

COURSE GUIDE

PHI 102: ANCIENT PHILOSOPHY

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PHL 102: Ancient Philosophy

Introduction

PHL 102: Ancient Philosophy is a one semester, three credit unit course. It is made up of 26 units which present the early philosophical thought in Africa (Egypt and Ethiopia), Asia (China, India, Persia) and Western Philosophy (Ionian, Eleatic schools, the Sophists, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle). In some instances, the course will explore the ideas of individual scholars from the African tradition of philosophy. This not only shows that the idea of philosophy is not something alien to Africa but also original to it.

In the period of engaging with PHL 102, the origin of how philosophy developed will be discussed. The attempt of making the world think that philosophy is entirely a Western idea without any input from Africa or other parts of the world will be disclosed. The study of ancient philosophy is among other things, aimed at assisting the training of the mental faculty that some of the philosophical issues of contemporary times are actually not to new. They have always lived with humans irrespective of their race and geography so long as they can use their critical faculty.

The course is a compulsory pre-requisites course for philosophy students. The course guide gives a brief description of the course content, expected knowledge, the course material, and the way to use them. Tutor-Marked Assignments is embedded in the course material.

Course Objectives

The major aim of this course is to enable the student have knowledge of the various strands in Ancient period aspect of the historical development of philosophy. This will be achieved by the following broad objectives:

- i. The meaning, etymology and development of philosophy;
- ii. Historical development of philosophy in Africa, Asia and Western philosophy;
- iii. Show that ancient African philosophy has an important role to play in the development of philosophical thoughts even when Eurocentrism aims to wish this away;
- iv. Introducing you to the basic issues in the development of philosophy in the regions above; and
- v. Introducing you to the basic differences in philosophical thought in the various regions above

Working through this Course

Essentially, this course introduces you to the meaning, etymology and development of philosophy as a discipline. It takes you through the development of philosophy in Africa majorly in Egypt; in Asia with particular reference to India and in the ancient Greece. It hopes to expose you to objective thinking about the development of philosophy and the various attempts made by different philosophers to address the challenging problems at their various times. Thus, your understanding of ancient philosophy will equip you with knowledge of the ancient scholars in philosophy and their contributions to the development

of philosophy yesterday, today and in the future. To complete this course, you are required to read the study units, read recommended books and read other materials. Each unit contains self-assessment exercises, and at some points in the course you will be required to provide tutor marked assignments that go to form your continuous assessment.

Study Units

There are four (5) modules in this course. Each of the modules has 3-5 units, making a total of twenty (20) study units. The breakdown of the contents of each module into units for this course is displayed below:

Module 1: Philosophy: Meaning, Etymology and Evolution

Unit 1: Meaning, etymology and evolution of Philosophy

Unit 2: General issues on the development of Philosophy

Unit 3: The Eurocentric undergirding of Philosophy

Unit 4: Distinguishing Philosophy from Religion and Science

Module 2: Some Philosophers in Ancient Africa

Unit 1: On the Nature of Ancient African Philosophy

Unit 2: The Ideas of Ptah Hotep

Unit 3: The Ideas of Ọ̀rúnmìlà

Module 3: Philosophy in Ancient Africa

Unit 1: Proverbs and Morality among Ancient Africans

Unit 2: Aesthetics among Ancient Africans

Unit 3: The Mathematical Basis of Divination among Ancient Africans

Unit 4: Sexuality in Ancient African Beliefs

Unit 5: The Medical Philosophy of Ancient Africans

Module 4: Philosophy in Ancient Babylon, Egypt, India and China

Unit 1: Philosophy in Ancient Babylon

Unit 2: Philosophy in Ancient Egypt

Unit 3: Philosophy in Ancient India

Unit 4: Modern Science and Ancient Oriental “Scientific” Ideas

Module 5: Philosophy in the Ancient Greek and Neighboring City-States

Unit 1: Ionian/Miletian thinkers

Unit 2: Pre-Socratic Philosophers

Unit 3: Philosophers in the Socratic Era

Unit 4: Contributions of Plato and Aristotle to Education

Presentation Schedule

This course has two presentations. There is one at the middle of the semester and the other towards the end of the semester. Before presentations, the facilitator would have taken the

time to establish the rudimental of the course to the familiarity of the students. 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. All of these add up to the reinforcement of class participation and attendance.

Assessment

There are two segments on assessment for this course. These are: Tutor-Marked Assignments (TMAs) and a written examination. You are expected to submit your assignments to your tutor as at when due for 30% of your total course mark. Afterward, a final three-hour examination accounts for 70% of your total course work. Together, all of these amount to 100%.

To avoid plagiarism, students should use the followings links to test run their presentation papers before submission to their tutors:

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

Similarity index for submitted works by student must **NOT EXCEED 35%**.

How to Get the Most Out of this Course

For students to get the most out of this course, s/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; and
- 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 publications, and raise critical issues which s/he shall bring forth in the forum discussion for further dissection; three, summarizes forum discussion; four, upload materials,

videos and podcasts to the forum; and five, disseminate information via email and SMS if need be.

References/Further Readings/Web Sources

- Arieti, J. (2004). *Philosophy in the Ancient world: An Introduction*. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Christian, J. (1998). *Philosophy: An Introduction to the art of wondering*. Chicago: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Russell, B.(1996). *History of Philosophy*. London: Bertrand Russell Foundation.
- Kolak, D. (1998). *From the Presocratics to the Present*. California: Mayfield Publishing Company.
- Mitchell, H.B. (2008). *Roots of Wisdom*. Australia: Thomson and Wadsworth.
- Sinha, J.N. (2009). *Introduction to Philosophy*. New Delhi: New Central Book Agency.
- Soccio, D. J. (1998). *Archetypes of Wisdom: an Introduction to Philosophy*. London: Wadsworth Publishing Company.
- Stumpf, S.E. (1994). *Philosophy: History and Problems*. N.Y. McGraw- Hill.

In addition to the afore-stated work, the following online sites can also assist students to acquire additional publications:

- www.pdfdrive.net
- www.bookboon.com
- www.sparknotes.com
- <http://ebookey.org>
- <https://scholar.google.com>
- <https://books.google.com>

MODULE 1: Philosophy: Meaning, Etymology and Evolution

Unit 1: Meaning, Etymology and Evolution of Philosophy

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3 What is Philosophy?
- 1.4 The Evolution of Philosophy
- 1.5 Summary
- 1.6 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 1.7 Possible Answers to SAEs

1.1 Introduction

In this unit, we are going to talk about two crucial elements: philosophy and how much it has evolved as a discipline that shapes human history. These are the two contents in this unit. So, the first part addresses the question: “What is Philosophy?” Here attention will be given to the issue of etymology and meaning of the concept. The second unit addresses the issue of the development of philosophy.

1.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit it is expected that students must be able to:

- Understand the meaning of philosophy from its etymology; and
- Be familiar with the ideological underpinnings of evolution of philosophical ideas

1.3 What is Philosophy?

Philosophy is thought to have emanated from two Greek concepts: *Philo* and *Sophia*. With *Philo* meaning love and *Sophia* meaning wisdom rendering the concept *Philosophia* as love of wisdom. The Greeks have four words for love. They are: *Philo*, *Agape*, *Storge* and *eros* but with different meanings and directions of thinking. *Philo* means love in form of attachment, desire, and the like while *agape* has to do with love in relation to the general interest in humanity irrespective of the person, race, colour, nationality. It is that feeling of love that is given to any human being by the mere fact of being human.

Storge has to do with the love for material things like food, clothes, fashion, and the like while *eros* is the love in relations to intimacy. The other segment of the concept philosophy, *Sophia* has to do with wisdom, reason, knowledge. B.S. Nnamdi (2008:4) appears to have captured the etymology of philosophy when he stated that the ancient Greek word *Philia* and *Sophia* meaning literally love of wisdom was linked to Pythagoras who shared the belief that only the gods could be wise and the closest man could go is to love wisdom. As a result, man could only be a lover of wisdom.

Philosophy means different things to different persons. It is like the proverbial story

of four blind men who touched different parts of an elephant. One touched the trunk, another touched the body, another touched the tail and the last person touched the foot. Each one of them had his or her experience of the part that he or she touched as a result each had different perception and description of the elephant. This is how philosophy appears to different persons. Egbeke Aja (1996:10) describes philosophy as “a Chameleon that means all things to all men and nothing to some.” Be that as it may, philosophers have defined philosophy from the perspective of their thought systems, culture and tradition.

Joseph Omeregbe (1985:1) appears to capture the basic tenets of philosophy when presents philosophy as “essentially a reflective activity.” Accordingly, to philosophize is to reflect on human experience in search of answers to some fundamental questions. As man reflects on himself or the world around him he is filled with wonders. This “wonder” is perceived as the foundation and the cornerstone of philosophy. Both Plato and Aristotle tell us that this „wonder“ is the beginning of philosophy. Omeregbe (1985:1) further opines that human experience is the source of philosophy. The experience could be personal (subjective) or experience of the world around him (objective). Hence, philosophy could start from subjectivity or objectivity.

The subjective dimension of philosophy could start from the human person. Man is a rich source of philosophy beginning with the marvel on the complexity of the human person, the brevity of human life, the vicissitude of life, man’s superiority over the rest of nature, his power and weakness, his joys, sorrows, success and failure, his finitude, his experience of suffering, misery, disease, old age, death, etc., have led men and women to deep reflection and philosophizing all over the world. Imagine the kind of being man is that is so strong and powerful and yet so weak, feeble and die.

The objective dimension of philosophy could begin with the immensity of the universe, amazing variety of things, idea of time, the ceaseless changes in the universe amidst permanence, the basic unity amidst diversity, the seasons of the year, the heavenly bodies and their orderly circular movements, the starry sky, the sun, moon, stars, etc, these and many more can be the source and touch stones of philosophy.

Philosophy reflects on these experiences and many more in search of answers to questions that these experiences generate for people. The more human beings experiences the things in himself or in the other, the more curious he becomes and the more his natural desire to know is awakened. In spite of all these, human knowledge is so limited that he knows little about himself. He does not know why he exists and he has no answers to his own basic questions. The tendency to reflect on such fundamental philosophic questions is part of human nature. It is rooted in the natural instinct of curiosity.

Human nature is the same all over the world and the tendency to philosophize is part of human nature. It follows therefore that philosophizing is not peculiar to a group of people. In other word, other civilizations have their own philosophers. They reflect on the basic philosophic questions about human life or about the universe.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

1. With regards to the study of wisdom among humans, pick the odd choice (a) *Storge* (b) *Eros* (c) *Venus* (d) *Philo*
2. For _____ philosophy is mainly a reflective activity.
3. _____ are the same all over the world and the tendency to _____ is part of human nature.

1.4 The Evolution of Philosophy

You would have learnt from our definitions of philosophy that it is a reflective activity. That to philosophize is to reflect on human experience in search of answers to some fundamental questions. We also stated that as a man takes a reflective look at himself or the world around him, he is filled with wonders.

It is generally held by scholars in philosophy that philosophy begins with wonders. Both Plato and Aristotle tell us that this wonder is the beginning of philosophy. It is through wonders that humans originally began to philosophize. That is, the wonders that men and women experience with their personal or social issues experiences. Thus, the first step in philosophical activity is this wonder that accompanies human beings' experiential contact with himself or the world around him. This wonder gives rise to some fundamental questions and this is the second step in philosophical activity. The third step begins with reflection on these fundamental questions in search of answers. At this stage, man is philosophizing, if he puts down his reflections in writing, it becomes a philosophical essay (Omogrebe 1985: 1).

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

1. What is the foundation of philosophy and what are the processes of philosophizing?

1.5 Summary

This study unit addressed the question of philosophy, its etymology and evolution. This study unit introduced the student to the art of reasoning that is popularly known as philosophy. In the process, it defined philosophy as a reflective activity. That it

reflects on human experiences which could be personal or social in nature. It goes further to explain that the wonder that one experiences in the course of reflecting is the foundation and touch stone of philosophy. The student will also learn that the etymology of the term philosophy is *Philo* and *Sophia* which means love of wisdom. Further examination shows that a philosopher is a lover of wisdom. We also studied the process of philosophizing which begins with wonder, questions emanating from the experiences and reflection on those questions in search for answers.

1.6 References & Further Reading

- Aja, E. (1996). *What is Philosophy? An African Inquiry*. Enugu: Dozie Family Circle Publications.
- Nnamdi, B.S. (2008). "The concept of Philosophy." In B.S. Nnamdi (Ed.) *Basic Issues in Logic and Philosophy*. Port Harcourt: Divine Technologies, Pp. 1 – 18.
- Omeregbe, J.I. (1985). "African Philosophy: Yesterday and Today." In P.O. Bodunrin (Ed.) *Philosophy in Africa: Trends and Perspectives*. Ife: University of Ife Press Ltd, Pp. 1 – 14.
- Sinha, J.N. (2009). *Introduction to Philosophy*. New Delhi: New Central Book Agency.

1.7 Possible Answers to SAEs

Self-Assessment Exercise 1: 1. (d); 2. Joseph Omeregbe; 3. Human Nature/Philosophise

Self-Assessment Exercise 2: The first step in philosophical activity is this wonder that accompanies human beings' experiential contact with himself or the world around him. This wonder gives rise to some fundamental questions and this is the second step in philosophical activity. The third step begins with reflection on these fundamental questions in search of answers. At this stage, man is philosophizing, if he puts down his reflections in writing, it becomes a philosophical essay.

Unit 2: General Issues on the Development of Philosophy

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3 Overview of the Development of Philosophy in Ancient Times
- 1.4 Summary
- 1.5 References/Further Readings/We b Sources
- 1.6 Possible Answers to SAEs

1.1 Introduction

This unit presents the development of philosophy in ancient times in the African, Asian and European regions. It examines the development and systemization of philosophical discourse in the world.

1.2 Learning Outcomes

The objectives of this study are:

- To discuss the overview of the development of philosophy in the ancient times in Africa, Asia and Europe; and
- To identify the general trend that makes an idea pass as philosophy even in the ancient periods.

1.3 Overview of the Development of Philosophy in Ancient Times

According to Joseph Omeregbe (2001:6) there is no part of the world where men never reflect on such basic question about human person or about the physical universe. In essence, there is no part of the world where people do not philosophize. The tendency to reflect on such fundamental philosophic questions is part of human nature; it is rooted in human natural instinct of curiosity – the instinct to know. Omeregbe (2001:7) further holds that human nature and experiences are the same all over the world, and the tendency to philosophize is part of human nature. It is against this backdrop that Karl Jasper (1974:10) holds that “man cannot avoid philosophizing.” It essentially means that men all over the world philosophize, and all peoples have their own philosophers.

Ability to reason logically and coherently is an integral part of man’s rationality. The power of logical thinking is identical with the power of rationality (Omeregbe 2001:7). It is therefore false to say that people cannot think logically or coherently unless they employ the forms of Aristotelian or Russellian logic. The place of training that a particular philosopher has determines this mode of thinking that such a person employs. It is totally unacceptable to think that a group of people do not have a philosophy because of their mode of reflection and discussion on issues that confronts them.

One of the major challenges facing the discourse on the early development of philosophy is their mode of transmission and preservation. Some of the teachings

and discourse of the early philosophers were transmitted and preserved in written form while others ended up in oral form leading to the loss of the bulk of the teachings, discourse and the philosophers themselves. A culture that has the art of writing is fortunate in that their philosophers have their teachings and discourse preserved in form of writing.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. “Philosophizing is a universal enterprise” Discuss.
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1.4 Summary

This unit addresses one of the major problems of the ancient philosophical discourse, particularly, the problem of philosophical nature of the discourse of African and Asian thinking, teachings and discourse. It is generally thought that people from Africa and Asia cannot philosophize and could not have had philosophers because they have not documented materials. In the process, we discussed the universal nature of the modalities of philosophy. The tenets of philosophical discourse and activities are the same all over the world. These discourses could be written or oral but whatever form that they may be the rudiments of thinking and reflecting are the same all over the world.

1.5 References/Further Reading/Web Sources

- Makunba, M.(2005). *Introduction to Philosophy*. Nairobi: Pauline Publications Africa.
- Omeregbe, J.I. (2001). *Knowing Philosophy: A General Introduction*. Lagos: Joja Educational Research and Publishers Limited.
- Sinha, J.N. (2009). *Introduction to Philosophy*. New Delhi: New Central Book Agency.

1.6 Possible Answers to SAE

Self-Assessment Exercise: In essence, there is no part of the world where people do no philosophize. The tendency to reflect on such fundamental philosophic questions is part of human nature; it is rooted in human natural instinct of curiosity – the instinct to know. Omeregbe (2001:7) further holds that human nature and experiences are the same all over the world, and the tendency to philosophize is part of human nature. Ability to reason logically and coherently is an integral part of man’s rationality. The power of logical thinking is identical with the power of rationality (Omeregbe 2001:7). It is therefore false to say that people cannot think logically or coherently unless they employ the forms of Aristotelian or Russellian logic.

Unit 3: The Eurocentric Undergirding of Philosophy

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3 Reacting to the Idea of a “First Philosopher” as subtle Eurocentrism
- 1.4 The Ideological Implication of the “First Philosopher”
- 1.5 Summary
- 1.6 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 1.7 Possible Answers to SAEs

1.1 Introduction

Thus far in this module, attention has been given to the idea of philosophy and what it means for someone to be engaged in the activity entitled philosophy. What has not however been said is that the idea of philosophy as a completely Western or Greek idea emanating from Thales has been given an uncritical assessment. So, in this unit, the main idea is to argue against this assumption as a form of Eurocentrism which renders the useful ideas from non-European geographies otiose.

1.2 Learning Outcomes

This unit is goaled toward making the student to be able to:

- Possess a broader view of philosopher;
- Question the implication in the assumption that Thales is the father of philosophy; and
- Uphold the tenet that philosophy is a universal activity peculiar to humans.

1.3 Reacting to the Idea of a “First Philosopher” as subtle Eurocentrism

As we have previously shown, philosophy, takes nothing for granted. It raises questions about every assumption and supposition underlying any object or concept. Philosophy is anti-dogmatic. Most scholars often claim that philosophy is the base and apex of any endeavor of study. This is why regardless of whatever one has studied, the highest academic qualification one can have is the PhD – Doctor of Philosophy.

On the meaning and nature of philosophy, prominent African philosopher Professor J.I Omeregbe is of the view that “philosophy is essentially a reflective activity.” (Omeregbe;1985:1) We agree with him because to philosophize is to reflect on any human experience, to search for answers to some fundamental questions that arise out of man’s continuous curiosity. Philosophy is imbued in every man as it arises out of wonder. Based on this analysis, it will be foolhardy to agree with the West who categorized Miletian Thales as the father of philosophy, or what other authors have termed the first philosopher. But this claim is totally wrong.

By positing that Thales is the first philosopher, logically means that no one before him had done any reflective activity. We must recall that human experience is the source of the reflective activity known as philosophy. If we agree with this statement, then it becomes important to reject the claim that Thales is the first philosopher as ill-founded and logically out of place. This argument is usually made to denigrate the ability to philosophize in non-Western zones of the world by intellectuals who are the mouth-piece of imperialist propaganda. All the peoples that lived before Thales then would not have been philosophizing. Is this not what this amounts to?

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

1. If Thales were the first philosopher, then no one thought philosophically before him (a) True (b) False (c) Undetermined (d) None of the above
2. Most scholars often claim that philosophy is the base and apex of any endeavor of study (a) base and length (b) base and apex (c) breadth and length (d) width and viscosity

1.4 The Ideological Implication of the “First Philosopher”

How can one notice the ideology of Thales as the first philosopher? In our own opinion, philosophy began with man’s existence. There are many obstacles, challenges, wonder, curiosity that causes man to reflect deeply. J.I Omeregbe (1985:4) on the nature of philosophy argues that:

To reflect on such questions in search of explanations or answers is to philosophize. There is no part of the world where men never reflect on such basic questions about the human person or about the physical universe. In other words, there is no part of the world where men do not philosophize. The tendency to reflect on such fundamental philosophic questions is part of human nature; it is rooted in man’s natural instinct of curiosity – the instinct to know.

The above excerpt makes our point more obvious. There is no particular race that is endowed to philosophize while others lack this gift. Notable Western philosophers who have denied the Africa the possibility of any reflective activities are Friedrich Hegel, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Levy-Bruhl, Thomas Hobbes etc. Friedrich Hegel, for instance, saw philosophy as the self-consciousness of the Spirit was led by racism to say that in Africa, the Spirit had not yet attained self-consciousness, meaning that there is no philosophy in Africa, no rationality, no thinking. But the above analysis has shown that their claims are ill founded. Just as we have intellectuals who promote ideologies in any other sector of the society, some African philosophers were also

quick to admit that philosophy was alien to Africans on the grounds that what the Africans engaged in was bald and non-argumentative; they called it folk philosophy. A prominent scholar who holds such position is the Ghanaian philosopher, Kwasi Wiredu, who in 1980 argues that: “without argument and clarification, there is strictly, no philosophy.” (Wiredu 1980:47) The point we exhume from this analysis is that the denial of a philosophizing ability in Africa merely points to the advancement of ideologies of Western hegemony on other parts of the world.

On the whole, philosophy is a rational enquiry of anything to produce and explain something. We recognize that the ancient Egyptians were philosophers as well. But nobody mentions this. From where did Thales, the so called father of philosophy get his knowledge of geometry? How did the Aristotle fare with the works of ancient Egypt after the conquest of Egypt by Alexander the great. (Alozie;2002) Surely, all the libraries in Egypt were not burnt; all the books were not destroyed; and none of the ancient Egyptians was named as the author of any particular book. It is our opinion that most of the thoughts of this ancient Egyptian civilization have found their ways into the Greek and ultimately Western world views yet refusing to acknowledge the African origins of these thoughts. It becomes obvious that internationalism, imperialism, colonialism, plagiarism are terms that have been in existence centuries ago.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

1. The phrase: “without argument and clarification, there is strictly, no philosophy” is attributed to _____
2. Most of the thoughts of _____ have found their ways into Greek thinking and ultimately Western world views but not acknowledged.

1.5 Summary

In this unit, we have been able to discuss the contradiction in the outlook that: (a) Philosophy is a universal practice among humans and (b) Thales is the first philosopher. Both (a) and (b) are not reconcilable. The implication is that before Thales nobody was able to think logically. More so, even the ancient Egyptians whom Thales learnt from were not excluded. This is the point that Eurocentrism wishes to achieve. This unit has been able to counter such false move as a form of ideological bias aimed at denigrating the African intellect.

1.6 References/Further Readings/Web Sources

- Alozie, P (2002) *Philosophy of Physics*, Calabar, Univeristy of Calabar Press
Cayne, B.S (1992) (ed.) *The New Webster’s Dictionary of the English Language*, New York, Lexicon Publishing Ltd
Fanon, F (1963) *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York, Grove Press

Omeregbe, J.I (1985) 'African Philosophy: Yesterday and Today' in P. Bodurin (ed.), *Philosophy in Africa: Trends and Perspective*, Ile-Ife: University of Ife Press
Parenti, M (1989) *The Sword and the Dollar: Imperialism, Revolution and Arms Race*, New York, St. Martin's Press
Wiredu, K. (1980) *Philosophy and an African Culture*, Cambridge: C.U.P

1.7 Possible Answers to SAEs

Self-Assessment Exercise 1: 1. (b); 2. (b)

Self-Assessment Exercise 2: 1. Kwasi Wiredu; 2. Ancient Egypt

Unit 4: Distinguishing Philosophy from Religion and Science

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3.1 What is Religion?
- 1.3.2 What is Science?
- 1.4 Philosophy as Mediator between Religion and Science
- 1.5 Summary
- 1.6 References/Further Readings Web Sources
- 1.7 Possible Answers to SAEs

1.1 Introduction

A crucial distinction is important before going to examine the ways that ancient philosophies can be classed as neither science nor religion. For the sake of the agenda of this course, it is important to understand that some ideas that will be encountered will be close to science and religion. This may be taken as such especially if the philosophical aspect is not easy to detect. So, in this unit, what we intend to do is to show the ways that religion and science are different from philosophy as well as how they converge to make the world and its operation intelligible.

1.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, students should be familiar with:

- The meaning of religion;
- The meaning of science; and
- The role that philosophy plays in both religion and science.

1.3.1 What is Religion?

Since it lacks a general definition it is safe to say that the word ‘religion’ is derived from the Latin etymology ‘religare’, “which means to bind” (Hanks, 1976: 271). It is true when we realize that religion as so understood is a derivation from the fact that it intends to bind humans with the divine. Religion has been conceived as “man’s expression of his acknowledgement of the divine...a system of beliefs and practices relating to the sacred and uniting its adherent in a community” (Cayne, 1992:841). For Edgar Brightman “religion is concerned about experiences which are regarded as of supreme value, devotion towards a power, believed to originate, increase, and conserve these values; and some suitable expression of this concern and devotion whether through symbolic rites or through other individual and social conducts” (Brightman, 1940). Meanwhile, John Dewey construes religion as “any activity on behalf of an ideal and against obstacles in spite of loss” (Dewey, 1934). In his own understanding, James Frazer informs that “religion is a propitiation of, and dependency on, superior powers which are believed to control and direct the course of nature and human lives” (Frazer, 1926). For Paul Tillich “religion is man’s ultimate concern for the ultimate” (Tillich, 1955). In a related development, James Bissett Pratt maintains that “religion is one’s attitude towards what one considers to be the

determinant of destiny” (Pratt, 1921). With the idea of religion already expressed, we shall now focus on the meaning of science.

1.3.2 What is Science?

Like religion, Science also lacks a universally accepted definition. At some point in human history, many works on science were tagged, “natural philosophy” (Alozie, 2004:4). Princewill Alozie explains that in England such great works were sometimes published by the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society. This is quite understandable, if we remember that the word, science – *scientia* (in Latin), *wissenschaft* (in German), *Nauka* (in Russian), *Amamihe* or *Mmuta* (in Igbo) means knowledge (Alozie, 2004: 4). Science may be taken to mean “knowledge acquired by careful observation, by deduction of the laws which govern changes and conditions, and by testing these deductions by experiment” (Cayne, 1992: 895). Elsewhere, we read that “science is a systematic enterprise that builds and organizes knowledge in the form of testable explanations and predictions about the universe” (Wilson, 1999); (Heilbron, 2003). For Isaiah Negedu “science is not a field of study like mathematics, chemistry and economics, but a method which should be applied to other branches if they must gain relevance in the modern world” (Negedu, 2014: 245).

Now that we have been able to make a conceptual analysis of each of philosophy, religion and science, it is important for us to look at the connection with one another. For this task, the position of Russell will be used as a model.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

1. Pick the odd option: (a) *Amamihe* (b) *Nauka* (c) *Wissenschaft* (d) *religare*
2. _____ construes religion as “any activity on behalf of an ideal and against obstacles in spite of loss”

1.4 Philosophy as mediator between Religion and Science

What can philosophy tell us about religion and science? In order to answer this question, the thoughts of Russell on the subject will be used as a guide. Russell is of the opinion that philosophy is like an intermediate position between religion and science because it has the potential to accommodate the method and truths of both fields. How did Russell argue his points? Specifically, he does this by showing instances in the history of Western philosophy where philosophers combined these various fields without much problem. Pythagoras’ case is a curious combination of religion, mathematics, science, music, re-incarnation, mysticism etc. which influenced some medieval and modern thinkers like St. Augustine, Rene Descartes and Immanuel Kant. On the authority of Bertrand Russell:

The combination of mathematics and theology, which began with Pythagoras, characterized religious

philosophy in Greece, in the Middle Ages, and in modern times down to Kant . . . In Plato, St Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz there is an intimate blending of religion and reasoning, of moral aspiration with logical admiration of what is timeless, which comes from Pythagoras, and distinguishes the intellectualized theology of Europe from the more straightforward mysticism of Asia (Russell, 1962:37).

Russell clearly reveals that there was the intellectual harmony from the background of philosophy for both religion and science. However, throughout his intellectual career, Russell favours the scientific aspect of philosophizing over the religious wing. For instance, in *Principia Mathematica*, Whitehead and Russell worked on logicism which claims that mathematical truths can be translated into logical truths, a claim which remains controversial to this day. They attempted to derive all mathematical truths from a set of axioms and inference rules in symbolic logic. *Principia Mathematica* is considered by specialists as one of the most important books in mathematics and philosophy (Lawhead, 2002: 482).

The assertion that philosophy is an intermediate between religion and science cannot be demonstrated in any of Russell's contributions to philosophy. He seems more scientific than religious. His thought on logic is one of the backbones for the founding of one of the distinctive area of philosophy of science. According to S. Psillos:

Philosophy of science emerged as a distinctive part of philosophy in the twentieth century. It set its own agenda, the systematic study of the metaphysical and epistemological foundations of science, and acquired its own professional structure, departments and journals. Its defining moment was the meeting (and the clash) of two courses of events: the breakdown of the Kantian philosophical tradition and the crisis in the sciences and mathematics at the beginning of the century. The emergence of the new Frege–Russell logic, the arithmetization of geometry and the collapse of classical mechanics called into question the neat Kantian scheme of synthetic a priori principles (Psillos, 2008: 618).

We also find that Russell places emphasis on empirical verification which is a scientific method but that has no place in religion. This is because of his relation with members of the Vienna Circle. 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. If metaphysics is seen as non-science, then the case of religion which does not use the verification principle to know is not helped. However, Russell was skeptical of the use of senses in a later writing but this does not remove him from the peg of a scholar that uses more of scientific than religious. In his words:

In daily life, we assume as certain many things which, on a closer scrutiny, are found to be so full of apparent contradictions that only a great amount of thought enables us to know what it is that we really may believe. In the search for certainty, it is natural to begin with our present experiences, and in some sense, no doubt, knowledge is to be derived from them. But any statement as to what it is that our immediate experiences make us know is very likely to be wrong (Russell, 1997:1).

So far we have been able to show that there is disconnection between the statements of Russell that philosophy is the midway between religion and science and his actual contribution and conception of philosophy.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

1. Russell favours the scientific aspect of philosophizing over the _____
2. Russell places emphasis on _____ which is a scientific method but that has no place in religion.

