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 4.6 Possible Answers to SAE

### **4.1 Introduction**

In this unit we shall examine the terms “mortality” and “immortality”. Mortality is the state of being susceptible to death while immortality means the indefinite continuation of a person’s existence. In philosophy, there is the ever present argument about whether man is mortal or immortal. Some philosophers have argued that man is composed of matter and at death, man ceases to exist. Some, on the other hand, have argued that man consists of the body and the soul and although the body perishes at death, yet, the soul continues to exist even after death. In this unit, however, we shall examine the concept of mortality and immortality from the Yoruba cultural perspective.

### **4.2 Learning Outcomes**

Students should be able to:

- understand the term “mortality”
- understand the term “immortality”
- understand the concept of mortality and immortality in the Yoruba culture
- identify and evaluate some positions against immortality
- identify some arguments in support of immortality or reincarnation

### **4.3.1 Mortality and Immortality**

Mortality and immortality have been one of mankind’s major concerns and even though these terms have been confined to discussions in religion, yet, discussions on mortality and immortality are issues of interest in philosophy. In philosophical analysis, the term mortality means susceptible to death. Mortality, also regarded as death refers to the cessation of biological functions that makes life possible. In this sense, mortality stands in contrast to life that is, once a person or thing dies, it is impossible for such a thing to live again. Mortality therefore refers to the decomposition of the human body and the cessation of life. (Luper, 2019) A person is said to have experienced mortality or death if the body no longer responds to vital signs like brain activity, consciousness, response to painful sensation etc.

Immortality, on the other hand, means the indefinite continuation of a person's existence. It implies a perpetual or never ending existence regardless of the decomposition of the body. Immortality implies that a person is capable of existing forever without experiencing death. (Andrade, 2020) Discussions about immortality have generated philosophical questions about what constitutes a person. Generally, a person is regarded as a single individual who consists of a life and has the capability of conscious thought. However, some have argued that man only consists of material substances that are susceptible to death. People who hold this view are known as materialists and they argue that man is made up of matter that is, man is composed of the material body which houses the brain and the central nervous system. They hold that the mind is the brain and since mind is the brain, then it implies that at death, the body which consists of the brain, the central nervous system and other material parts decompose at death. Materialists therefore argue that death/mortality is the final end of everything. (Schumacher, 2010) At death, the body decomposes and ceases to exist. Hence, for them, the idea of immortality is illogical and flawed. Philosophers who hold this view include Democritus, the Atomists, Gilbert Ryle, U.T. Place and D. C. Armstrong.

However, some other philosophers regarded as dualists have argued contrarily to the position of the materialists. Dualists argue that man is composed of two substances namely the body and the soul/mind. Dualists conceive the mind as a non-physical, immaterial and spiritual substance that can survive death. The body on the other hand is the material and corporeal substance that ceases to exist at death. The dualist position implies that man is composed of two substances namely the body and the soul and while these two substances interact, yet the soul can exist independently of the body but not vice versa. This position also implies that since the mind/soul is an immaterial substance, then it is not subject to death and so, it is immortal. (Andrades, 2020) Hence, dualism posits that a person is made up of two substances namely the body and the soul and while the body is material and perishes at death, the soul is immaterial and can survive death. Philosophers who hold this view include Plato, Saint Augustine, Rene Descartes, Gottfried Leibniz etc.

#### **4.3.2 The Concept of Immortality in an African Culture (Yoruba)**

The Yoruba people are people who reside majorly in the South-western region of Nigeria and they constitute one of the major ethnic groups in Nigeria, Western Africa. The Yoruba word for mortality is *ikú* while the word for immortality is *àikú*. The Yoruba believe that a person is made up of three parts namely *ara*, *emi* and *ori*. *Ara* is the body which perishes at death. The *ara* (body) which comprises of parts like *okan* (heart), *owo* (hand), *ese* (leg), *eje* (blood), *ifun* (intestine) is a material and perishable substance which decomposes at death. (Oyeshile, 2006) The *emi* (soul) is the life giving spiritual substance that comes from *Olodumare* (the supreme deity). The *emi* is the life force of a person and without it, a man

ceases to live. The *emi* is regarded as a spiritual substance that is immaterial and immortal. The Yoruba believe that at death, the body perishes while the *emi* leaves the body and returns to *Olodumare* (the Supreme Being who is the owner of *emi*). The *ori* (head) is believed to have a dual conception that is the physical head which houses the brain and the spiritual head which houses the destiny of the individual. (Akomolafe, 2018)

The implication of this conception of a person is that: (1) The *emi* is seen as a creation of the *Olodumare* (2) The creation of *emi* is different from the creation of the body. (3) While the physical body is considered to be perishable at death, the *emi* is regarded as the vital force or spiritual element that gives life and thus, it is not destructible. (4) The *emi* is therefore immortal (5) Death is only a change of state and a door to another existence. The Yoruba belief in immortality is often reflected in some practices such as ancestral worship, funeral rites, Masquerade festivals etc. (Lawal, 1977).

### 4.3.3 Some Arguments against Immortality

In this section, we shall consider two scholars who argue against the concept of immortality and even the lack of a soul that can outlive the physical body after death. These are John Searle and Gilbert Ryle.

Ryle, in his 1949 masterpiece entitled, *The Concept of Mind*, commenced with the following words:

The philosophical arguments which constitute this book are intended not to increase what we know about minds, but to rectify the logical geography of the knowledge which we already possess (Ryle;1951:7).

What the above excerpt informs us about is that the mind-problem is not to be solved by arguments but by logic and language. This is his reaction to the thoughts of Rene Descartes briefly exposed above:

Descartes left as one of his main philosophical legacies a myth which continues to distort the continental geography of the subject. A myth is, of course, not a fairy story. It is the presentation of facts belonging to one category in the idioms appropriate to another. To explode a myth is accordingly not to deny the facts but to re-allocate them. And this is what I am trying to do (Ryle;1951:8).

He informs us as the above reveals that the enterprise of Rene Descartes is a myth. He calls it the “Myth of the Ghost in the Machine”. Having discovered this so called myth, what did he do? In response, Ryle reiterates that:

I try to use reductio ad absurdum arguments both to disallow operations implicitly recommended by the Cartesian myth and to indicate to what logical types the concepts under investigation ought to be allocated. I do not, however, think it improper to use from time to time arguments of a less rigorous sort, especially when it seems expedient to mollify or acclimatise. Philosophy is the replacement of category-habits by category-disciplines, and if persuasions of conciliatory kinds ease the pains of relinquishing inveterate intellectual habits, they do not indeed reinforce the rigorous arguments, but they do weaken resistances to them (Ryle;1951:8).

It is the conviction of Gilbert Ryle that Rene Descartes has missed the point entirely for assuming as his theory reveals that something where it is not. This is why the “Myth of the Ghost in the Machine” is seen by Gilbert Ryle as category mistake. What is category mistake?

Gilbert Ryle move on to cite some cases that illustrates the category mistake but due to the limitation of time and space, we shall be limited to the oxford illustration which is as follows:

A foreigner visiting Oxford or Cambridge for the first time is shown a number of colleges, libraries, playing fields, museums, scientific departments and administrative offices. He then asks 'But where is the University? I have seen where the members of the Colleges live, where the Registrar works, where the scientists experiment and the rest. But I have not yet seen the University in which reside and work the members of your University (Ryle;1951:16).

This above is a scenario Gilbert Ryle uses to show the inherent view in the work of Rene Descartes and previous scholars who had worked on the subject. Ryle holds that they have misrepresented “minds as extra centres of causal processes, rather like machines but also considerably different from them. Their theory was a para-mechanical hypothesis (Ryle;1951:19). Ryle said the category mistake was applying properties to a non-material thing that are logically and grammatically appropriate only for a category including material things.

Gilbert Ryle traces the origin of the category-mistake to Rene Descartes’ struggle to merge his scientific view with his religious view. To this view, Fritjof Capra says:



The birth of modern science was preceded and accompanied by a development of philosophical thought which led to an extreme formulation of the spirit/matter dualism. This formulation appeared in the seventeenth century in the philosophy of Rene Descartes who based his view of nature on a fundamental division into two separate and independent realms; that of mind (*res cogitans*), and that of matter (*res extensa*). The ‘Cartesian’ division allowed scientists to treat matter as dead and completely separate from themselves, and to see the material world as a multitude of different objects assembled into a huge machine (Capra;1975:16).

Gilbert Ryle is of the conviction that the human mind is not a separate and distinct entity from the body. Rather, the mental processes ascribable to the human person are in fact functions of the body itself. This thesis is in line with the Lockean critique of innate ideas.

Maybe, we should look at the issue of Ryle’s category mistake anew. The core of this refutation is that mind should be taken out of the discourse of personhood. This brings to our mind quickly, the practice of yoga, soul-travel, day-dreaming, introspection, clairvoyance as well as telepathy. Are these activities the product of the brain? If it is granted that these activities are real, then the claim that they are the product of the brain will be baseless. However, it is one thing for us to claim that something exists, but it something else to show that they in fact do. Here, we have little competent, but there is a critical point to it. If Mr “A”, “B”, “C” and “D” claimed that they practice such activities like telepathy and clairvoyance, and provide some evidences. Are we to grant that they do? In fact, many accounts have been given in the traditional African religion to support telepathy, yet we are still skeptical to the certainty of these claims. Why?

The question whether minds exist is the core of this dispute. No doubt, all have granted that the body exists. Of course, we have also granted that brain thinks. We never consider it necessary to refute these claims. The reason for this is simple: it is open to public assessment. To my mind, even if we all believe that brain thinks, we have no clear justification for this. It is not verifiable (Samuel, 2011: 164).

Given that Ryle takes a materialistic stance against Descartes dualism, the next section tries to look at the idea as exposed and amplified by John Searle.

In his 1984 work, *Minds, Brain and Science*, John Searle gives us a thorough materialistic resolution of the mind-body problem. His view is very similar with that of Gilbert Ryle but he does not concern himself with Rene Descartes directly as Gilbert Ryle had done. He recognizes that contemporaneously the mind-body

discourse has evolved into the relation between the mind and the brain. John Searle is convinced that:

I believe that the mind-body problem has a rather simple solution, one that is consistent both with what we know about neurophysiology and with our commonsense conception of the nature of mental states – pains, beliefs, desires and so on (Searle;2003:12).

He holds that the problem we had all along had was the way this aspect of philosophy has been handed down to us and the vocabulary inherent therein. Searle is convinced that there are four features of the mental phenomena. They are: consciousness, intentionality, subjectivity of mental states and the problem of mental causation. Consciousness for John Searle is “central fact of specifically human existence because without it, all of the other specifically human aspects of our existence – language, love, humour and so on would be impossible” (Searle;2003:14). He defines intentionality as the “feature by which our mental states are directed at, or about, or refer to, or are of objects and state of affairs in the world other than themselves” (Searle;2003:14). Subjectivity as holds by John Searle has to do with personalism or has Rene Descartes calls it ‘ergo’. Mental causation has to do with our belief that our thoughts and cogitations have some measures of causal effects on the physical world. These four put together are impossible to be admitted in our scientific framework according to John Searle. These four features for John Searle are what made answers to the mind-body problem so elusive. In his proposed solution to the mind-body problem, John Searle advances that:

Mental phenomena, all mental phenomena whether conscious or unconscious, visual or auditory, pains, tickles, itches, thoughts, indeed, all of our mental life, are caused by processes going on in the brain (Searle;2003:16).

John Searle describes the structure of the human mental life as a connection of neurons to the brain. He hints that “our sensations of pains are caused by a series of events that begin at free nerve endings and end in the thalamus and in other regions of the brain” (Searle;2003:16-7). It is when the brain begins to process these that the mental aspect becomes evidential. This implies, on the other hand that “if the events outside the central nervous system occurred, but nothing happened in the brain, there would be no mental events” (Searle;2003:17).

At this point, one comes to a crucial point in the analysis of John Searle on the mind-body solution. He claims that all what Rene Descartes are mental activities and private are merely brain processes. This means that the Cartesian division between the mental and the observable is erroneous. It also denies the possibility

of an immortal soul that can outlive the body. But wait a minute! John Searle has made two statements that do not seem to go hand in hand. In his arguments to evince the solution to the mind-body problem these two statements would need a marriage:

- i. All mental phenomena are caused by brain processes;
- ii. All mental phenomena such as pain, thoughts etc are just features of the brain.

The above (i) and (ii) do not appear to be so easy to merge. For how can it be conceived that brains cause mind and yet minds are just features of the brain? John Searle believes that it is the impossibility to see a merger to both propositions that has blocked a solution to the mind-body problem all along. In his resolution, John Searle uses the analogy of the formation of some material substances. He expounds:

In the case of liquidity, solidity, and transparency, we have no difficulty at all in supposing that the surface features are caused by the behaviour of elements at the micro-level, and at the same time we accept that the surface phenomena just are features of the very systems in question. I think the clearest way of stating this point is to say that the surface feature is both caused by the behaviour of microelements, and at the same time is realised in the system that is made up of the micro-elements. There is a cause and effect relationship, but at the same time the surface features are just higher level features of the very system whose behaviour at the micro-level causes those features (Searle;2003:19).

Now, when he returns to the brain-mind problem (otherwise construed as mind-body problem), Searle informs us that the four features of mental phenomena mentioned earlier are actually the causes of mental activities as well as the features in association with the brain and the entire nervous system. With this he claims to have given a satisfactory answer to the mind-body problem. He states that: “To summarise: on my view, the mind and the body interact, but they are not two different things, since mental phenomena just are features of the brain” (Searle;2003:24).

The resolution given by John Searle and Gilbert Ryle is commendable. They have both succeeded in eradicating the problem of causation that has plagued the Cartesian framework. It is also the case that these scholars have put logic and language into revealing the problem of the debate. Just as Rene Descartes' analysis surpassed those of his contemporaries, the Rylean and Searlean structure

as well can be commended for their illumination further and evincing new claims on the subject matter.

There is no doubt that the idea of Rene Descartes is full of problem and Gilbert Ryle has been able to locate the logical fault that is present there. This study has been able to go beyond criticisms of Ryle alone but to show the materialistic position of Ryle and even Searle.

In the section that follows, we shall focus on the criticisms of a materialistic position of Ryle and Searle by relying on the arguments of the mystics. What are the arguments on this other side?

#### **4.3.4 Some Arguments for Immortality**

In this section, the arguments that have been used to establish the idea of a soul that can outlive the human body will be considered. Consciousness, astral projection and reincarnation will be used to show that the materialistic view held by Ryle and Searle may not be encompassing enough.

**Consciousness:** In this section, we shall be briefly talking about telepathy under studies in consciousness. This is intended to show that there is more to the human body as Searle and Ryle would want us to believe. Maybe, we should look at the issue of Ryle's category mistake anew. The core of this refutation is that mind should be taken out of the discourse of personhood. This brings to our mind quickly, the practice of yoga, soul-travel, day-dreaming, introspection, clairvoyance as well as telepathy. Are these activities the product of the brain? If it is granted that these activities are real, then the claim that they are the product of the brain will be baseless. However, it is one thing for us to claim that something exists, but it something else to show that they in fact do. Here, we have little competent, but there is a critical point to it. If Mr "A", "B", "C" and "D" claimed that they practice such activities like telepathy and clairvoyance, and provide some evidences. Are we to grant that they do? In fact, many accounts have been given in the traditional African religion to support telepathy, yet we are still skeptical to the certainty of these claims. Why?