1.5 Summary

This unit has been able to provide conceptual clarifications for each of the key terms “religion” and “science.” It has been able to show that the instance of clashes that persist between the two of them depends on the methodology that each of them uses.

What methodology can this be? As the unit reveals, one uses empirical verification whereas the other does not make and even makes metaphysical proposition that may not be verifiable. From these, we can see that regardless of the tussle between religion and science, they both rely on philosophy to make sense of their individual views.

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1.7 Possible Answers to SAEs

Self-Assessment Exercise 1: 1. (d); 2. John Dewey

Self-Assessment Exercise 2: 1. Religious; 2. Empirical verification

End of Module Questions

1. For _____ philosophy is mainly a reflective activity
2. _____ are the same all over the world and the tendency to _____ is part of human nature
3. If Thales were the first philosopher, then no one thought philosophically before him
(a) True (b) False (c) Undetermined (d) None of the above
4. Most scholars often claim that philosophy is the _____ and _____ of any endeavor of study (a) base and length (b) base and apex (c) breadth and length (d) width and viscosity
5. _____ construes religion as “any activity on behalf of an ideal and against obstacles in spite of loss”
6. Russell places emphasis on empirical verification which is a scientific method but that has no place in _____.

Module 2: Some Philosophers in Ancient Africa

Unit 1: On the Nature of Ancient African Philosophy

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3 On the Question of Ancient African Philosophy
- 1.4.1 The non-Apologetists on the Existence of Ancient African Philosophy
- 1.4.2 The Apologetists on Existence of Ancient African Philosophy
- 1.5 Summary
- 1.6 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 1.7 Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercises

1.1 Introduction

The overriding concern of the present unit is related to the discourse on ancient African philosophy. In what period can we say ancient African philosophy started? Is it possible to locate some individuals that pass as philosophers in ancient Africa? What are the scholarly contentions concerning the possibility that there was ancient African philosophy? In this unit, these are the core questions that will be contended.

1.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, the students must have been able to:

- The debate over the question of ancient African philosophy;
- Have a clear understanding of ancient African philosophy;
- Understand the debates concerning ancient African philosophy; and
- Be familiar with the distinctive character of ancient African philosophy.

1.3 On the Question of Ancient African Philosophy

If one conceives philosophy essentially as a reflective activity concerned with the reflection on fundamental problems of human and physical existence in search of rational answers, one will possibly view the history of philosophy in general and African philosophy in particular from a culturally universal perspective dating back to antiquity among all people of different epochs and civilizations in the world. Joseph Omoregbe's (1998: 5) assertion that "all civilizations, all people, have their own Plato, their own Descartes, their own Socrates, their own Hegel, etc.," corroborates this leaning. How does this add to our understanding of what making ancient African philosophy?

It is helpful to commence with the idea that understanding of 'Africa' on the one hand, and 'African' in the context of 'African philosophy' on the other hand, has an implication on what one thinks of the nature of ancient African philosophy. As a result, scholars in the category of F. U. Okafor (1997: 252) who for whatever reasons, holds that North Africa is not part of Africa, would automatically have excluded ancient Egyptian philosophy as being part of the ancient history of African philosophy.

Okafor's point is that the black race is synonymous with Africa and that the Egyptian

ancestry has no cultural as well as racial link with black Africa. It was only by arbitrary and artificial geographical location that mapped North Africa in Africa. Essentially, Okafor's claim is that the North African inhabitants have stronger linguistic, historical and ecological affinities with those in the Arabian Peninsula than the black Africans. Like-minded scholars in the category of Okafor are W. R. Bascom and M. J. Herskovits. They have shown in their book, *Continuity and Change in African Cultures* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), that ancient Egypt was not in Africa and that the people of ancient Egypt were non-Africans. George P. Murdock holds the same view in his work, *Africa: Its Peoples, Culture, and Their History* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1959), 4. M. Terris in his article, "An Ancient Basis for African Philosophy or an Old Myth in New Dress? A Reply to Edward P. Philip," also claims that irrespective of the race of the ancient Egyptians, they were cultural forebears of Europe. In other words, one's understanding of the *Africanness* of African philosophy is important in underscoring the scope and nature of ancient African philosophy.

For those who think that the word 'African' in African philosophy means the foundation of such philosophical thought in African cultures only, the simple implication is that the works of ancient Egyptians and Ethiopians vacillates as indigenous creations of African culture owing to of the external influence of Islam and Christianity. However, if a scholar such as Oladele Balogun (2008: 113) who holds that the Africanness of African philosophy may not necessarily reside in its themes but will depend above all, on the geographical origin of those who produce it, such a scholar is at the same time creating a wide-ranging scope for ancient history of both philosophy in Africa and African traditions of philosophy.

More fundamental is the meaning of 'ancient' in ancient African philosophy. Should 'ancient' be interpreted as dating back into antiquity with specific chronological time lag such as from 3000 to 300 B.C as suggested by L. Keita (1979), T. Obenga (2004), Y. C. Onyewuanyi (1993), I. M. Osuagwu (2001), M. S. Onyibor (2008), and others? Or should the periodization of ancient period of African philosophy be within 10,000 BC to 700 BC, as suggested by Ogunmodede (2004)? Should one follow the Western historical periodization of ancient as that period that dated into the antiquity and ended with fall of ancient Rome in 476? Given all of these how can one properly situate ancient African philosophy?

In order to avoid unnecessary and spurious chronological speculations, we can identify as 'ancient' in this paper, a period belonging to a remote antiquity in African history, ending approximately before the period of early European exploration of Africa in the 15th century. A study of the ancient period of African philosophy will therefore be the critical study of the ancient philosophical doctrines of the Egyptian civilization, Ethiopian civilization, and other parts of Africa as embodied in myths, proverbs, folklores, imageries, and oral traditions with their philosophical imports. This ancient period will also cut across the philosophies of the North African Church fathers such as Augustine, Tertullian, Origen and Cyril to include the philosophical thoughts of African Islamic scholars of North

African and West African Empires.

One implication of this expansive ancient periodization is that there is no philosophy of the Africans in the Diaspora. This is because the period of early European exploration and contacts with Africa, which gave birth to the diasporic experience between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries, will be exempted. The justification for this periodization derives from my conviction that the *Africanness* of African philosophy is not limited to the cultural criterion or foundation of the contents and themes, but it extends also to the geographical origin of the author.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

1. What is Okafor's argument concerning if ancient Egyptians were black Africans?
2. For ancient African philosopher, _____ matters (a) Geography (b) Biology (c) Physics (d) Mathematics

1.4.1 The non-Apologists on the Existence of Ancient African Philosophy

In the previous section, we mentioned scholars like Okafor (1997) whose principal argument is that the ancient Egyptians are not black Africans and so African philosophy will have to look for its origin from elsewhere. He is however neither the first nor the only one to argue against the existence of ancient African philosophy.

Given the above clarifications, it is appropriate at this point to note that many contemporary African thinkers have expressed strong skepticism about ancient history of African philosophy. These scholars can be broadly classified as the non-apologists of ancient African philosophy. Prominent members of this orientation include: Paulin Hountondji (1983), Peter Bodunrin (1981), Kwasi Wiredu (1980), C. B. Okolo (1987), A.G.A. Bello (2004), among others. They opposed the idea of attributing ancient history to African philosophy on the grounds of the lack of considerable data on such ancient African philosophers and scholars. They also point to the absence of a theoretical tradition that was distinctively African in the supposed ancient African philosophy.

As a foremost antagonist of ancient African philosophy, Wiredu (1980) is reputed for positing that philosophical traditions in Africa are still in the making, and by virtue of this, there is no justification for the study of the history of ancient African philosophy.

Hountondji, Bello, Bodunrin and others of the antagonist leaning have radically criticized the position of Omoregbe as well as other apologists on the existence of ancient African philosophy. Hountondji (1983: 106), for instance, discloses that "there may have been African philosophers without an African philosophy, although the reverse is strictly impossible." The point Hountondji is arguing is that even if one concedes the position of

Omeregbe that there were African philosophers in ancient Africa, and accepts Oluwole's insistence that some African oral texts are critical, argumentative, rational and analytically expressive of philosophy, it would be false to say that they pass as philosophical treatises. This is because a literary piece or oral literature is not philosophy until it develops into a theoretical scientific tradition. How do the apologists react to this argument?

1.4.2 The Apologists on the Existence of Ancient African Philosophy

On the other side of the debate, there are those who insist that indeed there was a tradition worthy of being passed as ancient African philosophy. These are the apologists. Prominent scholars in this camp include: Sophie Oluwole (2007), Francis Ogunmodede (2004), Claude Sumner (1985), J. O. Oguejiofor (2002), J. O. Omeregbe (1998), L. Keita (1979), T. Obenga (1992, 2004), M.K. Asante (2000), Y. C. Onyewuenyi (1993), C. Anta Diop (1974), Edward P. Philip (1974), among others. In spite of slight differences in their claims, the common denominator among these minds is the agreement concerning the persistence of ancient African philosophy and philosophers.

Omeregbe's analysis of the distinction between philosophy and its mode of transmission and preservation can help us eradicate the doubt on the existence of philosophical thought among ancient Africans. According to him, there is a distinction between philosophical reflections and the modes of preservation and transmission, which in any case, can be done through many avenues: writing, mythologies, proverbs, music, oral traditions and other forms of verbal expressions. While noting that writing is the best way of preserving and transmitting philosophical reflections, because of its obvious advantages of thought transmission with least distortion and providing the knowledge of the philosopher's identity whose thoughts were in print, Omeregbe equally acknowledges the ineffective preservation of philosophical reflections of ancient African thoughts, a reason attributable to the absence of early writing in Africa. It is because of this that the identities of many ancient African thinkers remain unknown to us. However, this should not imply that they did not exist. Fragments of their views and philosophical reflections are still preserved and passed to us through channels other than writing, such as oral traditions. In this sense, Omeregbe writes:

The fragments of philosophical reflections, ideas and world views transmitted to us through the formulas of wise sayings, through proverbs, stories, socio-political organizations, mythology, through religions doctrines and practices did not originate from a vacuum. They are evidences of deep philosophical reflections by some gifted individuals thinkers who were the African philosophers of the past, the African counterparts of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Kant, Hegel, etc. (Omeregbe, 1998: 5).

In consonance with Omeregbe, the cognitive substance of oral tradition in the discovery of ancient African philosophical ideas cannot be despised. "Not only were oral traditions a

vital historical, intellectual, and cultural resource, they were also an unbreakable link between the present and a living past that has continued to define and animate the present” (Osha, 2018: 106).

Oluwole, a foremost apologist is emphatic that such an inference will be premature. She suggests the pertinence to first of all, acquaint and get engrossed with the extensive and rigorous explorations of several actual oral texts in different African languages. They must be engaged with the goal of discovering the ancient philosophical thoughts embedded in them. This is fundamental because it is not enough to condemn ancient African thought as “un-philosophical,” “unscientific,” or “vulgar philosophy” as Wiredu, Hountondji, Bodunrin amongst others have characterized it, “without first establishing its style and modality” (Oluwole, 2007: 47). Thus, the direct study of African oral literature will serve as a basis or proof for drawing a conclusion on the existence or non-existence of ancient African philosophy.

Before Oluwole (2007), Abiola Irele (1981: 10), who seems to hold a similar stance, had reflected that “a valid typology of [ancient] African philosophy can only be derived from the internal evidence of oral texts.” For such a study to be deemed approximately philosophical, Oluwole (1999: 100) maintains that what should directly interest the philosophers is not the cultural behaviours of the people, but “the intellectual style established by oral texts in different African languages.” In other words, the whole essence of embarking on a study of African oral texts is to find “what the ancient African people’s thinking was; and what paradigms of thought they adopted and used.” In the words of Oluwole (1999: 101):

The fundamental issue is to identify what intellectual culture ancient African thinkers initiated, developed and transmitted as a literary heritage from generation to generation...The ancient African tradition of thought, in the form it existed, must have been initiated a long time ago. We may now search for it not because it never was, but primarily because we do not, up till today, know what it was.

Such expression of ignorance of the philosophical historicity of African tradition of thought poses a fundamental challenge to contemporary African philosophers. They should therefore urgently consider the task of discovering (as opposed to inventing or newly formulating or spinning out philosophical theories) whether or not there were traditions of philosophy in ancient Africa—with their own specific not necessarily unique—style of formulating problems of human existence and proffering solutions to them. The greater burden of this task is more on the shoulders of the apologists or protagonists of ancient African philosophy.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

- 1 Pick the odd option (a) Oluwole (b) Omeregbe (c) Okafor (d) Oruka
- 2 The apologists tender that ancient African philosophy is in the making (a) True (b) Probably True (c) Both (a) and (b) (d) None of these
- 3 “The ancient African tradition of thought, in the form it existed, must have been initiated a long time ago.” This assertion is ascribable to _____

1.5 Summary

In this unit, we have been able to focus over the question of ancient African philosophy and how scholars have been divided over the discourse. We have shown how the apologists have strongly argued for their position that the idea of ancient African philosophy cannot be denied to ancient Africans because they have the capacity to reason logically and ply their affairs rationally. In the units ahead, some of these ideas of these philosophers will be given closer attention as a way of substantiating the view of the apologists concerning the existence and nature of ancient African philosophy.

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1.7 Possible Answers to SAEs

Self-Assessment Exercise 1: 1. Okafor's point is that the black race is synonymous with Africa and that the Egyptian ancestry has no cultural as well as racial link with black Africa. It was only by arbitrary and artificial geographical location that mapped North Africa in Africa. Essentially, Okafor's claim is that the North African inhabitants have stronger linguistic, historical and ecological affinities with those in the Arabian Peninsula than the black Africans; 2. (a)

Self-Assessment Exercise 2: 1. (c); 2. (d); 3. Sophie Oluwole

Unit 2: The Ideas of Ptah Hotep

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3 Ptah Hotep's Thoughts on Moral and Political Philosophy
- 1.4 Summary
- 1.5 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 1.6 Possible Answers to SAEs

1.1 Introduction

In this unit, the primary focus is on the idea of Ptah Hotep, an ancient Egyptian philosopher who is said to have written some ideas that pass as political philosophy. So, this section looks at his ideas as a way of understanding the features of ancient African philosophy.

1.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, students should be able to:

- Show an appreciable understanding of Ptah Hotep's ideas on moral and political philosophy;
- Realise that there were individuals in ancient times that pass as philosophers;
- Find justification in the position of the apologists on the existence of ancient African philosophy.

1.3 Ptah Hotep's Thoughts on Moral and Political Philosophy

Before we delve into the ancient Egyptian thoughts on political philosophy, it would be helpful to commence with a rationale whether or not ancient Egypt has a philosophic background which does not necessarily have to correspond to philosophy as we know it today. This is why Mary Lefkowitz (1996, 188) opines that:

I use the term philosophy in the more specialized, modern sense, to mean the study of causes and laws underlying reality or a system of inquiry designed specifically to study those laws and causes. The ancient Egyptians and Babylonians were learned and had what we would now call advanced civilizations; they could have developed an abstract terminology for discovering causes and principles had they chosen to do so. But they did not study and analyze the nature of reality in abstract, non-theological language. This specialized notion of philosophy was invented, so far as anyone knows, by the ancient Greeks.

The above idea has also been corroborated by Princewill Alozie (2004, 1) when he informs that “the learned societies of ancient Egypt did not personalize the results of

scientific research. The Greeks, not only did they personalize whatever success that was made, they also plagiarized what the ancient Egyptians had assembled without acknowledging the sources. This accounts for the numerous books attributed to Aristotle's genius." What this implies is that history does not recognize the genius of the ancient Egyptian society which was a black civilization. This is why J. Jorge Klor De Alva laments that "as is well known but quickly forgotten, the victors ordinarily write history. The losers are usually silenced or, if this is impossible, they are dismissed as liars, censored for being traitors, or left to circulate harmlessly in the confined spaces of the defeat" (Klor 1991, xi). It is high time we roused from this slumber, by employing the sayings of Ptha-hotep to justify why there had been an African political philosophy traceable to a sage.

The specific text to be considered here is included in many anthologies of Egyptian and/or African literature and is frequently referred to as "The Moral Teachings of Ptah-hotep." Various versions of the text exist, but scholars seem to agree that Ptah-hotep was an official of the Old Kingdom (Fifth Dynasty) who lived c. 2400 B.C. The heart of Ptah-hotep's manuscript consists of thirty-seven principles (for lack of a better word) that more importantly, justify certain forms of behavior as being moral (*Maat*). A complication in assessing the text's philosophical significance is that it has been translated into English using a variety of formats—as poetic verse as imperative (Asante 2000). For most of the thirty-seven principles Ptah-hotep also provides reasons, often in the form of potentially adverse or positive consequences, why a particular form of behavior is to be discouraged or commended, as in the following:

25. If you are mighty and powerful then gain respect through knowledge and through your gentleness of speech. Don't order things except as it is sitting. The one who provokes others gets into trouble. Don't be haughty lest you be humbled. But also don't be mute lest you be chided. When you answer one who is fuming, turn your face and control yourself. The flame of the hot-hearted sweeps across everything. But he who steps gently, his path is a paved road. He who is agitated all day has no happy moments, but he who amuses himself all day can't keep his fortune (see Hord & Lee 1995, 28).

What is intriguing is the repeated emphasis Ptah-hotep gives to a more select set of values that have also been outlined in the work on Yoruba moral epistemology done by Hallen and Sodipo. Again and again, Ptah-hotep stresses the importance of "good speech" (see Hallen 2002, 6). This clearly shows that given the emphasis placed on morality, there is no doubt that such precepts would inform a political set up. Ptah-hotep boasts of a lot of principles which can be interpreted to imply a political philosophy.

These values are enunciated in no less than fifteen of the thirty-seven principles, as well as in the introductory and concluding passages that accompany them. The accompanying text makes it clear that Ptah-hotep affirms them as moral values because they promote truth, and therefore they have epistemological consequences as well. A person whose word(s) can be relied upon is a moral person, and vice versa. A person who maintains self-control is in an optimal state to be an objective observer of his or her surroundings and, hence, to correctly understand, record, report, and offer advice (if needed) about what is going on.

The fool who does not *hear* [listen, observe, and speak with care and forethought], he can do nothing at all. He looks at ignorance and sees knowledge. He looks at harmfulness and sees usefulness. He does everything that one detests and is blamed for it every day. He lives on the thing by which one dies. His food is evil speech [things that are not true]. His sort is known to the officials who say, “There goes a living death every day.” One ignores the things that he does because of his many daily troubles (see Gilhard et al 1987, 30).

Barry Hallen (2002) sees a lot of affinity between Ptah-hotep’s ethics and Yoruba moral epistemology but that does not necessarily mean that a process of direct philosophical transmission or exchange between these two cultures took place. This brief excursion into the moral thoughts of Ptah-hotep is intended to substantiate our thesis that the existence of a moral philosophy traceable to an ancient African sage implies that such moral precepts are germane for political philosophy.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. The Principal text of Ptah Hotep is entitled: _____
2. Ptah Hotep was an _____ in the _____ dynasty of ancient Egypt

1.4 Summary

Thus far, this unit has been able to give an illustration of an individual in ancient Egypt that qualifies as an ancient African philosopher. By looking at the thoughts of Ptah Hotep over the idea of moral and political philosophy, it is indeed becoming clear that philosophy is universal and not a property one particular race.

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1.6 Possible Answers to SAEs

Self-Assessment Exercise 1: 1. "The Moral Teachings of Ptah-hotep."; 2. Official/5th

Unit 3: The Ideas of Ọ̀rúnmìlà

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3 Who is Ọ̀rúnmìlà?
- 1.4 Ọ̀rúnmìlà as a Philosopher
- 1.5 Summary
- 1.6 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 1.7 Possible Answers to SAEs

1.1 Introduction

As a way of further showing that there are traces of practices that can be called philosophy among ancient Africans, this unit considers the view of another personality called Ọ̀rúnmìlà. This unit is going to discuss his personality and some ideas that are ascribed to him that makes his reflection show the philosophical activity.

1.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, one should be able to:

- Understand the position of Ọ̀rúnmìlà on a variety of topics; and
- Be familiar with another important ancient African philosopher

1.3 Who is Ọ̀rúnmìlà?

There are traditions aiming to describe the personality of Ọ̀rúnmìlà. Ọ̀rúnmìlà, it needs to be said is depicted in an *Odù Ifá* as an extraordinary persona. An *Ifá* tradition has it that Ọ̀rúnmìlà was sent along with other Ọ̀rìṣàs, deities, to *Ilé-Ifẹ̀* by *Olódùmarè*, God, to establish the world. By being branded as a deity with *imò òjìnlẹ̀*, deep knowledge and wisdom of things, his special mandate was to use this wisdom to organise the society and deliver unto humankind the divine message of *Olódùmarè*. But then he was mocked for lack of children. This tradition is documented in *Odù Ìwòrì Méjì* rendered in the English thus:

It is the apá tree that grows in the forest, lighting the wizards' fire

It is the orúrù tree that is clothed in blood from top to bottom

It was on the earth that I pressed the marks of Ifá

Before I used the divining tray

The slender palm tree atop the hill

Which branches this way and that in sixteen heads

Performed divination for Ọ̀rúnmìlà

When they said that Baba would never have children in the city of Ifẹ̀

The question of lack of children caused Ọ̀rúnmìlà to laugh but he performed divination. He soon gave birth to eight children, each of whom became important kings of Yoruba city-states [most of which still exist today, the *Odù Ifá* explains how the titles of the kings and other important positions of these cities are contractions of the original names of Ọ̀rúnmìlà's children].

One day, *Ọ̀rúnmìlà* summoned his children for a festival. They all came to join him and paid their respects, but the youngest child challenged *Ọ̀rúnmìlà*'s authority by coming to the festival with the same symbols of authority which his father wore and refused to bow to him. *Ọ̀rúnmìlà* was incensed by this rejection of his authority, so he withdrew to the foot of a particular kind of palm tree and climbed up into heaven. As a result, the earth fell into chaos, women couldn't get pregnant, those who were pregnant couldn't deliver, the sick didn't recover, the rain stopped falling, the rivers dried up, the crops failed, and even the animals started behaving strangely. Everything was falling apart.

The people begged *Ọ̀rúnmìlà*'s children to convince him to come back, and they went to perform divination. *Ọ̀rúnmìlà*'s children made the prescribed sacrifice and went to the foot of the palm tree their father had climbed and began to implore him to return to earth, reciting a litany of his praise names. However, *Ọ̀rúnmìlà* had made up his mind not to return to earth. But pitying his children, he told them to stretch out their hands so he could give them something to ease their distress. He gave them the sixteen *ikin*, the palm nuts used in *Ifá* divination, telling them, "All the good that you want in this world, this is the one you must consult". When they returned to *Ilé-Ifẹ̀*, things started to go well again and they attained all the good things they were seeking.

However, there is a more secular explanation that passes *Ọ̀rúnmìlà* as a human being who was born at *Ilé-Ifẹ̀*. Ola Longe shares this perspective when he demarcates *Ọ̀rúnmìlà* from *Ifá*. For him, the *Ifá* corpus "...was originated and codified by *Ọ̀rúnmìlà* who lived in *Ilé-Ifẹ̀*, several centuries ago" (Longe, 1998: 15). The need to clarify the deity from the corpus is important because of the trend of involving the "use of *Ifá* and *Ọ̀rúnmìlà*" (Balogun & Fayemi, 2008: 37); (Abimbola, 1976: 3) as though they are synonymous. For this reason, Kola Abimbola explains the ground for the interchangeable use of the name as well as the proper characterization of each term thus:

Ifá, who lived for hundreds of years, and visited many parts of the world, bequeathed the *Ifá* divination system to humanity. Another name of *Ifá* is *Ọ̀rúnmìlà*. The word *Ifá* however, is used to refer to the *Orisa* (divinity) himself, his instruments of divination as well his system of divination and literature. The name *Ọ̀rúnmìlà* refers solely to the divinity himself... *Ifá* priests and priestesses were counselors, physicians, historians and philosophers of ancient *Yorùbá* land (Abimbola, 2006: 119).

Nevertheless the synonymy between the terms, this study will admit that the *Ifá* corpus is a product of *Ọ̀rúnmìlà* and his disciples regarding a wide array of topics of interest, with a distinct method and varied philosophical outputs. In this regard,

Sophie Oluwole reveals that there are oral traditions which identify the originator of *Ifá*, as an exceptionally wise man whose fame brought him several disciples and apprentices from far and wide (Oluwole,1994). *Ifá* chose only 16 of them and their names coincide with the elder 16 *Odù Ifá*. The younger 240 *Odù* could therefore be reasonably regarded as members of the later generation of disciples and apprentices trained by the first 16 and others. Each *Odù* has 16 verses. Each verse generally occurs as poetry intermittent with prose (Oluwole, 1994: 7). It is therefore important to engage with these topics, through the employment of the corresponding verses in the corpus. In the next section, some of these shall be given closer attention.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

1. From the tradition concerning Ọ̀rúnmilà, he withdrew to Heaven because _____
2. Since he could not return from heaven Ọ̀rúnmilà made them reach him via (a) Meditation (b) Divination (c) Clairvoyance (d) Telepathy

1.4 Ọ̀rúnmilà as a Philosopher

We commence with epistemology as documented in the corpus. Upon a philosophical examination of concepts such as ‘truth’ and ‘knowledge’ in the *Ifá* corpus, one needs no serious elaboration to discern that Ọ̀rúnmilà’s philosophy is penetrative and sophisticated even when it has not received much attention from the concurrent academia. This is demonstrated for instance, in *Odù Okanran-turupon* thus:

It is through learning Ifá that one understands Ifá

It is by missing one’s way that one becomes acquainted with the way

It is the road that one has not walked before that makes one wander here and there

The foregoing *Odù* is targeted at the idea of trial and error, which is characteristic of the method of science. To attain higher truths and knowledge of things, one has to be prepared to make and overcome the initial errors or gaffes. However, proper guidance and tutelage is still required for the successful attainment of knowledge. Ọ̀rúnmilà is not oblivious that an improper guide or tutor can mislead a learner. This outlook is even more obvious in *Odu Irete-Ogbe*, where Ọ̀rúnmilà expatiates: “*If we teach a person to be wise, he will be wise, if we teach a person to be stupid, he will be stupid.*”

Furthermore, the insistence on absolute and unshakeable truths is disregarded as ignorance within the *Ifá* corpus. Hence, Ọ̀rúnmilà’s takes a fallible outlook in his epistemology. Specifically in *Odù Ịwori Ogbè*, Ọ̀rúnmilà and his disciples announce:

As today is seen, tomorrow is not seen likewise

That is why the babaláwo performs divination every five days

Whilst tinkering on truth, *Ọ̀rúnmilà* boasts of some witty ideas which also attest to the widespread locus that not many are comfortable with a true reality. In *Odù Ọwọ̀nrin Dagbọ̀n*, we read:

*Truth is a sacred water from Ilé-Ifè
There are not many who drink from it*

However, just like Socrates, *Ọ̀rúnmilà* also perceives a connection between truth and virtue. This is striking once we pay attention to the role of character (*ìwà*) in his teachings. In a fair rendition in the English Language, *Ọ̀rúnmilà* and *Ọsa-Otura*, in the *Odù* bearing the latter's name dialogue thus:

Ọsa Otura says "What is Truth?" I say "What is Truth?"

Ọrunmila says "Truth is the Lord of Heaven guiding the earth"

Ọrunmila says "Truth is the Unseen One guiding the Earth. The wisdom Olódùmarè uses"

Ọsa Otura says "What is Truth?" I say "What is Truth?"

Ọrunmila says "Truth is the character (ìwà) of Olódùmarè. Truth is the word that cannot fall. Ifá is Truth. Truth is the word that cannot spoil. Truth surpasses all. Blessing everlasting"

He was the one who cast Ifá for Earth.

They said they should come and speak the truth.

"Speak the truth, tell the facts;

Speak the truth, tell the facts;

Those who speak the truth are those whom the gods will help"

The foregoing is basically on truth and truth is an epistemic issue, as shown in the dialogue between *Ọ̀rúnmilà* and *Ọsa Otura* one of his disciples. More so, the *Odù* points out that the dialectical method can also be found in the classical reflections of *Ọ̀rúnmilà*, as is the case with Socrates. Closely knitted with it is the complementary method, which is evident in the *Yorùbá* saying that "When the right washes the left and the left washes the right, a cleaner hand will emerge". In the foregoing *Odù*, it is the complimentary method of give and take through dialogue that examined the notion of truth. The same method also implies that no one based on age should be rendered useless. Complementarity is redolent in the outlook provided by *Ọ̀rúnmilà* in *Odù Ọ̀yèkú Mèjì* where it is documented that:

A child is not tall enough to stretch his hand to reach the high shelf

An adult's hand cannot enter the opening of the gourd

The work an adult begs a child to do

Let him not refuse to do.

We all have to work to do for each other's good

Ọ̀rúnmilà's contributions to the notion of self-critical awareness are not to be easily wished away in the light of its connection with the notion of truth as character, *ìwà*. This necessarily implies his moral philosophy too. In *Odù Èjì Ogbè*, we glean:

Coming into the world is easy

*Later, when returning, the last gasps are difficult
There is no comforter
No one to whom we can complain, what remains is the work of one's hands
Gentle character is what Èḷẹ̀dùmarẹ̀ likes*

The foregoing *Odù* beckons on the cultivation of improved morality and character through critical self-awareness and examination. Even though the recognition of the difficulty of cultivating improved character is acknowledged, *Òrúnmilà* still admonishes this in *Odù Ogbẹ̀-Yònú* which is rendered in the English thus:

*Nothing comes from getting angry
Patience is the father of character
An elder who has patience has everything
This is why divination was casted for orí, and likewise for character (ìwà)
It is only cultivating character that is difficult
There is not one bad orí in Ilé-Ifẹ̀
It is only cultivating character that is difficult.*

Elsewhere in *Odù Ireṭẹ̀ Mèjì*, we find:

*The mind (inú) of this person should be open
That he should not have two minds (inú méjì) [have second thoughts] about someone.
Ifa says that life should be easy for this person.*

It is clear that from the exploration of some of these *Odùs*, the rendition that *Òrúnmilà* is wholly mythical entity loses substance. Sophie Oluwole had shared a similar conviction when she pens: “The mythic origin of *Ifá* does not therefore necessarily detract from the belief that *Ifá* once lived as a man of great wisdom, a consulting oracle of a sort” (Oluwole, 1994: 9). His contribution through the dialectical method with his disciples has inspired Ola Longe to aver that “Ifa is recognized by the Yoruba as the repository for Yoruba traditional body of knowledge, embracing history, philosophy, medicine and folklore” (Longe, 1998: 11-4). Similarly, Oluwole concurs that the *Ifá* literary corpus is a “concrete example of Africa philosophy” (Oluwole, 1994:7).

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

1. *Òrúnmilà* is concerned about truth (a) True (b) False (c) Undetermined (d) None of these
2. *Odù Ogbẹ̀-Yònú* a verse purportedly given by *Òrúnmilà* stresses the need to curtail _____ as a vice (a) Patience (b) Kidnapping (c) Lying (d) Anger

1.5 Summary

In this unit, attention has been given to the reflections of Òrúnmilà as another instance of ancient African philosopher. It is however important to relay that Òrúnmilà did not write per se. all of his ideas were committed through generation of oral tradition. As the unit has shown, we can see how rich they are in philosophic ideas which shows again that before Thales there were individuals that have been reasoning critically about life.

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1.7 Possible Answers to SAEs

Self-Assessment Exercise 1: 1. His youngest child challenged Òrúnmìlà's authority by coming to the festival with the same symbols of authority which his father wore and refused to bow to him. Òrúnmìlà was incensed by this rejection of his authority, so he withdrew to the foot of a particular kind of palm tree and climbed up into heaven.; 2. (b)

Self-Assessment Exercise 2: 1. (a); 2. (d)

End of Module Questions

- 1 The non-apologists tender that ancient African philosophy is in the making (a) True (b) Probably True (c) Both (a) and (b) (d) None of these
- 2 "The ancient African tradition of thought, in the form it existed, must have been initiated a long time ago." This assertion is ascribable to _____
3. Since he could not return from heaven Òrúnmìlà made them reach him via (a) Meditation (b) Divination (c) Clairvoyance (d) Telepathy
4. The ideas of Òrúnmìlà are passed down via _____ means to the present day

Module 3: Philosophy in Ancient Africa

Unit 1: Proverbs and Morality among Ancient Africans

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3 The Meaning and Nature of Proverbs
- 1.4 Moral Development and the Role of Proverbs
- 1.5 Summary
- 1.6 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 1.7 Possible Answers to SAEs

1.1 Introduction

In the ancient periods, there are varieties of ways through which moral development occurs. In this unit, we are going to talk about how proverbs contribute to morality in ancient times. The main contents of this unit will address the meaning and nature of proverbs before considering what kind of challenges that militate against the use of this very relevant ancient tool for moral development in contemporary times.

1.2 Learning Outcomes

In this unit, students will be able to:

- Understand the meaning and nature of proverbs;
- Understand how proverbs contribute to moral development; and
- Know some of the challenges of how proverbs can finetune moral development in contemporary times.

1.3 The Meaning and Nature of Proverbs

“Proverbs,” in the writings of the late literary icon, Chinua Achebe “are the palm oil with which words are eaten” (Achebe, 1958:25). This goes so much to inform about the indispensable role that proverbs play in traditional African society. To this end, it may then be inquired if this role can still come to be in modern Africa. In other words, can proverb play the role it was accorded in traditional times in modern times? What are proverbs? How do they inform moral development in ancient times? Can the positive roles of proverbs in ancient times be rejuvenated, modified and then applied to suit modern times? What are the challenges faced if one engages with this expedition? These are the germane questions that this unit purports to investigate.

An overview of some Yorùbá concepts, Yorùbá maxim, proverbs, riddles, folktales, reveal much more about the unique way with which the Yorùbá people use words and concepts. In the same manner, “utilizing source materials derived primarily from oral literature – proverbs, myth, folktales, songs, Ifá Corpus and the likes – philosophers, situated for the most part in Africa, set out to analyze the meaning of a concept that occurs in an African language and that they believe to be of philosophical prepossession and interest” (Hallen, 1998). For instance, there are several arrays of notions that have yielded dialogues which span metaphysics, logic, epistemology,

ethics, aesthetics, to name a few. Barry Hallen has made commendable efforts highlighting how the ordinary language analysis suits and helps African aboriginal thoughts gets closer to what passes muster as philosophy.

In the traditional and modern African societies, proverbs are generally accepted as the quintessence in the passage and communication of ideas and ethics among both the old and the young. In fact, a scenario is best explained where a speaker encapsulates his thoughts in a suitable and appropriate proverb. Hussein (2005: 18) underscores the point made above when he observes that Africa is a continent known for its rich oral arts and that proverbs are the most widely used in the continents', long tradition of oral arts. Proverbs do not play an aesthetic role, they serve as the acceptable medium of passing or transmitting knowledge and convention from generation to generation (Hussein, 2005: 19). On this note, Lawal Ajayi and Raji (1995: 28) stated clearly the didactic functions of *Yorùbá* proverbs especially for the younger generation.

African elders seldom use proverbs when they talk, but when proverbs are employed either for pedagogic reasons or for predictive purposes they are often terse but explanatory (Akinjide, 2014:33). As paradigmatic entities, their life is predicated on the situations that bring them to life. Indeed, they are nothing but theoretical models upon which ethical, social and religious situations are tested. For Fayemi (2010) "proverbs are an essential oral tradition that Africans use in storing and retrieving any aspect of their cultural worldview." According to Fayemi, proverbs picture reality. Chiku & Rick (2004) contends that:

African cultural heritage, (proverbs, taboos, dirge etc.) passed on from generation to generation, has been a source of guidance for African communities in times of peace, uncertainty, birth, life and death. It has been a basis of their self-identity, self-respect and self-confidence. It has enabled them to live in harmony with their physical, social and spiritual environments. This heritage provides a foundation for leadership, guidance, problem solving, decision-making, self-reliance and development.

Chiku (2010) also indicates that proverbs are used to identifying and dignifying a culture, clarifying vision, serve as metaphors to explain complex issues and create strong mental pictures of events. The question is: How do proverbs perform these cultural functions? Let us take some of these proverbs in *Yorùbá* culture, for the purpose of illustrations. Consider for instance the proverb: *Ikoko ti yio je ata idi re a gbona*. The proverb extols the virtue of perseverance. It says that "success is attained through persistent efforts." Such is the case with such other proverb; namely, *A kii nkanju la obe gbigbona*, which translates literally "one does not sip hot soup in a hurry." This proverb extols the virtue of patience, and prudence in choice-making. It says that choice-making needs to involve some elements of prudence to avoid making

irrational or arbitrary choice. There are some fundamental issues at stake here. First, there is the question of decision making which rests on prudence. Second, there is the issue of rationality in decision making, and third there is also the cognitive process that underpins the decision making. The issues are logically related in the sense that one lends support to the other. The elder who says one does not sip hot soup in a hurry knows that people do throw caution to the wind while making decision in life. Sometimes the notion of prudence demands that a person is sure of the choice he wants to make. However, this is only possible where a person acts with a reasonable sense in selecting options where they are available. In this regard, the exercise involves a judicious selection of these options (Akinjide, 2014:34). How then does proverb inform moral development?

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

1. “Proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten” is attributable to _____ (a) Achebe (b) Achilles (c) Soyinka (d) Ekwensi
2. African elders use proverbs for _____ purpose (a) Flamboyant (b) Linguistic (c) Pedagogical (d) None of these

1.4 Moral Development and the Role of Proverbs

Proverbs among the ancient Yorùbá is a compendium of ideological configuration on gender, politics, socio-economics, race, sex, etc. In recent times, language has ceased from being perceived as a medium of communication alone. It is perceived largely as a reflection of our total being. On this note, Ajolore, (1982: 1) observed that in a gendered society, of which Yorùbá land is a potent part, language is used to express how groups should behave and relate to the external world and to each other. And that once they have entered into relationship of dominance and subordination, the social groups make distinctions among themselves through forms of signification.

Underscoring the above assertion, Hussein (2005: 61) wondered why little attention was being given to the ideological tones of proverbs in Africa. He emphasized that some proverbs relating to man-human relationship were interpreted within their generalized import, that within their sexist and thus ideological import. He opined further that if some African proverbs examined psychoanalytically, it would be discovered that “groups who occupy a subordinate or oppressed position in society invariably suffer from linguistic disparagement” (Kehinde, Ayo 2004).

Yorùbá proverbs also serve as a potent instrument of social control. Deviant behaviour and social miscreants have characterized human society right from the twilight. The Yorùbá society is not an exception in this regard. Language, therefore, serves as a means of ensuring social conformity. Proverbs, as an integral part of language aptly plays this role. On this note, Lawal, Ajayi and Raji (1997: 637) emphasized that proverbs are used to reinforce and sustain the traditional respect for

elders and that they are also used as a potent means of social control where they become handy in settling quarrels and disputes.

Of what importance then is the study of this ancient resource to the education of African persons for moral development in contemporary times? The education of African child usually begins from home, and it comes in terms of the interaction between the child and his/her environment. In this regard, education is not confined to the experience a child acquires in school. Such forms of education may take place at home. For instance, parents sometimes use proverbs, taboos and folklore to educate their children at home. These cultural resources are used to draw attention to the consequence(s) of bad conduct. African parents do not spare their children when they involve in misconduct. Corporal punishment is one of those measures often used to correct children's misconduct. However, it may sometimes turn out to be counter-productive when it is used very often. Instead of corporal punishment parents may remind their erring children of the consequences of their actions through such cultural resources as folktales, taboos and proverbs. There are lessons for them to learn from folklore, proverbs and taboos as elders often organize moonlight stories where folktales are told and interpreted by young children.

Marah (2006:18) captures this form of education when he says that "stories are used not only to amuse and express feelings, but to also teach ideal form of behavior and morality." In schools, a teacher may use proverbs to caution his/her pupils/students against bad conduct. When the need arises, a teacher may use the proverb: *Bi a ba so'ko sarin oja ara ile eni nii ba*, which translates "If you throw a stone to the market place you may hit your own household." This proverb performs some cautionary roles: (a) by warning students of the consequences of wrongdoing, and (b) by deterring them from engaging in social vices. The moral values embodied in this proverb are expected to moderate the students' conduct and behaviour. Thus, proverbs are expected to provide a theoretical framework for championing (i) the virtue of patience, (ii) the notion of prudence in anything a person does, and (iii) the use of rational enquiry in conjunction with prudence where one is faced with choice-making. However, the epistemological import of proverbs lies in the predominant stress that is laid on the fact that: (i) behind every perceptual experience is the problems of perception (ii) the awareness of these problems may help to effect a cautionary role on how we perceive and interpret human behaviour (iii) facial expressions are much more complex, sometimes incongruent with intentional dispositions.

From the discussion so far, it is very obvious that although proverbs mean well for Africa, it faces a lot of challenges. This cannot be wished away out of the reality that several factors militate against the role(s) that proverb can play in the 21st century African community.

Firstly, the impact of the continuous program of globalization of culture is fast making cultural assimilation from other parts of the world supersede those that are

indigenously African. This is one of the reasons why it has been very difficult to ascertain and point out the connection and relevance of proverb to moral development in today's African setting.

Secondly, African indigenous languages are fast been replaced by the languages of the colonial masters. It is very easy to find Africans who cannot speak their own indigenous tongues. In this case, the full force of meaning implied in proverbs is lost if converted to their indigenous interpretation.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

1. _____ reasons were identified in the unit for why proverbs is not influential in contemporary moral development among Africans (a) Five (b) Two (c) Three (d) Four
2. Proverbs also serve as a potent instrument of _____ (a) Social control (b) Animal control (c) Crowd control (d) None of these

1.5 Summary

In this unit, we have been able to consider the relevance of proverbs in the ancient periods. The meaning of proverbs and how it serves as a veritable means for moral development has been unloaded in this unit. The contemporary challenges that has made the use of proverbs for moral development and social control has also been chronicled in this unit.

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1.7 Possible Answers to SAEs

Self-Assessment Exercise 1: 1. (a); 2. (c)

Self-Assessment Exercise 2: 1. (b); 2. (a)

Unit 2: Aesthetics among Ancient Africans

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3 Art as Social Practice among Ancient Africans
- 1.4 Metaphysical Significance of Artworks in Traditional Igbo and Yorùbá Societies
 - 1.4.1 *Ikenga* among the traditional Igbo
 - 1.4.2 *Ere-ibéjì* among the traditional Yorùbá
- 1.5 Summary
- 1.6 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 1.7 Possible Answers to SAEs

1.1 Introduction

In this unit, the aesthetic dimension among ancient Africans will be discussed. The aim is to discover how much emphasis that they gave to artworks and the level of significance that same had over their lives. Do these artworks translate into idol worshipping? Are they symbols of wealth and self-fulfillment? Do these artworks have spiritual or metaphysical significance? These are some of the questions that will be discussed. The latter section of this unit considers two important artworks that bear similarities in utility among the ancient Igbo and Yorùbá.

1.2 Learning Outcomes

In this unit, the students should be able to:

- Understand the main idea of aesthetics and whether ancient Africans practiced it;
- Comprehend the relationship between artworks and their social significance among ancient Africans; and
- Be familiar with the approaches of ancient Igbo and Yorùbá to the role of artworks.

1.3 Art as Social Practice among Ancient Africans

How do we define the idea of art among ancient Africans? Perhaps it is helpful to commence with Innocent Onyewuenyi who implores that “...African aesthetic standards are different from the ‘accepted’ standards of uniqueness and individuality; that African works of art are created as an answer to a problem and serve some practical end” (Onyewuenyi 1984: 237).

Innocent Onyewuenyi defends the possibility of an African aesthetic on the grounds that “the general principle or standards of values of aesthetics, which is a branch of philosophy, are bound up intimately with a people’s shift and constitution, and are a factor in their life history, subject to the conditions of race, culture and civilization” (Onyewuenyi 1984: 239). This does not make traditional Africans inferior in reason or outlook. This is why one must glean from the outset that “the mind of the African is not structurally different from that of the Westerner... The truth is that both are similarly marked by the same basic features of the human species. The difference lies

in the ways the two societies conceive of reality and explain objects and events. This is so because they live different forms of life” (Sogolo 1993: 74). The claim being emphasized here is that for the traditional African, artworks and the attitude given to them are in line with the entire body of the African connection with reality. In this vein Onyewuenyi expatiates:

Works of art are expressions of ritual and religion, as clues to the temperament of the tribe and society, as language in a culture without writing, must do all these in service to the community whose ritual and religion they express, whose temperament they reveal, the being of whose ancestors they participate in. Hence, African art is functional, community-oriented, depersonalized, contextualized and embedded (Onyewuenyi 1984: 243).

The implication of the foregoing claim is that for the traditional African, the notion of “art for arts’ sake” is a non-existent. This intellectual perspective has also been stated by Nkiru Nzegwu when she pens that “...the critical question in creativity is no longer what constitutes a work of art, but what the relationship between creative objects and social life is in a given society” (Nzegwu 2004: 415). It must be made known however, that this idea of a community and practical orientation for the creation of art among traditional African is not new at all. This has come to be termed by Robert Eldridge (2003) as ‘art as a social practice’. As a way of justifying his claim Eldridge opines that: “In beginning to try to be articulate about what in various works of art distinctly moves us, it is important to remember that making and responding to works of art, in many media, are social practices” (Elridge 2003: 5). Incidentally, the notion of art as social practice is extendable to traditional Africans precisely because:

It is inconceivable that these practices are the invention of any distinct individual. Any intention on the part of an individual to make art would be empty, were there no already going practices of artistic production and response. If there are no shared criteria for artistic success, then the word art cannot be used objectively, as a descriptive term (Elridge 2003: 5).

From the foregoing analysis of the nature and essence of the aesthetic attitude of traditional Africans toward works of art, it is clear that autonomous judgments and pronouncements do not persist. As a result, solipsism does not even occur to recur at any point. It is therefore correct, the claim African aesthetics is depersonalized. An individualistic perception of art is inconceivable for the African. This implication has been captured by Wittgenstein thus: “whatever is going to seem right to me [to call art] is right. And that only means that here we can’t talk about ‘right’” (Wittgenstein 1958: 92). It is in the need for explanatory justification that this essay will employ popular traditional artworks among the Igbo and Yorùbá as a

dais that autonomy via quasi-realism does not hold among the traditional Africans.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

1. _____ defends the possibility of an African aesthetic on the grounds that “the general principle or standards of values of aesthetics.
2. The proposition: “Among traditional Africans, the notion of “art for arts’ sake” is a non-existent.” (a) Undetermined (b) True (c) False (d) None of these

1.4 Metaphysical Significance of Artworks in Traditional Igbo and Yorùbá Societies

1.4.1 *Ikenga* among The Traditional Igbo

The *ikenga* is common among the *Igbo*, aboriginal to the South-East of Nigeria. While there are several traditions and renditions regarding the origin of the *Igbo* people, this research takes as axiomatic, the position of Emmanuel Edeh who explains:

The Igbos are a people principally located in southeastern Nigeria, West Africa. They also extend to parts of the midwestern and delta regions of Nigeria. The Igbo land covers Imo, Anambra and the eastern part of Bendel states. It lies between latitude 5 to 6 degrees north, and longitude 6.1 to 8.5 degrees east, covering an area of approximately 16,000 square miles, it has borders on the east with the Ibibio people. On the west it is bounded by Bini and Warri people. The Igbos share their northern boundary with the Idomas; and their southern boundary with the Ijaws and the Ogoni. The river Niger, before emptying itself into the Atlantic Ocean through a network of tributaries, divides the Igboland into two unequal parts: the Western Igbos and the Eastern Igbos. The Western Igbos are only one-tenth of the total, whereas the Eastern Igbos constitute about eight-tenths. The rest of the Igbos are scattered in other parts of the world (Edeh 1985: 8-9).

The *Igbo* like any other African peoples are deeply metaphysical. This is clearly demonstrated in their art, particularly the *ikenga*, which is the occupation of this study. It is therefore important to hint from the outset that “with the *ikenga* we see how art objects are used in reinforcing self and cultivating assertiveness” (Nzegwu

2004: 420). Etymologically, the word '*ikenga*' connotes 'place of strength'. The *ikenga* appears as a wooden sculpture depicting personal success, power, affluence and achievement in life among the traditional *Igbo*. For Nkiru Nzegwu "*ikenga* are usually between six inches and six feet high and there are three stylistic types: the architectonic, the anthropomorphic, and the abstract cylindrical. Of the three, the most interesting to art historians have been the architectonic and anthropomorphic types, while the small portable type, generally favored by constantly traveling *dibias* (diviners and herbalists), attracts little attention" (Nzegwu 2004: 420). In her account of the artwork which is even more detailed, Nzegwu expounds that:

The sculpture is presented as a human figure that is seated on a stool. A pair of horns emerges from the head of this sculpture. Breasts or the male genitalia may be visibly displayed. Still, a number of *ikenga* are not sexually marked even though the human form may be socially marked with *uli* body designs. Usually, the seated figure either carries a knife or machete, a gun, an *abana* (ceremonial sword), or an *otulaka* (small elephant tusk) in the left hand, and either a human skull (symbol of prowess), a full-size elephant tusk (symbol of wealth), or *akpa ego* (a bag of money) in the right hand (Nzegwu 2004: 420).

It is also interesting to note that sometimes, the sculptures are presented with special adornments of eagle feathers, coral beads and even special attires. Among the Ogwash-Ukwu *Igbo* component in Aniocha South Local Government Area in Delta State, the *ikenga*, is sometimes adorned with white piece of clothing, usually depicting purity or sanctity. These peoples perceive the *ikenga* as the spiritual projection of the individual, but more on this later. What is to be gleaned however is that even when the *Igbo* intends to carve his or her *ikenga*, the foregoing specifications initiated by the community must be put into serious consideration. It is for this reason that Cole and Aniakor chronicle that "symbols and motifs are usually community owned, and the immense sizes of the sculptures represent collective ownership" (Cole and Aniakor 1984: 31-2). Speaking on the significance of each of the usual typified presentations of the *ikenga*, Nkiru Nzegwu emphasizes thus:

On the *Igbo* referent scheme, the horn is assigned the attribute of will power. It evokes a purposive force that cuts a swathe through life. Horns connote assertiveness, strength, daring, and persistence. Icons such as leopards, pythons, and antelopes that proliferate on the *ikenga* have socially assigned attributes...The machete, sword, or gun that is carried in the right hand represents the tool or instrument utilized by individuals in changing their material condition (Nzegwu, 2004: 421).

With the presentation of the *ikenga*, succinctly recounted, it needs to be established how this piece of artwork plays a metaphysical role, aside the aesthetic among the traditional *Igbo*. For them, the *ikenga* is necessarily connected to personhood, but also as a tool for the push for personal strife and success in life. More so, it is this connection with personhood that informs the life course of an individual in most cases. A little expiation is imperative in this connection.

As an artwork that is tied to personhood, it needs to be stated *ab initio*, that the *ikenga* plays a metaphysical role among the traditional *Igbo*. Usually, “it is simultaneously a spirit or psychic force, a sculptured piece, an icon for meditation, and a “text” of psychological principles in which “utilization” of the “text” unravels encoded knowledge” (Nzegwu 2004: 421). At the core, an *ikenga* is a part of the spirit in us. Each person is essentially a *mmuo* (spirit or vitalizing force that may have reincarnated many times with possibly different sex in each existence), and each *mmuo* embodies a *chi*. Each person has a *chi* that is conceived as a personal guardian spirit (*mmuo*) or personality essence that controls one’s destiny (Nzegwu 2004: 421). The *ikenga*, as an aspect of the *chi*, is understood as the force that facilitates personal achievement and propels individuals to success (Nzegwu 2004: 421). Furthermore, the idea of *ikenga* is used to strike a balance between family obligations and individuality, and between free will and fate, by making an individual responsible for his or her successes or failures in life. A person’s *ikenga* functions satisfactorily when it facilitates the individual’s progress in accordance with her pre-birth life choices (Nzegwu 2004: 422).

It is therefore a consequent of the foregoing that “When one succeeds in one’s ventures, one validates *ikenga* (the spirit force) using the sculpture as a visual interface with the inner. One gives it “food” and “drink” to thank it for being “awake”. On escaping from danger one does the same; and if ill luck befalls one, one “communes” and prods one’s *ikenga* (spirit force) to drive away the bad luck” (Nzegwu 2004: 422). In traditional African aesthetic attitude, it is the case that there is immense emphasis on the community and artworks that promote group solidarity as well as individual well-being. The *ere-ibéjì* among the traditional *Yorùbá*, will also reveal that traditional Africans share similar perceptions regarding works of art.

1.4.2 *Ere-ibéjì* among the Traditional *Yorùbá*

Etymologically, *ere-ibéjì* is a coinage from two independent *Yorùbá* words. ‘*Ere*’, depicts statue, image, effigy, figurine. ‘*Íbéjì*’ on the other hand, is the *Yorùbá* word for twin birth. In conjunction, *ere-ibéjì* among the *Yorùbá* is literally translated as the ‘sacred image/statue of the twin’. This belief is common among all variations of the *Yorùbá*. This is why it is important to disinter that the *Yorùbá* is a major ethnic group in South-West Nigeria.

Undeniably, the *Yorùbá* constitutes one of the major ethnic groups of modern Nigeria.

They effectively occupy the whole of *Ogun, Ondo, Oyo, Osun, Ekiti, Lagos*, and a substantial part of *Kwara State* (Atanda 1990: 1). Aside from Nigeria, the *Yorùbá* are also found in sizeable numbers in the south eastern part of the republic of Benin, Togo, and Dahomey in West Africa, in West India and in South Africa. There is also a thriving *Yorùbá* culture in South America and the Caribbean, especially Brazil and Cuba, where the descendants of the unwilling immigrants have been successful enough to maintain their distinctiveness to preserve their cultural and historical legacy. And for each of these, there are slight variations in dialect. The afore claim has been verified by Tunde Onadeko who reveals that: “Today, the *Yorùbá* live in three distinct regions: at home in Western Nigeria; in other West African countries, such as the southeastern Benin Republic and Togo; and outside of Africa, especially in South America, the West Indies, and Cuba (Diaspora)” (Onadeko 2008). However, for its purpose, this study will focus on the traditional *Yorùbá* most especially because of the failure of modernity to erode the salient aspects of this thought system.

It is an established fact that *Yorùbá* women “have one of the highest rates of twinning in the world—it is estimated that out of every 1,000 births, 45-50 result in twins. Twins are revered among the Yoruba and come into this world with the protection of the *orisha* (deity) *Shango* who is evoked at the baby’s naming ceremony. Due to the low birth weight of twins and the high infant mortality rates in Nigeria, many twin babies do not live long (Klemm 2010).

Hence, when one or both of these twins die, *Ifá* divination takes sway. The diviner, popular called *babalawo* (for a man) and *iyaniḡa* (for a woman) will find if the cause is spiritual and if this is the case s/he “...will help the parents find a carver to create an *ere-ìbèjì* figure. An *ere-ìbèjì* is a wooden carving of a male or female figure once used by the Yoruba. The figure is thought to be a focal point for the spiritual energy of the deceased twin who, according to Yoruba traditional thought, resides in the supernatural realm where he/she is cared for by a spiritual mother” (Klemm 2010). It has therefore become a general belief among the traditional *Yorùbá*, in the words of Peri Klemm that:

Families, particularly grieving mothers, take comfort in the belief that a spiritual mother is caring for and guarding the departed child. The Ere ibeji is ritually washed, fed, clothed and carried in a cloth wrapper on the mother’s back as a real baby would be carried (Klemm 2010).

What can be gleaned from the traditional *Yorùbá* understanding of the *ere-ìbèjì* statue is definitely not ‘art for arts’ sake’ but art for some targeted end. And this targeted end needs no elaboration for being community but not autonomy-dependent. This is why a quasi-realistic aesthetic attitude among traditional Africans is futile.

However, it is not to be contested that most of the foregoing claims regarding

traditional *Igbo* and *Yorùbá* conditioning of artwork will not only baffle the mind of the Westerner but will also seem to be uncritical on first showing, since it is merely descriptive. However, profound analytic scholar, Ludwig Wittgenstein does not mind a descriptive approach to analyzing ideas. For him, “we must do away with all explanation and description alone must take place” (Wittgenstein 1963:109). He submits that “philosophy neither explains nor deduced anything” (Wittgenstein 1963:126). Traditional *Igbo* and *Yorùbá* aesthetics may be descriptive. It is however, the task of the philosopher of the present era to ensure a critical plight is initiated. Hence, it is within this spectrum that a proper description and analysis of the unique aesthetic attitude of the traditional *Igbo* and *Yorùbá* may become important in modern times to combat the influx and hold of Western art appreciation and outlooks. It needs to be stressed however, that in the quest for improvement and advancement in ideas and creativity, the critical and logical methods of philosophy are not to be excluded. Continuous critical assessment of life and its foundation is very pertinent. H.S. Staniland shares this optimism too when she chronicles that “philosophy is the criticisms of the ideas we live by” (Staniland 1979: 3). So in a way, much as description is important, critical appraisal is also essential for any philosophic culture to thrive.

From the exploration of the conception of artworks among the traditional *Igbo* and *Yorùbá*, it may be revealed that a metaphysical significance is attached to objects of artistic creation. These objects usually must share some qualities put in place by the society for them to be categorized as effective or efficient for the said metaphysical significance. Having used the traditional *Igbo* and *Yorùbá* as research paradigm, it will be unwise to generalize that *all* traditional Africans share this aesthetic attitude to objects of art. The point however, is that there is a common denominator among traditional Africans that art must have a specific goal.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

1. The *ikenga* plays a _____ role among the traditional *Igbo* (a) Geological (b) Metaphysical (c) Epistemic (d) Geographical
2. _____ is the deity who is evoked at the *Yorùbá* baby’s naming ceremony in ancient times (a) Ogun (b) Shango (c) Oya (d) Oshun

1.5 Summary

This study has been able to consider the nature of artworks in two traditional African cultures. The *ikenga* and *ere-ìbéjì* have been able to highlight the metaphysical role played by objects of art. Furthermore, these metaphysical roles are alien to the Western mind whose conception of art and art objects radically differ. It is in line with this thinking that this paper validates the position of Innocent Onyewuenyi (1984: 237) over three decades ago when he announced that the notion of “art for

arts' sake" has no place among traditional Africans.

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1.7 Possible Answers to SAEs

Self-Assessment Exercise 1: 1. Innocent Onyewuenyi; 2. (c)

Self-Assessment Exercise 2: 1. (b); 2. (b)

Unit 3: The Mathematical Basis of Divination among Ancient Africans

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3 *Ifá* Divination and Base-2 Numbering Pattern
- 1.4 Bamana Divination and Base-2 Numbering Pattern
- 1.5 The Sikidy and Hakata Divination Systems
- 1.6 The African Origin of Base-2 Numbering Pattern
- 1.7 Summary
- 1.8 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 1.9 Possible Answers to SAEs

1.1 Introduction

In this unit, we are going to look into another important discussion upon which ancient African thrived – divination. We are going to pay attention to the philosophy of mathematics which undergirds their divination techniques. So this unit is going to consider four divination techniques from ancient Africa and their mathematical relations.

1.2 Learning Outcomes

With this unit, students must be able to:





- Understand the numbering pattern of ancient Africans;
- Be familiar with the divination techniques among ancient Africans; and
- Be able to argue for the African origin of base-2 or binary numbering pattern.