The question whether minds exist is the core of this dispute. No doubt, all have granted that the body exists. Of course, we have also granted that brain thinks. We never consider it necessary to refute these claims. The reason for this is simple: it is open to public assessment. To my mind, even if we all believe that brain thinks, we have no clear justification for this. It is not verifiable (Samuel, 2011: 164). We shall explore this initiative shortly.

Simply put, telepathy is "communication, apparently without the use of sight, sound etc. between the minds of different persons" (Cayne;1992:1016). These

'little' definition is however incomplete. Telepathy could also involve communication between humans and nonhuman animals as well. The Buddhist T. Lobsang Rampa demonstrates this reality in his 1978 work, *As It Was!* He gives this scenario:

At the sight of me the frontier guards set great mastiffs loose and they came snarling and slavering at me, but then, to the amazement of the guards, they jumped at me with affection because they and I recognized each other as friends. Those dogs had never been talked to telepathically before and I suppose they thought I was one of them. Anyway, they jumped all around me and welcomed me with wild yelps and barks of joy (Rampa;1978:96-7).

Elsewhere, the author writes that "animals are not just stupid creatures who can't talk and can't do anything. Actually, humans are the dumb clucks because animals can do and do talk by telepathy. Humans for the most part have to make uncouth sounds which they term a language, whereas animal can do telepathy in any language!" (Rampa;1980:12).

Now if it can be established that there is a conscious channel through which humans can communicate with animals, does that not imply that animals also have minds? Although this is a discourse for another time, what cannot be ruled out is that a materialistic assertion given by Ryle has a lot of erroneous consequences that if care is not taken may end up truncating the real constitutive element of human beings. When we examine the argument from reincarnation, we become familiar with the idea that a simplistic and materialistic proposal is far from reality. In other words, Ryle's reductionism does us no good. This is because it fails to appreciate some of the truth and experiences of persons.

**Reincarnation:** In this section, the focus is to argue contra Ryle that the human person is beyond the material. The mind cannot be easily wished away as the operations of the brain as Ryle would have us believe. But what is reincarnation? Does it have any implication for the interaction between mind and body? We shall address these questions soon enough.

"Reincarnation is the passage of the soul from one body to another" (Labeodan;2008:6). Elsewhere we are told that "reincarnation happens if and when one and the same person returns to life in a body that is numerically distinct from the body she had (or was) when she died. (Murray and Rea; 2008:274). Now, re-incarnation has been dealt with seriously by John Locke. However, when we gloss over how the people in the state of nature come to know the law of nature in his *Two Treatise on Government*, we find that his answer to that is not compatible

with his claim about how we come to know in Essay. This shows the limits of his mental capacity and shortcoming.

Re-incarnation is a reality that some have experienced. Again, because we have not had such experiences is not sufficient to say those who have are liars. We shall look at some examples.

Lobsang Rampa whom we had mentioned before now, was a lama whose soul inhabited the body of a British plumber named Cyril Henry Hoskin (1910-1981) who writes with that name (T. Lobsang Rampa) and recounts events that had occurred many years back as a lama in Tibet and China.

The ancient philosopher Pythagoras is said to have hinted at his re-incarnation in the following tradition handed down to us:

They say that, while staying at Argos, he saw a shield from the spoils of Troy nailed up, and burst into tears. When the Argives asked him the reason for his emotion, he said that he himself had borne that shield in Troy when he was Euphorbus; they did not believe him, and judged him to be mad, but he said he would find a true sign that this was the case; for on the inside of the shield was written in archaic lettering EUPHORBUS' S. Because of the extraordinary nature of the claim, they all urged him to take down the offering; and the inscription was found on it (Barnes;1979:110).

There are many other such reports that are not limited to the ancients or Hinduism and Buddhism alone. Many cultures even in sub-Saharan Africa such as the Yoruba people have testified to this reality and implied the existence of a soul that can outlive the human body. In the words of Helen Labeodan:

The belief in reincarnation, as seen among the Yoruba portrays clearly their belief that the soul of man does not die because it can exist independently outside of the body. They believe evidently that there is an element of immortality in man and that there is a life after death (Labeodan;2008:7).

Anyone could object that these are not true or that they are just myths concocted against the reality of death. This is a very good skepticism. The Yorubas, however make incisions on the skin of the deceased baby who when coming back to life as 'another' baby brings those markings on the skin at the places where the earlier incisions were made. Such children are called 'abiku' and they are clear cut cases

of the reality of a human soul or mind which is independent of the body as John Searle and Gilbert Ryle would have us believe.

**Astral Projection:** In the two sections before the present one, our attention has been on the ideas of consciousness and reincarnation as realities that counter the claims of Ryle that the mind is the functioning of the brain. We acknowledge the fact that Descartes is not able to reconcile how the material and immaterial interact, but the criticisms and solution given by Ryle are far from reality. This is true if we consider the case of astral projection closely.

In a simple way, astral projection is that human ability to move away or out of one's body. Of course, what moves out of the body cannot be the body but what Rene Descartes and philosophers before him as far back as Socrates, Pythagoras and Plato had called the human soul. This supports the thesis that there is a soul that can exist independent of the human mind. Shirley Maclaine, Iyke Nathan Uzorma and Lobsang Rampa have all experienced astral projection and we shall make a very brief exposition of their experiences.

In her 1983 book, *Out on a Limb*, Shirley Maclaine describes her astral experience thus:

I stared at the flickering candle. My head felt light. I physically felt a kind of tunnel open in my mind...I felt myself flow into the space, fill it, and float off, rising out of my body until I began to soar. I was aware that my body remained in the water. I looked down and saw it... (MacLaine;1983:327).

The above excerpt shows, above other things a personal experience of a human with flesh and blood. She demonstrates that there is something more than the physical human body, contra what scholars such as Gilbert Ryle and John Searle would have us understand. In his own first astral experience which occurred in November 1971, Nigerian author Iyke Nathan Uzorma harps:

In that experience, I had something like electric shock all over my body while I was still awake on the bed. Immediately after this shock I found myself standing outside my body. Thereafter, I began to run inside a big tunnel filled with darkness. This was astral projection in its first stage (Uzorma;2007:71).

There is a common denominator between the experiences of these persons. Both testify to the reality of a human soul and both of them talked about a tunnel, although both had dissimilar starting points. This thought has been also

corroborated by the experience of Lobsang Rampa when he writes that “you will experience a sensation that you are going through a tunnel toward a light at the far end of the tunnel. You will be drifted upwards like a piece of thistle down on an evening breeze” (Rampa;1980:65). Now, the fact that these persons may not have met before and tell their stories shows that there is an aorta of truth no matter how little and just because their experiences cannot be incorporate into the scientific schema does not make them the opposite of the truth in all entirety.

From the discussion above regarding the reality of astral projection, it is the case that one cannot simply wish away the experience of these persons. Furthermore, there is no doubt in the fact that what some of these mystics have been able to put forward clearly strengthen the idea that contra Gilbert Ryle, there is something that is more than the human mind. What all of the above seems to be telling us is that there is something that is other than the brain. Whatever may have led Ryle to postulate that the human mind is the functioning of the brain may mean he has not factored in some of the scenarios mentioned above. These are the kinds of scenarios that the mystics experience on daily basis.

This section has been able to show why there will always be a problem with the kind of solution to the mind-body problem provided by Ryle and scholars who share his views. The primary agenda of this chapter has been to show that Ryle’s solution is wrong. Through engagement with the experiences of mystics in astral projection, reincarnation and even telepathy, there is no doubt that there is more to the idea of the brain as the seat of consciousness. This further makes the solution to the mind-body problem an open-ended issue even as it also presents itself as a metaphysica-anthropological issue.

### **Self-Assessment Exercise**

1. The following but one denied the existence of a soul (a) Aquinas (b) Augustine (c) Descartes (d) Hume
2. Pick the odd choice (a) astral projection (b) reincarnation (c) telepathy (d) materialism

## **4.4 Summary**

In this unit, we have examined the concepts of mortality and immortality. We explained that mortality means the cessation of life while immortality means the ability to live in perpetual existence. We also examined the idea of mortality and immortality in the Yoruba culture, The Yoruba people believe that a person is made of three substances namely *ara*, *emi* and *ori*. While the *ara* is physical and perishable at death, the *emi* is spiritual and indestructible. The Yoruba people also



have practices such as ancestor worship and masquerade festivals which show their belief in immortality. In the present unit, we have been able to:

- Mortality means susceptible to death
- Immortality means perpetual existence
- Materialists hold that man is composed of matter and thus, perishes at death
- Dualists hold that man has a mind/soul which survives the body at death
- The Yoruba believe in the immortality of the soul (*emi*)
- Examine the divergent views on the existence of soul and immortality

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#### 4.6 Possible Answers to SAE

1. (d); 2. (d)

### END OF MODULE EXERCISES

1. Who is convinced that there are four features of the mental phenomena?
2. Who takes a materialistic stance against Descartes dualism?
3. The African version of causal explanation is \_\_\_\_\_ (a) mystical (b) celestial (c) physical (d) selective
4. Which African culture believes in two planes of existence namely, *Orun* ('spiritual abode') and *Aye* ('physical world').
5. What is that aspect of metaphysics that studies the nature of beings in the actual world? (a) Ontology (b) Cosmology (c) Anthropology (d) Psychology

## **MODULE 2: THEORIES OF SOUL**

Unit 1: On the Concept of Soul

Unit 2: Soul in pre-Socratic philosophy

Unit 3: Soul in Plato's philosophy

Unit 4: Aristotle on soul

Unit 5: African Notions of Soul (Yoruba and Akan)

Unit 6: Soul in Ancient Chinese Thought

Unit 7: Soul in Hindu Philosophy

## **UNIT 1: ON THE CONCEPT OF THE SOUL**

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3.1 Meaning and Definition of soul
- 1.3.2 Etymology and origin of soul
- 1.3.3 Philosophical perspectives on the concept of soul
- 1.3.4 Religious perspectives on the concept of soul
- 1.4 Summary
- 1.5 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 1.6 Possible Answers to SAE

### **1.1 Introduction**

This unit attempts a conceptual clarification of the key term of this module, namely; “soul”. It attempts a discussion on the etymology and origin of the term “soul” and also discusses the concept of the soul from two important perspectives that is, the philosophical and the religious perspectives.

### **1.2 Learning Outcomes**

This unit will help students:

- to understand the concept of the soul;
- to understand the etymology and origin of the soul;
- to understand the philosophical and religious perspectives on the concept of the soul.

### **1.3.1 On the Concept of the Soul**

In many religious, philosophical and mythological traditions, man is conceived as a tripartite being composed of the spirit, the soul and the body. The body is the physical/material aspect which perishes at death while the spirit and the soul are immaterial aspects which survive after death. However, although most people hold the belief that the body is the physical aspect of a person which perishes at death, yet, there is a lot of controversy on the nature of the soul in the sense that some believe that the soul is immaterial and possesses psychological, cognitive, and intellectual abilities, while, some believe that the soul is material and perishes at death. However, most people refer to the soul as the incorporeal essence of a living being.(Britannica, 2010) Soul is believed to comprise of the mental abilities of a living being which includes reason, character, feeling, consciousness, memory, perception and thinking among others. In most religions, the soul is considered as the immaterial aspect or essence of a human being, which confers individuality and humanity, and often considered to be synonymous with the mind or the self. In theology, the soul is defined as that part of the individual which partakes of divinity and often is considered to survive the death of the body.

Many cultures have recognized some incorporeal principle of human life or existence corresponding to the soul, and many have attributed souls to all living things. There is evidence even among prehistoric peoples of a belief in an aspect distinct from the body and residing in it. Despite widespread and longstanding belief in the existence of a soul, however, different cultures, religions and philosophers have developed a variety of theories as to its nature, its relationship to the body, and its origin and mortality. In the Greek oldest literary texts—Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (commonly dated to the eighth and seventh century) - there are two types of soul. On the one hand, there is the free soul, or *psychē*, an unencumbered soul representing the individual personality. (Bremmer, 1987) This soul is inactive (and unmentioned) when the body is active; it is located in an unspecified part of the body. Its presence is the precondition for the continuation of life, but it has no connections with the physical or psychological aspects of the body. *Psychē* manifests itself only during swoons or at death, when it leaves the body never to return again. On the other hand, there are a number of body-souls, which endow the body with life and consciousness. The most frequently occurring form of body-soul in Homer's epics is *thumos*. It is this soul that both urges people on and is the seat of emotions. There is also *menos*, which is a more momentary impulse directed at specific activities.

Similarly, in Ancient Egypt, it is believed that a soul known as *ka or ba* was made up of many parts. In addition to these components of the soul, there was the human body known as *ḥꜥw*, meaning "sum of bodily parts." According to ancient Egyptian creation myths, the god *Atum* stood on the primordial mound in the midst of the waters of chaos and created the world. The power which enabled this act was *heka* (magic) personified in the god *Heka*, the invisible force behind the gods. The earth and everything in it was therefore imbued with magic, and this naturally included human beings. (Mark, 2017) It is believed that an individual's life on earth was considered only one part of an eternal journey. The personality was created at the moment of one's birth, but the soul was an immortal entity inhabiting a mortal vessel. When that vessel failed and the person's body died, the soul went on to another plane of existence where, if it was justified by the gods, it would live forever in a paradise which was a mirror image of one's earthly existence.

The Egyptians believed that the soul consists of nine separate parts which were integrated into a whole individual but had very distinct aspects. In order for these aspects of the soul to function, the body had to remain intact, and this is why mummification became so integral a part of the mortuary rituals and the culture. The *Khat* was the physical body which, when it became a corpse, provided the link between one's soul and one's earthly life. The soul would need to be nourished after death just as it had to be while on earth, and so food and drink offerings were brought to the tomb and laid on an offerings table. The *Ka* was one's double-form

or astral self and corresponds to what most people in the present day consider a 'soul.' This was "the vital source that enabled a person to continue to receive offerings in the next world. The *ka* was created at the moment of one's birth for the individual and so reflected one's personality, but the essence had always existed and was "passed across the successive generations, carrying the spiritual force of the first creation.(Shaw, 2016:207) The *ka* was not only one's personality but also a guide and protector, imbued with the spark of the divine. It was the *ka* which would absorb the power from the food offerings left in the tomb, and these would sustain it in the afterlife.

In the Ancient Jewish tradition, the soul is believed to be that part of a person's mind that constitutes physical desire, emotion, and thought. It is also believed that the soul has three elements namely, the *nephesh*, *ru'ah*, and *neshamah*. *Nephesh* is that part that is alive and signifies that which is vital in man. It feels hunger, hates, loves, loathes, weeps, can die or depart from the body and can sometimes come back into the body again. *Ruach* is the middle soul, or spirit which contains the moral virtues and the ability to distinguish between good and evil. In modern parlance, it equates to psyche or ego-personality. *Neshamah* is the higher soul which distinguishes man from all other life forms. It relates to the intellect, and allows man to enjoy and benefit from the afterlife. It is that part of the soul which allows one to have some awareness of the existence and presence of God. Having examined the concept of soul in the Greek, Egyptian and Jewish culture, it is obvious that the common idea between them is the belief that the soul is a different entity from the body, and that the soul is an immaterial element which can survive death.