1.3 *Ifá* Divination and Base-2 Numbering Pattern





In his inaugural lecture titled *Ifá Divination and Computer Science*, Longe (1998, 22) makes explicit, his conviction that there are at least eight basic similarities between *Ifá* divination and computer science. Specifically, the binary digit, representation of numerical values, modulo arithmetic, permutations and combinations, representation of basic characters, Boolean algebra and logic, main memory organization and matrices are the deep-seated connections between computer science and *Ifá* divination (Longe, 22–6). The common denominator among these eight parallels, for me, is the emphasis on the base-2 numbering system. How does the binary numbering pattern operate in the *Ifá* corpus?

In order to understand how binary numbers permeate the *Ifá* corpus, this unit provides an illustration using the divining chain technique (i.e. *òpẹlẹ*), which comprises of “a chain of thread formed by knotting eight shells of the fruits of the *òpẹlẹ* tree. Each shell is curved, creating a convex and concave side.” (Ogunnaike 2015, 257). The convex corresponds to the outer part (represented by squares in Fig. 1 & 2) when the concave refers to the deep hollow part of the shells (represented by the circles in Fig. 1 & 2) and there are four of each of these “connected by a double chain to make four pairs. Each group of four pairs gives one of the 16 divination symbols, which tell the

future of the diviner’s client” (Eglash 1999, 93). As a result, the signature of the *òpẹ̀lẹ̀* evinces a column of four vertical markings, where double vertical strokes depict even numbers as single strokes connote odd numbers (See Figures 1 & 2 below). Accentuation on odd and even numbers implying binary series is based on ethnomathematical nature of double series among the *Yorùbá* and other African cultures. It is based on this finding that Ron Eglash (1999, 89) infers that “the presence of doubling as a cultural theme occurs in many different African societies and in many different social domains, connecting the sacredness of twins, spirit doubles, and double vision with material objects, such as the blacksmith’s twin bellows and the double iron hoe given in bride wealth.”

	II	One open, the other one open,	$1+1 = \text{even}$	1
	I	One closed, the other one open,	$0+1 = \text{odd}$	0
	I	One open, the other one closed,	$1+0 = \text{odd}$	0
	II	One closed, the other one closed,	$0+0 = \text{even}$	1

(Figure 1 signifying *Odù Ìwòrì* with binary output 1001)

	II	One closed, the other closed,	$0+0 = \text{even}$	1
	I	One open, the other closed,	$1+0 = \text{odd}$	0
	I	One closed, the other open,	$0+1 = \text{odd}$	0
	I	One closed, the other open,	$0+1 = \text{odd}$	0

(Figure 2 signifying *Odù Òsá* with binary output 1000)

In addition to the foregoing, it is interesting to also understand that the additions leading to the inferences of even and odd numbers are in consonant with Longe’s conviction that modulo-2 or base-2 arithmetic is foundational and original to *Ifá*. Longe (1998, 25) maintains further that “the convenient method of identification of the *Ifá* divinities is by coding. Since there are a total of 256 divinities and $256 = 2^8$, then 8 binary digits, i.e. 8 bits are required for the identification code. Since there are only 16 major divinities and $16 = 2^4$, then 4 bits are required to identify the major divinities,” as the foregoing figures, that are representative of two major divinities or major *Odùs* indicate.

In addition to the foregoing, Longe explores the binary coding pattern for each of the major *Odùs*, in a bid to substantiate his conclusion that *Ifá* divination, as an ancient *Yorùbá* knowledge system, reveals to us the coherence, logicity, precision and profundity of the thoughts, philosophy, mathematics and computer science as known and practiced by our forefathers (and mothers) before the 11th Century A.D., well before the same ideas were rediscovered in the West in latter centuries” (Longe 1998, 41). What does this imply?

The implication is that binary numbering pattern has been employed by the traditional *Yorùbá*, centuries before Western contact. However, much as Longe (1998) seems to conclude that the eight basic concepts (listed above) of Computer Science had been operating before the West came to disclose the ideas, he does not provide whether or not the West stumbled upon this understanding or there were some African connections to this Western discovery of base-2 numbering pattern. Inadvertently, some other scholars, African and non-African that have explored this ethnomathematical practice that permeates *Ifá* have come to the conclusion that indeed there must have been a form of mathematics original to the peoples, yet alien to the West. For instance, the ethnomathematician, Ron Eglash (1999, 19–40) who studied indigenous African fractal mathematics relays that when Europeans first came to Africa, they considered the architecture disorganized and primitive. It never occurred to them that the Africans might have been using a form of mathematics that they had not discovered yet. The outlook that the form of mathematics explored and applied to codify reality by traditional Africans may have anticipated or perhaps obscure to the contemporary *Yorùbá* is endorsed by Albert McGee (1983, 100) concerning the *Ifá* literary corpus in the following words:

I do not believe that it is a coincidence that the *Ifá* system is characterised by even numbers. In the meantime, one can only speculate that the originators of the system may have been using a more refined or different mathematics than what we know today.

For Sophie Oluwole (2015, 95–6), who seems to be in concord with all of the foregoing: “Dr. Joseph Akin Sofoluwe and others have now moved McGee’s speculation on *Ifá* to the level of fact on the testimony of its contents and methodology... *Ifá* is a computerized system that relies solely on binary coding system which contains all the nine features of Artificial Intelligence.” *Ifá* which is called *Fa* in Benin Republic has also been studied to the conclusion that it explores the rules of probability. In the words of Victor Houndonougbo (1997, 148): “My aim, in sum is to use statistical evidence to show that *Fa* divination is a process for the evaluation of probabilities.” In a related development, Frank Smith’s (2003) research also endorses the notion that basic or foundational ideas of *Ifá* are based on the theory of particle physics which contains Algebra and Geometry.

This account is not to be easily wished away since it has become replete that

geometry has been operating in ancient Africa even before the ancient Greeks understood and started to learn it (Raju 2017, 259). Hence, “the claim that the “Pythagorean” theorem must be credited to Greeks because it is “of course a formal mathematical theorem of Euclidean geometry” may need to command serious revisions in the light of the ways that ideas are acquired without acknowledgment. Raju (2017, 273) continues that “There is no historical evidence for either Pythagoras or Euclid (only much evidence against “Euclid”). There are no formal mathematical theorems in the *Elements*; indeed, formal mathematical theorems did not exist prior to the 20th century.” Granted that the ethnomathematics that undergirds *Ifá* has implications for all of the foregoing, at a time that these were unknown to the West and the clamor that they are foundation to the establishment of digital circuits and supercomputers in the West, there has been no critical exploration concerning how this mathematics evolved into Europe. Whereas we shall consider that in a latter part of this unit, it is however important to first consider the employment of modulo-2 numerical system in other parts of Africa to counter the parochial outlook of the scholars who seem to conclude that this numerical pattern is only replete in *Ifá* divination.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

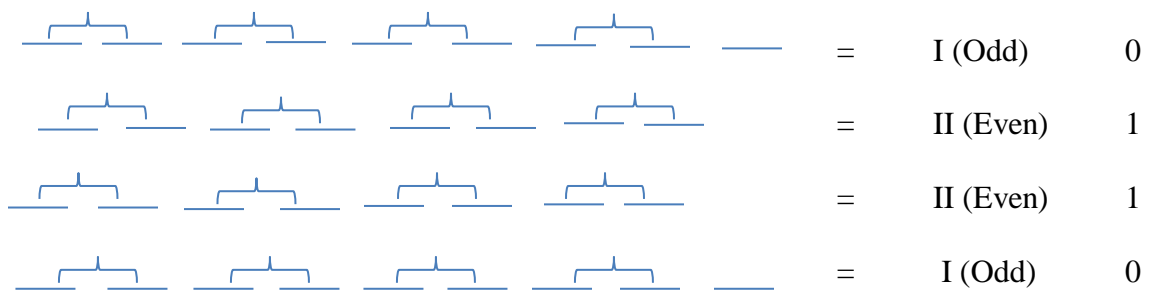
1. According to Frank Smith’s research, the notion that basic or foundational ideas of *Ifá* are based on the theory of particle physics which contains Algebra and Geometry is _____ (a) False (b) Undetermined (c) True (d) None of these
2. *Ifá* is a computerized system that relies solely on _____ which contains all the nine features of Artificial Intelligence

1.4 Bamana Divination and Base-2 Numbering Pattern

As Ron Eglash (1999) informs, number doubling is something that seems to be rampant in Africa, this means there are other ethnomathematical approaches that bear semblances with the traditional *Yorùbá*. Here, this unit considers very briefly, the *Bamana* divination pattern of Senegal, the *Sikidy* system of Madagascar and the *Hakata* four-tablet system in Southern Africa, to evince the base-2 numerical pattern that underpins divination in these parts of sub-Saharan Africa.

The *Bamana* divination technique is a form of *cedena*, popularly called sand divination where “almost all diviners have some kind of physical deformity – “the price paid for their power”” (Eglash 1999, 93). Divination is made through symbolic codes where “each symbol, represented by a set of four vertical dashed lines drawn in the sand, stood for some archetype concept (travel, desire, health etc.)...” (Eglash 1999, 93). It is from this that predictions about futuristic events may be discerned. In principle, *Bamana* divination is based on recursion where the diviner starts by inscribing on the sand, four sets of several horizontal dashes in descending order or top-to-bottom manner. These dashes are inscribed hurriedly so there is no certainty of

the numbers of dashes on each horizontal line (see figure 3 below). Two pertinent factors seem to account for the number of dashes for each horizontal lines – firstly is the length of each dash as drawn by the diviner and the width of the sand-filled tray or surface for divination (see figure 3 below). Afterward, dashes on each of the horizontal lines are paired “such that each of the four lines is left with either one single dash (in the case of an odd number) or no dashes at all (all pairs, the case of an even number). The narrative symbol is then constructed as a column of four vertical marks, with double vertical lines representing an even number of dashes and single lines representing an odd number. At this point, the system is similar to the famous Ifa divination: there are two possible marks in four positions, so 16 possible symbols” (Eglash 1999, 95).



(Figure 3 with binary output 0110)

Whereas the generation of even and odd binary outputs continues in *Bamana* divination, my primary focus is to show how the practice employs base-2 numerical pattern for its *modus operandi*. One important point to note concerning this system just like *Ifá*, is that it explores self-generated numbers which in the words of Eglash (1999, 97) is “important in modern computing, where it is called “pseudo-random number generation.”” Clearly, the connection between this ancient African divination approach and modern computing is not in doubt.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

- 1 Another name for the Bamana divination is _____
- 2 _____ is made through symbolic codes where “each symbol, represented by a set of four vertical dashed lines drawn in the sand, stood for some archetype concept (a) Probability (b) Divination (c) Technicalities (d) Manipulations

1.5 The *Sikidy* and *Hakata* Divination Systems

The *Sikidy* system uses the dried seeds of a fano tree (*Piptaenia chrysostachys*). These seeds are between 124 and 200 (Ascher, 1997: 382). The diviner usually begins by issuing incantations after which s/he takes a full fist of seeds from the pouch that

contains them and randomly makes them fit into four piles. Each of the piles is reduced by removing two seeds until what is left in each pile is either a seed or two. Definitely, the two seeds signify even numbers when one seed implies odd numbers, just as the case for the *Ifá* and *Bamana* divinations which have been entertained hitherto. As Marcia Ascher (1997: 382) puts it: “There are four randomly generated columns of four entries each. Each of the entries can be one seed (0) or two seeds (00), and so, in all there are $2^4=16$ different columns possible and $16^4=65536$ different arrays possible...and each column and each row has a particular referent in the divination.” Clearly modulo-2 patten may be noticed here too. One point to note, however, is that this system is Arabic-derived. In other words, “the *Sikidy* system of Madagascar and the Comoro Islands, based on 16 combinations whose essential Arabic names still retain the unmistakable reminiscence of the late first millennium CE, Iraqi Arabian divination system of *‘ilm al-raml* from which it is derived” (van Binsberg, 2005: 6). *‘ilm al-raml* in English means science of sand (Eglash, 1999: 99). At this juncture, one will now consider the *Hakata* divination system.

The *Hakata* four-tablet system also produces $2^4=16$ combinations whose symbols remind of the *Sikidy* system (van Binsberg, 2005: 6). In clear terms, the divination employs the “manipulation of four small rectangular or triangular tablets made out of wood, bone or ivory” (van Binsberg, W. 1996: 3). The tablets are made to look different from one another by name and inscriptions. As Wim van Binsbergen (1996: 2) relays:

The four tablets are distinguished from one another by name and features. Two have notches at the bottom; these are considered the junior tablets, the male—commonly called Lumwe—with one notch, the female—commonly called Ntakwala—with two notches. The remaining two, senior, tablets are marked as either female—commonly called Kwame—by the incised picture of an eye or a house on the upper side, or as male—commonly called Chilume—by the picture of an axe or a spear.

The interesting point to note is that after these four tablets have been jiggled by the diviner, he releases them and they assume various displays depending on whether or not they land, facing up or otherwise. So in mathematical terms, each of the tablets (i.e. four in all) has the probability of either facing up or down. This extends to $2^4=16$ displays, with a similar probability of 1/16 to happen at each throw (van Binsbergen, 1996: 2-3). The reality is that the modulo-2 base is employed in this system of divination. It is the case that the *Hakata* system seems to have emerged “about half a millennium ago on the Zimbabwean Plateau under Arabian influence – probably by grafting Arabian ideas onto pre-existing forms of the nutshell or astragali oracle” (van Binsbergen, 1996: 15). Assuming this strong Arabian influence is the case, then how may this be reconciled with the orient that “Africa was the center of Mathematics

history for tens of thousands of years...” (Bangura, 2014: 12)? This is a question that will be addressed in a latter part of this research. This unit has disclosed how base-2 mathematics is a practice that is not unique to *Ifá*. The fact that there is an Arabian connection for each of the *Sikidy* and the *Hakata*, we will engage in another section. For the section that follows however, we now concern briefly with the possibility to do mathematics regionally or culturally.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3

1. It is true to say that the *Sikidy* and the *Hakata* use binary system (a) False (b) True (c) Undetermined (d) None of these

2. _____ also produces $2^4=16$ combinations

1.6 The African Origin of Base-2 Numbering Pattern

Mathematics may be seen generally as the systematic study of change, quantity, relation, space, structure, and other topics dealing with entity, form, and pattern (Devlin, 2003). This means that people from different parts of the world may have developed unique mathematical principles to deal with phenomena as they please. This is the main crux of ethnomathematics, which “involves the study of the mathematical ideas of people in traditional or small-scale cultures” (Ascher, 1997: 376). Sure enough, such mathematical ideas original to the various traditional intellectual cultures across the world, would comprise of number, logic, spatial configuration and the organization of these into systems or structures (Ascher, 1991). Clearly, the African divination cultures that have been explored thus far are suggestive of base-2 numerical system which is original to them. In this vein, it has also been relayed that “Greek and European knowledge was actually *inferior* to that of others” (Raju, 2017: 273 Emphasis in the original). What does this portend for divination among Africans?

Similarly, fractions are said to have been popular among Black Egyptians as far back as 3, 700 years ago, judging from inscription in the Rhind Papyrus (Clagett, 1999). It was not until around 1572 that it entered Europe (Phillips, 1941). Hence it has been suggested that “ancient Egypt, in fact, is the origin of Algebra. Algebraic mathematical series, simple equations, balance of quantities, (*pesou*) were all invented in Egypt. Even the Rules of False Position...” (Bangura, 2014: 13). This clearly runs counter to the proposal that Algebra is an Arabic invention. Of course, the Arabs would have learned from the ancient Egyptians, revise before passing the theorem to Europe. This is the universal nature of mathematics which has unfortunately tried to eliminate albeit effortlessly, the contributions of ancient Egyptians to the discipline. It is important to state once again that in sub-Saharan Africa, “base-2 calculation was ubiquitous, even for multiplication and division. And it is here that we find the cultural connotations of doubling that ground the divination

practice in its religious significance” (Eglash, 1999: 99). To make the point more lucid, it is pertinent to consider how the base-2 numerical system, original to sub-Saharan Africa arrived the shores of Spain via Northern Africa.

Owing to the conviction of scholars that base-2 system is instrumental to the emergence of supercomputers and digital circuits. In other words, it has been recognized that “base 2 representation and its automatic electrical manipulation became the internal operating mode for digital computers” (Ascher, 1997: 379). Owing to Ron Eglash’s (1999: 101) conviction that base-2 numbering system commences with African divination, how possible is it that the idea travelled into Europe without acknowledging its African foundation? This is the concern of the remnant of this research.

Europeans owe Raymond Lull, a European alchemist that was also fascinated with geomancy for the arrival of base-2 numbering to the continent. It is important to understand that the modulo-2 patten seems to have been originated by *Òrúnmìlà*, the classical *Yorùbá* philosopher and originator of the *Ifá* divination system, according to Ola Longe (1998) and I agree with him. Whereas I do not boast to the finality that there was a connection between the *Yorùbá* and the *Bamana*, it is however not impossible that trade relations between the West African empires (Rodney, 1972), could have accounted for the divination technique of the *Bamana* of Senegal. The extent of *Yorùbá* influence is not measurable since the *Bamana* divination technique is grossly under-research when compared with the *Ifá* divination system. It is however important to point out that these two sub-Saharan cultures may have accounted for the presence of base-2 thoughts in ancient Egypt. This is plausible since sand divination or geomancy was unknown in these regions originally (Eglash, 1999). With ancient Egypt, the Arab world came to know of the practice and the establishment of trade and conquests to southern Africa accounts for the base-2 divination systems of the *Sikidy* (Bloch, 1968: 278-83). The Arabian influence may not be ruled out for the *Hakata* too, as van Bisbergen (1996: 15-7) proposes.

Some Europeans who had come to Northern Africa, where the base-2 mathematics had been employed for geomancy carted it away. Hence, base-2 calculations entered Europe at a period when Alchemy was at its peak. This period also coincides with the introduction of geomancy to Europe by Hugo of Santalla in 12th Century Spain (Eglash, 1999). Geomancy and the base-2 mathematics that undergirds it interested Raymond Lull who engaged extensively on the practice. In other words, “while Raymond Lull, like other European alchemists, created wheels with sixteen divination figures, his primary interest was in the combinatorial possibilities offered by base-2 divisions. Lull’s work was closely examined by German mathematician Gottfried Leibniz, whose *Dissertatio de arte Combinatoria*, was published in 1666 when he was twenty, acknowledged Lull’s work as a precursor” (Eglash, 1999: 100). The implication for all of these is that Leibniz’s *Dissertatio de arte Combinatoria*, being the first work by a European on base-2 system makes him the author of binary coding

system. At this juncture, no mention is made of geomancy and how the practice was employed in ancient Africa. This perhaps must have been puzzling for Eglash (1999: 101) who submits:

It is not far-fetched to see a historical path for base-2 calculation that begins with African divination, runs through the geomancy of European alchemists, and is finally translated into binary calculation, where it is now applied in every digital circuit from alarm clocks to super computers.

The above shows how the murder of traditional African ‘episteme’ is hereby acknowledged. And epistemicide, conceived as the murder of knowledge doubles as “The loss of epistemic confidence that currently afflicts modern science has facilitated the identification of the scope and gravity of the epistemicides perpetrated by the hegemonic Eurocentric modernity” (Santos, 2016: 135). The epistemicide of indigenous African knowledge systems was crucial to pave way for the colonization of Africans. And this colonization meant that nearly all of the original ideas would have to be replaced by the ones from the colonizer even when the latter aims at all costs to diminish the contribution of the former to knowledge concerning the actual world and its *modus operandi*.

Self-Assessment Exercise 4

1. _____ are said to have been popular among Black Egyptians as far back as 3, 700 years ago
2. From the discussion of this unit, the claim that Leibniz originated the binary system is questionable (a) True (b) False (c) Undetermined (d) None of these
3. The failure to give credit to Africans for the contributions to world civilization is expressed in _____ and _____ (a) Forgetfulness/Reparation (b) Colonisation/Blackness (c) Credulity/Foresightedness (d) Eurocentrism/Epistemic marginalisation

1.7 Summary

In this unit, we have been able to discuss another important issue in ancient African civilization – the relationship between mathematics and divination. This unit has been able to make two points lucid through the explorations made thus far. This unit has relayed that *Ifá*, though, truly explores base-2 numbering pattern, similar practice obtains in other parts of Africa prior colonization by Europe. It has also shown how the base-2 numbering system, original to sub-Saharan Africa moved to North Africa before arriving the shores of Spain as geomancy, as the mathematics soon informed binary coding. The unfortunate aspect of this trajectory is that the origin of binary

series was ceded to Gottfried Leibniz when actually it could have been *Òrúnmìlà*, or any other intellectual sage of Western Africa. The colonized seems to not only have been robbed of his natural minerals resources and deposits but mathematically too. This is an outlook shared by Raju (2017) concerning mathematics as he points out that for the sake of ease of reference over how calculus and rocket trajectories are calculated today, an easy analogy might assist in understanding that process by which the colonizer first learnt from the colonized, and then gave back a slightly altered product, declaring it to be superior. In the same vein, this unit submits that for those who do not know how binary code emerged but submitted to Leibniz as its formal originator, it is important to realize that the colonized learnt modulo-2 mathematics from the colonized and then gave it back through smartphones, laptops and other modulo-2-driven assets which have made life more pleasant. It is therefore important for Africans themselves to rouse, decolonize mathematics and science and chart a viable route to dictate their own pace of human advancement and development.

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1.9 Possible Answers to SAEs

Self-Assessment Exercise 1: 1. (c); 2. binary coding system

Self-Assessment Exercise 2: 1. Cedena; 2. (b)

Self-Assessment Exercise 3: 1. (b); 2. The *Hakata* four-tablet system

Self-Assessment Exercise 4: 1. Fractions; 2. (a); 3. (d)

Unit 4: Sexuality in Ancient African Beliefs

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3 Contemporary view that Homosexuality is “Un-African”
- 1.4 Homosexuality among Ancient Africans
- 1.5 Summary
- 1.6 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 1.7 Possible Answers to SAEs

1.1 Introduction

In this unit, we are going to consider the extent to which traditional Africans viewed sexuality. The particular attention here is to see how they treated and viewed homosexuals. In this unit, we are going to use the ancient Yoruba view on sexuality as an illustration.

1.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, students should be able to:

- Comprehend the fundamental ideology that informs homophobic practices;
- Be familiar with how traditional Africans view sexuality; and
- Be able to relate with how ancient Africans tolerated the third gender.

1.3 Contemporary view that Homosexuality is “Un-African”

Contemporaneous living is a fast-paced one. Information, values and ideas have been made more accessible with ease through globalization. And globalization “refers to worldwide processes that make the world, its economic system, and its society more uniform, more integrated, and more interdependent” (Stutz & Warf, 2007:9). It is this interdependence and integration that accounts for the way cultures and religious institutions have been perceived. Traditional African cultures have been on the defensive given the role and influence wielded by Western culture and values as well as the religious tradition too. Traditional African culture has been construed as backward and antiquated even by Africans themselves.

Christianity and Islam are religious products of some cultures. The introduction of these religions within the African sphere has cemented the understanding of Western values and cultures over and above the African. The consequence of this on the part of contemporary Africans is the dearth of a full and in-depth knowledge of her culture and tradition. When the Western society, in spite of being the precursor of Christian values in many parts of Africa, consented to homosexuality, there were discordant tunes in Africa among Africans. Quickly, Africans revived their long forgotten tradition and culture as a veritable paradigm that homosexuality is alien to Africa but a consequence of Western influence. The analysis of the African past to jettison homosexuality and sexuality as a whole by most of these scholars, is either inadequate or shoddy, evidence of an uncharitable presentation of sexuality among

traditional Africans. Some instances will suffice.

Ebun Oduwole admits that “from ordinary language and ideas in Yoruba thought, it is arguable that there are traces of homosexuality in traditional African society though the influence of Western culture might have made it more pronounced” (Oduwole, 2018:13). To my mind, it is *unarguable*, that there were traces of homosexuality in traditional African society. But Oduwole had an aim which she was shaping her arguments toward. She submits: “Nonetheless, homosexuality is generally seen as unacceptable in Africa because it is believed to threaten traditional marriage institutions, family values, accepted cultures and other traditions which the *Yoruba* hold in high esteem” (Oduwole 2018, 14).

However, one is moved to ask: Are there no instances where heterosexual activities threaten marriage institutions and African values? What makes an adult having carnal knowledge of a minor better than two consenting homosexuals who are both of age? Is it not obvious that the former threatens accepted cultures and traditions more than the latter that has been practiced among Africans from time immemorial?

When Oduwole (2018; 2013) cites *Odu Gori-Irete*, an *Ifa* verse, wherein *Orunmila* pronounced that homosexuality is an exercise in futility, she fails to discern the implications of her thoughts. Oduwole’s argument could be deployed against women suffering from *mullerian agenesis*, that having sex is an exercise in futility, since they have no womb. Oduwole revives the age-long but misleading locus that sex is mainly for procreation *simpliciter*. The *Odu Ifa* that Oduwole cited recommends that for the sake of procreation, a man and a woman should copulate. To say as she does that *Ifa*, the storehouse of *Yoruba* values, knowledge and customs condemns homosexuality is an instance of the Strawman Fallacy. Oduwole is, however, not the only person to have opposed homosexuality. While Oduwole holds to the outlook that the practice of homosexuality is arguable, some African heads of state conclude that it is entirely alien to the continent but must be proscribed too.

While providing a justification for the argument against homosexuality, Kehinde Obasola (2013) takes a position similar to Oduwole’s. For Obasola, “homosexuality is an adaptation, not an inborn trait. It is a distortion of the biological and psychological components of the body” (Obasola, 2013:83). He amplifies further:

It is proper to respect homosexuals as human beings created in God’s image, their moral shortcomings notwithstanding. But such respect and sympathy should not translate to condoning the pseudo dichotomy of homosexual orientation and homosexual desires which are unarguably opposed to the creator’s original will (Obasola, 2013:83).

Elsewhere, it is even made more explicit that the Western world is to blame for the

perceived intrusion of homosexuality into the African continent. It is intriguing to find a scholar putting that:

The Western world has provided acknowledged leadership in science and technology, but the African marital culture is infinitely superior to theirs, and we must not let them take it away from us. Rather, they should be made to recognize and adopt our cherished family values and the beauty of our extended family system which guarantees corporate and individual well-being. The giddy technological height attained by the so-called developed world has resulted in the disintegration of their traditional society and the breakdown of family life, as well as the collapse of social and religious institutions, which serve as ballasts to communal living (Umukoro, 2009).

Implied in the foregoing is that homosexuality being a Western construct aims to cripple African family values which are superior. Consequent to these scholarly contentions, the then Kenyan president Uhuru Kenyatta denounced homosexuality as alien to Africa. In his words: “There are some things that we must admit we don’t share (with the US). Our culture, our societies don’t accept” (Alimi, 2015). Robert Mugabe, the then president of Zimbabwe held that homosexuals “are worse than dogs and pigs” (Moyo, 2012). Mugabe was confident that homosexuality is ‘Un-African’ (Moyo, 2012).

Heads of government in African countries like Uganda, Nigeria, Zimbabwe have kicked against homosexuality as a reality that derives from the West but not original to Africa. The consequence of this is not far-fetched – discrimination against homosexuals and in Nigeria, the Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Act of 2014.

The foregoing proscription of homosexuality on the African soil mirrors Michael Foucault’s third mechanism that shows the link between moral development and understanding of sexuality as the “socialization of creative behavior” (Foucault, 1990:104). This mechanism has the tendency to portray sexuality as a social affair to be regulated and governed. It is more social than private. However, has this always been the case? Is homosexuality necessarily ‘un-African’? Is homosexuality a Western affair imported to destabilize Africa’s values? What is the nature of sexuality among traditional Africans? Is it the same as the one paraded by contemporary Africans? These are the questions I seek to respond to as I employ traditional *Yoruba* understanding of gender and sexuality as a dais for the ‘Africanness’ of homosexuality.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

1. From the arguments of the authors above, homosexuality is replete among Africans because of their interactions with European culture (a) Necessarily True (b) Probably True (c) Certainly False (d) None of these
2. Pick the African country that does not penalize homosexuality (a) Nigeria (b) Zimbabwe (c) Uganda (d) South Africa

1.4 Homosexual among Ancient Africans

We can begin with the outlook that sexuality among the traditional *Yoruba* is not fixed or rigid. In addition, there is clearly the lack of gender-specific terms in the *Yoruba* language that are suggestive of a fixed and immutable understanding of sexuality (Oyewunmi, 1997). One must understand that, “Biological anatomy is not a limitation to social status as that of husband, wives, mothers, or fathers among the Yoruba. In addition, the Yoruba language provides no pronoun for sexual distinction. The notion of gender among the Yoruba is complex and multidimensional” (Olajubu, 2004:42). This, however, does not mean that the traditional *Yoruba* does not know the biological or anatomical expression of man and woman. It needs to be affirmed that even when “gender is central to traditional *Yoruba* culture and society” (Olupona, 2002), the contention is that sex is not the paragon or yardstick.

The traditional *Yoruba* construction of sexuality moves beyond the yardstick of a person’s sexuality and gender. While they perceive the human man as *ako* and the female human as *abo*, consequent of their anatomy, there are terms that show that the traditional *Yoruba* takes into cognizance some other humans that do not share this two-fold distinction which Queer Theory condemns. Two of these suffice in my articulation of their thoughts on sexuality: *Lakiriboto* and *Adofuro*.

The closest English word for *Lakiriboto* is hermaphrodite (Oduwole, 2013). But for the sake of my purpose, I will use a more euphemistic term that is recognized in the academia, ‘intersex persons’. These are human beings with partial expressions, the physical features of male and/or female. They do not express the widespread and dominant biological characterizations of male-ness and female-ness. For instance, *Lakiriboto*, could appear as a woman without female reproductive organs (Layi & Ofuasia, 2019: 195-6). What this implies is that the traditional *Yoruba* recognizes that biological manifestation or expression is not a sufficient foundation for gender construction. In addition to the lack of a pronoun for sexual distinction, it seems the people recognize the possibility of intersex humans. How does this assist with the discourse on homosexuality?