### 1.3.2 Etymology and Origin of Soul

Etymologically, the Modern English word "soul" is derived from the Old English word "sawol". This word is cognate with other German and Baltic terms "saiwala". The original concept behind the Germanic root is thought to mean "coming from or belonging to the sea or lake" because of the Germanic and pre-Celtic belief in souls emerging and returning to sacred lakes. (Lorenz, 2003) The Koine Greek language translates the word "soul" as *psyche* while the Hebrew translate it as *nephesh* which means life, vital breath, self, living being etc. The Greek word *psyche* means to blow or to cool and hence refers to breath, life, soul, spirit or consciousness.

Generally, there is no universally agreed account on the origin of the soul but the major theories that have been put forward include creationism, traducianism and pre-existence. According to creationism, each individual soul is created directly by God, either at the moment of conception, or some later time. Creationists believe that God creates each soul ex nihilo and individually at the very moment he joins it to the developing organism. The major philosophical argument for this is stated

by Saint Thomas Aquinas who argues that “since the soul does not have matter as part of itself, it cannot be made from something as from matter. It therefore remains that the soul is made from nothing. And thus the created soul belongs to the genus of intellectual substances, which cannot conceivably be brought into being except by way of creation.” (Yates, 1989:126) Traducianism, derived from the Latin word *tradux* which means “layer” is the theory which says that all souls are, as it were, derived ultimately from the one original soul of Adam. According to Tertullian, the most important representative of traducianism, “the soul is handed on from parent to child through the organic process of generation. In procreation, the soul as well as the body passes on part of itself to its offspring, so that the whole person, soul and body, is derived from the substance of the progenitors.” (Yates, 1989:122) Pre-existence theory claims that the soul exists before the moment of conception. This theory, therefore, holds that each individual human soul existed before mortal conception, and enters into the body at the point of birth.

### **1.3.3 Philosophical Perspectives on the Concept of the Soul**

From the Western philosophical perspectives, philosophers like Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas and Rene Descartes provided much insight into the nature of the soul. Pythagoras, a Greek philosopher who lived in the second half of the sixth century, introduced the speculative doctrine of metempsychosis. According to him, man is a mixture of both divine and human elements. He posited that the soul lived previously in the previous world and was sent to the present world as a punishment for an offence committed in the earlier world. Thus, as a punishment, the soul is imprisoned in the body. He opined that the soul transmigrates into another human body or even into a lower animal to pay for its punishment. Thus, the soul undergoes the transmigration process until it is purified and thereafter achieves liberation. (Omeregbe, 1991:8)

Plato, another Greek philosopher in his book, *Phaedo*, offers a metaphysical and ontological proof for the existence of the soul. Plato, in *Phaedo*, postulated a dualistic theory of human person. For him, a person is made up of the body and the soul and that the soul survives the body after death. Plato holds that the soul is immortal, eternal, indestructible, unchanging, and most importantly, intelligible. Plato further argues that the soul pre-exist the body that is, the soul has a previous existence and will continue to live even after the body is destroyed. Thus, the soul has the ability to contemplate the knowledge of the world of forms. (Kenny, 2004:25-26) However, Aristotle, another Greek philosopher, radically rejects Plato’s theory of the soul. Aristotle contends that the soul is not different from the body that is, the soul does not have an independent existence of the body. He argues that the soul is the form while the body is the matter. This means that the soul and the body are mutually dependent and inseparable. (Omeregbe, 1991:171)

Although philosophers especially from the ancient Greek traditions and the medieval era have extensively discussed the concept of the soul, yet, the French philosopher Rene Descartes is often regarded as the philosopher who discussed the nature of the soul systematically with his theory of interactionism. Rene Descartes, in his book Cartesian Meditation, claims that human persons are made up of two substances namely the mind and the body and these substances are fundamentally distinct substances. For Descartes, while the body is material and corporeal, the mind is immaterial. (Descartes, 1641:62) This view leaves room for human souls which are generally considered immaterial. Descartes, therefore, argued that souls are immaterial, can exist separately from the body and can interact with the body. His position is often referred to as Cartesian dualism.

#### **1.3.4 Religious Perspectives on the Concept of the Soul**

Many religions of the world hold the belief that a human being possesses a soul which is immaterial or spiritual but, in our discussion here, we shall examine the concept of the soul from the perspectives of two major world religions that is, Christianity and Islam. The concept of the soul is a very integral/significant concept in Christianity. The word “soul” is translated in the Old Testament as *nephesh* (Hebrew) while it is referred to as *psyche* (Greek) in the New Testament. Christians believe that the soul is God-given and that it is immortal. They believe that only humans have souls and this is what makes people unique and special and different to all other life forms. (Woodhead, 2004:5)

The soul is sometimes described as the spiritual element of humans. At death the soul is separated from the body and exists in a conscious or unconscious disembodied state. But on the future Day of Judgment souls will be re-embodied (whether in their former but now transfigured earthly bodies or in new resurrection bodies) and will live eternally in the heavenly kingdom. Christians believe that although the soul lives in the body, it can live outside the body that is, while the soul obviously lives without the body, the body cannot live without the soul. When a soul returns to a lifeless body, the body is said to “rise from the dead” or to be “revived”. Thus, the manifestation of souls is “seen” in this physical world when they are united with, and animating with physical bodies. There is also the belief in the immortality of the soul. Christians believe that even after the death of bodies, the soul does not die rather it is subject to God’s judgment. (Macgregor, 1987) A person who believes in Jesus Christ would spend eternity with Christ in paradise while the evil person will spend eternity in hell.

The holy book, Quran, in Islam holds that the creation of man involves Allah breathing a soul into man. This intangible breath which forms part of an individual’s existence is pure at birth and has the potential of growing and achieving nearness to God if the person leads a righteous life. At death the person's soul transitions to an eternal afterlife of bliss, peace and unending



spiritual growth. This transition can be pleasant (Heaven) or unpleasant (Hell) depending on the life in which the individual had led while on earth. Thus, it is generally believed that all living beings are comprised of two aspects during their existence: the physical (being the body) and the non-physical (being the soul). The non-physical aspect, namely the soul, includes his/her feelings and emotions, thoughts, conscious and sub-conscious desires and objectives. (Ahmad, 2011: 180) The body and its physical actions are believed to serve as a “reflection” of one’s soul, whether it is good or evil, thus confirming the extent of such intentions.

### **Self-Assessment Exercise**

1. According to Plato, what did the soul drink which lead to forgetfulness of the Forms?
  
2. The word “soul” is translated in the Old Testament as \_\_\_\_\_

## **1.4 Summary**

In this study, we examined the concept of soul. We said that the soul can be described as the incorporeal essence of a human being which comprises of the mental abilities such as reason, character, feeling, consciousness, memory, perception and thinking among others. We also examined the concept of the soul from the ancient Greek, Egyptian and Jewish traditions while noting that the common idea between them is the belief that the soul is an immaterial element which can survive death. We examined the etymology and origin of the soul from three major theories namely, creationism, pre-existence and traducianism. Lastly, we examined the concept of the soul from the philosophical perspective and from the religious perspective. In this unit, we have been able to:

- In many religious, philosophical and mythological traditions, the soul is considered as the immaterial aspect or essence of a human being, which confers individuality and humanity, and often considered to be synonymous with the mind or the self
- The word “soul” is derived from the Old English word “sawol”.
- The major theories on the origin of the soul are creationism, traducianism and pre-existence
- The French philosopher, Rene Descartes, extensively discussed the nature of the soul with his theory of interactionism.
- Both Christianity and Islam believe that God creates the soul.
- Explain Cartesian interactionism

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## 1.6 Possible Answers to SAE

1. Water of Let; 2. *Nephesh*

## **UNIT 2: SOUL IN PRESOCRATIC PHILOSOPHY**

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Learning Outcomes
- 2.3.1 Pythagoras on the nature of the soul
- 2.3.2 Empedocles on the nature of the soul
- 2.3.3 Anaxagoras on the nature of the soul
- 2.4 Summary
- 2.5 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 2.6 Possible Answers to SAE

### **2.1 Introduction**

In our previous unit, we examined the concept of the soul. We said that soul is the immaterial essence or aspect of a person. In this unit, however, we shall examine the concept of the soul in pre-Socratic philosophy. Pre-Socratic philosophy refers to the philosophy of the Ancient Greek philosophers who were born before Socrates. This study will therefore focus on the thoughts of pre-Socratic philosophers such as Pythagoras, Empedocles and Anaxagoras.

### **2.2 Learning Outcomes**

This unit will help students:

1. to understand the nature of the soul in Pythagoras' philosophy,
2. to understand the nature of the soul in Empedocles' philosophy,
3. to understand the nature of the soul in Anaxagoras' philosophy.

### **2.3.1 Pythagoras on the Nature of the Soul**

Pythagoras (582-496 BC) was born in Samos, a small island near Miletus but he eventually migrated to Croton in southern Italy, where he founded a religious community that was open to both men and women. Pythagoras developed a number of religious beliefs but among the religious beliefs that he promoted was the immortality of the soul and the transmigration of the soul. (Lawhead, 2002:13) Pythagoras believed in reincarnation as he held that human souls can be reborn into other animals after death. For him, the soul is immortal that is, it can survive death and that it can transmigrate or move into other kinds of animals depending on the moral behaviour of the person while on earth. Pythagoras believed that the goal of religion was purification, and the goal of purification was the salvation of one's soul. Pythagoras believed that since the soul is immortal and that after death it migrates into another body, the only way to achieve release from the "wheel of birth" and the prison of the body was to purify the soul through various purification rites and dietary restrictions. (Lawhead, 2002:13-14) As a result of his belief in transmigration of the soul, Pythagoras is believed to have forbidden the ill treatment of animals because the human soul could reside in the body of animals. Pythagoras believed that a soul occupies a different body after death. For him, each time a body dies, the soul discards the body to occupy another body. He

further explained that the human soul does not necessarily occupy the body of another human being after death; rather it occupies the body of any living thing including plants and animals. The type of body that a soul will occupy depends on the actions performed by the soul in its previous life. (Huffman, 2005)

### **2.3.2 Empedocles on the Nature of the Soul**

Empedocles (493-433 BC) is regarded as one of the most colourful philosophers in ancient Greece. He was a Sicilian patrician, from the city of Acragas, a philosopher, an orator and a statesman. Like other pre-Socratic thinkers, Empedocles was also involved in both philosophical speculations and religious activity. His speculations on the nature of the soul were recorded in his poems *On nature* and *Purifications*. (Campbell, 2016) Empedocles, like Pythagoras, is a firm believer in the transmigration of souls. Empedocles believed that those who have sinned must wander for 30,000 seasons through many mortal bodies and be tossed from one of the four elements to another. Escape from such punishment requires purification, particularly abstention from the flesh of animals, whose souls may once have inhabited human bodies. Empedocles' well-known phrase (for I was once already boy and girl, thicket and bird and a mute fish in the waves) denotes that he believed that he had retained memories of his past lives and could recall having lived as many different life forms with different gender. He held this belief because he believed that the soul is immortal and is reincarnated whenever the mortal body is destroyed.

In his poem *Purifications*, Empedocles aimed at redeeming the soul and making it capable of ascending to the divine planes. Empedocles believed that he was a daemon, a long-living being from the divine planes that was banished to the mortal world. He was condemned to live a cycle of reincarnations lasting 30,000 years in order to atone for his sins. Having repeated so many transmigrations as different life forms, Empedocles believed that he had reached his current reincarnation, redeemed his soul and became an immortal god. According to him, it is through the transmigrations of the soul that men can purify their soul, reincarnate as prophets, physicians, seers or rulers and in the end attain divinity. (Guthrie, 1969)

### **2.3.3 Anaxagoras on the Nature of the Soul**

Anaxagoras (500-428 BC) is an Ancient Greek philosopher who was born in the city of Clazomenae in Asia Minor but moved to Athens and became a part of the intellectual circle surrounding Pericles, a major political figure of this time. In his philosophy, Anaxagoras developed a doctrine of the autonomous, infinite, powerful and eternal mind (also referred to as soul or *Nous*). He regards the soul or mind as the purest of all things, the master of itself and the ruler on everything, controlling all the elements and directing all the physical interactions in the universe by the most proper way. According to him, everything is set and directed by Mind, which is the causative power of all creation. (Stavros, 2018:1-2) The

Mind (*Nous*) is unique, original, eternal, authentic, autonomous, unlimited, unmixed with anything else, remaining pure and alone by itself, self-powered, self-subsistent, self-sufficient, and separated completely from all other elements.

For him, mind is the finest and the purest of all things. It is free, infinite over time and space, stable, unchangeable and unique. The mind is also incorporated in the human being and acts as the leading power of the soul which prevails over the body and configures its functionality fully, penetrating entirely the existence of all entities that are alive. The mind dominates on the inner life of the man, inducing peace, serenity and wisdom, but, as a result of the weakness of our senses we are not able to judge the truth always. (Stavros, 2018:1-2) Mind/*Nous*, according to Anaxagoras, is the unique steering power, which created cosmos from the existing chaos, by triggering and initiating the rotation of the previously unmoved masses of various confused elements. For him, mind is the source of motion and the principle of order. *Nous* does not create the world but it is a free, spontaneous, active, perfect and all-knowing force. (Lawhead, 2002:24) It is important to note that Anaxagoras' doctrine on mind exercised a profound influence upon the philosophical orientation of thinkers such as Plato and Aristotle who endeavored to discover the depths of the human soul in order to find the unseen links between the soul and the body.

### **Self-Assessment Exercise**

1. What, according Anaxagoras, is the unique steering power, which created cosmos from the existing chaos? (a) Body (b) Liver (c) Matter (d) Soul
  
2. What is the title of Empedocles' poem where he discussed the soul?

### **1.4 Summary**

In this unit, we have explored the concept of the soul in the philosophy of some pre-Socratic thinkers namely, Pythagoras, Empedocles and Anaxagoras. We explained that Pythagoras viewed the soul as an immortal entity which can survive death and can also transmigrate or move into other kinds of living things that is, plants or animals depending on the moral behaviour of the person while on earth. Empedocles also believed in the transmigration of the soul. For him, the soul is immortal and can reincarnate through several bodies before attaining divinity. Anaxagoras describes the soul as the causative power of all creation, the source of motion and the principle of order. Hence, in this unit, we have learned that:

- Pre-Socratic philosophy refers to the philosophy of the Ancient Greek philosophers who were born before Socrates.
- Pythagoras believed that human souls can reincarnate and be reborn into other animals or plants after death

- Empedocles believed that it is through the transmigrations of the soul that men can purify their soul, reincarnate and attain divinity.
- Anaxagoras believed that the mind/soul is the source of motion and the principle of order.

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## 1.6 Possible Answers to SAE

1. (d); 2. Purifications

## **UNIT 3: SOUL IN PLATO'S PHILOSOPHY**

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Learning Outcomes
- 3.3.1 Plato's biography
- 3.3.2 Plato's theory of forms
- 3.3.3 Plato's tripartite account of the soul
- 3.4 Summary
- 3.5 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 3.6 Possible Answers to SAE

### **3.1 Introduction**

In our previous unit, we examined the nature of the soul in the philosophy of pre-Socratic thinkers such as Pythagoras, Empedocles and Anaxagoras. In this unit, however, we shall examine the nature of the soul in Plato's philosophy. Firstly, we shall give a brief biography of Plato and then, we shall proceed to discuss his theory of forms and his three dimensions of the human soul.