Oduwole (2018: 15) maintains that “the Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Act of 2014 in Nigeria is consistent with our cultural values.” She seems to assume here that

Nigeria is a homogenous political entity, where what holds in a predominantly Christian South with diverse ethnic groups also obtains in a predominantly Muslim North where the Sharia law operates. It is on the basis of this that Oduwole assumes that the Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Act of 2014 is consistent with African cultural values. This assumption is a careless and deliberate use of generalisations. This is because the general claim itself is not plausible when we consider that the Nigerian Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Act of 2014 is only applicable in Nigeria, and not the rest of other societies in Africa. The claim that homosexuality is inconsistent with African values is itself consistent with committing the fallacy of Converse Accident. Moreover, examples abound in many societies in Africa, including Nigeria where evidences of homosexual activities are acknowledged as normal within some traditional African societies.

Among the ancient Hausa in present day Northern Nigeria and the *Lango* people of Northern Uganda, there were men identified as *yan duada* and *makudo dako* respectively. In the words of Mathew Paige (2016) *yan duada* "... were effeminate men and were considered an option for other men to marry. Other traditions were found in the *Nilotico Lango*. There was the third gender *makudo dako*, which were people of the male sex who dressed as women, and treated as women. Marriage between men and *makudo dako* was a common practice." Similarly, among the traditional *Yorùbá* the terms *adofùrò* and *lakíríbotò*, are suggestive of gay and inter-sex persons respectively. There were no strict penal codes against these humans. They were respected and accorded their own rights as human beings. There were neither Sharia laws that made them death row candidates nor imprisonments of a decade and four years. Accounts of many castrated male slaves, either bought or captured as spoils of war, that were used as sex objects by traditional warlords to bolster the efficacy of their spiritually insulated voodoo, give glimpses of reality that, in fact, Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender/Queer (LGBTQ) engagements were once activities of pride and powers in traditional Africa. Those words, such as the Yoruba's *adofuro*, Hausa's *yan daudu* or even powerful and ordinary individuals who were openly gay in pre-colonial Africa are assertions to the fact that African cultures and languages are not emphatically gender-specific. In spite of the vilification that has tended the LGBTQ activities in post-colonial Africa, traditional accounts suggest that the problem of gender identity was not a complex one, as pangenderism was warmly embraced. What has shaped sexual thoughts, perceptions and acts today, can be said to be the influences of both Christianity and Islam.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

1. Traditional accounts suggest that the problem of gender identity was not a complex one, as _____ was warmly embraced.
2. From the discussion in this unit, homosexual practices were rife in ancient Africa
(a) Necessarily true (b) Doubtful (c) Necessarily false (d) Undetermined

1.5 Summary

In this unit, we have been able to consider a very important matter that homosexuality is un-African. This view, it has been shown to be grossly unreliable as there are terms among some ancient African cultures that show that they have a deep idea and even practiced homosexuality. The fact that they were no criminal or penal codes erected against them is another reason why it is important as this unit has done to give a second look at the issue of homosexuality considering how it is creating divides in recent times.

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1.7 Possible Answers to SAEs

Self-Assessment Exercise 1: 1. (a); 2. (d)

Self-Assessment Exercise 2: 1. pangenderism; 2. (b)

Unit 5: The Medical Philosophy of Ancient Africans

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3 The Traditional *Yorùbá* Idea of Medicine
- 1.4 Summary
- 1.5 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 1.6 Possible Answers to SAEs

1.1 Introduction

In this unit, the traditional *Yorùbá* approach to medicine will be given special attention. This unit will reveal the nature of the medical practice as well as how it continues to influence the people's approach to illness and healing in contemporary times. One important thing to pay attention to in the course of this unit is the relationship between the diviner, who serves as a "laboratory" and the herbalist who serves as a "physician."

1.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, the students must be able to:

Be familiar with the traditional *Yorùbá* idea of medicine; and

Draw some semblances between this ancient system and contemporary medicine concerning diagnosis and treatment.

1.3 The Traditional *Yorùbá* Idea of Medicine

In traditional *Yorùbá* society, when someone is suffering from an ailment that has defied household treatment and recommendations from friends and family members who may have experienced some similar disease, the service of the *onísègùn* is sought and it is at this juncture that the *onísègùn*-patient relationship is initiated. Due to the peoples' traditional medical thought system, the first task is for the *onísègùn* to refer the patient to a *babaláwo/ìyanifá* (i.e. *Ifá* diviner), if the *onísègùn* is not competent in divination. The *babaláwo/ìyanifá*, plays the role that laboratories (where scans and x-rays are carried) play in modern medicine. The results of the metaphysical assessment of the ailment are then taken back to the *onísègùn* for treatment to ensue.

It is pivotal to relay that "divination is one important means of diagnosis employed by the medical practitioner. In the divination process, the priest establishes a link among the client, the client's *orí*, and the god of wisdom in a series of steps" (Abimbola 2001, 16). These, taken together will establish for the *onísègùn*, the course of treatment. In this measure Kola Abimbola (2001, 16) makes it clearer:

If after having divined, the *onísègùn* determines that the source of disease, illness or affliction is spiritual, then in addition to herbs and medications designed to treat and repair the body, the *onísègùn* will also prescribe something for spiritual repair. Sacrifice is compulsory after every divination. But the *onísègùn*'s

prescription may include incantations and/or *Ifá* (*Ifá* here means special herbal talismans, the recipes of which are contained in *Ifá* poems).

Much as the foregoing approach to medicine among the traditional *Yorùbá* speaks to the inner kernel of narrative medicine, through the spiritual exploration of a patient's life with the *onísègùn* to arrive a holistic cure, there is more. Via divination and diagnosis by the *onísègùn* “a detailed history of the patient's illnesses as well as lifestyle, habits, personality and family history, going back several generations is noted carefully” (Nayernouri 2017, 721).

From the exploration made thus far, it is imperative to evince that the *onísègùn*-patient relationship in traditional *Yorùbá* has three levels for treatment:

- (1) Diseases that have physical causes/explanations. These can be treated with herbs, with the homeopathic approach;
- (2) Diseases that have both physical causes/explanations and spiritual significance. In addition to taking the treatment route in (1), the *onísègùn* will explore the spiritual dimension for healing. The appropriate spiritual force or deity that needs to be engaged spiritually will be propitiated for effective treatment; and
- (3) Diseases that have strictly mystical or non-physical explanations. The strand of ailments that can be classed within this range are diseases that are strictly the effects of manipulations or effects of the spiritual force or deity. Here, the proper spiritual dimension is given crucial attention by the *onísègùn*.

Self-Assessment Exercise

- 1 Diagnosis and treatment in *Yorùbá* medicine has _____ levels
- 2 In less than a minute, reflect over the interaction between the diviner and the herbalist in *Yorùbá* medicine.

1.4 Summary

In this unit, the idea of medicine and medical practices among the traditional *Yorùbá* has been shown to serve as another ancient anticipation of the ways that contemporary world of medicine works. It has been shown that the journey toward healing is a collaborative venture between patient-diviner and physician.

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1.6 Possible Answers to SAEs

Self-Assessment Exercise: **1.**Three; **2.** In traditional *Yorùbá* society, when someone is suffering from an ailment that has defied household treatment and recommendations from friends and family members who may have experienced some similar disease, the service of the *onísègùn* is sought and it is at this juncture that the *onísègùn*-patient relationship is initiated. Due to the peoples' traditional medical thought system, the first task is for the *onísègùn* to refer the patient to a *babaláwo/ìyanifá* (i.e. *Ifá* diviner), if the *onísègùn* is not competent in divination. The *babaláwo/ìyanifá*, plays the role that laboratories (where scans and x-rays are carried) play in modern medicine. The results of the metaphysical assessment of the ailment are then taken back to the *onísègùn* for treatment to ensue

End of Module Questions

1. “Proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten” is attributable to _____
(a) Achebe (b) Achilles (c) Soyinka (d) Ekwensi
2. The *ikenga* plays a _____ role among the traditional *Igbo* (a) Geological (b) Metaphysical (c) Epistemic (d) Geographical

3. _____ is the patron saint of twins in ancient *Yorùbá* society
(a) Ogun (b) Shango (c) Oya (d) Oshun
4. Another name for the Bamana divination is _____
5. _____ is made through symbolic codes where “each symbol, represented by a set of four vertical dashed lines drawn in the sand, stood for some archetype concept
(a) Probability (b) Divination (c) Technicalities (d) Manipulations
6. From the discussion of on the African origin of divination, the claim that Leibniz originated the binary system is questionable (a) True (b) False (c) Undetermined (d) None of these
7. Traditional accounts suggest that the problem of gender identity was not a complex one, as _____ was warmly embraced

MODULE 4: Philosophy in Ancient Babylon, Egypt, India and China

Unit 1: Philosophy in Ancient Babylon

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3 Philosophical Ideas among the Ancient Babylonians
- 1.4 Summary
- 1.5 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 1.6 Possible Answers to SAEs

1.1 Introduction

This unit studies the development of philosophy in the ancient Babylonian and Sumerian society. It studies the contributions of the ancient Mesopotamian society which was the centre of Babylonian empire. It studies how religion, philosophy, literature and ethical values developed in the ancient cities of Cyprus, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Lebanon and the like.

1.2 Learning Outcomes

The objectives of this study are:

- To know the development of philosophy in the ancient Mesopotamian society; and
- To assess the contributions of the Babylonians to the development of philosophy.

1.3 Philosophical Ideas among the Ancient Babylonians

The nature of philosophy in ancient Babylonian world is traceable to great Mesopotamian wisdom that contained their socio-political, economic, cultural, religious and ethical values and relationship to their existence in the world as noticeable in many Babylonian literature sourced from Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Cyprus, and southern part of Turkey (Aso, 2019: 53).

History has it that the Babylonian empire which covers aforementioned countries had its capital city in Babylon, less than 100 kilometers from Bagdad, present day Iraq. It was a powerful kingdom of Nebuchadnezzar that outlived Assyrian empire after it declined around 610 BC. Nonetheless, the worldviews and philosophical values of this great people became very strong and developed beyond religious beliefs, mythologies and folklores. Around the 8th Century BC, Babylonian astronomers started raising questions and evaluating the real nature of the universe by which they make use of intuition or internal logic to make predictions about special inherent system that exist in each component of the planets.

Babylonian civilization predated the Greek civilization with evidence of Babylonian dialogue of pessimism which are evident in platonic dialectical analysis and the Heraclitan principle of contrast. More so, there are some outstanding concepts in

Babylonian philosophy that are present in various philosophical schools in different parts of the universe. For example, the thought that the human intellect is pre-eminent among other organs; that totalitarianism is encouraged; that the state is the primary determinant of everything in human life and that everything in creation is a product of organic evolution.

The growth and development of astronomy, mathematics and astrology are traceable to Babylonian philosophy with reference to abstract reasoning that involves the relationships between the gods and the goddesses and the physical world. Diodorus, the Greek historian acknowledged that fact of Babylonian philosophers that demonstrated systematic knowledge of logic and language analysis. There are evidences of three Babylonian methods of gaining access to knowledge such as the logical analysis of language, the art of divination to create opportunity for the gods and man to relate well and the rule of law for harmonious existence in the universe with the gods (Aso, 2019: 54).

Babylonian traditions and literature highlighted their epic poetry, folklores and mythologies as being based on their rational and empirical reasoning based on their existential realities of daily experiences. These thought are expressed in the works of Mulla Sadra, Yahya Ibn Adi, Muhammed Abduh, Al-Ghazali, Averroes, Avicenna and the hosts of others.

Babylonian empire fell into the hands of Alexander the great in 331BC when he conquered the known world of his time. After the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BC, his palace teacher, Aristotle articulated all the ancient Egyptian mysteries and texts looted from Egyptian temples and Babylonian thought into a unified Greek philosophy (Aso, 2019: 55).

Self-Assessment Exercise (In less than 1 minute)

- | |
|---|
| 1. Discuss the contribution of the Babylonians to the development of philosophy |
|---|

1.4 Summary

The Babylonian empire had a lot of thinkers that made their valuable contributions to the growth and development of philosophy in that region. Their search for knowledge which was carried out through language analysis and divination process has produced a lot of resources for philosophical discourse and development. Philosophical development in Mesopotamian, Sumerian and Babylonian empire were carried out through language analysis and divination and has influenced the development of Islamic philosophy.

1.5 References/Further Reading/Web Sources

Aso, W.O. 2019. *Rudiments of Philosophy for Undergraduates*. Lagos: Fropiel

International Ltd.

1.6 Possible Answer to SAE

Self-Assessment Exercise 1: Babylonian civilization predated the Greek civilization with evidence of Babylonian dialogue of pessimism which are evident in platonic dialectical analysis and the Heraclitan principle of contrast. More so, there are some outstanding concepts in Babylonian philosophy that are present in various philosophical schools in different parts of the universe. For example, the thought that the human intellect is pre-eminent among other organs; that totalitarianism is encouraged; that the state is the primary determinant of everything in human life and that everything in creation is a product of organic evolution. The growth and development of astronomy, mathematics and astrology are traceable to Babylonian philosophy with reference to abstract reasoning that involves the relationships between the gods and the goddesses and the physical world. Diodorus, the Greek historian acknowledged that fact of Babylonian philosophers that demonstrated systematic knowledge of logic and language analysis. There are evidences of three Babylonian methods of gaining access to knowledge such as the logical analysis of language, the art of divination to create opportunity for the gods and man to relate well and the rule of law for harmonious existence in the universe with the gods.

Unit 2: Philosophy in Ancient Egypt

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3 Ancient Egyptian Cosmology
- 1.4 *Maat* and the Ethics of Leadership
- 1.5 Summary
- 1.6 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 1.7 Possible Answers to SAEs

1.1 Introduction

This unit studies the development of philosophy in Ancient Egypt. In the process, it examines the ancient Egyptian civilization, Egyptian cosmology, Egyptian mystery cult, pyramids and their moral system.

1.2 Learning Outcomes

The objectives of this unit for the students are:

- To discuss the development of philosophy in the ancient Egyptian civilization;
- To study the ancient Egyptian cosmology; and
- To analyze the Egyptian moral system (*Maat*).

1.3 Ancient Egyptian Cosmology

Egyptian civilization far exceeded all other groups who settled elsewhere. According to Bob Brier (1999:6) the earliest Egyptian habitation was Circa 700,000 BC. These people perhaps migrated from the south along Nile Valley. The first human inhabitants used language, gathered food, used hand axe and perhaps controlled fire. Bier (1999:7) further opines that between 30,000 – 10,000 BC, the Nile Valley was declining, people lived in swamps. Their settlements had clay hearths on which they cooked, grindstones for grinding. The development of bow and arrow made hunting easier. Between 10,000 – 5,000 BC, farming and cooking were used in both Northern and southern Egypt with the use of clay pots. Settlements grew along the Nile and the first sign of kingship appeared in both north and south Egypt. This was the beginning of Egyptian civilization. The population of the people was about 2,000 peoples. The dead were buried with possessions, in sand pit. Carved palettes, some adorned with decorative arts came up along the line.

According to Bier (1999:4) “Egypt is the most advanced civilization in history. Its accomplishments include monumental architecture (the pyramids), medical science, monotheism, and mummification.” Egypt remains one of the most mysterious civilizations in history. Brier further holds that Egyptian arts maintain great continuity for 3,000 years, subscribing to eternal values rather than creativity and innovation. And these civilizations are revealed through arts and literature. Tomb painting tells us about their belief in afterlife. More so, tombs were provisioned with

an amazing variety of everyday objects. He also held that temple walls were decorated with histories such as records of battles; lists of kings, book of the dead reveal the Egyptians' thought on the next life.

Allen (1988:1) posits that the traditional Egyptian concept of the universe is best captured by the relief and inscriptions on the ceiling of Seti's cenotaph. The relief depicts the sky as a goddess NUT extended as a canopy over the earth and separated from it by the atmosphere in a form of a god SHU. Along the body of the sky are depicted stars and the moon in their various stages of its daily journeys.

Allen (1988:4) holds that Egyptian cosmology holds the world of human experience as bound by land below and sky above, separated from one another by the atmosphere. Within these limits, the circle of daily life takes place, defined by the rising and setting of the sun. What lives outside them is beyond the realm of human knowledge. Thought to be unknown by the gods or spirits but not beyond the limits of speculation. Egyptian philosophers attempted to understand what lies outside the universe through series of contrast with the known world. Where the world is finite what lies beyond it is limitless. The known world is lit with sun, the universe outside it is uniformly and perpetually dark.

The Egyptians conceive of the universe as a limitless ocean of dark and motionless water. The sky is conceived of as a kind of interface between the surface of the waters and the dry atmosphere. The sun sails on this waters just as people sail on the Nile. The sun's disappearance inside the sky and appearance in the morning suggests the Egyptians circle of death and rebirth.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

1. _____ disappearance inside the sky and appearance in the morning suggests the Egyptians circle of death and rebirth.
2. _____ holds the world of human experience as bound by land below and sky above, separated from one another by the atmosphere.

1.4 *Maat* and Ethics of Leadership

What is the idea of *Maat* and how does it inform the ethics of leadership? This is the principal focus of this unit. The ancient Egyptians reasoned that it was possible to have an environment where truth, justice, righteousness, balance, and order dominated provided there exists a pharaoh willing and able to apply *maat* in every sphere, from the most abstract to the most concrete (Sesanti 2018: 7). It was held that the king's most important duty was to maintain *Maat* throughout the land. The emergence of a just king was not left to chance but conscious efforts were made to mould such. There were certain instructions that were given to those who were to ascend to the throne about how to apply rule characterized by justice. One of such documents was the

instruction of Merikare, “the legacy of a departed king which embodies treatise on kingship” (Lichtheim 1975: 97). In this treatise, Merikare’s father urges his son to “not neglect my speech, which lays down all the laws of kingship, which instructs you, that you may rule the land, and may you reach me with non to accuse you! (Lichtheim 1975: 107). The father told the son that as a king, he was expected to do justice, to care for the weeper, not to oppress the widow, not to expel a man from his father’s property, not to punish wrongfully and not to kill, (Lichtheim 1975: 100).

Sesanti (2018:7) further presented the instruction of Merikare’s father that cautioned his son against being biased in favour of the well to do in the society against the commoners in the land. He instructed his son to give out works on the basis of skills. He further asked his son that in a world where the powerful surround themselves with the weak, self-ingratiating and sycophants, he should keep critical and independent minds that would be able to show him his wrongs when occasion necessitated.

The instructions of Ptah-Hotep (2650 – 2135 BC) is one of the most ancient teachings of the Egyptian kings on the ethics of leadership. Ptah-Hotep urges those in positions of authority to do perfect things that posterity will remember. They are expected to listen calmly to petitioners so that they will feel being attended to in moments of needs. He issued a strong warning against greed, arguing that it was a grievous sickness without cure.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

1. _____ has the most ancient teaching of Egypt on ethics of leadership (a) Imhotep (b) Ptah Hotep (c) Ramses I (d) Amenhotep
2. The doctrine of merikare was to _____

1.5 Summary

Philosophy being a reflection on human life and experiences started developing in Egypt with the civilization of the people which is a product of people’s thinking, acting and experiences must have kick started in Egypt. The Egyptian civilization which brought about kingship, organization of the society and their burial system are product of the thinking system of the people. Be that as it may, the thinking of the people is built around their religious systems. Humanity is thought to have originated in sub-Saharan Africa several thousands of years ago but some migrated through the Nile Valley to Egypt where they developed, civilized, grew and organized themselves into a society, had kingship, developed a system of burial that has won global respect and admiration up till the present era and had a moral system that guided the king and the entire society. These are product of great thinking that is philosophical in nature.

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1.7 Possible Answers to SAES

Self-Assessment Exercise 1: 1. The sun; 2. Egyptian cosmology

Self-Assessment Exercise 2: 1. (b); 2. Ascend to the throne about how to apply rule characterized by justice

Unit 3: Philosophy in India

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3 Reality in Ancient Indian Philosophy
- 1.4 Summary
- 1.5 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 1.6 Possible Answers to SAEs

1.1 Introduction

This unit examines the development of philosophy in ancient Indian society. This society comprises of several nations, traditions and philosophies such as Hinduism and Buddhism in India and a host of others spread across the region. In view of the space and time constraints, it becomes pertinent to concentrate on the Hindu thought system.

1.2 Learning Outcomes

The learning objectives of this unit are:

- To study the development of philosophy in the Hindu society;
- To know the basic tenets of Hinduism; and
- To assess the impact of Hinduism on the development of the Indian society.

1.3 Reality in Ancient Indian Philosophy

What is the core idea of ancient Indian thought? What is considered and known as Eastern or Oriental or Asian philosophy is the articulations of basic characteristics of diverse philosophies in Asia by western scholarship because there is no integrated philosophical tradition that is traceable to one source in Asian continent. As a matter of fact, ancient eastern philosophies are articulated from Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Indian philosophies as evident in their worldviews, religious, moral, socio-political and cultural values. For example, Hinduism is the synthesis of Indian cultures and traditions; Jainism is anchored on the principle of non-violence (*Ahimsa*) towards all living creatures.

The story of Indian philosophy is long and exciting. Their philosophical thought presents a richness, subtlety and variety which constitute an awesome testimony to the human spirit. Practically, every insight and shade of speculation is found in Indian thought. This richness and complexity makes it difficult to summarize.

Indian philosophy is practical in nature. Their speculations are anchored on their desire to improve on their lives. Confronted with physical, mental and spiritual suffering, Indian philosophers sought to understand the reasons and causes of these suffering. They attempted to improve on their knowledge of human nature and the universe because they wanted to uproot the causes of their suffering.

Indian philosophers respond to both practical and speculative motivations.

Practically, there was the acquaintance with ordinary forms of suffering such as disease, hunger, loneliness and the knowledge that death will overtake the sufferer. Speculatively, there was the innate human curiosity to understand and to order experience. Practical considerations motivated the search for ways to overcome the various forms suffering. Speculative consideration led to the construction of explanatory accounts of the nature of reality and of human existence. But these considerations were not carried out separately. The primacy of practical considerations involved in Indian philosophies gives them substance while the necessity of the speculative philosophy determines their structure (Kohler, 1985:9).

The practical nature of Indian philosophy is manifested in a variety of ways. The very word which is translated as philosophy *Dashana* literary means vision. It is what is seen when ultimate reality is investigated. The Indian seers investigate the condition of suffering and examine the nature of human life and the world to find out the causes of suffering and the means of its cessation. What they found constituted their *Dashana*. It is possible to be mistaken in the vision as a result a philosopher's vision must be justified through logical analysis in which the inconsistencies are unraveled. The second method of verifying the veracity of a vision is through practical method. Indian philosophers have always insisted that practical method is the ultimate process of justifying a vision (Kohler, 1985: 9).

Indian philosophy is also concerned with finding ways to liberate the self from bondage to fragmented and limited modes of existence that is a bondage that causes suffering. According to Upanishad, the great power *Brahman* that energizes the cosmos and the spiritual energy of the self, *Atman* are ultimately the same. This vision of the identity of self with ultimate reality provides the foundation for the methods of liberation which constitute the central core of Indian philosophy. It is a vision which sees the various distinct things and processes of the world as manifestations of a deeper reality that is undivided and unconditioned. Part of the Indian thought is the principle of *Karma* in which everyone gets the results of his or her actions. Simply put, what goes around comes around.

Self-Assessment Exercise

- | |
|---|
| 1 _____ is the ultimate Being in Indian thought. |
| 2 _____ is the metaphysical principle in which everyone gets the results of his or her actions (a) Nemesis (b) Justice (c) Karma (d) Consequences |

1.4 Summary

Indian philosophy is primarily concerned with the development of the individual and the society which is expressed in and through vision which must cohere with reality. It is primarily concerned with understanding of the reality of suffering and modalities

of liberating people from it. Indian philosophy focuses on the development of the individual and the society. The society which is embodied in the universal soul (*Brahman*) is extended through the individual soul (*Atman*) which is linked to other people's *Atman* and explained as everyone emanating from the *Brahman* and is in the process of returning to the *Brahman*. It is in this process that everyone is thought as being linked to everyone else. As a result, humanity shares the same *Brahman* and all their *Atman* are linked to one another.

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1.6 Possible Answers to SAEs

Self-Assessment Exercise: 1. Brahman; (a); 2. (c)

Unit 4: Modern Science and Ancient Oriental “Scientific” Ideas

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3 Modern Physics and Ancient Oriental Conception of Reality
- 1.4 Summary
- 1.5 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 1.6 Possible Answers to SAEs

1.1 Introduction

In this unit, we are going to consider how some ideas in ancient India and China can be said to express anticipations of the various discoveries of modern physics in the 20th century. The ideas of quantum mechanics and their implications for understanding reality seems to have occupied the attention of scholars of ancient China and India even before physicists such as Oppenheimer and Heisenberg. What did these scholars discuss that made them to have similar ideas with modern physics?

1.2 Learning Outcomes

In this unit, we are going to:

- Learn that Asian ideas on science anticipate modern physics;
- Learn about the role of metaphysical theorizing and scientific postulation; and
- Learn to appreciate ancient ideas because of their contribution to knowledge in their own way.

1.3 Modern Physics and Ancient Oriental Conception of Reality

Since the publication of Fritjof Capra’s *The Tao of Physics*, it has become an established that what parades as modern science is but a rehearsal of ancient Indian and Chinese ethnosciences. A few years afterward, Gary Zukav’s *The Dancing Wu Li Masters* (similar to what Capra termed as the Cosmic Dance), appeared to reinforce the convictions of Capra. In third part of his classic, Capra draws the places of convergence between modern science and Oriental science paying attention to realities such as: the Unity of Diversity; Space-Time; World of Opposites; Dynamic Universe; Emptiness and Form; Cosmic Dance; Quark Symmetries; Patterns of Change; and Interpenetration (Capra 1975). Due to space-time limitation, I will only make my point by talking about the concept of Space-Time between these ‘scientific traditions’ – Eastern and Western.

Modern science, through advancements in quantum and relativity theories not only confirm some semblances with Eastern ethnoscientific traditions but surrender as well that “all the concepts we use to describe nature are limited, that they are not features of reality, as we tend to believe, but creations of the mind” (Capra 1975, 57). The concepts – ‘space’ and ‘time’ had been conceived by classical physics to exist as absolutes independent of the human mind. This is made viable by their excessive trust in the three-dimensional conditioning of reality.

In classical physics, the three-dimensional approach to space encoded in Euclid's geometry continued to influence European schools in the beginning of the previous century. Plato had believed that God is a geometer. Since there is no law of physics that excludes space and time from its formulation, classical physics had held a conception of absolute time and space (Alozie 2004). That Physics, it needs to be said, also thrived on the idea of absolute three-dimensional space irrespective of inherent material objects which obeys the laws of Euclidean geometry. Consequently, time is perceived as a distinct entity, absolute too, and flows liberated from the material world and human cognition. It is fixed, immutable and organized in the 'before,' 'after,' or 'simultaneous' which corresponds to past, future and present respectively. This outlook has been challenged validly by quantum theory.

Quantum theory challenges the approaches of reality from independent space and time. The theory as Princewill Alozie (2004, 110) admits that "instead of knowing something by observing it, quantum mechanics suggests something is not there, until you observe it." The same reality observed by Agent P and Q from opposing ends, for instance, will subtly differ and be relative for each of them. This is known in physics as the "observer effect" (Sheath 2019, 18).

The same also applies to temporal considerations. Temporal events, in classical mechanics, are arranged in time sequence following the velocity of light at 186, 000 miles per hour – a speed that is very high compared to any other velocity we experience giving the impression that we observe events at the instant they occur (Capra 1975, 59). This has been proved to be false as light requires time to travel from the space of event to the location of the observer. This idea of time has led to the abandonment of absolute space in Newtonian or classical mechanics – a faraway event which occurred at a particular time for one observer may appear earlier or later for another observer. The implication is that, like any quanta, space and time do not exist if they are not observed. They are not out there, fixed as classical mechanics tell us. This is why Mendel Sachs (1969, 53) asserts that "relativity theory implies that the space and time coordinates are the only elements of a language that is used by an observer to describe his environment." This understanding of time and space, which is peculiar to relativity theory, is not new to the Orientals.

Eastern philosophers and scientists of ancient times had recognized all along that time and space are particular states of consciousness (Ashvaghosha 2005, 107). Ethnoscience of ancient India and China, have learned the capacity to "transcend the three-dimensional world of everyday life to experience a higher, multidimensional reality" (Capra 1975, 61). It is however important to state as Capra too does that "the dimension of these states of consciousness may not be the same as the ones we are dealing with in relativistic physics, but it is striking that they have led the mystic towards notions of space and time which are very similar to those implied by relativity theory" (Capra 1975, 61). The idea that there are various forms of consciousness parallel with the present one is endorsed by William James (2002, 300-

1) who relays:

Our waking consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different. We may go through life without suspecting their existence, but apply the requisite stimulus, and at a touch they are there in all their completeness, different types of mentality which probably somewhere have their field of application and adaptation. No account of the universe in its totality can be final which leaves these other forms of consciousness quite disregarded.

This understanding of space-time finds expression in the *Avatamsaka* strand of Mahayana Buddhism. The aggregate kernel of *Avatamsaka* concerning space-time in Eastern ethnosience is relayed thus:

The significance of the *Avatamsaka* and its philosophy is unintelligible unless we once experience...a state of complete dissolution where there is no more distinction between mind and body, subject and object...We look around and perceive that...every object is related to every other object...not only spatially, but temporally...As a fact of pure experience, there is no space without time, no time without space; they are interpenetrating (Suzuki 1969, 33).

The foregoing has been corroborated by Taoist sage Hui-neng, the Sixth Zen patriarch who asserts: “The absolute tranquility is the present moment. Though it is at this moment there is no limit to this moment, and herein is eternal delight” (Watts 1957, 201). Elsewhere, the general consensus among the ethnoscientists and philosophers of ancient Oriental is that “the past and the future are both rolled up in this present moment of illumination, and this present moment is not something standing still with all its contents, for it ceaselessly moves on” (Suzuku 1968, 148-9). Elsewhere, I find that the actual world comprises “of several different worlds organised like rings of onions. At the summit of manifestation, it is possible to see the past, present and future in a single glimpse” (Sheath 2019, 20).