### **3.2 Learning Objectives**

Students are expected to understand:

- Plato's theory of forms
- Plato's tripartite theory of the soul

#### **3.3.1 Plato's Biography**

Plato is regarded as one of the world best known and most widely read philosophers. Born in 427 BC, to an aristocratic Athenian family, Plato was educated and groomed to become a great political leader but after the death of Socrates, his teacher, he decided to devote all his energies into philosophy. After the death of Socrates, Plato founded a school called the Academy which is often regarded as the first university in the Western world. Plato spent the most of his life teaching and directing the Academy as well as writing philosophical works. Among the most famous of his works was the Republic where he blended his ethical, political, epistemological and metaphysical ideas into an interconnected and systematic philosophy. Plato also spent his time travelling to Sicily and Italy to educate Dionysius the young ruler. Sadly, Plato's mission to educate the young king did not go as intended and therefore returned to the Academy where he continued to teach until his death in 347 BC.

#### **3.3.2 Plato's Theory of Forms**

Plato, in many of his dialogues was concerned about having a correct understanding of knowledge by eliminating the inadequate conceptions of knowledge. Plato, in his popular dialogue *Theatetus* argued that genuine

knowledge is objective, unavailable to the senses, universal and grounded in rational understanding. He posits that this kind of objective knowledge is not available in the physical world of experience but rather it exists only in the world of forms. Forms for Plato are the supra-sensible entities or essences that are perfect and universal such that all other matters or objects in the physical world are mere imitations of these essences. (Lawhead, 2002:48-50) What Plato means is that there is a non-physical world where perfect entities exist and the physical entities in our physical world are only mere imitations or copies of these perfect entities that reside in the world of forms. To illustrate his point, Plato explains that we have distinct individuals but yet we use the term human beings to refer to individuals. However, in spite of their difference, there is a common characteristic or essence that every human being shares which is the “form of humanity”. For him, the idea or form of humanity is the essence or form that is common to every human being but this form of humanity is a perfect and universal entity that resides not in our physical world but in the non-physical world of form. For Plato, this perfect essence i.e. the form of humanity is a universal and every particular individuals share in this universal form. (Cooper, 1997:50-53)The same goes for every other thing such as colours, animals and concepts like justice, beauty and knowledge. For Plato, therefore, genuine and universal knowledge resides in the world of forms but every object of knowledge participates or imitates this universal knowledge.

Having propounded his theory of forms, Plato proceeds to explain how human beings can apprehend the perfect and universal forms that reside in the world of form. Plato explains that the forms are imprinted on the soul because the soul also exists in the world of forms. For him, the soul is a pre-existent entity that is directly acquainted with the forms but on entering into the physical world, the soul forgets everything it has apprehended in the world of forms. Nevertheless, this knowledge of the forms is still there waiting to be rediscovered through the process of recollection. Hence, although the soul has the knowledge of the forms while in the world of forms but on entering into the human’s body the soul forgets what it knows. The soul can only recollect what it has known through the process of dialectics. (Brickhouse and Smith, 2021) The implication of Plato’s theory of forms is that Plato believes that the soul is a different entity that is different from the body. His theory also suggests that he believes that the soul is immortal and it pre-exists in the world of forms before coming into contact with the human body.

### **3.3.3 Plato’s Tripartite Theory of the Soul**

In his most famous dialogue *The Republic*, Plato discussed the possibilities of achieving justice in the human society so that people could hope to live in an ideal society. However, for such a just and ideal society to exist, Plato holds that it is required that the aspirations and the behavioural tendencies of individuals in the society must be accounted for and be fulfilled. It is for this reason that Plato



develops his tripartite theory of the soul. For Plato, the essential core of the person is the *psyche* or soul. However, if we examine our inner experiences, we will find out that the soul is not completely unified. He explains that individuals find inner conflicts and competing forces warring within them which suggest that there are several types of element that are at work within the soul.

Plato explains that there are three conflicting forces or elements that are present in the soul. The first element is the appetitive part of the soul which is associated with our bodily needs and desires such as the desire for food, drink and sex. The appetitive part of the soul pulls us in the direction of physical gratification and material acquisition. The second element is the rational part of the soul which controls the urgings of the appetites. It is the voice of reason within the individual and it is the source of the love of truth and the desire to understand. The third element which makes up the human soul is the spirited part which refers to the willful, dynamic and executive faculty within the soul. The spirited soul expresses itself in anger, righteous indignation, courage or assertiveness. It is the source of the desire for honour, respect and self-esteem. (Irwin, 1995:67) Plato explains that the appetitive part of the soul without being mediated by the voice of reason is harmful and destructive while the rational part of the soul is mediated by the spirited part that is, the spirited part is the intermediate element that reinforces the pull of reason. Plato, then, comments that justice is only achieved when the three elements operate in their correct balance within a person. Thus, a just person is one who possesses wisdom, courage and temperance and in whom each element plays its proper role and maintains its proper place. A well balanced or just soul is a soul that is well balanced and in right order. Hence, for plato, when the logical part of the soul is dominant, the person is able to distinguish well between fantasy and reality. (Robinson, 1995) The rational part of the soul will help the individual to make wise decisions that are just.

### **Self-Assessment Exercise**

1. Plato divided the soul into? (a) 2 (b) 3 (c) 4 (d) 5
2. Plato divided the world into? (a) 2 (b) 3 (c) 4 (d) 5

### **3.4 Summary**

In this unit, we examined soul in Plato's philosophy. We explained that Plato was one of the most influential Greek philosophers who founded the first university in the western world. Plato expressed his thoughts on the nature of the soul in some of his works such as *Phaedo*, *Meno* and *The Republic*. For Plato, the soul is an immortal entity which pre-exists in the world of forms. The soul, however, forgets everything it has known but could recollect some of its knowledge through the

process of dialectics. Also, we explained that Plato divides the human soul into three parts namely, the rational, the spirited and the appetitive part. Hence, for Plato, a just individual is a person who has a well-balanced soul. In a nutshell, this unit has been able to focus on the following:

- Plato founded the first university in the western world
- For Plato, the soul is immortal and pre-exists in the world of forms
- The soul has three important elements namely, the rational, the spirited and the appetitive part
- A well-balanced or just soul is a soul that is controlled by the voice of reason

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### **3.6 Possible Answers to SAE**

1. (b); 2. (a)

## **UNIT 4: ARISTOTLE ON SOUL**

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Learning Outcomes
- 4.3.1 Aristotle's biography
- 4.3.2 Soul in Aristotle's philosophy
- 4.4 Summary
- 4.5 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 4.6 Possible Answers to SAE

### **4.1 Introduction**

In our previous unit, we examined the concept of soul in Plato's philosophy. In this unit however, we shall examine the concept of soul in Aristotle's philosophy. Aristotle, often regarded as the most notable ancient Greek philosopher, in his work *De Anime* expresses the nature of the soul in three dimensions namely; the nutritive, sensitive and the rational soul. We shall therefore examine these three dimensions of soul in Aristotle's philosophy.

### **4.2 Learning Outcomes**

Students should be able to understand:

- The three dimensions of soul in Aristotle's philosophy
- The soul-body relationship in Aristotle's philosophy

### **4.3.1 Aristotle's Biography**

Aristotle was born in 384 BC in the Macedonian town of Stagira. His father, Nichomachus, was a physician to Amyntus II, the king of Macedonia. Aristotle sought out the best education offered at that time and became a student of Plato's Academy in Athens. He studied and taught for twenty years at the Academy until Plato's death around 348 BC. After the death of his teacher, Plato, Aristotle left the Academy and Athens and spent time travelling around the Greek islands, doing research works in marine biology. In 342 BC, he was summoned to the Macedonian court by King Philip to tutor the young prince Alexander. In 335 BC, Aristotle returned to Athens and founded his own school named Lyceum where he spent the next twelve years directing scientific research and writing most of his major works. (Lawhead, 2002) After the death of Alexander, in 323 BC, Aristotle left Athens and died the following year in Euboea, Macedonia. Aristotle's scholarly writings is said to cover many subjects including physics, biology, zoology, metaphysics, logic, ethics, politics, economics and geology among others.

### **4.3.2 Soul in Aristotle's Philosophy**

Aristotle's idea on the nature of the soul can be found in his psychology. Aristotle, in his work *De anime* translated as "On the soul" comments that the soul is the

general principle of life that is, the soul is “the first actuality of a natural body”. Soul is the substance as form of a natural body which has life in potentiality. Aristotle explains that the soul and the body are substances of form and matter. In contrast to Plato, Aristotle did not believe that forms or perfect universal essences reside in a separate non-physical world of forms but rather, he believed that forms dwell in particular substances or materials. (Shields, 2000) For instance, whereas Plato held that the perfect form or essence of humanity by which every human person imitates resides in the world of forms, Aristotle argues that the essence of humanity resides in every human person just as the form of beauty reside in every beautiful object. Bringing this to his position on soul, Aristotle, in contrast to Plato who argued that souls reside in the world of forms and only come into contact with the body at birth, holds that the soul is a form or essence which resides not in a separate world but inside the body and thus, the soul and the body are inseparable. (Sorabji, 1974) Aristotle comments that the soul neither exists without a body nor is it a body of some sort. According to him, “the soul is not the body but it belongs to a body, and for this reason is present in a body and in a body of such and such a sort”. This simply means that although the soul is not a material object, it is not separable from the body. Thus, for Aristotle, the soul is not an independently existing substance as it is linked to the body more directly. The soul is the form of the body, not a separate substance inside another substance of a different kind. The soul and the body are just like sight and eyes.

Moving from this, Aristotle, like Plato, proposes three dimensions or hierarchy of the soul. Plato, in his philosophy divides the soul into the rational, spirited and appetitive parts but for Aristotle, the soul can be divided into the nutritive, sensitive and rational soul. The nutritive soul is the soul that is possessed by plants. Aristotle comments that plants have a vegetative or nutritive soul which consists of the powers of growth, nutrition and reproduction. Animals have, in addition to the powers of growth, nutrition and reproduction, the powers of perception and locomotion and thus, they possess a sensitive soul. Animals also have the sense faculty of touch as they can feel pleasure or pain and whatever can feel pleasures also has desires; hence, animals can feel desires and therefore possess sensitive soul. (Menn, 2002: 88) However, human beings in addition to the powers of growth, nutrition, reproduction, perception and locomotion, possess the power of reason and thought which may be referred to as the rational soul. Thus, for Aristotle, the soul governs the characteristic functions and changes of a living thing. The nutritive psyche is the formal cause of growth and metabolism and is shared by plants, while the perceptual psyche gives rise to desire, which causes self-moving animals to act. When one becomes aware of an apparent good by perception or imagination, one forms an appetite, the desire for pleasure, or the desire for revenge or honor which is the product of the rational soul. (Humphreys, 2021)

## Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Aristotle is not Plato's pupil (a) True (b) False
2. Aristotle gives how many divisions of the soul? (a) 2 (b) 3 (c) 4 (d) 5

### 4.4 Summary

In this unit, we examined the concept of soul in Aristotle's philosophy. We explained that Aristotle was one of the most notable philosophers in ancient Greece and he wrote extensively on areas such as physics, biology, zoology, metaphysics, logic, ethics, politics, economics and geology. Aristotle, in *De anime*, commented that the soul is the first actuality of a natural body and that the soul and the body are substances of form and matter. Aristotle also identified three hierarchies of the soul namely: rational, sensitive and nutritive soul.

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### 4.6 Possible Answers to SAE

1. (b); 2. (b)

## UNIT 5: AFRICAN NOTIONS OF SOUL (YORUBA AND AKAN)

- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Learning Outcomes
- 5.3.1 Soul in Yoruba Traditional Thought
- 5.3.2 Soul in Akan Traditional Thought
- 5.4 Summary
- 5.5 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 5.6 Possible Answers to SAE

### 5.1 Introduction

From the beginning of this module, we have been discussing the concept of soul from the philosophies of ancient Greek thinkers like Anaxagoras, Empedocles, Plato and Aristotle. In this unit, however, we shall examine the concept of soul in some indigenous African cultures namely the Yoruba and the Akan culture.

### 5.2 Learning Outcomes

Students should be able to understand:

- The constituents of a person in Yoruba traditional thought
- The meaning and significance of *Okan*, *Ori* and *Emi* in Yoruba traditional thought
- The meaning and significance of *Okra* in Akan traditional thought

### 5.3.1 Soul in Yoruba Traditional Thought

The Yoruba people are an ethnic group that inhabits Western Africa mainly in the countries of Nigeria, Benin and Togo. In Yoruba ontology, the human being is believed to be the most important creature that is created by *Olodumare* and he is composed of material and immaterial elements (Awolalu and Dopamu, 1979: 155). The material element is the *ara* (body), while the immaterial or non-physical element is *emi* (spirit). The *ara* (body) is concrete, tangible, and made up of various components that make up the human anatomy, such as the brain (*opolo*), head (*ori*), heart (*okan*), intestine (*ifun*), and blood (*eje*). The *emi*, (spirit) on the other hand, is the invisible and intangible element which gives life to the whole body and thus, the presence of *emi* in or its absence from, the body helps to determine whether a person is alive or dead. (Idowu, 1996:169) However, in the Yoruba traditional thought, there is one element that is usually taken to be the equivalent of the Western concept of soul which is *okan* (heart). *Okan* has a dual interpretation and function in the body. The first interpretation for *okan* is the physical heart within the human body. At the physical level, the heart is part of *ara* (body) and it is responsible for the pumping of blood to other parts of the body. The second interpretation is at the psychical level where the *okan* is regarded as the seat of emotion and psychic energy. In this regard, we say of a brave person that *oni okan* (has a heart) and of a coward or timid person that *koni okan* (he has no heart). Hence, it is the material heart that constitutes a real

representation of the psychological heart which is essentially immaterial and invisible. (Oyeshile, 2006: 156)

Some scholars have however argued that *okan* is not the correct equivalent of the soul but rather it is the *emi*. *Emi* is the invisible and intangible element that is closely connected with breath. *Emi* is that which breathes in man, and it can best be described as that which gives life to the body such that when it ceases to function, man ceases to exist and the body becomes lifeless. (Idowu, 1996: 179) *Èmí* is regarded by the Yoruba as the basis of human existence. It is the entity which gives life to a person; its presence or absence in a person makes the difference between life and death. It is also conceived as that divine element in man which links him directly to God and so, in the event of death, the *emi* returns to *Olódùmarè* — who is regarded as the creator of *emi* (*Èlémìî*). (Oladiipo, 1992: 19) Interestingly, some scholars have also argued that both the *emi* and the *okan* are not correct interpretations of the soul but rather the element which stands as an equivalent of soul is the *ori*. *Ori* (head) in Yoruba thought also has dual interpretation just like *okan*. The first interpretation is the physical head which houses the brain while the second interpretation is the inner or metaphysical head which carries the destiny of a person. The metaphysical *ori* is therefore regarded as a person's personality or soul, human's double, a semi-split entity or a person's guardian angel. It is the determiner of the individual's personality or essence of a person. However, as Adebowale (2014: 63) commented, in the traditional Yoruba vocabulary, there seems to be no word corresponding in meaning to the Greek word *psyche* translated as soul in English. Hence, in Yoruba traditional thought, three elements namely; *òkàn*, *orí* and *ẹmí* are used as equivalent to the word soul, depending on the context.