That the ethnosience of the East has some levels of logical equilibrium with modern science, implies that the latter is not saying anything substantially new to the Oriental world at least. Quantum and relativity theories are not wholly unheard of as Julius Robert Oppenheimer (1954, 8-9), the three-time Nobel Prize nominee of physics informs: “They have a history, and in Buddhist and Hindu thought a more considerable and central place. What we shall find is an exemplification, an encouragement, and a refinement of old wisdom.” In a related theme, the Nobel Prize

winning Physicist Neils Bohr (1961, 20) validates: “For a parallel to the lesson of atomic theory...we must turn to those kinds of epistemological problems with which already thinkers like the Buddha and Lao Tzu have been confronted, when trying to harmonise our position as spectators in the great drama of existence.”

Self-Assessment Exercise

- 1 This understanding of space-time finds expression in the *Avatamsaka* strand of_____.
- 2 Modern Physicists like Oppenheimer deny that ancient oriental metaphysics has ideas for modern physics (a) Very true (b) Very probable (c) Most likely (d) Very false

1.4 Summary

The fundamental goal of this unit has been to demonstrate that some of the contemporary ideas that are being paraded possess ancient foundations, even they may not be acknowledged. In this unit, we have been able to reveal how ideas from ancient Asia has contributed to the advancement of modern physics as some notable physicists have also been able to admit.

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1.6 Possible Answers to SAEs

Self-Assessment Exercise: 1. Mahayana Buddhism; 2. (d)

End of Module Questions

1. The understanding of space-time finds expression in the *Avatamsaka* strand of Mahayana Buddhism
2. Modern Physicists like Oppenheimer agree that ancient oriental metaphysics has ideas for modern physics (a) Very true (b) Very probable (c) Most likely (d) Very false

3. _____ is the ultimate Being in Indian thought.
4. _____ has the most ancient teaching of Egypt on ethics of leadership (a) Imhotep (b) Ptah Hotep (c) Ramses I (d) Amenhotep

Module 5: Philosophy in the Ancient Greek and Neighbouring City-States

Unit 1: Ionian/Miletian Thinkers

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3 Thales and the Emergence of Western Philosophy
- 1.4 Anaximander's Contribution to Ancient Philosophy
- 1.5 The Philosophy of Anaximenes
- 1.6 Summary
- 1.7 References/Further Readings
- 1.8 Possible Answers to SAEs.

1.1 Introduction

All the units that will be considered in this module focus over the philosophy of scholars from the era of Thales down to Socrates. As much as possible, all the key ancient scholars will be discussed. In addition to this, it is also important to add that the period between Thales and Socrates will be broken into three eras, a unit for each. So, the present unit commences with the proposal of the Ionian/Miletian philosophers. Here, three main figures – Thales, Anaximander and Anaximenes will be discussed.

1.2 Learning Outcomes

In this unit, we are going to look at:

- The idea of how Western philosophy started;
- The individual ideas of Thales, Anaximander and Anaximenes; and
- The role of the Ionian philosopher who moved from religious to secular explanations of realities/events beginning with Thales.

1.3 Thales and the Emergence of Western Philosophy

According to Joseph Omoregbe (2003:3) Thales was the first known Greek philosopher in the western world. He hailed from Miletus, a Greek city which was a great port and commercial centre in Ionia. He was the first known Greek philosopher who offered a rational explanation for the nature of the cosmos. He lived around 600 BC. The most famous anecdote about Thales is told by Aristotle. Accordingly, Thales was reproached for his poverty which indicated that philosophy will be of no benefit to man. But, the story goes that from his knowledge of astronomy, he perceived while it was still winter, the coming of a great harvest of olives in the coming season, and having procured a small amount of money, he made a deposit for the use of all the olive presses of Miletus and Chios, which he rented for a low price.

When the harvest came and there was a sudden and simultaneous demand for the use of the presses he let these at whatever price he wished and made a fortune. He pointed out through this, that philosophers can easily become wealthy if they wish but such is not their main pursuit (Arieti, 2005:44). Thales is presented as a man who showed the lesson of Hesiod that study nature, apply its lessons and wealth will follow. More so,

Thales is presented as a man of philosophy who is not interested in the application of knowledge for personal gain but knowledge for its own sake.

Arieti (2005: 44) opines that love for knowledge for its own sake marked the man (Thales) from Miletus. Accordingly, the radical change in Milesian thought is its freedom from mythology through search for explanations reflective of universal law of nature. Furthermore, Arieti (2005: 45) thinks that this freedom from religious explanation is a manifestation of an attempt to understand for the sole sake of understanding. It was thought that the gods of Poseidon was responsible for earthquakes and people appealed for escape from the menace. Thales thought that earthquake is a product of agitation of the water on which the earth floats. In view of the above, He felt that there is no god to appeal to for safety. Thales thought that the knowledge of the cause of earthquakes would exist for its own sake, simply for the satisfaction of knowing the cause.

Thales's response to the question of the original substance, that primary stuff that was the foundation of all being is as follows. He stated that the material principle of all things is water. Thales may have had in mind the changeable condition of water (liquid, solid and gas). Arieti (2005: 45) thinks that water may be a metaphor for the various forms of matter. That Thales may have meant the claim as a metaphor for the significance of water for life. Thales is thought to have come to the conclusion from observing that all food is moist and that heat itself is generated from the moist and is kept alive by it.

Thales also discusses soul (psyche). He sees soul as something in motion. Thales held that all things are full of gods. He seems to suggest that the soul is the source of movement. We see a motionless corpse and conclude that its soul has departed. Thales believed that the soul is a god because it is self-moving, it causes things to move and that movement is the essence of being alive. Thus, rivers, trees, wind and celestial bodies are gods and are alive because they move and seem to have the faculty of self-motion. Independent self-motion is thought to have a divine cause.

The day Thales first questions about the makeup of the world and proposed new solutions was one of the truly revolutionary moments in the history of the world. He also predicted the eclipse of the sun by mathematical means but the prediction was correct only to the nearest year.

The contributions of Thales to the development of ancient Greece thought are manifold. To begin with, his prediction about olive and all his efforts towards making money shows that philosophers have the potentialities of being rich but he was quick to teach that philosophy is sought for its own sake and not for personal gains. He advocated selfless services to the society through teachings that will liberate the people from the shackles of slavery brought about by religion and mythologies.

Thales' thought that the primary substance from which all other beings emanated was water was a ground breaking thought at the time. He discovered that every being have its main content to be constituted by water and exists in and through it. Rarely will you identify a being that do exist without water. He identified the three forms of water – solid, liquid and gas. Nothing exists without water. At death, the being dissolves and is absorbed by the soil as liquid(water).

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

- 1 _____ is the primary stuff for Thales
- 2 For Thales, the soul is in _____ (a) Space (b) Motion (c) Static (d) Brilliant
- 3 The claim that Thales is the First Philosopher is _____ (a) Contestable (b) Necessarily True (c) Undeniable (d) None of these

1.4 Anaximander's Contribution to Ancient Philosophy

According to Omoregbe (2003:4) Anaximander was the second known Greek philosopher in the western world. He hailed from Miletus just like Thales and was a student of Thales. He held that there must be an original substance from which all things are made. But he did not think that it must be water as Thales did. He held that the primary substance cannot be of any of the things we know because all elements that we know are in conflict with one another. If any of them is the original substance, it will conquer and submerge all others. The primary element must therefore be a neutral element, different from all the elements that we know, it must also be infinite, eternal and indeterminate.

The conflict between the different elements was interpreted by Anaximander as an example of injustice in nature since by this conflict one element invade the domain of another element. But, he maintained that there is cosmic law of justice which establishes order and makes everything to go back into what came. It is in this light that he said that the principle of the world is boundless (*apeiron*), an undefined entity that can become anything and everything. He noted the various things such as rock, trees, houses, rivers, stars, etc, they have their names and natures that separate them from everything else, and wonders that if each one of them has a fixed nature how could things come into being or pass out of being or change into anything else. He concluded that the underlying matter does not itself have the boundaries of a fixed nature; instead all matter is rich in and full of potentialities. Thus, rock can be turned into a house, water can dry up and become air, bread when eaten digested and become flesh, etc. Anaximander's boundless is an improvement on the core problem of change regarding how a new set of properties becomes something else (Arieti, 2005:47).

This mechanism of change comes from a war between opposite forces, of which the four principal pairs are the hot and the cold, the wet and the dry. He looked at the cycle of the year and felt that the summer and the winter are opposed to each other. He felt that a living flesh is warm while a dead one is cold (Arieti, 2005:48).

Anaximander thought that the earth was cylindrical and not flat and we live on the surface of it. He inferred from his observation that the sun and other heavenly bodies revolve round the earth. He inferred from his mathematical ratio that an intelligible set of ordered rules governs the universe.

One of the major contributions of Anaximander to the development of ancient Greece thought is the concept of boundless, *apeiron*, an undefined entity that can become anything and everything. He explained the variation in things through this concept of boundless. It is through the concept of boundless that he explained the possibility of each being not to have a fixed nature.

Anaximander's thought that the earth was cylindrical in nature is another milestone in his discourse. He further held that human beings exist on the surface of the earth which has been given the desired respect in modern scientific discourse.

Anaximander's thought and discourse that the sun, stars and other heavenly bodies revolve round in a daily circular orbit around the earth is a reputable development. This thought has led to further development of the rotation and revolution of the cosmos.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

1. Anaximander thought that the earth was _____ and not flat (a) Ellipses (b) Cylindrical (c) Cyclical (d) Circumferential
2. _____ is the basic stuff of the universe.

1.5 The Philosophy of Anaximenes

Anaximenes, for Arieti (2005: 49) held that Thales's thought that water was the original substance that brought other beings into existence was a metaphor for matter because water could take on the shape of any container and could exist in gaseous, liquid, and solid states but could not explain how water could generate fire which appears as a polar opposite with water.

In view of that he felt that he will improve on the thought and teachings of his master by thinking that the original substance was air. He thought that where water presented the apparently insoluble difficulty of transforming into or out of fire, air presented

the advantage of invisibly taking on different forms in a way that could be actually perceived. We can feel air that is hot, moist, cold or dry. We can feel the wind blowing on our skin and then surmise that the same wind is invisibly whirling the dry leaves. He thought that air has a good claim to be the source of living things as water, for air is the breath of life.

Anaximenes, for Kenny (2011) sees air just like Anaximander's thought on boundless (*apeiron*) as having the feature of invisibility, but unlike the unbounded, there is actual evidence that it exists. He sees air as a perceptible part of nature while at the same time it enjoys a place in the explanatory intellectual and invisible realm that is somehow beyond nature. Anaximenes offered many other views such as the transformation of air into different substances like condensation and rarefaction. When air is condensed, it is cold; when it is relaxed it is hot.

He thought that the soul, which is a breath, sustains the body and gives it life. Vital air condenses and rarefies in such a way that all forms of becoming requires no other principle. He went further to transfer this biological model of the concept of the universe and astronomical phenomenon to explain that through condensation, hot air is transformed into rain, cloud, fog. He further holds that lightening from heavens is merely inflamed air.

One of the major contributions of Anaximenes to the development of ancient Greece thought is that air was the original substance through which all other beings emanated. He saw his thought as a better explanation for Anaximander's concept of boundless, *apeiron*, an undefined entity that can become anything and everything. Anaximenes explained that the soul is air and it gives it life.

Anaximenes's thought that air could turn into any being through condensation and rarefaction is one of his major contributions to the development of western philosophy. It is through this process that air could turn into solid, liquid and gas.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3

1. _____ is the primary substance of the universe for Anaximenes (a) Water (b) Boundless (c) Soul (d) Air
2. Anaximenes agrees with Anaximander on the primary stuff of the universe (a) False (b) True (c) Undetermined (d) None of these

1.6 Summary

In this unit, the three Ionian philosophers – Thales, Anaximander and Anaximenes have been considered. What has been shown is that the idea of what makes the universe has been an overriding discourse among them. It can also be noticed how

they went against the views of one another. It is on this basis that for the West the philosophic spirit started emerging as the ideas soon shifted from Ionia into the ancient Greece and Italy.

1.7 References and Further Reading

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Unit 2: Pre-Socratic Philosophers

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3 Pythagoras
- 1.4 Xenophanes
- 1.5 Heraclitus
- 1.6 Parmenides
- 1.7 Empedocles
- 1.8 The Atomist School
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- 1.12 Summary
- 1.13 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 1.14 Possible Answers to SAEs

1.1 Introduction

This unit discusses the discourse of philosophy in Italy where in the discourse of Pythagoras and the Pythagoreans, Heraclitus and Parmenides are examined. This module is made up of three study units. It gives the opportunity to know the movement of philosophy in Italy and the early 5th century philosophical discourse. This unit commences with the thought and contributions of Pythagoras. Other prominent philosophers of this era are also entertained. Specifically, the thoughts of Heraclitus and Parmenides follow Xenophanes's. The philosophies of each of Empedocles and those of Leucippus and Democritus, Anaxagoras, Zeno and the Sophists respectively are considered in this unit.

1.2 Learning Outcomes

In this unit, students are:

- To gain an understanding of how Western philosopher developed;
- The thoughts of individual pre-Socratic philosophers and their contentions; and
- To be able to understand the ideological foundation of some philosophical problems, e.g. Being, Atomis, Evolutionism.

1.3 Pythagoras

Who is Pythagoras and what kind of philosophy does he offer? According to tradition, Pythagoras moved to Croton in southern Italy; where he founded a secret brotherhood. He was a dynamic, inspirational leader, renowned, also mocked, for his learning. Since the secrets of the brotherhood were very well kept, very little is known for sure about it. What is known is that the brotherhood believed in the transmigration of souls, a process whereby souls did not die but returned in the bodies of animals or human beings, It was perhaps for this reason that Pythagoreans kept special dietary laws, abstaining from kidney beans (which, perhaps reminding them of embryos,

were believed to contain the souls of the dead) and meat (which might turn out to have housed the souls of one's ancestors or friends). They cultivated the art of memory, requiring members to perform exercises such as recalling the previous day's activities and conversations with the greatest possible exactitude. Whether Pythagoras himself or someone else is responsible for the discoveries attributed to him is, for the most part, impossible to determine. Pythagoras was given all the credit. His followers treated him as something of a deity, not pronouncing his name but referring to him as "he himself" or as "the man." Among the legends associated with the Pythagorean brotherhood is the story of a certain Hippasus, who was allegedly put to death for having divulged the secret that the square root of 2 is irrational (that is, not able to be expressed as a ratio of integers). Although the story is probably false, it shows the reputation the Pythagoreans enjoyed for their secrecy and for their wish that the world actually be without what might be regarded as mathematical ugliness.

Like the Milesian thinkers whom we have considered, the Pythagoreans were looking for an underlying principle beyond what could be seen with the senses. They thought they had found this principle in mathematical order, the basis of which was number, for number gave everything proportion, shape, and quantity (Arieti, 2005: 57). Numbers in ancient times were presented as points forming geometric figures, and these figures were of great importance to the Pythagoreans, who derived fascinating arithmetical facts from them and also attributed to them imaginative moral and physical qualities (Stumpf, 1994:9).

Even numbers made symmetrical figures. In Greek, the word for "even numbers" (*artion*) means *joined* and has a positive connotation of order and clarity. The number *four*, being doubly symmetrical, was for the Pythagoreans a perfect number and was identified with justice and law.

One of the truly amazing discoveries made by the Pythagoreans was that musical harmony is based on mathematical proportions. Since all accomplishments were credited to Pythagoras, the story of the discovery gives him the leading role. One day the story goes, he happened to hear the pleasing sounds produced by the clanging of a blacksmith's hammers. The hammers turned out to have weights in 12, 9, 8, and 6 units, and from these numbers he derived the octave ($12:6 = 2:1$), the fifth ($12:8 = 9:6 = 3:2$), the fourth ($12:9 = 4:3$), and the whole tone (9:8). He discovered as well that when the string of a lyre is halved in length while maintaining the same tension, the note played is increased by an octave. The significance of this discovery, which perhaps formed the basis of the whole Pythagorean confidence that the universe is based on number, is the uncovering of what had been hidden—this fact that hidden mathematical ratios are the basis of perceptible harmony (Arieti, 2005: 58).

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

1. Pythagoras was obsessed with _____ (a) Symbols (b) Artworks (c) Relics (d) Numbers
2. Pick the odd one concerning Pythagoras's ideas (a) Mathematics (b) Science (c) Archaeology (d) Music

1.4 Xenophanes

Xenophanes was born around 570 BC in Colophon, in 546 he left his land, which was occupied by the Persians through the Median (Composta, 1998; 47). He lived as an exile from about the age twenty-five, when he left his native city of Colophon in Asia Minor. He was an independent thinker and a cheerful critic of his culture's values. For example, he pointed out the rewards that come to someone who wins a victory in the Olympic Games—free board; at public expense or a rich treasure and protested that no athletic skill was as good as his wit. The victorious athlete does “not fatten the store houses of the city.” (Arieti, 2005: 60). Xenophanes could have addressed his lament at today, for this particular habit has not changed: we reward our athletes—at least with earthly gold—far more than we do to our scholars.

Xenophanes offered biting criticisms of the traditional conception of the gods. He wrote, “Homer and Hesiod attributed to the gods whatever „is shameful and blameworthy in the eyes of men stealing, adultery, and deceiving one another” (Arieti, 2005: 60). With considerable audacity, Xenophanes declared that the standard of the gods' character must not be tradition or even faith but moral purity. His statement goes beyond an attack on mere anthropomorphism (rendering the gods in human form). Xenophanes berated gods to behave in a way that we would frown at in human beings and that is incompatible with the essence of divinity and that therefore the poets are wrong in attributing such behavior to the gods. In other words, he asserted that we can make true claims about the divine based on standards discoverable by reason. The gods do not commit adultery, steal, or deceive because these actions are intrinsically wrong. He suggested, moreover, that the gods live according to a standard beyond their will. Adultery is not wrong because the gods declare it to be wrong; it is wrong, and the gods do not engage in it because it violates an objective standard. Thus the gods too are subject to law. They are, in a sense, less free than the king of Persia, whose will itself is the law. As Anaximenes had rendered the gods subject to the inexorable physical law that everything is air, so Xenophanes put universal moral law above any private divine prerogative (Composta, 1998: 47 - 48).

Xenophanes made a very vital contribution to philosophical discourse when he posited that the society needed to place more values on their thinking tanks than their celebrities. Xenophanes made a very vital contribution to philosophical discourse

when he criticized the art of placing more values on the athletes than the scholars who develop the basic foundation of the society. He also created the awareness that anthropomorphic conception of the gods were highly misleading.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

1. Xenophanes offered support for Homer and Hesiod concerning the gods (a) Not true (b) Probable (c) Certainly (d) Improbable
2. For Xenophanes, the gods are morally upright (a) (a) Not true (b) Probable (c) Certainly (d) Improbable

1.5 Heraclitus

Heraclitus (500 BCE), born to a noble family, had the right to an aristocratic title by the laws of heredity (Arieti, 2005: 69). He was entitled to an Aristocratic position but gave up his title to his brother. According to traditional accounts, Heraclitus dedicated his treatise, which survives in fragments of no more than a few lines each, to the Temple of Artemis, evidence perhaps that the treatise was intended neither for posterity nor even for a human audience. Heraclitus believed that humans are incapable of understanding his rational explanations. He says about people:

Of the Logos [Greek for rational account], which is as I describe it, men always prove to be uncomprehending, both before they have heard it and when once they have heard it. For although all things happen according to this Logos, men are like people of no experience, even when they experience such words and deeds as I explain, when I distinguish each thing according to its constitution and declare how it is; but the rest of men fail to notice what they do after they wake up just as they forget what they did when asleep (Arieti, 2005: 69).

Arieti (2005: 69) further holds that Heraclitus did not spare his wise predecessors for lack of confidence in his fellow humans. Heraclitus held that learning many things does not teach intelligence; if so it would have taught Hesiod and Pythagoras, and again Xenophanes and Heraclitus. According to Arieti (2005: 69), the claim that most people are incapable or unwilling to understand the truths of philosophy is common in the history of thought. From Heraclitus through Plato, through the Stoics, through the theologians of the Middle Ages and on, philosophers have distinguished the “few” who can understand from the “many” who cannot. Perhaps this distinction of the few and the many in other philosophers

is a “coping mechanism” to help philosophers accept the fact that their work is not attractive to many people, In Heraclitus’s case, and the unattractiveness seems entirely justified by an opaqueness that won him the nickname of the “dark” or the “obscure.” But where obscurity in some thinkers may be a cultivated affectation in Heraclitus the obscurity is intimately connected with his thought, for his fundamental conceptions are that nature hides the truth and that underlying all reality is a clash of opposites (Composta, 1998: 35).

According to Heraclitus, the world consists of an oscillation between opposites that are in continuous flux. He wrote, “Living and dead are the same, and awake and asleep, and young and old, for the ones, turned over become the others, and the others again, turning over, become the one”. And also, “The cold is heated, the hot cooled, the wet dried, and the arid drenched (Stumpf, 1994: 15).” For Heraclitus nothing exists except the constant transformation of one thing into another. He declared, “You enter the same river, but other waters flow unto you.” Heraclitus elaborated his doctrine of opposites with the metaphor of a harmony, according to which different tensions on a string will produce a beautiful sound. Consider this pair of fragments.

Things taken together are whole and not whole, something which is being brought together and brought apart, which is in tune and out of tune; out of all things there comes a unity, and out of a unity all things. They do not apprehend how being at variance agrees with itself literally, how being brought apart it is brought together with itself there is a back stretched connection as in the bow and the lyre (Arieti, 2005: 70).

The principle of harmony that things opposed to each other work together in a creative way is one of Heraclitus’s central metaphors for the world. Just as in music high notes and low notes flats and sharps, long notes and short notes all collaborate to form a concordant whole, so too, the various opposite forces and conditions of the world harmonize in forming a whole. This truth is apparent in our lives, where hunger and thirst, pain and pleasure, sleep and waking-all opposites- are necessary components of life and health. For Heraclitus, there is not an underlying substance of which things are a form, no shapeless matter or *apeiron*, as Anaximander suggested. The world is made of opposites that continuously change into one another.

According to Omeregbe (2002: 12), Heraclitus did not actually use the word opposites. His metaphor for this operation of the universe is war, whereas for other people war is the god *Ares* (*Mars* in Latin), destroyer of all that is beautiful and destroyer of cities and ravager of fields. For Heraclitus, war is what generates the

creative pairing of opposites: “War is all-father and all king, and he appoints some to be gods and others to be men; he made some to be slaves and others to be free.” As Arieti (2005: 71) put it war thus he comes, in a way. The underlying reality is a war, everlasting and all pervasive, between the opposites of the universe. God, for Heraclitus, is what keeps the eternal war raging, God, who is himself a unity of opposites: “God is day and night, winter and summer, war and peace, fullness-hunger. He changes his appearances, just as oil, when blended with perfumes, is named after the smell of each perfume. For Heraclitus, the tension created by the oppositions is the world. While men see some things as just, others as unjust, for God all is just: God sees the big picture and sees that the opposites are necessary for each other. It is, after all, sickness that makes health good, hunger that makes satiation good.

Fire is associated with Heraclitus, and some think that he makes it the basic material principle of the world. But in Heraclitus “fire” is a metaphor for the principle of opposition of all things. Fire is destructive, of course, for it burns everything up. On the other hand, warmth, which comes from fire, is found in living and growing beings. Fire seems a perfect metaphor for change since it constantly changes its shape. Indeed, in a brilliant metaphor that shows a modern economist’s understanding of the nature of money as a medium of exchange-that is, a currency into which everything can be converted for the purpose of trade- he writes, “Everything is exchange for fire, and fire for everything, as gold is for merchandise and merchandise for gold (Arieti, 2015:71; Omoregbe, 2002:12).” Fire is responsible for souls, for souls vaporize from what is moist, and the wisest and best souls are dry. Moreover, souls participate in the process of cosmic change. Writing about souls, perhaps constituted of fire, Heraclitus says that “it is death to become water; from water it is death to become earth; from earth water comes into being; and from water, soul comes into being.” Soul thus seems to be greater than physical things, for “one could not discover the limits of the soul, even if one traveled by every path in order to do so; such is the depth of its meaning” (Arieti, 2015:71; Omoregbe, 2002:12; Stumpf, 1994: 16).

Heraclitus believed that humans are incapable of understanding his rational explanations. He did not spare his wise predecessors for lack of confidence in his fellow humans. He also held that learning many things does not teach intelligence and checked it against the backdrop of the teachings of Hesiod and Pythagoras, and again Xenophanes and Hecataeus. His position that nature hides the truth and that underlying all reality is a clash of opposites seems to capture the central issue in his thought. Heraclitus holds that the world consists of an oscillation between opposites that are in continuous flux and that the living and dead are the same, and awake and asleep, and young and old, for the ones, turned over become the others, and the others again, turning over, become the one. These and many more have distinguished Heraclitus’ thought from other philosophers.

Heraclitus held that fire is the basic material principle of the world. Heraclitus sees

“fire” as a metaphor for the principle of opposition of all things. Fire is destructive, of course, for it burns everything up. On the other hand, warmth, which comes from fire, is found in living and growing beings. Fire seems a perfect metaphor for change since it constantly changes its shape. More so, nature hides the truth and that underlies all reality is a very important position to ponder upon.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3

1. The _____ that things opposed to each other work together in a creative way is one of Heraclitus’s central metaphors for the world
2. _____ is the fundamental element for change (a) Earth (b) Water (c) Air (d) Fire

1.6 Parmenides

This section discusses the thought of Parmenides of Elea. He is popularly respected as a contemporary of Heraclitus. His teachings were completely opposite those of Heraclitus. He teaches that everything is static contrary to the thinking and teaching of his predecessor, Heraclitus who held that everything is in constant flux.

Parmenides was from the city of Elea, in Southern Italy which was at that time a Greek colony. He was born towards the end of the sixth century B.C. He claimed to have been led to the gates of the sun, guarded by justice; and there he received a revelation of the truth from a goddess (Omoregbe, 2002: 13). In view of the above, the philosophy of Parmenides is given a mythical setting. It is taken for granted that Western philosophy grew out of mythology and religion. Its separation from mythology and religion was a very slow and long process. Mythology and religion accompanied Western philosophy all through the Greek period, while religion dominated it in the medieval period.

According to Arieti (2005: 73) Parmenides is said to have come from a noble family and to have been wealthy. Unfortunately, like so much of ancient biography, details of his life may be more in accord with what the biographer thought *ought* to have been true than with any actual facts. In general, there may have been an assumption that anyone who could devote his life to philosophy had to be rich, for in Greek the word *study* is the word for *leisure* (from *schole*, from which derives our word school).

The philosophy of Parmenides is expressed in his poem, entitled “On Nature,” which consists of two parts, namely, “Way of Truth,” and “Way of Opinion.” The way of truth is the way of reason, and the way of opinion is the way of the senses. It is through reason that man can attain truth; reason alone leads to truth whereas the senses can only give us opinion but cannot lead us to truth. This radical distinction between reason and the senses together with a mistrust of the senses and reliance on

reason played a very important role later in the philosophy of Plato. Parmenides was the first philosopher to emphasize this difference (Omoregbe, 2002:13).

The main doctrine of Parmenides is that change is simply an illusion of the senses, that being is one and unchanging. There is no becoming, nothing comes into being and nothing goes out of being, being simply is and does not change. There is no change in reality, whatever is, is and cannot become anything else. His argument for saying that nothing comes into being is that if anything comes into being, then it must come either from being or from non-being. If it comes from being, then it is already being and so does not really come into being. But if it comes from non-being, then it is nothing, for only nothing can come from nothing or non-being. In either case there is no becoming, nothing comes into being. Whatever is, is and does not become anything else. Being is one, eternal unchanging and infinite. Parmenides thus denied the reality of change and the plurality of being, and ascribed belief in these as due to the illusion of the senses. In reality being is one and does not change. Change in this context includes motion, so that by denying the reality of change, Parmenides also denies the reality of motion.

The thought of Parmenides that nothing changes remains a great achievement. All beings are the same insofar as they are beings. In essence, what is, is and what is not, is not. What is can only produce what is and what is not cannot produce anything. In essence, there is nothing really new. The thought of Parmenides that nothing changes was a milestone and still remains a great achievement. Parmenides held that there is something called being and that whatever has being, is. A being is the same insofar as it is being. In essence, what is, is and what is not, is not. What is can only produce what is and what is not cannot come into being. In view of the above, there is nothing new and we should not expect anything new but things that already exist. As a result, nothing changes. Everything is what they are.

Self-Assessment Exercise 4

1. “What is can only produce what is and what is not cannot produce anything. In essence, there is nothing really new” is attributable to _____
2. The title of Parmenides’s poem is _____

1.7 Empedocles

This unit studies the life, person and thought of Empedocles. It goes further to examine his discourse and contribution to the development of western philosophy. Empedocles lived around 440 B.C. was from Akragas, city on the South Coast of Sicily. He was not only a philosopher but also a religious man who even claimed to be a god. According to legend, he tried to prove that he was a god by leaping into a

volcanic crater, and that was the end of his life. But he forgot one of his slippers while coming and that made people to know what happened. He was also a scientist who discovered that air was a separate substance.

He tried to reconcile the theories of Heraclitus that everything changes, with that of Parmenides that there is no change, that nothing comes into being and nothing goes out of being. Empedocles maintained that there were four eternal elements, namely, earth, air, fire and water. All things according to him are composed of these four elements. The elements are eternal and indestructible. They always remain what they are, none becomes the others; fire does not become earth, etc. This means that there is no change, nothing changes for they are eternal, indestructible and unchanging. Everything in the world is a combination of these four elements. When the four elements unite, something comes into existence, and when they disintegrate something ceases to exist. The unification and separation of these four elements explain the coming into existence and the passing away of all things. We can therefore say, on the one hand that there is no change, that nothing new comes into being and nothing really goes out of being as they unite and separate. On the other hand, their notification and separation in as much as they make things come into existence and go out of existence respectively, can be seen as change. This is what we mean by change (Omoregbe, 2003: 18).