### 5.3.2 Soul in Akan Traditional Thought

The Akan are an ethnic group living in the countries of present day Ghana and Ivory Coast. According to Akan ontology, the soul is the *kra* or *okra* and it is believed to have existed with *Nyame* (God) long before it became incarnated. The soul may be the soul or the spirit of a kinsman or sometimes of another person, but one who belongs to the same tribe. Whatever line the soul may have come from, it is believed that the soul existed with *Nyame*, God, and the day a person is born is the day on which he takes upon himself the human frame in order to make his existence real in the physical world of man. (Akesson, 1965: 282-283) The Akan consider *kra* or *okra* as a separate being who protects an individual, gives him good or bad advice, causes his undertakings to prosper or slights and neglects him and, therefore, in the case of prosperity, receives thanks and thank-offerings like a fetish. When an individual is about to die, it is believed that the person's *kra* leaves him gradually, before he breathes his last, but it may be called or drawn back. However, when the *kra* finally leaves and the person dies, the *kra* is no more called *kra* but *sesa* or *osamang*.

The Akan hold the general belief that the soul is not the body which is visible but rather it is a separate entity which permeates the whole anatomic system of a man. The soul is an entity that can be found in the blood, breath, hair, finger and toe clippings. To the Akan, the soul is a life-force which animates the body; it is that which makes man a living person. Though the *kra* is invisible, it is known through the activities of the living person and the nature of the soul is determined by the character and the actions of the living person. Maxims such as *me kra nnye*, which literally means "I have a bad soul" (I am not lucky), or *me kra ayew me ho*, meaning "my soul has fled away from me" when one is fearful, are indications of the activities of the soul. Also, according to the Akan traditional thought system, all *okra* (souls) are equal in quality, in substance, and in form for they come from one source *Nyame* (God). But when the *kra* enters the world of the living he assumes a physical and social role appropriate for him in the Akan tribal or clan hierarchy. (Antwi, 2017: 95-96) Akans, therefore, distinguish between two sorts of souls, namely, the souls of those of the ancestors and those of individuals who may die without ascending to the throne created for the ancestors. The latter souls compose of the active body of the clan while the souls of the ancestors survive death. The Akan also believe that each soul after death of the body returns to God by whose permission he came to live among the living that is, each soul goes back to the source from which he came where he would either be an ancestor or form part of the body of the clan or tribe. Soul in Akan is therefore conceived to be a spiritual entity that can survive death, become an ancestor or reincarnate as a family or clan member. (Ajume, 2006)

### Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Who are those that hold the general belief that the soul is not the body which is visible but rather it is a separate entity which permeates the whole anatomic system of a man?
2. What has a dual interpretation and function in the body? (a) Ara (b) Emi (c) Okan (d) Inu

## 5.4 Summary

In this unit, we have examined the Yoruba and Akan concepts of the soul. The Yoruba believe that the soul, sometimes translated as the *emi*, *ori* or *okan* is a spiritual element which gives life to the body. However, there is no single word in Yoruba language which translates directly as the soul. In the Akan tradition, the soul is regarded as the *kra* or *okra* and it is a spiritual entity that is responsible for the life of a person. Without the *kra*, a person ceases to live. Both concepts of the soul regard soul as a spiritual entity that is responsible for the life in a person.



Upon death, however, the soul leaves the body to go back to its creator that is, the *Olodumare* (Yoruba) or *Nyame* (Akan). So, in this unit we have learned that:

- In Yoruba ontology, a person is composed of the material and immaterial elements namely the *ara* and the *emi*
- Soul in Yoruba traditional thought is a spiritual element that gives life and personality to a person
- Soul is often regarded as *ori*, *emi* or *okan* depending on the context.
- In Akan ontology, the soul is referred to as the *kra* or *okra*
- The *kra* is the life-force which animates the body and makes man a living person

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## 5.6 Possible Answers to SAE

1. The Akans; 2.(c)

## UNIT 6: SOUL IN ANCIENT CHINESE THOUGHT

- 6.1 Introduction
- 6.2 Learning Outcomes
- 6.3 Soul in Ancient Chinese Thought
- 6.4 Summary
- 6.5 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 6.6 Possible Answers to SAE

### 6.1 Introduction

In our previous lesson, we examined the concept of soul in the Yoruba and Akan traditional thought. In this unit, however, we shall examine the concept of soul in ancient Chinese thought.

### 6.2 Learning Outcomes

Students should be able to understand:

- The concept of soul in ancient Chinese thought
- The difference between *hun* and *p'o*
- The significance of *hun* and *p'o* in ancient Chinese thought

### 6.3 Soul in Ancient Chinese Thought

Ancient Chinese thought refers to the belief systems that were developed by various philosophers during the era known as the Hundred Schools of Thought when these thinkers founded their schools during the Spring and Autumn period (772-476 BC), Warring States Period (481-221 BC) and after the Zhou Dynasty (1046-256 BC). Some of the major schools that were developed during these periods were Confucianism, Taoism and Yin-Yang School. These schools of thought conceive the soul as consisted of at least two distinct parts namely *p'o* and *hun*. (Mark, 2020) The *p'o* is the visible personality indissolubly attached to the body, while the *hun* is the ethereal complement element that interpenetrates the body, but not of necessity tied to it. The *hun* in its wanderings may be either visible or invisible; if the former, it appears in the guise of its original body, which actually may be far away lying in a trance-like state tenanted by the *p'o*. The ancient Chinese believe that every individual has a *hun* and a *p'o* and that the *hun* has the ability to leave one's body and also come back but in the case where the *hun* stays away permanently, death finally results. (Smith, 1958: 173)

Most Taoist schools believe that every individual has more than one soul or the soul can be separated into different parts and these souls are constantly transforming themselves. Some believe there are at least three souls for every person: one soul coming from one's father, one from one's mother, and one primordial soul. In Ancient Chinese thought, it is also understood that the *hun* soul is the spirit of a person's vital force that is expressed in consciousness and intelligence and the *p'o* soul is the spirit of a person's physical nature, expressed

through bodily strength and movements. (Puett, 2011: 225) During one's life both the souls of *hun* and *p'o* require the nourishment of the essences of the vital forces of the cosmos to stay healthy. When a person dies his or her *hun* soul gradually disappears into heaven or a special underworld and the *p'o* spirit will return back to the darker realms of the cosmos.

Ancient Chinese culture also believes in the existence of the *yin* and *yang* elements which represent the two vital forces of the cosmos. In the Ancient Chinese belief, the *yin* is the receptive, consolidating, and conserving female element while *yang* is the active, creative, and expanding male element and together they give rise to the multiplicity of things through their continuous and dynamic interactions. Hence, each human being is an amalgamation of the *yin* and *yang* and these two elements interact during the lifetime of an individual, but at the time of death, the two souls will separate and go in different directions. (New World, 2019) Thus, within the ancient Chinese tradition, every living human has both a *hun* spiritual, ethereal, *yang* soul which leaves the body after death, and also a *p'o* corporeal, substantive, *yin* soul which remains with the corpse of the deceased.

### Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Ancient Chinese culture also believes in the existence of the *yin* and \_\_\_\_\_
2. The two prominent ideas of ancient China are: (a) Confucianism and Shintoism (b) Taoism and Shintoism (c) Confucianism and Buddhism (d) Confucianism and Taoism

## 6.4 Summary

In this unit, we have examined the concept of soul in Ancient Chinese Thought. We explained that the ancient Chinese thought holds a dualist conception of soul that is, the *hun* and *p'o*. Ancient Chinese thought also believe in the existence of the *yin* and *yang* elements which represent the two vital forces of the cosmos. During a person's lifetime, these elements interact but at death, these elements separate. However, the *hun* and the *p'o* are regarded as the two pivotal concepts that have been, and still remains the key to understanding Chinese views of the human soul and the afterlife. This unit has exposed us to:

- The major schools of thought in Ancient China were Confucianism, Taoism and Yin-Yang School.
- In Ancient Chinese Thought, the soul is made up of two parts namely, the *hun* and the *p'o*

- Ancient Chinese Thought also believes in the existence of the *yin* and *yang*; the two vital forces of the cosmos.
- Ancient Chinese Thought holds that the *hun* soul can leave temporarily but when it leaves permanently, death occurs.

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## 6.6 Possible Answers to SAE

1. *Yang*; 2. (d)

## UNIT 7: SOUL IN HINDU PHILOSOPHY

- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Learning Outcomes
- 7.3.1 Brief Exposition on Hindu philosophy
- 7.3.2 Soul in Hindu philosophy
- 7.4 Summary
- 7.5 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 7.6 Possible Answers to SAE

### 7.1 Introduction

In our previous unit, we discussed the concept of soul in ancient Chinese thought. In this unit, however, we shall examine the concept of soul in Hindu philosophy. Hindu philosophy encompasses the philosophies, worldviews and teachings associated with Hinduism in Ancient India. One of the salient features in Hindu philosophy is the belief in the existence and reincarnation of the soul. We shall therefore examine the existence and reincarnation of the soul in Hindu philosophy.

### 7.2 Learning Outcomes

Students should be able to understand:

- the nature of the soul in Hindu philosophy
- the meaning of reincarnation in Hindu philosophy

### 7.3.1 Brief Exposition on Hindu philosophy

Hinduism” is a term used to designate a body of religious and philosophical beliefs indigenous to the Indian subcontinent. Hinduism is one of the world’s oldest religious traditions, and it is founded upon what is often regarded as the oldest surviving text of humanity: the Vedas. It is a religion that is practiced majorly in India and in some other places like Bali, Mauritius and Nepal. The history of Hindu philosophy can be divided roughly into three, largely overlapping stages: Non-Systematic Hindu Philosophy, found in the Vedas and secondary religious texts (beginning in the 2nd millennia B.C.E.), Systematic Hindu Philosophy (beginning in the 1st millennia B.C.E.) and the Neo-Hindu Philosophy (beginning in the 19th century C.E.). (Ranganathan, 2021)

Some of the salient features of Hindu philosophy include: the belief in Karma, the practice of polytheism, the principle of *Dharma* and the Caste system. Hinduism advocates the belief that events in a person’s life are determined by *karma*. The term *Kharma* literally means “action,” but it denotes the moral, psychological spiritual and physical causal consequences of morally significant past choices. Hinduism also advocates polytheism or the worship of many deities such as *Visnu*, *Shiva*, *Brahma*, *Laksmi* etc. In Hindu philosophy, there are a set of four core values that are held to be the ends of persons namely: *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*. “*Dharma*” is the ethical or moral action, or character or duty of persons,

*artha* stands for economic wealth, *kāma* for pleasure, and *mokṣa* for liberation from rebirth and imperfection. There is also the existence of caste system which specifies the kind of occupation or life that Hindus could live. The caste system is composed of four castes namely: *Brahmins* (priestly or scholarly caste), *Kṣatriya* (marshal or royal caste), *Vaiśyas* (merchant caste) and *Sūdras* (labor caste). (Thapar, 1990)

### 7.3.2 Soul in Hindu Philosophy

In Hinduism, the soul is known as *atman*. The soul is the vital force of human personality that is, the essential element of human personality which controls human life. The individual souls- *jivas* enter the world in a mysterious way by the power of *Brahman*. Like bubbles that form on the bottom of a boiling teakettle, they make their way through the water, that is, the universe until they break free into the limitless atmosphere of illumination or liberation. The soul begins as the soul of the simplest forms of life, but do not vanish with the death of the body thus, the difference between the living body and the dead is the presence of a soul, and as soon as the soul departs the body, the body is considered dead. Hinduism teaches that each living body, including animals, is filled with an eternal soul and the individual soul of all living bodies, including animals, was part of the creator spirit, *Brahma*. They believe that each soul's job and wish is to eventually return to *Brahma*. No soul can return to *Brahma*, however until becoming clean of all impurities and sins of the world, they must be holy and pure to return to *Brahma*. The process of becoming pure enough to return to *Brahma* is not an easy task; it takes more than one life to cleanse oneself. The soul is forced to live life after life until it is pure enough to return to *Brahma*. Thus, the Hindus refer to the cycles of rebirth as *samsara* or the Wheel of Life. It is called *moksha* when a soul is finally cleansed and ready to go back to *Brahma*. When a soul finally returns to *Brahma*, it is there for an eternity of contentment and ecstasy. (Nandan & Jangubhai, 2013)

Hindus also believes strongly in the immortality and reincarnation of the soul. For them, every soul creates its own rewards and punishments through *karma*. *Karma* rules what each soul will be in the next lifetime, it is formed by a person's good and bad deeds in life; if a person had more good deeds than bad deeds then they have good *karma*, if they had more bad deeds than good, then they have bad *karma*. Every soul is also responsible for balancing its own *dharma*, the areas of *dharma* to balance are religious, social and within the family. Individual's souls must keep their promises and remain faithful to religious rituals, while also taking care of their family. If a soul is unbalanced, then it will affect its *karma*. (Pelko et al, 2010) Thus, the *Karma* is the law of cause and effect by which each individual creates his own destiny by his thoughts, words, and deeds. The soul reincarnates, evolving through many births until all *karma* has been resolved.

The import of this is that Hinduism conceives the soul/self (*atman*) as the essence of *brahman* as it relates to it. The *ātman* is humankind's "hidden connection" to *brahman*. While the *ātman* is seemingly individualized, since it exists in every human being, it is not stamped with the individual personality of a given person; rather, it is the agent that holds together the individual's personality, and as such it is identical in everyone. The *ātman* can be thought of as a "central instance of cognition" in humankind, indicating its special connection to mind, for the ordinary personality is subject to *karma* and transmigration until one achieves knowledge of the *ātman's* identity with *brahman*. (Encyclopedia, 2020) At death, "a person consisting of mind only" (that is, one who knows *brahman*) merges with *brahman*, never to return; in contrast, those who perform actions, such as sacrifices, pass into elements such as sky and wind before taking birth on earth again; and at a still lower level, "those who do not know these two paths become worms, insects, or snakes." The *ātman* holds together the phenomenological personality, but it has no distinguishing marks characteristic of individuality. It is thus an agent of continuity, not a mark of personal identity. When spiritual liberation is achieved, the *ātman* merges with *brahman*; the individual marks of a person are dissolved, both in terms of the body and personality structure, and in terms of the mind, as individual self-reflective consciousness dissolves into pure, non-dualistic consciousness.

### Self-Assessment Exercise

1. What rules what each soul will be in the next lifetime, it is formed by a person's good and bad deeds in life? (a) God (b) Karma (c) Atman (d) Brahman
  
2. Hinduism believes in the existence of soul (a) True (b) False

## 7.4 Summary

In this unit, we have examined the concept of soul in Hindu philosophy. We explained that Hinduism is a body of religious and philosophical beliefs indigenous to India. We also explained that in Hinduism, soul is regarded as the vital force of human personality that is, the essential element of human personality which controls human life. Hinduism advocates a strong belief in the immortality and reincarnation of the soul. For them, every soul creates its own rewards and punishments through *karma* and *karma* is regarded as the consequences of morally significant past choices. So, in this unit, we have learned that:

- Hinduism is a religion that is widely practised in India
- In Hinduism, the soul is known as atman.
- In Hinduism, the soul creates its own rewards and punishments through Karma

- The soul goes back to Brahma after it has been purified from every uncleanness

## 7.5 References/Further Readings/Web Sources

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## 7.6 Possible Answers to SAE

1. (b); 2. (a)

### END OF MODULE EXERCISES

1. According to Plato, what did the soul drink which lead to forgetfulness of the Forms?
2. What, according Anaxagoras, is the unique steering power, which created cosmos from the existing chaos? (a) Body (b) Liver (c) Matter (d) Soul
3. What is the title of Empedocles’ poem where he discussed the soul?
4. What has a dual interpretation and function in the body? (a) Ara (b) Emi (c) Okan (d) Inu
5. Most Taoist schools believe that every individual has more than one soul or the soul can be separated into different parts and these souls are constantly transforming themselves (a) True (b) False



6. In Hinduism, the soul is known as \_\_\_\_\_

### **Module 3: The Question of Identity**

Unit 1: Identity: Meaning, types and sources

Unit 2: Identity and permanence

Unit 3: Identity and continuity

Unit 4: Identity and self-transcendence

## **UNIT 1: Identity: Meaning, Types and Sources**

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3.1 Meaning of Identity
- 1.3.2 Types of Identity
- 1.3.3 Sources of Identity
- 1.4 Summary
- 1.5 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 1.6 Possible Answers to SAE

### **1.1 Introduction**

This unit attempts to discuss identity; its meaning, types and its different sources. Identity, simply defined, is how a person or a group defines itself which makes it to be sufficiently different from others. There are two main types of identity; personal and social identity, of which the latter has two classes namely; role and class. The main sources of identity include; age, ethnicity, class, region and gender.

### **1.2 Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this lesson, the student is expected to be able to

- Know the meaning of identity beyond its popular day-to-day usage.
- Be able to recognize the main types of identity
- Be able to recognize the main sources of identity

### **1.3.1 Meaning of Identity**

Many a time, we ask ourselves or others a three-word question such as; who I am? Or what are you? These questions sometimes sound nonsensical and at time rhetorical but an appropriate answer to these questions is always a reflection of what we are, what we believe in and also the way we see other people. In a book titled *What is Identity*, James D. Fearon (1999) gathers fourteen definitions of the concept culled from the writings of different authors, three of these definitions are:

- a. Identity “refers to the ways in which individuals and collectivities are distinguished in their social relations with other individuals and collectivities” (Jenkins 1996, 4).
- b. “Identity is used in this book to describe the way individuals and groups define themselves and are defined by others on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, language, and culture” (Deng 1995, 1).
- c. Identity is “people's concepts of who they are, of what sort of people they are, and how they relate to others” (Hogg and Abrams 1988, 2).

### 1.3.2 Types of Identity

Despite the plurality of the senses in which the concept identity is used today, there are two distinct but intertwined meanings of the concept namely personal and social identity.

**Personal Identity:** The most relevant entry of for the concept “identity” in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 1989) defines identity as: “the sameness of a person or thing at all times or in all circumstances; the condition or fact that a person or thing is itself and not something else; individuality, personality.” This definition is sharply different from the three definitions of the concept earlier presented as it lays emphasis on the sameness of a person or a thing that remains intact through time.

However, it has been a debate among philosophers from antiquity over a particular and often rather technical understanding of the concept “identity.” Philosophers have conceived personal identity as properties or qualities which make a thing what it is rather than something else. In other words, if those properties or qualities are altered or annulled, the thing will cease to be that thing again and become something else. It is in this sense that Fearon defines personal identity as: “those predicates of a person such that if they are changed, it is no longer the same person, the properties that are *essential* to him or her being that person rather than being merely *contingent*.” (Fearon 1999:12) Fearon then proceeds to define identity in the broadest possible sense. According to him, personal identity is a set of attributes, beliefs, desires, or principles of action that a person thinks distinguish her in socially relevant ways and that (a) the person takes a special pride in; (b) the person takes no special pride in, but which so orient her behavior that she would be at a loss about how to act and what to do without them; or (c) the person feels she could not change even if she wanted to (Fearon 1999:25)

**Social Identity:** According to Alexander Wentz “Social identities are sets of meanings that an actor attributes to himself while taking the perspective of others, that is, as a social object. ... social identities are cognitive schemas that enable an actor to determine ‘who I am/we are’ in a situation and positions in a social role structure of shared understandings and expectations” (Wendt 1994, 395). In a similar way, Gary Herrigel defines social identity as the desire for group distinction, dignity, and place within historically specific discourses (or frames of understanding) about the character, structure, and boundaries of the polity and the economy”. (Herrigel 1993, 371)

There are two senses in which social identity can be conceived namely role and type identity. Role identities refer to labels applied to people who are expected or obligated to perform some set of actions, behaviors, routines, or functions in particular situations. Mother, father, teacher, manager, student, preacher, et cetera are but some of the examples of roles people perform. On the other hand, type

identities refer to labels applied to persons who share or are thought to share some characteristic or characteristics, in appearance, behavioral traits, beliefs, attitudes, values, skills (e.g., language), knowledge, opinions, experience, historical commonalities (like region or place of birth), and so on.

### 1.3.3 Sources of Identity

**Race and/or Ethnicity:** Close to, but significantly different from race is ethnicity. To clear the nuance, race denotes supposed biological/genetic differences between human beings. In the past people have talked about human beings being divided into distinctive racial groupings - usually based around things such as skin colour. This is the dubious tool through which the Europeans portray their supremacy over other races. On the other hand, ethnicity denotes *cultural differences* between different people. It is the recognition that different people develop from different forms of culture. This is a fact of their experiences that makes an ethnic group to be sufficiently different from others which can be based around a number of different areas which include common language, religious belief, territorial origin, cultural traditions and lifestyle, among others.

**Social Class:** Karl Marx makes a broad distinction between the proletariat and the bourgeois. Hence, Marx suggests class solidarity; that people of lower class should stick together, help each other so as to take over the stage and create an egalitarian (classless) society. This is the way social class is relevant as a source of identity. Social class refers to the various ways that people can be classified on the basis of their occupation. Thus, class can be used as an economic or occupational classification system. For the purpose of this lesson, we shall introduce a transient space between Marx's classifications. Hence we have the upper, middle and the lower class such that the upper class comprises the business owners; the middle class is made up of the managers while the lower class contains the workers. Doing the same kinds of job overtime, people develop something in common with each other identify themselves through what they do.

**Gender:** Gender is defines in term of the particular cultural characteristics that people give to different biological sexes. The difference between gender and sex is that; while the latter is a biological fact, the latter is the role attached to these biological facts in any given society. In Nigeria and most of the African states, we only recognize two sexes hence and genders. It will sound nonsensical to us any further bifurcation along the gender line. However, in Western worlds, there is recognition of hermaphrodite which is combination of male and female organ in various degrees. In effect, where only male and female sexes are recognized, the corresponding genders that will be recognized are masculine and feminine gender accordingly.

**Region:** Region is the geographical location an individual is found by birth and/or by residence. Region is another mean of constructing a sense of identity. We normally expect a kind of behavioural attitude from a city dweller quite different from what we expect from a villager. This is one of the ways region plays a formative role on individual's identity. You hear such remarks like, 'no wonder, he is a villager', or 'I am rely disappointed in you, you just behave like someone who was just brought from a village'. Closely related to this is nation and nationality which are related to patriotism and national identity. According to William Bloom, National identity describes that condition in which a mass of people have made the same identification with national symbols – have internalized the symbols of the nation ..." (Bloom 1990, 52).

**Age:** The concept of age is rooted in biological growth and development. Age is a function of time a person or anything whatsoever has passed in existence. It becomes a measure of physical, psychological as well as spiritual growth and development. This growth and development may be positive or negative or neutral across different age brackets depending on nature of the person or thing in question. Let us take for instance, physical growth spontaneous at early childhood stage till the adolescent age. Towards the end of the teenage, it becomes stunted and eventually reaches its peak at youth age. At this point, an individual is supposed to have the best of his energy. This will be maintained for a moment depending on the genetic make-up (nature) and nourishment of the subject. Towards the end of the adulthood, it starts shrinking until it reaches the old-age. This, by the way, obeys the law of diminishing return. Similar thing can be said about psychological make-up. However, it is believed that spiritual growth does not follow this rule as it takes the very inverse of the physical and psychological growth such that it is admitted to be high at infancy, diminish along the physical and psychological growth line and start increasing once again as the subject reaches the old-age until it becomes senile.

### **Self-Assessment Exercise**

1. Which of these is not a source of identity (a) Ethnicity (b) religion (c) region (d) age
2. What defines in term of the particular cultural characteristics that people give to different biological sexes? (a) Ethnicity (b) gender (c) Sex (d) region

## **1.4 Summary**

In this unit, we have explicated the meaning of identity. We have also looked into two main types of identity after which we looked into the significant sources of

identity. However, identity is socially constructed as it does not have a concrete existence beyond what human call it to be at every point in time. This makes many of the identity claims to be susceptible to change as human being wishes to. To be sure, the following have been learned in this unit:

- Identity is what an individual or a group call themselves or being called by others.
- There are two main types of identity; personal identity and social identity.
- Personal identity is how an individual answers the question “who are you?” or how he/she is being defined by others.
- Social identity is how a people are being defined by themselves or by others, which makes them sufficiently different from any others outside the group.
- People are identified in term of the role they play as well as in term of type they are.
- The significant sources of identity include; age, social class, ethnicity, region and gender.

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## **1.6 Possible Answers to SAE**

1. (b); 2. (b)



## **UNIT 2: IDENTITY AND PERMANENCE**

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Learning Outcomes
- 2.3.1 Meaning of Permanence
- 2.3.2 Nexus between Identity and Permanence
- 2.4 Summary
- 2.5 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 2.6 Possible Answers to SAE

### **2.1 Introduction**

In the previous unit, we explored the meaning, types and sources of identity. In this unit, we shall examine the relationship between identity and permanence. This we shall do by looking into the meaning of permanence in the context of identity.

### **2.2 Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this lesson, the students are expected to:

- be able to understand permanence in relation to identity
- articulate the individual concepts of identity and permanence

### **2.3.1 Meaning of Permanence**

At a moment, a human person is born as an infant. As time pass, the infant grows to be sitting independently on its own and latter crawling, trekking, blabbing and talking. The infant of yesterday attains childhood. Latter, it becomes a teenager, a youth, an adult, an old-person and finally dies. Amidst all these metamorphosis and transition, is there not permanence? This question was the fundamental to the birth of Western philosophy in the Ancient Greek City State and it remains unresolved up till date. They were looking out the permanent stuff, the prima object that remains permanent amidst all the changes in their experiences. While some of them hold that there must be permanence amidst the changes across birth, growth, death and decay, others suggest change. Water, air and fire were invariably suggested by ancient philosophers who hold on permanence. Permanence, simply defined, is the ability of a person or a thing to retain its identity through time.

### **2.3.2 Nexus between Identity and Permanence**

In psychology, permanence is defined as the apparent maintenance of object identity over time, especially during periods of non-observation. By this definition, it becomes obvious that permanence and identity goes together. A number of experiments and theoretical practical researches have been carried out in the field of psychology to prove (or otherwise disprove) the assumption that objects are permanent by default. One of theories the psychologists arrived at is Social Brain hypothesis which is considered as a pillar of human evolutionary

psychology (Dunbar and Shultz, 2003; Adolphs, 2009). The complex social relations envisioned as the primary drivers of human cognitive, emotional and behavioral evolution within the Social Brain framework inevitably, the psychologists posit, involve abilities to reliably identify particular individual humans over long periods of time and hence moderate to long periods of non-observation. Such abilities require an inference of continuing existence with individual identity maintenance; hence they require object permanence.

Philosophers as well as social scientists are divided over whether there is permanence in anything at any stage or change is the reality. For those who advocate for permanence, they argue that change is illusory. In another words, all observable changes in our experience are a matter of appearance. They did not form the reality. Reality is permanent and persistence through time. There is also a divide opinion among the adherent of permanence. The materialists' opinion is that what is permanent is nothing other than matter better matter is at the base of the reality. On the other hand, the non-materialists' hold that permanence is immaterial (spiritual being such as mind and soul). An intellectual contrary of permanence in this context is continuity. We shall discuss continuity in the subsequent unit.

### **Self-Assessment Exercise**

1. The complex social relations envisioned as the primary drivers of human cognitive, emotional and behavioral evolution within what?
2. What is the ability of a person or a thing to retain its identity through time?

## **2.4 Summary**

In this unit, we have looked into the meaning of permanence. We have also looked into philosophers' as well as psychologists' perspective to permanence after which we draw our searchlight into the relationship that exists between identity and permanence so conceived. We discussed the materialists' as well as the non-materialists' view towards permanence. However, the problem is that if permanence is through from materialistic point of view, how come that we lost the identity of someone we have missed for a long time, say forty-year back? And if non-materialists' were through, how do we identify this permanence? So, in a nutshell, we have learned that:

- Permanence is the ability of a person or thing to retain its identity over time.
- Contrary to the idea of permanence is continuity.
- There is a divide opinion over whether permanence or change is at the base of reality.

## **2.5 References/Further Readings/Web Sources**

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## **2.6 Possible Answers to SAE**

1. Social brain framework; 2. permanence

## **UNIT 3: IDENTITY AND CONTINUITY**

- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Learning Outcomes
- 3.3.1 Meaning of Continuity
- 3.3.2 Ethical Implication of Continuity
- 3.4 Summary
- 3.5 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 3.6 Possible Answers to SAE

### **3.1 Introduction**

In the immediately past unit, we discussed permanence in relation to identity and we raised a problem of identity in relation to the possibility of permanence. We also assert that contrary to the belief on permanence is continuity. In this unit, we shall do well to look into the meaning of continuity. We shall also look into continuity within the eyeglass of identity.

### **3.2 Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this lesson, students are expected to be able to:

- Understand the meaning of continuity
- Place identity within the context of continuity
- Realize the moral implication of continuity

### **3.3.1 Meaning of Continuity**

In the previous session, we analyzed permanence. We commented that the problem of identity culminates the fundamental problem that led to the birth of Western philosophy. The first waves of philosophers who concern themselves with this problem agree that there is permanence only that each and every one of them has his different candidate as far as the permanence is concerned. As a matter of fact, Heraclitus was the first philosopher to object this opinion, claiming that there is permanence is not the rule of the game. As an alternative, he suggests change, claiming that everything is in a state of flux (Sholarin et al. 2016). Also critiquing Homer for condemning the idea that strife existed among men and the gods, Heraclitus argues that strife is a very essential prerequisite for sustaining the rhythm of all things. Thus, if strife were to be taken away from life and humanity, life will literally cease to exist. Heraclitus puts it rightly thus: “Homer was wrong in saying, ‘...would that strife might perish from amongst gods and men.’ For if that were to occur, then all things would cease to exist” (Wogu, 2010:36-37). Contrary to Homer’s opinion, Heraclitus argues that: “it should be understood that war is the common condition, that strife is justice, and that all things come to pass through the compulsion of strife” (Burnet, 1892).

Continuity presupposes that amidst all the observable changes, there is an underlying link of interconnectivity such that the present is a continuity of the past

which is, in turn, an antecedent of the future shall build. The problem of continuity has a being a concern of psychologists as well as philosophers. There are psychological-continuity views; in fact, Nichols and Bruno 2010 give experimental evidence for it. These advocates in the discipline of psychology hold that there is continuity if, and only if, the subject could remember the past experience. In other words, the ability to remember the past is the only measure that guarantees the continuity. Another perspective to continuity is the bio-generation perspective which posits that one's existence is continuous inasmuch as one leaves another generation that is directly generated from the present generation.