What is responsible for the unification and separation of the four elements? According to Empedocles, there are two forces operating in nature, namely, the principle of unification and the principle of division. The former is love, and the latter hatred. Each of these two principles takes its turn in operation; love unites the four elements and thereby brings things into existence, then hatred takes turn, and separate them thereby making things cease. They are the principle of harmony and disorder, unification and division, each taking its turn to operate in the universe.

Empedocles was an evolutionist who proposed an evolutionary theory similar to that for which Darwin became famous several centuries later. According to Empedocles, all things came into existence by the chance combination of the four elements. The organs, the limbs, the shape of things as we now see them were not designed on purpose to be as they are now, nor were they like this at the beginning. For things had to struggle for existence, the less fitted for survival perished only those whose organs, limbs and shapes were most fitted survived.

Empedocles held that the four principal elements postulated by his predecessors as result, there is no new substance per se. He concluded that every substance is a combination of every other one. According to Empedocles, there are two forces operating in nature, namely, the principle of unification and the principle of division. The former is love, and the latter hatred. Each of these two principles takes its turn in operation; love unites the four elements and thereby brings things into existence, then hatred takes turn, and separate them thereby making things cease to be. They are the

principle of harmony and disorder, unification and division, each taking its turn to operate in the universe.

Self-Assessment Exercise 5

1. According to Empedocles, there are two forces operating in nature, namely, the principle of _____ and the principle of _____
2. Empedocles's theory is an anticipation of _____ (a) Evolutionism (b) Creationism (c) Abiogenesis (d) Biogenesis

1.8 The Atomist School

This section examines the thought of Leucippus and Democritus on their thought of Atom as the foundation of the nature of things that bear striking resemblance. What are their main ideas?

Leucippus and Democritus formulated a theory about the nature of things that bear striking resemblance to some 20th century views. The duo posited the doctrine of atomism as a response to the Eleatic arguments that what is real is both single and motionless, insofar as motion is impossible without empty space. Suffice it to say that the Eleatic standpoint is synonymous with Zeno's paradoxes. And for the Atomists, plurality cannot be possible without the availability of empty space to separate the different unities. In this regard, it is argued that allowing the empty space, the atomists could be able to avoid the Eleatic conclusion; however, the individual atoms will still retain the Parmenides idea of the unchanging reality.

The duo posits that the nature of things consists of an infinite number of particles or units called *atoms*. To these particles were ascribed the characteristics of indestructibility and serenity. This is to say that the atoms can neither be created nor destroyed as they exist in space homogeneously unchangingly solid but differ from each other in shape and size. The smallness in size of these atoms made them to be invisible to the human eyes, only detectable with the aid of scientific apparatus.

Nature, therefore, consists of two things only, namely, space (vacuum) and atoms. The atoms are perpetually moving in space and their motion leads them to form the objects of existence. For the duo, atoms originally were single individual units, but with time there was chance collision which led them to begin to form cluster or vortex. The whole of existence including the celestial bodies and other things, therefore, came into being as a result of the combinations of various kinds of atoms. More interesting is the Atomist view that the arrangement and conglomeration of the masses of atoms not only produced this world and its contents, but produces infinite number of worlds and bodies of existence.

The soul, according to the atomists, is most probably made of particularly fine atoms which are composite as well as perishable like the body. Hence perception to the atomists comes as a result of thin films of atoms being shed away from the surfaces of objects thereby getting the opportunity to interact with the atoms of the soul.

The atomists had proposed a magnificent mechanistic conception of nature or the universe which accorded no place for purpose (design) or a creator (Uduigwomem 2011:194). Plato and Aristotle objected to this vision of the atomists but wholeheartedly embraced by Epicurus and rediscovered in the 17th century which gave science a formidable working model for many centuries. The 20th century achievements in quantum and relativity theories gave rise to a new conception of matter. Quantum and relativity theories denied the attribute of indestructibility to the atoms.

The glory of originating the idea that there are indivisible atoms of matter has traditionally been given to both Leucippus (fl. 42.5 B.C.E.) and Democritus (born c. 460-457 B.C.E.). Although the original insight might well belong to Leucippus, our ancient sources do not clearly distinguish what was properly Leucippus and what belongs to Democritus. Because Democritus is generally recognized to have developed the insight into a complete theory with implications for physics, ethics, biology, epistemology, and politics, here the name Democritus will refer to the entangled Leucippus-Democritus composite.

Democritus offered yet a different solution to Parmenides' denial of plurality and motion. One of the logical consequences of Parmenides' idea that nonbeing cannot exist is that there cannot be any empty space. Empty space or emptiness, of course, would be nothing, and, as Parmenides observed, nothing cannot be. Democritus proposed that in addition to matter there exists what he called void, sometimes alternatively translated as vacuum or empty space. The void allows for plurality by separating the bits of matter and allows for motion by giving matter space in which to move. In declaring the void one of the fundamental principles of nature, any possible Parmenidean objections are simply ignored.

In Democritus's universe the bits of matter separated by void are called atoms, tiny, indivisible units, themselves unchanging and eternal miniature Parmenidean spheres, as it were. The Greek word atom means un-split. Atoms, constantly in motion through the void, make up all the different visible objects by their different combinations, just as different structures may be made out of different combinations of identical Lego blocks. Also like Lego blocks, the atoms differ in shape and size. Everything is constructed out of these atoms-mountains, rivers, bodies, souls, even gods. Visual and auditory images are made of atoms too. Finally, according to Democritus, atoms are infinite in number.

Democritus introduced atoms to avoid the repugnant notion of infinite divisibility. He introduced the notion of the void to elude Parmenides' equally repugnant argument

against motion. Whereas Parmenides argued that, because nonbeing cannot be, motion is impossible, Democritus argued the reverse: because motion is observed all the time and is therefore possible, there must be a sort of nonbeing void that makes motion possible.

Democritus also had to account for how atoms actually combine into things rather than collect in a pile at the bottom of the universe. His proposition was that the constant motion of atoms enables them to fulfill their function. Both their absolute motion in the universe and their motion relative to one another account for the coming into being and going out of being of everything. Nothing is created or destroyed; atoms are simply rearranged. Furthermore, the rearrangement is, ultimately, random. This universe, with its particular arrangements of atoms, did not have to come to be as it is; all its atomic configurations originate by chance. For all we know, there may be many other worlds.

Democritus's and Leucippus's discovery that atoms actually combine to form things rather than collect in a pile at the bottom of the universe. And that atom was in constant motion and enables them to fulfill their function are cogent contributions. Leucippus and Democritus also had to account for how atoms actually combine into becoming something rather than collect in a pile at the bottom of the universe. His proposition was that the constant motion of atoms enables them to fulfill their function. Both their absolute motion in the universe and their motion relative to one another account for the coming into being and going out of being of everything. Nothing is created or destroyed; atoms are simply rearranged and is ultimately, random.

Self-Assessment Exercise 6

- 1 Democritus's and Leucippus's discovery that _____ actually combine to form things rather than collect in a pile at the bottom of the universe (a) Quantum (b) Atom (c) Cells (d) None of these
- 2 According to Democritus, atoms are _____ in number (a) Finite (b) Infinite (c) Numberless (d) None of these

1.9 Anaxagoras

This section examines the thought of Anaxagoras's thought on primary substance and his thought on how the mind, an immaterial entity organizes and determines other beings. Anaxagoras was the first philosopher to settle at Athens which later became the centre of Greek philosophy. He came from Clazomenae in Asia Minor, and was born around 500 B.C. Like Empedocles, Anaxagoras also tried to reconcile the theories of Heraclitus and Parmenides.

He went further than Empedocles who postulated four elements as the constitutive elements of all things – earth, air, fire and water. According to Anaxagoras, each of these elements themselves is a combination of several different particles. There are infinite particles the combination of which results in things coming into existence. Everything is a combination of the particles all things. In other words, there are particles of all things in everything. Everything contains the particles of every other thing. In everything there is a portion of everything, for everything is a combination of the particle of all things. However, one particular kind of particle always predominates in it. For example, in gold there are particles of all things, but the particle of gold predominates, in it, hence it is called gold.

In a paper, there are particles of all other thing, but the particle of paper predominates, hence it is called paper. When paper is burnt and it becomes ashes what happens is that the particle of ashes now predominates whereas the particle of paper formerly dominate. It is because of the particle of ashes in paper that paper can become ashes if there were no particle otherwise how could paper become ashes if there were no particles of ashes in the particle as part of the constitutive elements? Similarly when an animal dies and the body becomes dust, what happens is that whereas the particles of flesh formerly predominated, now the particle of dust predominates. This means that the particles of dust is one of the constitutive elements of flesh, otherwise flesh could not become dust.

If one thing becomes another thing it is because the particles of the other was already there as part of its composition. This means that there is really nothing new; nothing new comes into being, and nothing really goes out of being or ceases to exist. So we can say on the one hand that there is no change (as Parmenides declared), and on the other hand that sometimes some particles that formerly predominated in things cease to predominate. This is what we call change, but it does not involve anything new coming into existence, nor does it involve anything ceasing to exist completely.

While Empedocles postulated two principles, love and hate, as the forces operating in the universe, Anaxagoras postulated only one, namely *Nous* (a Greek word meaning Mind, Intelligence, Consciousness or Spirit). It is Mind which rules the world and is the cause of everything in it. It is Mind which arranges the particles and brings order into the universe. In the beginning, it was Mind which brought order into the original chaos in the universe and brought things into existence (Omeregbe, 2003: 21).

Mind has power over all things that have life, both greater and smaller. And all things that were to be, and all thing that were now that will be and this revolution in which now that will and the sun and the moon and the air and the others which are separate off. And the revolution itself caused the separating off and the dense is separated off from the rare, and the warm from the cold, the bright are many portions in many things. But nothing is altogether or separated off from anything else except mind (Omeregbe, 2003: 21).

Anaxagoras is obviously talking of a divine, spiritual being who, he says is infinite and self-ruled, and is mixed with nothing, but is alone, itself by itself. Mind is the only reality, he says, that is not part of anything else, but is completely separated off from every other thing. Mind has all knowledge about everything and it has the greatest power and is present everywhere, though it is not part of anything. Mind as described by Anaxagoras is obviously an infinite, spiritual and divine being which we would call God. He has power over the whole revolution, so that it began to revolve at the start. Although Anaxagoras sometimes used material terms to describe it (for example he says that it is „the finest of all things, and the purest) it does not follow that he meant to say that Mind is a material being, as some have concluded (Omoregbe, 2003: 21). We can only say that he was not very careful in the choice of the terms used to describe Mind, and therefore sometimes used material terms or terms that imply matter to describe it. But from his whole description of it, it is clear that he was describing or talking of a spiritual, immaterial, divine being, as distinct from material beings. Anaxagoras was the first Western philosopher to rise above the level of matter to the level of the immaterial, and spiritual in his conception of being. He was the first to make the distinction between mind and matter, between material reality and spiritual reality.

Anaxagoras made serious attempt at reconciling the four principal elements postulated by his predecessors as the primary substance and concluded that every substance is a combination of every other one just that one substance predominates at a time only that the mind organizes them. Anaxagoras attempted a reconciliation of the four principal elements postulated by his predecessors – water, air, fire and earth, as the primary substance and concluded that every substance is a combination of every other one just that one substance predominates at a time. Anaxagoras further opined that each of these elements themselves is a combination of several different particles. There are infinite particles the combination of which results in things coming into existence. Everything is a combination of the particles of all things. In other words, there are particles of all things in everything. Everything contains the particles of every other thing.

Self-Assessment Exercise 7

- 1 _____ is a combination of the particles of all things. (a) Nothing (b) Something (c) Everything (d) Anything
- 2 Anaxagoras _____ as the overriding principle in the universe

1.10 Zeno of Elea

Zeno was a disciple of Parmenides. He was also came from the city of Elea. He was born around 490 B.C. Parmenides had become an object of ridicule particularly

among the Pythagorean philosophers. They ridiculed him for denying such plain facts of daily experience as change, motion and the plurality of things. Zeno then decides to come to the aid of his master; he produced several ingenious arguments, directed against the Pythagoreans in defense of Parmenides. These clever arguments were meant to show that the teachings of the Pythagorean themselves, when closely analyzed lead to absurdities. The arguments, calculated to reduce the position of the opponents to absurdity (*reductio ad absurdum*), were all based on the hypotheses of the Pythagorean doctrines (Omoregbe, 2002: 15).

The most famous of these arguments is that concerning an imaginary race between a tortoise and Achilles (the fastest runner in Greece.) Let us imagine, says Zeno that a tortoise and Achilles are going to run a race. Since the tortoise is very slow, it is allowed to start first and when it has covered a certain distance Achilles then starts. The funny thing is that Achilles can never meet nor overtake the tortoise, no matter how fast he runs. By the time Achilles reaches the point at which the tortoise was when he (Achilles) started, the tortoise has reached another point; and Achilles reaches this new point, the tortoise has also moved to another point, and so on. This means that there will always be a distance between the tortoise and Achilles. And if, as the Pythagoreans say, any distance no matter how short, is made up of infinite points, it follows that Achilles can never catch up with the tortoise because any distance that is made up of an infinite number of points must itself be infinite. How can Achilles traverse an infinite number of points, which in effect means infinite distance? To do so would require infinite time. Achilles thus, on the Pythagorean hypothesis that any distance is made up of infinite points, can never gain on tortoise.

A similar argument based on the same hypothesis of the Pythagoreans also leads to a similar conclusion, namely, that nobody can move from one side of a stadium to another; nobody can traverse a stadium or indeed any distance whatsoever since to do so would imply traversing an infinite number of points. Any distance that is made up of infinite points must be infinite, and to traverse it would require infinite time. This means that it is impossible to move from one place to another. In short, motion is impossible (Composta, 1998: 60).

Another argument of Zeno leads to the conclusion that a flying arrow is in fact motionless. This is based on the Pythagorean theory that everything occupies a space equal to itself. But, says Zeno, anything that occupies a space equal to itself must be at rest in the space which it occupies. Now, a flying arrow occupies a space equal to itself at every instant of its flight. This means that it is at rest throughout its flight. In other words, a flying arrow is motionless at every instance of flight. Zeno also argued against the Pythagorean theory of the plurality of things. According to the Pythagoreans, everything in the universe is made up of units. Now, these units, says Zeno, are either with size or without size. If they are with size, they can always be divided up, which means that they are infinitely divisible. And since they are infinitely divisible they must be made up of infinite units. In other words, everything

in the universe is made up of an infinite number of units. But whatever is made up of an infinite number of units must be infinitely great. It follows therefore that everything in the universe is infinitely great, and that the universe itself is infinitely great. Therefore if everything in the universe is made up of units which are with size and are infinitely divisible, the conclusion follows that everything in the universe is infinitely great. Now, let us take the second alternative and say that these units are without size. In that case, say Zeno, they must be infinitely small. And if everything in the universe is made up of infinitely small units, it follows that everything in the universe is infinitely small. If the universe is made up of infinitely small things, it follows that the universe itself is infinitely small (Composta, 1998: 61; Russell, 1996: 56).

Again, Parmenides said that reality is one and indivisible, but the Pythagoreans ridiculed him and maintained that reality is not one but many. But at the same time, reality is, according to them, made up of infinitely divisible units, then it must be infinite and if infinite, it must be innumerable for what is infinite is innumerable. What is infinite cannot be numerable, and what is numerable cannot be infinite. But Pythagoreans asserted these two contradictory things, namely that reality is many and at the same time infinite. In other words, they said that reality is numerable and at the same time innumerable which is contradictory and absurd. What can we learn from Zeno?

Zeno brought analysis into his discourse and made philosophy to be more interesting during the period of theorization of ideas. Zeno distinguished himself as an analytic philosopher at a period when philosophers were mostly preoccupied with theories rather than analysis. His ingenious arguments were the result of painstaking analysis and dialectic.

Self-Assessment Exercise 8

1. Zeno's arguments aim to criticize Parmenides (a) Completely False (b) Partially True (c) Probably True (d) Necessarily True
2. Zeno distinguished himself as a/an _____ at a period when philosophers were mostly preoccupied with theories rather than analysis.

1.11 The Sophists

This section examines the thinking, teachings and influence of the sophist on the development of philosophy in Greece. It examines the thought and discourse of Sophists such as Gorgias, Hippias and Thrasymachus and their influence on western philosophy.

With the arrival of the Sophists, there was a shift in the main direction and focus of Western philosophy. Before the Sophists, philosophy was mainly concerned with the physical world; the philosophers before them focused their attention on the cosmos, speculating on the underlying unity in the midst of diversity, stability in the midst of change, the original stuff or the primary element of which all things are made, etc. The Sophists, however, were not interested in such cosmological speculations; their main interest was man in the society. The Sophists differed from the earlier philosophers not only in the main object of interest but also in methods. The earlier philosophers began with general principles and tried to explain particular cases in terms of these general principles thus employing the deductive method. But the Sophists, began with particular cases which they had observed and drew general conclusions from them. Their method was therefore inductive.

The Sophists were a group of teachers and philosophers in the 5th B.C. that were itinerant teachers who went from one city to another teaching and instructing people, especially the youths. They instructed the youths and all those who aspired to participate in the democratic government of Athens. They taught, not only philosophy, but also grammar and rhetoric, and they charged money for their teaching. It was not the practice among the Greek philosophers to demand money for teaching philosophy, but the Sophists did and it made them unpopular (Omoregbe, 2003: 25).

In general, the Sophists were very critical; they questioned the foundations of traditional beliefs, traditional ways of life, traditional institutions and customs. They questioned the foundations of traditional religion and morality, and cast doubts on the real existence of the gods. Religion and morality were for them human inventions. Nevertheless, they did not encourage people to violate the traditions and customary moral law; on the contrary, they encouraged their observance for prudent reasons. The Sophists combined skepticism with their criticism they were very skeptical, they doubted the possibility of knowing anything with certainty. Their skepticism can be seen as the outcome of the cosmological speculation of the earlier philosophers with their conflicting theories. These led the Sophists to doubt the possibility of knowing anything for certain: „Is it possible for man to know any truth with certainty? What is the foundation or the guarantee of that certainty? (Omoregbe, 2003: 25).

Relativism is another characteristic feature of the Sophists, for they were relativists who denied the existence of objective and universal truths. Truth, for them, is relative, depending on the point of view of the individual. Whether anything can be said to be true or false depends on the way you look at it. Everybody sees things from his own point of view; what is true for you is true for you, and what is true for me is true for me. Things appear to different people in different ways, and everybody can only say the way things appear to him, i.e. the way he sees them. Truth therefore depends on the way you look at it; one thing may be true for one man and may not be true for the

other. They met severe criticism of Socrates and Plato who believed in the absolute universality and objectivity of truth, and the possibility of man attaining it. It is mainly through this criticism of the Sophists, by Socrates and Plato that the very word Sophism came to acquire a bad connotation. Today Sophism means false argument intended to deceive.

Protagoras of Abdera was one of the most influential Sophists. He is particularly known for his saying that man is the measure of all things, of those that are that they are and of those that are not that they are not. In essence, what man thinks is true is true including god, custom and culture.

Gorgias is noted for his famous statement that nothing exists and that if anything, it would be difficult to know it; more so that if it could be known, it could not be communicated. The Sophists came with the philosophy of relativism and propagated such philosophy in their days thereby generating serious crises of morality in the society. The Sophists were very critical of the social systems, cultures and customs and questioned the foundations of traditional beliefs, traditional ways of life, traditional institutions and customs. They questioned the foundations of traditional Religion and morality, and cast doubts on the real existence of the gods. They taught that religion and morality were for them human inventions.

Self-Assessment Exercise 9

- 1 Pick the odd choice (a) Georgias (b) Thracymachus (c) Pyrhho (d) Protagoras
- 2 According to _____ “man is the measure of all things, of those that are that they are and of those that are not that they are not.”

1.12 Summary

In this unit, we have been to discuss some of the key elements in the development of Western philosophy post-Milesian eras. We can notice that the ideas expressed by most of these philosophers actually anticipate some popular theories such as evolutionism that became popular many centuries later. All of these attest to the fact that their ideas are not entirely useless.

1.13 References/Further Readings

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1.14 Possible Answers to SAEs

Self-Assessment Exercise 1: 1. (d); 2. (c)

Self-Assessment Exercise 2: 1. (c); 2. (a)

Self-Assessment Exercise 3: 1. principle of harmony; 2. (d)

Self-Assessment Exercise 4: 1. Parmenides; 2. On Nature

Self-Assessment Exercise 5: 1. Unity/Division; 2. (a)

Self-Assessment Exercise 6: 1. (b); 2. (b)

Self-Assessment Exercise 7: 1. (c); 2. Nous

Self-Assessment Exercise 8: 1. (a); 2. Analytic philosopher

Self-Assessment Exercise 9: 1. (c); 2. Protagoras

Unit 4: Philosophers in the Socratic Era

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3 Socrates
- 1.4 Plato
- 1.5 Aristotle
- 1.6 Summary
- 1.7 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 1.8 Possible Answers to SAEs

1.1 Introduction

This unit discusses the Golden Age of Greek Philosophy. It is divided into three sections. They are: Socrates; Plato; and Aristotle. The “golden era” of ancient Greek philosophy represents the turning point of Greek philosophical enterprise with the self-critical reflection on the nature of our concepts and that human reasoning capacity emerged not only as a major concern, but alongside cosmological speculation and enquiry. This period witnessed in succession the three most influential sages (Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle) in the annals of Western philosophy. These epochal trio remains reference point in the discussion of any aspect of philosophy till this contemporary time.

1.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit, students should be able to:

- Understand the ideas of Socrates;
- Understand the ideas peculiar to Plato and Socrates influence on him; and
- Be familiar with the ideas of Aristotle.

1.3 Socrates

This section examines the life, person, teachings and contributions of Socrates to the development of Western philosophy. It is discussed as follows: historical background, Socratic methods of teaching, The Socratic Irony, Paradoxes and Essence of self-knowledge, Trial and Death of Socrates. How then can we understand Socrates?

Socrates was born in Athens in 469 BC. He was raised there, lived and died there. His mother was a mid-wife named Phaenarrete, his father was a sculptor name Sophroniscus. He followed the footstep of both. He was reported to have said that the gods have endowed my mother and I to be midwife. While my mother was assisting pregnant women to deliver their babies, I deliver young men who are noble and fair (Christian, 1990: 88). He was married to Xanthippe (5th BC), she was a dutiful house wife and mother. Socrates was of strong build and great endurance, and completely indifference to wealth and luxury. He served in the Athenian army as a soldier where he evinced an extraordinary power of self- discipline and indifference to discomfort such as cold, heat, hunger, thirst, life or death. Having the habit of going

into trance and remaining lost in thought, Socrates soon depicted extraordinary prowess of philosophical knowledge far and above his contemporaries (Plato, *The Symposium*, 1984: 155).

He was believed to be the father of Greek moral and humanist philosophy, whose entire philosophical pattern greatly influenced his generation and the entire Western philosophical temperament. According to Arieti (2005:132). There is no one else in the whole history of European philosophy who has changed the direction of thought so completely simply by what he was; for Socrates's thought sprang directly and inevitably, in a very special way from the whole character and makeup of the man.

Socrates remains one of the greatest ancient Greek philosophers whose personal moral character and discipline in an extraordinary manner evokes charm and influence among his contemporaries, students, adherents of old and young in the world. Socrates claimed that he was being guided all his life by an interior voice, a divine voice or an oracle (*daimonion*). He was quite convinced that philosophizing was for him a vocation, a divine mission entrusted to him by God and he considered it as a sacred duty about which there could be no compromise. In this context within which he exhibited great effort of being consistent with his philosophic principles, he was eager to please the gods by philosophizing when he observes that it would be a strange thing if, when facing death during the war, as a soldier, he remained at his post, like his fellow warriors, "and yet afterwards, when God appointed me, as I supposed and believed, to the duty of leading the philosophic life, examining myself and others, I were then through fear of death or of any other danger to desert my post"(Plato, *The Apology*, 1984: 424).

As great as Socrates was and well acknowledged by philosophers down the ages, he left no writing or epistle of his own, for he wrote nothing. Nevertheless, his life and teachings created deep impression on his friends and disciples (Xenophon and Plato) who wrote about his thought.

Philosophy, for Socrates was a way of life based on true knowledge and not just an academic exercise. Seeking the truth and helping others towards getting true knowledge is a noble cause worthy of pursuit. He posits thus, "and while I have life and strength I shall not cease from the practice and teaching of philosophy" (Plato *The Apology*, 428); for the purpose of knowledge is to enable one live good life, where knowledge is a means to a moral life.

The Socratic Method of teaching: The main method of teaching adopted by Socrates was the "*dialectic*". This is the method of seeking or acquiring knowledge through questions and answers. Socrates asks his interlocutors to define such concepts as justice, good, bad, right, wrong, and in the event that they could not provide the suitable response, Socrates would provide the answer. The second method is that of *inductive reasoning* which begins with a particular case or issue and ends at providing

universal knowledge as a conclusion.

Socrates gave no lecture to large groups of people, rather he taught by conversing with people, asking them questions and helping them to seek the answers. For Socrates, men have innate knowledge within them, and all they needed was somebody to help them bring out this knowledge from within them. Everyman as it were, is pregnant with inexhaustible innate knowledge, which can only be delivered of him by a philosopher-midwife. Hence, Socrates described himself as a “midwife” in a different sense. Contrary to the relativism and scepticism of the Sophists concerning the issue of the attainment of knowledge, Socrates was convinced that there was an objective and universal knowledge which could be attained by men through his help and guidance. In the light of the above, Socrates aimed at making men live a good life devoid of wrong doings and immoral activities.

The Socratic Irony, Paradoxes and Essence of self-knowledge: Although, through antiquity the Oracle of Delphy confirmed that Socrates was the wisest man in the entire Greek city-states which was justified by all those reputable men of wisdom in Greece, however, he professed to be ignorant. Through his pretended ignorance, he led people to knowledge; though he claimed that both he and his interlocutors were seeking knowledge together which is the cornerstone of the Socratic irony. For Socrates, a man who knows his ignorance is wiser than the one who does not know his ignorance. In this regard Socrates realized that he was the only one who knew his ignorance; hence he agreed with the oracle that he was the wisest man in Greece.

Socrates developed a number of distinctive ethical views in form of paradoxes. By equating knowledge with virtue, he professed that “knowledge is virtue“. He believed that ignorance was the cause of wrong-doing, because no man who knows what is wrong would go ahead to do it. Wickedness is also due to ignorance, for a wise man will always pursue what is right and refrain from evil deeds. Knowledge in this regard is deep personal conviction about what is right and what is wrong; however, majority of humankind lack this trait in their daily existential life activities.

The goal of life, according to Socrates, is *happiness* and the only path that leads to this universal, eternal goal is virtue. A necessary precondition for attainment of virtue is thus knowledge (moral knowledge). Socrates was not interested in abstract speculative knowledge that has no bearing on human conduct.

Socrates drew men’s attention to themselves and insisted on self-knowledge. Socrates told the people of Athens that his mission was to do the greatest good to every one of them, “to persuade everyone among you that he must look into himself, and seek virtue and wisdom before he looks to his private interests” (Plato *The Apology*, 1984: 430). Therefore, frequent reflection and self-questioning will help to reduce ignorance and ignorant people within the society.

Trial and Death of Socrates: Socratic ethical and moral epistles were strange to most Athenians. A corrupt and decadent society is always an anathema to morally inclined persons or philosophers. And almost inevitably, Socrates ran afoul of the Athenian authority's interests and was arrested, charged with impiety and corrupting the morals of the youths of Athens. It is apt to note that in the midst of both private and public (official) corruptions, Socrates was able to demonstrate high level of morality, accountability and discipline. When he was a member of the committee of the Athenian senate, he refused to be part of their dubious corrupt mechanizations. For example, in 404BC, he dissociated himself from the plot by the ruling party in Athenian government to arrest and murder Leon of Salamis, whose property they wanted to confiscate. Again his outstanding moral principle was called to bear. According to Copleston (1961:134):

Socrates showed his moral courage by refusing to agree to the demand that the eight commanders who were to be impeached for their negligence at Arginusae should be tried together, this being contrary to the law and calculated to evoke a hasty sentence.

Meanwhile, it was discovered by Socrates that his former pupils who were influential in the government of the day conspired and betrayed the Athenians by bringing the defeat in the war. Hitherto, Socrates through his teachings had instilled the spirit of criticism in the minds of the Athenian youths.

At his trial, he presented a justification of his life. In Plato's *Apology* Socrates tells the court that he will never stop practicing philosophy, even if the court or state orders him to stop. He was convicted and sentenced to death unless he would admit that he was wrong in his ideas. He refused to renege his ideas and preferred to die (Copleston, 1961: 134). His friends wanted to help him escape from prison and go into voluntary exile. But Socrates refused, on the ground that it was contrary to his moral principle. He remained calm and undaunted: "when a man has reached my age he ought not to be repining at the prospect of death" (Socrates in Plato, *Crito*, 1984: 448).

Socrates fervently believed in the immortality of the soul. While awaiting execution, Socrates continued to discuss philosophy with a strong conviction that he was going to another world where nobody is put to death, a world where he would continue his search for knowledge. When the time for execution came, he told his interlocutors that "the hour of departure has arrived, and we go our ways – I to die and you to live. Which is better God only knows" (Omogbe, 2003: 37). He willingly accepted to drink the hemlock (poison) and died in 399 B.C

Socratic discourse will continue to evoke new feelings of patriotism, selfless service and the desire to be a good citizen of a nation. He did not only think of such, he believed it, saw it as a vocation, lived it as a personal way of life and died for his

believe.