### **3.3.2 Ethical Implications of Continuity**

The idea of continuity is a controversial one. Be as it may, it has social benefits if a belief in continuity is held from whichever perspectives. The benefit is that the belief will go a long way to shape one's disposition towards life at every conscious time of existence. At the very bottom of the line is psychological continuity which, nevertheless has its social advantage; if one holds the belief that one is still going to leave beyond today and that one's action today can be a cause of jeopardy in the future time, the consciousness of the future would go a long way to serve as a curb from nonchalant actions towards oneself or to the fellow members of human community. As such, that would serve a justification of one's moral injunctions. The moral consciousness would even be more if one believes in the continuity on the ground that life continues even after one's death as individuals shall be survived by their generation who will continue the life. Similar thing can be said about a belief in continuity through any of ancestral existence, rebirth and resurrection. The position reaches its peak in ethical advantage if animism is adopted, as earlier explained as it makes a case for an inclusion of not only animals but minerals also in ethical consideration. This is a viable environmental ethical position.

#### **Self-Assessment Exercise**

1. The idea of continuity is a controversial one (a) agreeable (b) disagreeable (c) controversial (d) c and b
2. Who argues that strife is a very essential prerequisite for sustaining the rhythm of all things? (a) Parmenides (b) Anaxagoras (c) Homer (d) Heraclitus

### 3.4 Summary

So far, we have enunciated the meaning of continuity. We have also looked into different perspectives from which continuity is argued. These include; psychological continuity, a belief in survival by new generation, ancestral existence, rebirth and reincarnation. We also exposed some criticisms levied against psychological continuity. However, no matter the controversy of this claim, a belief in continuity is worthy of pursuance because, at least it serves a convincing and justifiable ground for our ethical beliefs. In this unit, we have learned that:

- Continuity is built on the assumption that the past is the antecedence for the presence, shall, in turn, serve as the antecedence for the future.
- There is both psychological as well as metaphysical approach to continuity.
- Psychological continuity analogous to memory, that is, the ability to remember an action being done by self in the past.
- Metaphysical approaches includes; belief in ancestral existence, rebirth and reincarnation.
- There is moral implication of a belief in continuity such that a collapse of this belief may be detrimental to our moral system.

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### **3.6 Possible Answers to SAE**

1. (d); 2. (d)

## **Unit 4: Identity and Self-Transcendence**

- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Learning Outcomes
- 4.3.1 Identity and Self-Transcendence
- 4.3.2 Ethical Implication of Self-Transcendence
- 4.4 Summary
- 4.5 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 4.6 Possible Answers to SAE

### **4.1 Introduction**

As the name implies, self-transcendence is the ability of an individual to divorce himself or herself and begin to see himself in the midst of others. There are three approaches to self-transcendence namely psychological, philosophical and spiritual approach. Whichever approach one takes into it, they all equally have the advantage of helping man to cope better with unavoidable ‘hills’ of life, to make humans morally better as he/she get rid of egocentric outlook towards life to a more egalitarian approach and leads to a better interpersonal relation among others.

### **4.2 Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this lesson, the student is expected to:

- Learn the meaning of self-transcendence.
- Understand the moral implication of self-transcendence.

### **4.3.1 Identity and Self-Transcendence**

In the previous units, we discussed identity as internal or external definition of self. We also discussed permanence and continuity. This unit however discusses identity and self-transcendence. From the existentialist perspective, Frakl defines self-transcendence as an innate desire to discover meaning in human life (Frankl 2000). There are three approaches to self-transcendence namely psychological, philosophical and religio-spiritual approach. Self-transcendence can thus be considered as a growing spirituality which involves both an expansion of boundaries and an increased appreciation of the present.

Levenson, Aldwin and Cupertino argue that self-transcendence is a developmental process that forms a pathway to wisdom. Distilling the principal concerns of the wisdom traditions in both European and Asian philosophies, Cornow, (1999) arrived at four central features of wisdom: self-knowledge, detachment, integration, and self-transcendence, arguing that self-transcendence is at the peak of the developmental processes. In this regard, we can best understand the place self-transcendence in term of the developmental phases that precede it. The first phase, self-knowledge is the consciousness of one’s sense of self, that is, one’s identity, which arises in context of role and type as explicated in the unit one of



this module. It is also a sense of enduring duality that we conceptualize as self and other. Detachment involves an understanding of the transience and provisional nature of the things, relationships, roles, and achievements that create and sustain our sense of self. Integration is the dissolution of separate “inner selves” reflected in the defense mechanisms that defend ego against threats to self-worth. Being able to detach from external definitions of the self and dissolving rigid boundaries between self and other allows for self-transcendence (Loy, 1996).

From the religio-spiritual perspective, Thomas Merton (1972) makes a distinction between a true and a false self, arguing that a false self is the self that is defined by others. He outlines a progressive transformation from an identity founded in the false (i.e. illusory, nonspiritual and worldly) self to a new identity founded in the true (i.e. spiritual, contemplative and enlightened) self. The false self is egocentric and concerned with meeting its own needs. The true self is other-focused and finds serenity through releasing the vestiges of egocentrism. The false self is one’s most familiar identity, but is also superficial. It includes thoughts, emotions, personas, roles and social awareness. Merton holds further that, in contemplation, one becomes aware of his or her true self and learns that the false self is limited. The false self erects barriers that must be surmounted before the true self can be explored and experienced (Merton 1972:7). In his latter book, Merton then asserts that Self-transcendence is the doorway from the false self to the true self. (Merton 2003:2)

#### **4.3.2 Ethical Implication of Self-transcendence**

Self-transcendence is argued to be a personality by some and yet a trait by some others. Whichever way construed, self-transcendence preaches that a self that is defined in a parochial sense is unsustainable. Contextualizing spirituality within human identity and using metaphors like transcendence and the true self can make continued development more accessible to busy and under-resourced people. Because these themes are based on a wealth of spiritual and psychological thought and practice, they have the substance to sustain and rejuvenate depth and meaning. By this way, a transcendent self will find it easier for him/her to cope with life that is full of ups and downs. Death is an unavoidable bitter reality of life. It requires a transcendent eye to see the matter of death a ‘necessary reality’ that awaits every living being rather than seeing it as ‘necessary evil’. More so, self-transcendence enhances interpersonal relation with other people in the same environment on the one hand, and with the non-human living and non-living components of environment. Social identity is seeing oneself as a product of an ethnic group/nation/continent hence an allegiance to that ethnic group/nation/continent even at the detriment of other ethnic group/nation/continent. This is the genesis of many problem of ethnicity and racism. However, a transcendent self could easily find solace in transnationalism and cosmopolitanism. This is because they are able to see beyond self.

### Self-Assessment Exercise

1. What is argued to be a personality by some and yet a trait by some others?
2. What involves seeing oneself as a product of an ethnic group/nation/continent? (a) social identity (b) gender (c) self-transcendence (d) facticity

#### 4.4 Summary

So far, we have looked into the meaning of self-transcendence from the psychological, existentialist and spiritual point of view. Relating it with identity, identity is the self that is defined by oneself or the others. Meanwhile, self-transcendence calls for a denial of all the labels that were put in place by identity so defined. It is achieved through old age as well as other developmental activities which include learning, meditation, sufferings and supplication among others. In this unit, we have been able to realize that:

- Self-transcendence is an innate desire to discover meaning in human life.
- There are psychological, religio-spiritual and existentialist perspective to self-transcendence.
- Self-transcendence is a developmental state and, at the same time, a personality.
- It is acquired through with old age and true learning.

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#### **4.6 Possible Answers to SAE**

1. Self-transcendence; 2. (a)

### **END OF MODULE EXERCISES**

1. The complex social relations envisioned as the primary drivers of human cognitive, emotional and behavioral evolution within what?
2. What is the ability of a person or a thing to retain its identity through time?
3. What is argued to be a personality by some and yet a trait by some others?
4. What involves seeing oneself as a product of an ethnic group/nation/continent? (a) social identity (b) gender (c) self-transcendence (d) facticity

## **MODULE 4: INDIVIDUALISM, COMMUNALISM AND PERSONHOOD**

Unit 1: The Concept of Personhood

Unit 2: Individualism and Communalism

Unit 3: Individual Freedom in African Community

## **UNIT 1: THE CONCEPT OF PERSONHOOD**

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3.1 Etymology of Personhood
- 1.3.2 Meaning of Personhood
- 1.4 Summary
- 1.5 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 1.6 Possible Answers to SAE

### **1.1 Introduction**

In this unit, we shall examine the concept of personhood. To achieve this, we shall examine what it means to be a person and the relationship between the terms “person” and “personhood.”

### **1.2 Learning Outcomes**

In this study, we intend to clarify the concept personhood. Consequently, the students are expected to:

- Know the etymology of the concept
- Understand the concept as both a normative as well as a descriptive concept
- Be able to know the relationship and the difference between person and personhood

### **1.3.1 Etymology of the Concept ‘Personhood’**

According to Clifford’s account, the English word ‘personhood’ is gotten from the Latin term *persona*. It is used to refer to someone processing legal status within Roman Empire (Clifford, 2018, p.43). Conceptual relatives of personhood include; person, personality, personnel, personal, impersonation, among others, of which they all emanate from the same root. According to Raymond Williams, the term “person” came into English vocabulary in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century. Immediate forerunner of the word into English language was *persone*, a French word that was derived from another old French word *persona* which was from a Latin word *persona*. William claims further that the original Latin term has undergone a series of meaning starting from its original conception as: ‘a mask used by a player’ and later to mean ‘a character in a play’, then ‘a part that a man act’ until it finally becomes ‘a general word for human being’. (Williams, 1976: 232-233)

### **1.3.2 Meaning of Personhood**

The term person and its conceptual relations are in our common vocabulary of usage. The Cambridge International Dictionary of English (2002: 1052), defines the term person as ‘man, woman or child.’ It adds that this term is also used to describe someone’s character, for example, whether one is kind generous, mean or

cowardly. Personhood, as a concept can be used in two senses namely descriptive and prescriptive senses (Adekanye, 2020: 2). The former is about the ontology of being, which is further bifurcated into biological and metaphysical being. The descriptive notion is the ethical; it is acquired after a series of socialization and conformation with ethical standard of a certain human community. Here is where it becomes necessary to make a simple clarification between the two terms often used to mean denote the same thing. These are; person and personhood where the former is the biological beingness which makes a biological organism to be human rather than being something else, say, goat or the closest of the animal kingdom to man, ape. As we can see, being a person so defined is automatically attained immediately at birth with no effort required from the subject. Contrarily, personhood is acquired as a result of a series of efforts at defined by the community of humans. It is acquired unlike the other which is attained automatically at birth. The relationship between the two concepts is that ‘person’ is endowed with the potentiality of personhood. It means, to attain personhood, one has to, first of all, be a person. Gyekye succinctly asserts that “while the concept of a person is discussed only sometimes in connection with the notion of community, personhood seems to be discussed always in connection with latter (Majeed, 2017:26).

Personhood is a ‘status’ conferred on a biological person upon acquiring the ‘substances’ as defined by human community. This means that a person that lacks the substance can never have the status. Personhood is conferred on individual by others in the community having acquired the virtue. This virtue is defined by, and varies from community to community. The virtues include; morality, wealth, knowledge, age, among others. Echoing this notion, Adekanye remarks that “this explains why the human person is a microcosm of the kind of society in which he belongs, a society entirely of his making.” This indicates that the notion of personhood is determined by the orientation and cultural, social, religious background that underpin individual worldviews” (Adekanye, 2020: 10)

### **Self-Assessment Exercise**

1. Personhood can be used in how many senses? (a) 1 (b) 2 (c) 3 (d) 4
2. Which is not a virtue? (a) knowledge (b) age (c) wealth (d) desperation

## **1.4 Summary**

In this unit, we examined the etymology of the concept “personhood”; how the concept has evolved and how its meaning has changed overtime and across linguistic communities. We also explained the relationship between the two terms “person” and “personhood”. A person in isolation can never attain personhood. However, it is right to conclude this unit that a biologically qualified individual as

a person may be denied the status of personhood if the individual fails to behave as is expected of him/her in a given human community. The reason is not farfetched; person as a term is biological while personhood is social in nature. In this unit, we have been able to learn that:

- Personhood, as a concept, has its core root derived from a Latin word *persona*.
- Person as a term is biological while personhood is social.
- Person is a biological fact that is automatically attained at birth
- Personhood is a social 'status' that is conferred on individual in a human community having socialized and demonstrated the possession of the social 'substances' as drawn by the community of human.

### **1.5 References/Further Readings/Web Sources**

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### **1.6 Possible Answers to SAE**

1. (b); 2. (d)

## UNIT 2: INDIVIDUALISM AND COMMUNALISM

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Learning Outcomes
- 2.3.1 Meaning of Individualism
- 2.3.2 Meaning of Communalism
- 2.3.3 The Relationship between Individualism and Communism
- 2.4 Summary
- 2.5 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 2.6 Possible Answers to SAE

### 2.1 Introduction

Having looked at the conception of personhood in the previous study unit, we shall proceed to look into the meaning of individualism and communalism in this unit. We shall do this by looking into the etymological derivation of both concepts; how both of them have evolved and how their meanings have changed overtime. We shall also expose the broader meanings of the concepts as it has been presented by some scholars.

### 2.2 Learning Outcomes

At the end of this lesson, students are expected to:

- Understand the etymological trajectory of the duo of the concepts; individualism and communalism
- Explain the concepts in a broad sense
- Know the relationship and the differences of the concepts

### 2.3.1 Meaning of Individualism

Making recourse to available historical trajectory of the concept, Williams, R. (1976) accounts that the concept *individualism* is a Medieval Latin word, that was derived from another Latin word *individuus* as far back as 6<sup>th</sup> Century. The Latin *individuus* is derived from the two Latin words; prefix (*in*) which means ‘not’ and the adjective *dividere* which means ‘divide’ hence, the word originally meant indivisible, that is, a unit whole that cannot be further split. Individualism is the immediate forerunner of the English word ‘individual’. Williams accounts further that the Latin word *individuus* was used to translate a classical Greek word *atomos* ‘not cuttable’, ‘not divisible’. As far back as 6<sup>th</sup> Century, Boethius, in his *Porphyrium commentarium liber secundus* defined the meanings of *individuus* thus:

Something can be called individual in various ways: that is called individual which cannot be divided at all, such as unity or spirit (i); that which cannot be divided because of its hardness, such as steel, is called individual (ii); something is called individual, the specific



designation of which is not applicable to anything of the same kind, such as Socrates (iii).

‘Individual’ seen in this sense was not social until, perhaps, in the writing of Locke (*Human Understanding*, III, vi; 1690) that the modern social sense emerged, but even then still as an adjective as it is contained in: ‘our Idea of any individual Man’. Later in the writing of Adam Smith in the last period of 18<sup>th</sup> Century, a crucial shift in attitudes can be clearly seen in uses of the word as it is contained in the following assertion: ‘among the savage nations of hunters and fishers, every individual . . . is . . . employed in useful labour’ (Adam Smith. 1776: i). It was Leibniz’s notion of ‘monads’ that postulated the individual as the substantial entity and promoted further in the writings of social contract theorists, among whom Hobbes is a key player. Williams account thus:

Individualism corresponds to the main movement of liberal political and economic thought. But there is a distinction indicated by Simmel: ‘the individualism of uniqueness - *Einzigheit* - as against that of singleness - *Einzelheit*’. ‘Singleness’ - abstract individualism - is based, Simmel argued, on the quantitative thought, centred in mathematics and physics, of 18<sup>th</sup> Century. ‘Uniqueness’, by contrast, is a qualitative category, and is a concept of the Romantic Movement. It is also a concept of evolutionary biology, in which the species is stressed and the individual related to it, but with the recognition of uniqueness within a kind. (Williams, 1976: 164)

### **2.3.2 Meaning of Communalism**

The term “communalism” was coined by the libertarian socialist, Murray Bookchin (2007) who defines communalism as “a theory of government or a system of government in which independent communities participate in a federation as well as the principles and practice of communal ownership.” According to Etta et al (2016), communalism is a political structure that was practiced in traditional African society. Under this political structure, the African family and cultural structures under respective Kingship pattern were founded on the basis of communal principles. For instance, the family structure which consisted of the nuclear family and the extended family structure was headed by a family head. Many of these families however produced a community with a community head. The different communities within a given culture with a

common language and other cultural norms formed nationhood with an overall monarch as their head. With this, “African communities were self-governing, autonomous entities, and in that, all members took part, directly or indirectly, in the daily running of the tribe”. (Etta et al, 2016: 303)

According to Kwame Gyekye (2011), “communalism is the doctrine that the communality (or group) is the focus of activities of the individual member of the society.” In the same vein, Africa Economic Development Institute (AEDI) defines “communalism as a strong allegiance limited to one’s own ethnic group, commonly based on sharing history and cultures, characterized by collective cooperation and ownership by members of a community.” (AEDI, 2016) These definitions spell out the main characteristics of communalism namely shared cultural history and values which enhance collective cooperation that make a given culture peculiar. Communalism is based on the assumption of common identity and the belief that people belong to specific groups, sharing history, language, culture and historic space. In communalism, membership of the group is strictly determined by the criteria that define the community and afford members rights and loyalty.

### **2.3.3 The Relationship between Individualism and Communalism**

We have examined the meaning of individualism and communalism. This is done purposefully to pave a way for the last unit and, so, we shall build on them. In the trajectory, we show how the meaning of the concept ‘individual’ originally meant ‘indivisible’. And this point, individualism portrays the idea of ‘unity’ as it connoted that ‘an individual is a significant component of an indivisible unit of entire human community or at least, an immediate human community of the individual. This promotes a sense of unity in the sense that a community is like an organism of which an individual is a part just like we have eyes, nose mouth, *et cetera* that comes together to form a system of an organism. However, in the works of the latter Western scholars who popularize it and gave it its more social form, notably from the work of ideologist, social scientists, political theorists as well as economists which include Leibniz, Adam Smith, Thomas Hobbes, reach its climax in the writing of Karl Marx and, worst still, in the writings of the existentialists, especially as championed by Jean-Paul Sartre among others, the concept became corrupted to mean isolation and singleness rather than unity. In this regard, individualism, as a concept, becomes a correspondence to the main movement of liberal political and economic thought.

Individualism so conceived is the political cum economic thought that is based on the ideology that individual has the liberty to exhibit their potentials to the fullest without any constrain from government inasmuch as the individual does not infringe on others’ right. An individual, in this view, has liberty to vest all his energy, intellectual acumen and skills to accumulate wealth have no right to deny

him/her or impose any duty on him/her that can hinder him from benefiting from the fruits of his/her labour to the fullest. This engenders a wider gap between the rich and the poor.

Contrarily, communalism is derived from the root word ‘common’ as we have expounded in the previous subunits. Unlike individualism, communalism emphasizes communal values and shared beliefs. Communalism is an ideology that promotes ‘commonalism’. It is a political structure which emphasizes the importance of the community in the development of the individual. An individual is a social agent who lives in the community. Hence, communalism holds that an individual’s individuality is intertwined and sharpened by communal values, beliefs, norms and culture.

### **Self-Assessment Exercise**

1. Communalism is derived from which root word? (a) common (b) commoner (c) communion (d) communism
2. What is the political cum economic thought that is based on the ideology that individual has the liberty to exhibit their potentials to the fullest without any constrain from government? (a) communism (b) communalism (c) individualism (d) identity

## **2.4 Summary**

In this study unit, we have explicated the meaning of the meaning of individualism and communalism. We showed the relationship between the two concepts. However, this unit concludes that individualism takes human liberty to an extreme end which is against human nature of forming a society and interrelationship among them. On the other extreme end is communalism which infringes on the freedom of individuals to exercise their potential to the fullest. In between these two extreme ends is a better middle which makes a good blend of the elements of both. We shall examine this ‘middle position in the next unit. To sum up however, in this unit, we have seen that:

- Individualism, in its original sense, connotes ‘indivisibility’ but its contemporary usage deviates from its original sense.
- Communalism has ‘common’ as its root word and nevertheless its modern usage maintain its contact with this root word.
- Individualism is the social-political and economic ideology that promotes individual liberty to its extreme.
- Communalism is the opposite of individualism. It preaches a common identity and the belief that people belong to specific groups, sharing history, language, culture and historic space.

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## 2.6 Possible Answers to SAE

1. (a); 2. (c)

## **UNIT 3: INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM IN AFRICAN COMMUNITY**

3.1 Introduction

3.2 Learning Outcomes

3.3.1 Individual Freedom in African Communities

3.3.2 Individual Freedom in African Communities: The Yoruba Example

3.4 Summary

3.5 References/Further Readings/Web Sources

3.6 Possible Answers to SAE

### **3.1 Introduction**

In the previous units, we have discussed the meaning of personhood from the normative and the descriptive dimension. We also examined the meaning of individualism, communalism and the relationship between the two concepts. This unit is dedicated to the discussion of individual freedom in African community. The discussion in this unit shall build on the previous unit. The connection between them is that African sense of community is derived from their conception of personhood. We shall discuss the general overview of individual freedom in African community. After that, we shall take an African culture as a foil so as to engender effectiveness, in this case, Yoruba culture.

### **3.2 Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this lesson, the student is expected to be able to:

- Understand the general overview of Africans on individual freedom in community.
- Understand the view of Yoruba people, particularly, on individual freedom in community.

### **3.3.1 Individual Freedom in African Communities**

The idea of individual freedom in African community derives from African conception of person and personhood. The African conception of person is intricately interwoven with the notion that involves issues such as destiny, ancestors, life and death, community and individuality. There are two forms on the nature of the discussion of the concept of personhood. The first expresses personhood in term of communal relation such that for an individual, to be a person, there are certain duties and obligations which an individual is expected to fulfill. In this sense, personhood is attained or could be otherwise conferred on an individual if, and only if, an individual could conduct himself and consistently relate with other people in his personal interaction and the community at large. The second sense is independent of the communal interaction, holding that there are certain key characteristics that constitute personhood independent of the communal relations. The formal is communitarian/normative view while the latter is ontological/metaphysical view which is made up of both the biological and the spiritual components.

I need to make a declaration here that Africans are essentially communitarian. African communitarian idea comes out of a voluntary mindset of classless human community that is inferred from the popular Cogito-like Ubuntu dictum which goes thus; “I am because we are, since we are, therefore, I am.” It is also noteworthy that while Cogito has individualistic tendency as it portrays a self-discovering that is independent of the existence of others. Meanwhile, Ubuntu, as African communalistic philosophy, reads that individual’s wellbeing, flourishing and survival is conditioned on the wellbeing, flourishing and survival of the community at large. The implication of this is that if, for a reason, the community is ill, the individuals that constitute the community are ill. In a community so defined, community takes before the individuals that constitute it. It calls for every individual to sacrifice its personal interests for the general interest of the community whenever there is a clash between the two. What big a sacrifice!

Father Placid Tempel’s groundbreaking work on African philosophy was sold to the idea of personhood and how it implies communal living in African. Tempel emphasizes on the communal importance of a person with the notion of Ubuntu as explicated earlier. He also emphasizes the importance of name in personhood of a person, in which he presented three categories of names among the Balula people; the inner name which is given at birth, the name that is given to people at what he refers to as ‘an occasion of force such as initiation or investiture’—for example if someone is graduating from a training in traditional healing, he might assume a new name. The third and the least in his name order is a name given to oneself, perhaps, nickname or a name at church baptism. Tempel’s third notion of personhood is the measure of an individual ‘vital force’, an analogy for soul, which, he considers that it could either be; very high, diminishing or somehow exhausted depending on the bearers moral dispositions and devotions.

J. S. Mbiti is another African philosopher who holds the communitarian position. His thesis is one that positions the individual as an essentially communal being who owes his existence, allegiance and his whole being to the community. He is one with the community and without the community, he cannot be. His community constitutes who he is in the strong sense of this word. Sogolo’ position is also in tandem with Tempel’s. Ifeanyi Menkiti also follows a line a continuum with Tempels. Menkity argues that “the reality of the communal world takes precedence over the reality of individual life histories, whatever these may be.” He holds further that the individual comes to be aware of himself through the community and so can only become ‘man’ because of the existence of the community and the community, in his view, must take epistemic and ontological precedence over the individual. He was so clear on the assertion that in Africa, it is the community that defines and confers the status of personhood on individual. The only significant difference between Tempel and Menkiti is that; while the former recognises the important role of individual as a ‘vital force’ that is

endowed with the power of creation collectively with other ‘vital forces’ and so, an individual has the power of making a change in his community in time of turmoil, the latter’s notion of person which is much stronger than Tempel’s and Mbiti’s claim of the community as taking absolute precedence over the individual so much so that whatever rights an individual claims to have, those rights come second to the reality of the community.

Menkiti gives premium to age as a key measure of personhood since he admits that personhood requires a series of ‘initiation’ into one’s societal norms, which one becomes better in the awareness of these norms, the older one becomes. He makes an allusion to the English Language’s use of ‘it’ for a new born baby which will later transit to ‘he/she’ to make a case for what he calls it-status as opposed to ‘person-status’ claiming that personhood is not automatically attained at birth. It is on this ground, Menkiti argues, the elders were respected for two folds of reasons; for their experiences and for their closeness to the ancestors, most especially at senile stage since they are believed they will soon join the community of ancestors. This is the more reason while their blessings are valued while their curses are feared.

Kwame Gyekye’s position significantly differs with all the aforementioned philosophers, holding they are all “radical communitarians” and presents his as “moderate communitarianism”, the brand which he claims to triumph over the former. Using Menkiti’s as an object of criticism, he points out the incoherence in Menkiti’s position which can unavoidably lead to such a gradation like; “more of a person” and “full person” which he considers to be incoherence and bizarre. He also notes that Menkiti does not define the excellences that enable the olds to be more of persons than the young. Is it not the case that there are elderly people who are known to be wicked, ungenerous, unsympathetic and all that, right from their childhood when, on their other way round, some young are intrinsically virtuous. Gyekye argues that radical communitarianism of Tempel, Menkiti, Mbiti’s version fail to recognise individuals’ freedom in the society, arguing that an individual is also other things apart from being social being, having in mind, with his notion of other things, the attributes such as virtue, the ability to make choices and rationality. Failure to recognise these attributes reduces man to robots.

### **3.3.2 Individual Freedom in African Community: The Yoruba Example**

To illustrate this multifaceted nature of personhood in African philosophical thoughts, this section focuses on the concept of the person among the Yoruba of South Eastern Nigeria. Though Yoruba thought and belief systems closely relate to those of the Igbo, Efik, Akan and some other groups in West Africa, nevertheless, Yoruba concept of the person or personal identity may not reflect the broader conceptions of personhood among other various groups and cultures across Africa. Like many other African ethnic groups, Yoruba’s belief of a person is both

ontological and normative. Segun Gbadegesin is one of the spokesmen for Yoruba's idea of personhood and community. According to him, Yoruba concept for person is *eniyan* which has both normative and ontological meaning of which the former is of greater emphasis over the latter. He points out further that there are four prominent features of the Yoruba's conception of *eniyan*; *ori*, *emi*, *okan* and *ara*. He also notes that the metaphysical consideration is ultimately linked to the practical requirements of the society. He claims that the height of personhood is expressed through selfless devotion in service and aid of others. This is so because persons are what they are in virtue of what they are destined to be, their character and the communal influence on them. Gbadegesin concludes that there are certain metaphysical characteristics that constitute to the essential make up of person.

Yoruba's measure of a person is by virtue. These virtues include moral, wisdom and age among others. This is explicated in many of their proverbs, Ifa verses, folklores and others. It is worth of note that the apex of Yoruba's moral virtue is patience. This is spelled out in Ifa rendition that; "*ibinu ko da nkankan, suuru ni baba iwa...*" meaning; "grievance earns one nothing, patience is the father of virtues".

However, African sense of communitarianism presented by Tempel, Mbiti and Menkiti, as Gyekye critiques, is radical and tends to become harbinger on individuals' freedom. It fails to recognise the innate of human being as radical being who also have their freewill. Individuals have the freewill to obey their community or otherwise without any fear of losing their personhood from the community. More so, is it not the case that an individual may be born, but out of his/her extraordinary intelligence, comes to realise that what his community has been holding as their moral standard is intrinsically wrong only that it takes his wisdom to realise that? Is it to say that he should maintain an allegiance with the community despite that it has become evident that the act is wrong? This is the problem with individual freedom and African conception of personhood as advocated by Tempel and his disciples.

### **Self-Assessment Exercise**

1. Who is a radical communitarian theorist? (a) Wiredu (b) Gyekye (c) Houtondji (d) Menkiti
2. Pick the odd choice: (a) Tempels (b) Mbiti (c) Kagame (d) Oruka

### **3.4 Summary**

So far, we have explained that African conception of person is communitarian. We also presented Tempel, Menkiti and Mbiti's view on personhood. We examined



the criticism of Gyekye on their views on personhood. We finally narrowed our discussion down to the Yoruba's view of the individuals' freedom in community so defined and pointed out that African conception of a person does not guarantee individuals' freedom. Thus far, this unit has been able unveil:

- African conception of personhood is communitarian and not communistic in nature.
- Personhood in Tempel's view is attained, or otherwise conferred on people base of their conformity with the norms of the human community. Mbiti and Menkiti also share this view.
- Menkiti considers personhood as dependent on age meaning that the older one becomes, the better person he becomes.
- Gyekye is a critic of this view and tags it as radical communitarianism as opposed to his moderate communitarianism.
- Individuals' freedom, in African community as painted by Tempel and his disciples, is infringed on.

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### **3.6 Possible Answers to SAE**

1. (d); 2 (d)

### **END OF MODULE EXERCISES**

1. Communalism is derived from which root word? (a) common (b) commoner (c) communion (d) communism
2. What is the political cum economic thought that is based on the ideology that individual has the liberty to exhibit their potentials to the fullest without any constrain from government? (a) communism (b) communalism (c) individualism (d) identity
3. Segun Gbadegesin is one of the spokesmen for Yoruba's idea of personhood and \_\_\_\_\_
4. Who is a moderate communitarian? (a) Mbiti (b) Menkiti (c) Gyekye (d) Tempels