In a nutshell, Socrates was an Athenian, son of Sophroniscus and Phaenarrete both of whom are sculptor and midwife respectively and he took after them. He saw himself as divinely endowed with the mission of aiding young men with noble ideas to bring them to reality. He believed it, lived it and died for it.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

1. The style used by Socrates for teaching is _____
2. _____ is the poison given to Socrates as a sentence

1.4 Plato

This unit examines the life, person and thought of Plato. It presents the thought of Plato and his contribution to the development of Western philosophy. Plato was one of the most creative and influential thinkers in Western philosophy. He was credited to be the first to use the term “philosophy”, meaning “love of knowledge or wisdom”. Plato dwelt extensively on a whole wide range of topics chief among which was the theory of forms. This theory proposed that objects in the physical world merely resemble or participate in the perfect forms in the ideal world, and that only these perfect forms can be the objects of true knowledge. He held that the goal of the philosopher is to know the perfect forms and to instruct others in that type of knowledge.

His real name was Aristocle and was born in Athens on the seventh Thargelion in the year of the 88 Olympiad – May 427 BC (Christian, 1990: 46). His father traced his lineage to Codrus, the last king of Athens, and his mother, Perictione, traced hers to Solon, Athens’ greatest lawgiver. His was an illustrious heritage, and he moved with statesmen, playwrights, artists, and philosophers all his life. He was called Plato because his coach nicknamed him Plato from the Greek word *Platon* meaning “broad shouldered,” he excelled in sports and wrestled in the Isthmian games at Corinth. He was multitalented and distinguished himself in every field. He fought in three battles during the Peloponnesian war and was decorated for bravery (Christian, 1990: 46).

Born into an aristocratic wealthy family, Plato was the most intimate friend and devoted disciple of Socrates. His life ambition was to become a politician but was greatly disillusioned by the corrupt attitude of the Athenian political authorities of his time and the manner his master, Socrates was ill – treated by the politicians of Athens. He quickly jettisoned his earlier ambition and decided to educate future political class to become philosophers. For this purpose, Plato founded his famous Academy which later became known as the first European university. Here future politicians were to

receive a sound education in philosophy. He believed that only philosophers can be good rulers. Besides philosophy, other disciplines such as Mathematics, Astronomy, Biology, Political theory and Physical sciences were also studied in the Academy. It is pertinent to say that, the Academy provided a comprehensive curriculum for the acquisition knowledge.

Plato's works were in form of dialogues. Some of them (*Apology, Crito, Euthyphron and Phaedo*) are about Socrates' last days. Although, some other works are not directly about Socrates, but Socrates is made the chief speaker in the dialogue, the speaker was made to express Plato's own views and doctrines. These include *Protagoras, Meno, Hippias, Symposium, Phaedrus, Georgias, and Republic*, the most famous of Plato's books. These works depict philosophical ideas being advanced, discussed, and criticized in the context of a conversation or debate involving two or more people. Thus, the earliest total collection of Plato's work includes 35 dialogues and 13 letters (Composta, 1998: 146).

The Republic is the most complex, and most ambitious of Plato's works. This book is based on the nature of justice in the soul and in the state. Plato tries to give a theoretical account of the perfect just state – the ideal state. The fundamental ideas in the book are set forth through analogies e.g. the Mathematical entity of the circle. A circle, to Plato is a plane figure composed of a series of points, all of which are equidistant from a given point, yet none of which itself occupies any space. Thus, an ideal circle would be perfect, timeless, and the model for the circularity of all ordinary circles. In the same way, abstract concepts such as beauty and good are perfect, timeless entities (Composta, 1998: 146).

Plato argues that justice in the soul is linked to justice in the city. Both soul and city have three (3) analogous parts; the id (desiring part), the ego (a spirited part) and the super – ego (a rational part). Justice, therefore, directs that each part should carry out its own function appropriately. The two non-rational parts must be ruled by the rational part. Thus, the two lower classes of the society must be ruled by the highest class – the philosophers who alone can use their reason to acquire knowledge of the forms (Omeregbe, 2003: 39).

The political structure of the just state would depend on a thorough educational programme which selects the potential philosophers on the basis of merit, and trains them rigorously. Plato's scheme is such that education should be almost life-long endeavour. The most brilliant pupils should be trained to become the philosopher kings or rulers, while those citizens who are less gifted educationally, should be trained for the armed force and other menial professions, depending on their capabilities. The state should shoulder the responsibility of educating all the citizens throughout state. This is a communistic policy in which the state runs everything and all citizens seem to exist for the interest of the state (Composta, 1998: 146).

Once the philosophers are selected from the midst of other citizens, their autocratic rule in the light of reason must be safeguarded from corruption. For Plato, these guardians are deprived of private ownerships of properties and families. They should have everything including women and children in common. No individual in this category can lay claim of paternity in order to avoid distraction. In this scenario, the guardians or philosophers are forced to pay attention to civic affairs. Such a drastic measure, most certainly, ensure that their rule and loyalty is for the sake of the state as a whole and not for pecuniary or private interests.

There is no gain saying the fact that, Plato's influence on later history of philosophy has been monumental. His Academy continued to exist until A D 529, when it was closed by the Byzantine emperor Justinian 1 for conflicting with the tenets of Christianity.

Plato was enthusiastic about the good and development of Athens. As a result he sacrificed his knowledge, talents and ideas for the growth and development of Athens. Plato was enthusiastic about the good and development of Athens. Thus, he thought of the best way that his society could grow, He joined the military and fought for Athens, and painfully saw his master, Socrates maltreated by the politicians of his days and was disenchanted but still thought of the best way to train future politicians that will bring greater development to Athens.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

1. Justice for Plato is the harmony of the _____ parts of society (a) 3 (b) 1 (c) 4 (b) 2
2. For Plato, these guardians are deprived of private ownerships of properties and families. (a) Guardians (c) Bodyguards (c) Artisans (d) None of these

1.5 Aristotle

This section studies the life, person, thought and contributions of Aristotle to the development of western philosophy. This section is centred on the historical development of Aristotle.

Aristotle, the son of a physician to the royal court was born at Stagira in Macedonia. He was an outstanding philosopher and scientist. He studied at Plato's Academy under Plato as a student and later as a teacher. He shared his teacher's (Plato's) reverence for human knowledge but had certain divergent opinions on some issues originally raised by his master. Aristotle thus, *emphasized methods rooted in observation and experience.*

Aristotle surveyed and systematized nearly all known branches of knowledge and provided the first ordered accounts of biology, psychology, physics, and literary theory. He invented the field known as formal logic, pioneered zoology, and discussed virtually every known major philosophical problem.

Aristotle was tutor to Alexander the Great but returned to Athens when Alexander became the king in 335 B.C, to establish his own school, *the Lyceum*. Upon the death of Alexander in 323 BC, there was strong anti-Macedonia teaching developing in Athens, and Aristotle decided to retire to a family estate in Euboea. He died there the following year (Christian, 1990: 73).

Suffice it to say that, Aristotle was a prolific writer who wrote a number of works on a wide range of topics. He was credited with having written more than 170 separate books, although it is likely that many of these might be false attributions. Aristotle published several philosophical dialogues, apart from summaries of works of other philosophers, and is credited with works on topics as diverse as music and optics, and a book of proverbs. However, only a few brief excerpts have survived. A substantial body of unpublished writings, usually taken to be the materials on which courses in the Lyceum were based is still in existence (Omeregbe, 2003: 49).

Aristotle's greatest achievements were in two distinct areas: he invented the study of formal logic, devising for it a finished system known as Aristotelian syllogism, and he pioneered the study of zoology, both observation and theoretical, in which his work was not surpassed until the 19th century (Composta, 1998: 243). Though his works in the natural sciences and zoology are now out-of-date, his intellectual prowess and influence as a scientist is unparalleled in the annals of philosophy.

As a philosopher, he was equally stupendous; although his syllogism is now recognized to be only a small part of formal logic, modern philosophers still consult and relish his writings in ethical and political theory as well as in metaphysics and philosophy of science. Obviously, Aristotle's historical importance and influence is second to none, and his works remain a powerful component in current philosophical debate (Composta, 1998: 243).

Furthermore, Aristotle clearly disagreed with Plato's communistic standpoint. To Aristotle, the structure of the communistic ideal state of Plato was too utopia to be practiced because of the inherent encumbrances of indoctrination of both parents and children in order to make the system work.

As a departure from Plato, Aristotle proposed unrestricted access to acquisition of education by the citizens where they would be able to develop their potential to the fullest. However, Aristotle was in tandem with Platonic division of educational system into stages, starting from the lowest to the highest strata in order to produce rational thinking rulers and citizens. Aristotle believes that the ultimate goal of human

existence should be individual happiness which functional education should be able to inculcate into the citizens thereby, enhancing a person's reasoning capacity and capability. Attainment of this will make the individual a wise person that lives a good moral life.

Aristotle's contribution to the development of philosophy in Greece and the entire world is manifold. He took philosophy beyond the conception of philosophy in ancient times. Aristotle departed from Plato through his proposed unrestricted access to acquisition of education by the Athenian citizens where they would be able to develop their potential to the fullest. Meanwhile, he agreed with Platonic division of educational system into stages, starting from the lowest to the highest strata in order to produce rational thinking rulers and citizens which should be acquired through functional educational system.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3

1. Aristotle's idea of education is restrictive than Plato's (a) Completely True (c) Partially True (c) Completely False (d) Partially False
2. Aristotle surveyed and _____ nearly all known branches of knowledge

1.6 Summary

In this unit, the Golden era of ancient Greek Philosophy expressed in the trio of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle have been explored. What can be noticed here is that a tradition that is peculiar to the Greek people which will eventually inform the entire Western tradition of philosophy developed was expounded by these scholars. Their contribution to philosophy therefore is not to be wished away.

1.7 References/Further Readings

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1.8 Possible Answers to SAEs

Self-Assessment Exercise 1: 1. Dialectics; 2. Hemlock

Self-Assessment Exercise 2: 1. (a); 2. (a)

Self-Assessment Exercise 3: 1. (c); 2. Systematized

Unit 4: Contributions of Plato and Aristotle on Education

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Learning Outcomes
- 1.3 An Exposition of Plato's Philosophy of Education
- 1.4 An Exploration of Aristotle's Philosophy of Education
- 1.5 Comparative Analysis of Plato and Aristotle on Education
- 1.6 Summary
- 1.7 References/Further Readings/Web Sources
- 1.8 Possible Answers to SAEs

1.1 Introduction

As a way of furthering the conviction established in the previous units concerning the relevance of the ideas of the ancient philosophers, this unit looks at the idea of education between two ancient Greek scholars of the Golden era – Plato and Aristotle. This unit considers the philosophy of education of each of them before making a comparative analysis.

1.2 Learning Outcomes

This unit allows students to:

- Be familiar with the idea of education in Plato and Aristotle; and
- Understand the places of semblance and departures in the philosophies of education of Plato and Aristotle.

1.3 An Exposition of Plato's Philosophy of Education

In this section we shall be looking at the theories that helped shaped Plato's philosophy of education. We shall look at his theory of ideas and how these assisted in the formulation of his epistemology or theory of knowledge.

Plato argued that reality is known only through the mind. There is a higher world, independent of the world we may experience through our senses. Because the senses may deceive us, it is necessary that this higher world exist, a world of Ideas or Forms -- of what is unchanging, absolute and universal. In other words, although there may be something from the phenomenal world which we consider beautiful or good or just, Plato postulates that there is a higher unchanging reality of the beautiful, goodness or justice. The task of education is to live in accordance with these universal standards -- to grasp the Forms is to grasp ultimate truth. He distinguishes between the reality presented to us by our senses – sight, touch, taste, sound and smell – and the essence or Form of that reality. In other words, reality is always changing – knowledge of reality is individual, it is particular, it is knowledge only to the individual knower, it is not universal. There are 3 sources of knowledge (Stumpf, 1979): Knowledge obtained from senses, i.e. knowledge of objects, colours, taste, touch etc. But Plato does not consider this as real knowledge. An opinion regarding any object, but this knowledge cannot be relied upon as the views of every person

differs regarding the same object. Knowledge through mind or wisdom – it is the highest degree of knowledge which includes virtues like truth, goodness and beauty. This knowledge is idealistic and is based on original thinking. The characteristic of knowledge is that it is found in the form of universal truth. The highest goal of education, Plato believed, is the knowledge of Good; to nurture a man to a better human being, it is not merely an awareness of particular benefits and pleasures.

Plato is of the view that knowledge is recollection. Omoregbe (1999:42) informs us that:

Following the Pythagoreans, Plato maintains that the human soul pre-existed before its union with the body. It pre-existed according to Plato in the World of Forms before it came into this world to be imprisoned in the body (for the body is like a prison to the soul). While in the World of Ideas, the soul was acquainted with the Idea of Form of things. But when it came into this world and became imprisoned in the body, it forgot or lost its knowledge. If forgets its former knowledge of the essences of things. But when in this world it perceives the ‘shadows’ of the Forms, it is reminded of what it used to know, it remembers or regains its knowledge. Hence the process of learning in this world is a process of reminiscence, a process of remembrance.

From the brief exposition of what is on ground, the metaphysico-epistemic overview of Plato would be very relevant in the philosophy of education that would be given in the next section.

Modern educational authors have tried to press Plato's ideas on the structure and sequence of education into our modern categories of elementary, secondary, and higher schooling. This is difficult for two reasons; first, because of the general differences between Greek and modern civilization, which do not allow an easy transfer of terms; secondly, because Plato himself lays much more value on the spirit than on the external organisation of education.

From birth to about six years of age, a child's body and healthy habits have to be developed. During the first three years of life, sanitary nursing is most important. From three to six, sports, games, plays, and songs are the best means of good breeding. In this period also, the basis for courage and self-discipline has to be laid by exposing the child to pleasure and pain, and the basis for reverence for tradition by inculcation of the elements of the great national myths. At the age of six, a child should begin a more formal education. Boys and girls, too, should receive their initial

military training in the form of gymnastics, practised with a view towards war. Simple and dignified music, conducive to the cultivation of noble emotions, ought to prepare them to combine, in their later life, the courage of the warrior with the refined enjoyment of peace (Yogendra;2002:41).

The highest good ... is neither war nor civil strife—which things, we should pray rather to be saved from—but peace one with another and friendly feeling. The insistence on fullness of experience serves as guiding principle also for the higher stages of Plato's scheme of education. After the first years of adolescence, intellectual studies are interrupted in favour of intensive physical training and military service. They require four years, and only then may the young man, now at the age of twenty, return to theoretical studies, provided he has excelled among his comrades. He is now sufficiently matured to enter upon the first level of higher education.

For the Higher education period there is a different way. A regular school life begins for both boys and girls, controlled by a "law-warden," a director of education. Reading, writing, and the rudiments of mathematics have to be taught. Gymnasia and schools, open to all, ought to be built; teachers ought to be appointed. Plato wishes that all the means of education be concentrated systematically toward bringing about a full and mature personality. In this process, mere guidance and information, as well as mere conditioning and habituation, would fail. They are effective in the pursuit of the virtues of temperance and courage, but a person endowed with these qualities may still be narrow, unpleasant, and perhaps socially dangerous unless he possesses also the virtues of wisdom and justice. All these virtues must be molded into an organic whole. Plato has, thus, outlined a number of periods for systematic training and instruction according to the stages of development of life (Yogendra;2002:42).

During infancy which extends from birth to three years, the child is to be properly nourished and is to be saved from pain and pleasure as far as possible. According to Plato, this period extending from three to six years of age is the most important part of education. The education during this period should consist of play, fairy tales, mother goose, and simple recreations. This period should begin at six and go up to thirteen. Boys and girls should be housed in separate state dormitories. Plato believes that during this period the children lack in harmony and control and their movements are uncoordinated. During this period music, play, religion, morals and mathematics should be taught to children. Plato thinks that education in these will bring the necessary rhythm, melody and control in the behaviour of children. This period begins at thirteen. Plato says, "The age of thirteen is the proper time for him to begin the lyre, and he may continue at this or another three years, . . . whether his father or himself like or dislike the study, he is not to be allowed to spend more or less time in learning music than the law allows" (Plato;1997).

Hence, this period from thirteen to sixteen was to be devoted to training in

instrumental music which consisted of the play of cithera, religious hymns, memorize poetry, arithmetic (especially theory).

There is a period of physical education. This period extends from sixteen to twenty. During this period special attention to formal gymnastic and military training should be given. No stress on intellectual training during this period is desirable. Plato recommends that at the age of twenty the most promising young men and women should be selected through diagnostic tests for a ten year course in scientific studies. At this period, the purpose will be to help young men and women to see the inter relationship of facts, because during this period of growth there is a need of correlating of all thinking.

During this period, the systematization of the various sciences will be emphasised—there will be coordination of reason and habits and inter-relating of the physical sciences. Plato says, "The sciences which they learned without any order in their early education will now be brought together, and they will be able to see the natural relationship of them to one another and to true being." Plato has recommended a course for officers selected to serve the state in high offices. This course is for the period from thirty years of age upto thirty-five. The course consists of philosophy, sociology, government, law and education.

Those selected as high officers will serve the state on active duty from thirty-five to fifty. Plato has recommended that at fifty, the high officers of the state should be relieved from active duty and they should be encouraged to give their attention to the study of higher philosophy.

Plato was not sympathetic to practical arts. He considers them vulgar and unfit for a gentleman. He regards them suitable only for slaves. Therefore, he has given no place to them in his scheme of education. Plato declares, "If any citizen inclines to any other art than the study of virtue let them punish him with disgrace and infamy" (Plato, 1997). No Education for Slaves. Plato has declined to recommend any system of training for the slaves; because he wants to exclude them from participation in any affairs of the state. He wants that they should follow the traditional family life. He expects the slave boy to follow his father's occupation, and the girl to take part in the household activities of the women. Thus, Plato wants that the slave boy and girl should learn by imitation, because all their training is only an affair of forming right habits.

In the case of the education of women, we have already seen that the men and women have fundamentally the same nature, except that the women are weaker. "All pursuits of men are the pursuits of women also, but in all of them a woman is inferior to a man" (Plato 1997). If men and women have the same qualities as regards their duties in the state, it means they should have the same education. Plato says that music,

dancing, gymnastics, military exercise, housemanship and fighting should be taught both to men and women.

From our assessment of Plato so far, we shall now proceed to the next section of making a critic of his thoughts on education.

Plato's educational scheme acknowledges only tradition and rejects experimentation. There is censorship and control not only over the schools and the general upbringing of youth, but also over the people's religion (Yogendra, 2002: 44). Plato is convinced that the decay of his city is due to the abandonment of the simple customs of the forefathers. Out of this conservative attitude Plato develops a strong appreciation for the unwritten ancestral customs, pervading the more instinctive life of a nation.

Even the inventors of new games, new sports, and new melodies are punishable as corruptors of morals. It conforms with this conservatism that Plato regards habituation or, as we could also say, "conditioning" as one of the main instruments of education. He plans the most just and advanced State. What he would actually achieve, here as with his laws concerning nurture and procreation, is a society without any incentive to improve itself through experimentation and democratic co-operation. A decisive contrast between Plato's love of a free and liberal life and his reactionary emphasis on conditioning and stability runs through his whole system. That is one of the reasons why he came to be admired by both conservatives and radicals.

There can be no doubt that Plato, sometimes, approximates modern "totalitarianism" (Yogendra 2002:45). He does so institutionally, through recommending censorship and the complete subordination of schools to the control of the polls, and even morally.

More so, when we look critically at the education philosophy of Plato critically, we find out that there is no place for the creativity of the students to come into place. The life of the student has been structured along some set curriculums and there is no way change can occur from the mind-set of the student. Furthermore, this kind of education treats man as a means to an end rather than as an end in himself as Immanuel Kant would have us believe.

Self-Assessment Exercise 1

1. Plato's educational scheme acknowledges only tradition and rejects _____.
(a) Experimentation (b) Introspection (c) Opinion (d) None of these
2. Plato agrees that slave be educated (a) Necessarily True (b) Partially True (c) Necessarily False (d) None of these

1.4 An Exploration of Aristotle's Philosophy of Education

It is not a secret that Aristotle is a materialist and was more realistic than his teacher who subscribes to a reality in the world of forms (Hummels 1999).

Aristotle's main interest lay in the science of biology and thus his philosophy was stimulated by his research in natural science, therefore, he was more a thinker than a great philosopher, yet to understand and appreciate his philosophy we may attempt as hereunder Aristotle believes that all substances, with the exception of God, are made up of Form and Matter. Form is identified with actuality, while Matter is identified with potentiality. God is pure Form or Pure Actuality (Yogendra 2002:49).

Aristotle tells us that there are four types of causes: 1. material cause, 2. efficient cause, 3. formal cause, and 4. Final cause (Omogbe 1999). This doctrine can be clarified by a concrete example. Imagine an artist who is trying to erect a statue. The content of the statue is the material cause; the artist is the efficient cause; the form of the statue is the formal cause, while the goal of the artist represents the final cause (Stumpf;1979). Now, according to Aristotle, the most important cause is the final cause. This doctrine has important consequences. It implies a rejection of a mechanistic philosophy. The universe cannot be interpreted according to absolute laws, rather it exhibits definite levels. The highest levels determine the function of the lower levels, and all levels are dominated by the climax of creation: God. The doctrine also implies that the actual is prior to the potential. The purpose of the artist determines the nature of the product which he creates; the plan of the universe determines the content of the universe. According to Aristotle, God is completely immutable. He is not a personal deity in the Christian sense, nor does he possess a sense of morality. His main activity is a meditation upon his own perfection. We must not omit Aristotle's adherence to the geocentric hypothesis. Aristotle firmly believed that the earth was the center of the universe; he was certain that there could not be more than one heaven and that outside the heaven there could be no place or void. His teleological interpretation of science had a significant impact upon many medieval thinkers who likewise were mostly concerned with the religious purpose of science, rather than with the practical application of scientific knowledge.

From an educational standpoint, it is important to understand Aristotle's doctrine of immortality. Aristotle did not believe in personal survival after death. He considered the intellect to be composed of a potential or passive reason and an active reason. The passive reason is determined by physical forces (Yogendra 2002:51).

From the discussion we have had about the metaphysics of Aristotle, we begin to understand some of the main themes that assisted in the formulation of his philosophy of education. Perhaps in the next section where we shall be concerned with his philosophy of education proper, we shall begin to better appreciate the role played by his metaphysics, ethics and epistemology.

For Aristotle the goal of education is identical with the goal of man. Obviously all forms of education are explicitly or implicitly directed towards a human ideal (Hummels;1999:2). But Aristotle considers that education is essential for the complete self-realization of man. The supreme good to which all aspire is happiness. But for Aristotle the happy man is neither a noble savage, nor man in his natural state, but the educated man. The happy man, the good man, is a virtuous man, but virtue is acquired precisely through education. Ethics and education merge one into the other.

Aristotle's ethical works are teaching manuals on the art of living. In the first book of *The Nichomachean Ethics*, Aristotle asks in an unequivocal manner "whether happiness is to be acquired by learning or by habituation or some other sort of training, or comes in virtue of some divine providence or again by chance"(Aristotle;1926). The reply is equally clear: 'virtuous activities are what constitute happiness' (Aristotle;1926). There are two categories of virtue: intellectual and moral (Aristotle 1926). "Intellectual virtue in the main owes both its birth and its growth to teaching (for which reason it requires experience and time) while moral virtue comes about as a result of habit. None of the moral virtues arises in us by nature" (Aristotle;1926). We shall return to the distinction made here between 'teaching' and 'the result of habit' when we come to discuss Aristotle's pedagogy. He concludes: 'It makes no small difference, then, whether we form habits of one kind or of another from our very youth; it makes a very great difference, or rather *all* the difference' (Aristotle;1926). The point could not be more tersely made.

In his educational ideals, Aristotle symbolized the Athenian view of life, which stressed moderation and a balanced concept of man and his intellectual powers (Yogendra 2002:55). In Athens, there was no infallible theology. There was not one standard of morals and religion. The Athenians believed in free inquiry, and thus they laid the seeds for our own intellectual development. Man's most formidable asset is curiosity, which is a truly explosive force. It makes us eternally restless, so that we seek and yearn and never stand still. To cultivate curiosity in education is to cultivate a power which goes beyond life and death and which gives meaning to the uncertainty of human existence. Santayana one time remarked that the life of reason was most perfectly embodied by the Greeks, even though it was limited by political insecurity and by the struggle between totalitarianism and democracy. But the Greeks, especially thinkers like Aristotle, were more creative than perhaps any other civilization; to them education became a way of life; unending curiosity became man's most important trait in his quest. The basic weakness of Aristotle's educational ideal is its anti-democratic tendencies. He had a low opinion of women, he defended slavery, and he had contempt for the culture of other nations. Furthermore, he neglected the importance of vocational training, a necessary supplement to any liberal education. The greatness of Aristotle lay in his emphasis upon reason. By the use of reason man surpasses his animal nature; through rational insight emotional impulses can be controlled. Reason, used pragmatically, can remold the conditions of

existence. Even Freud, who glorified man's animal impulses, stated in a letter that "there is no control of our passions except through intelligence". 'Beginnings' and 'Ends' of Education: But just as education "ends" in reason and logos, so it "begins" with them. The phrase "it ends" is correct if we refer to the psycho-physical growth of a single individual. He is first habituated and educated without himself processing the capacity of deliberation and decision. This capacity comes only with increasing maturity.

But the end becomes a beginning if education is viewed as an historical and objective social function which takes hold of the individual before he himself is able to decide whether he wishes to be educated or not. The human race, unlike animals, has been able to develop education as one of its cultural functions, and to transmit it from one generation to the other, only because it is not merely dependent on, or mechanically reacting to, its environment. Rather, the human race is able to detach itself from its surroundings, to understand and examine them, and to select, reject, and prepare conditions according to experiences and principles.

Hence education, in the sense of mastering one's self and his environment, is ultimately based on rational and moral decisions of which the human race, and only the human race, can avail itself because of its affinity to a universal logos. Therefore, we can just as well say that education begins with, as to say that it ends in, the logos.

Education, Aristotle maintains, can be divided into several phases. At first, from birth to age seven, the child should be brought up in a healthy manner. Special attention should be paid to his physical development; he should be taught how to endure hardship. Association with slaves should be avoided. A break takes place when the child reaches the age of five. As Aristotle states in the *Politics*: "The next period lasts to the age of five; during this no demand should be made upon the child for study or labor, lest its growth be impeded; and there should be sufficient motion to prevent the limbs from being inactive. This can be secured, among other ways, by amusement, but the amusement should not be vulgar or tiring or riotous.

The Directors of Education, as they are termed, should be careful what tales or stories the children hear, for the sports of children are designed to prepare the way for the business of later life, and should be for the most part imitations of the occupations which they will hereafter pursue in earnest.

Those are wrong who (like Plato) in *The Laws* attempt to check the loud crying and screaming of children, for these contribute towards their growth, and, in a manner, exercise their bodies. Straining the voice has an effect similar to that produced by the retention of the breath in violent exertions.

Besides other duties, the Directors of Education should have an eye to their bringing

up, and should take care that they are left as little as possible with slaves. For until they are seven years old they must live at home; and therefore, even at this early age, all that is mean and low should be banished from their sight and hearing."

From the age of seven to puberty, the child is exposed to an extensive curriculum which includes the study of the fundamentals of music and gymnastics as well as reading, writing, and arithmetic. During the next phase, from puberty to age seventeen, the boy would study rhetoric, grammar, literature, and geography, as well as instrumental music and mathematics. Now the stress would be upon exact knowledge. The climax of education comes after the boy reaches age twenty-one. Only the really superior students may continue with their studies. Now the young man would develop truly encyclopedic interests as he would study the biological and physical sciences, psychology and ethics, and rhetoric as well as philosophy.

Self-Assessment Exercise 2

1. For Aristotle, there are _____ causes for all there is in the universe (a) Two (b) Three (c) Primary (d) Four
2. For Aristotle, at what age should special attention be paid to a child's physical development?
3. Two types of virtues that education teaches a man according to Aristotle are ____ and ____ intellectual and moral

1.5 A Comparative Analysis of Plato and Aristotle on Education

In this section of this unit, we are going to consider the parallels and departures between Aristotle and Plato on education.

Similarities: When we take a critical look at the philosophy of education in Plato and Aristotle, we shall notice some of the following similarities:

Firstly, it is obvious that both consider education as a branch of statecraft and as the most important means of upholding the institution of the polis. Both criticize the Athenians for their lack of a unified public system of education and recommend measures which, for a people accustomed to more private forms of schooling, would have meant a complete revolution in the upbringing of the younger generation (Yogendra;2002:60).

Secondly, Aristotle, like Plato, held the education of a liberal man to be contingent on two more or less physical factors. The first of them is a sound body with sound instincts. "Nature," Aristotle says, "gives us the capacity to receive virtue"

(Aristotle;1926).

Thirdly, On the basis of this early habituation, there ought to be ingrained in the minds of the young a sense for the noble values of life. With this definition of a liberal education, we have already touched the problem of its goal. According to Aristotle, every normal being wants to be happy or, in the Greek term, to achieve Eudaimonia.

Fourthly, Aristotle, as well as Plato, lays decisive stress on the introduction of a rational factor into human conduct. As this rational principle is not conceived as a merely accidental invention of men, but as the reflection of the divine on the human sphere, it follows with logical necessity that the highest activity, and the greatest and most lasting happiness of man, can be found only in contemplation of, and unity with, this ultimate power.

Differences: Here, we shall be citing some grey areas of fundamental differences between the thoughts of Plato and Aristotle. There is first a remarkable difference in their attitudes toward life. When Plato observes, he does so in order to transcend reality toward the sphere of the ideal. Aristotle, on the other hand, prefers to dwell on his observations and their objects. He examines and describes, and if he transcends things, he goes through them, whereas Plato treats them as symbols.

Firstly, Plato represents the more intuitive, mathematical, and dialectical type of philosopher. Aristotle, though he is all that too, is also the collecting and systematic scientist.

Secondly, Plato's attitude toward the world is such that its surface does not concern him as something ultimate. Consequently, he is not only the enthusiast and the radical reformer, in spite of his emphasis on conservatism, harmony, and balance; he is at the same time the artist, full of humour and irony. Often enough, he may have gone with his master Socrates where nobody could see them and there split with laughter over the world's folly—which is not to say that they did not weep over it the next hour.

Thirdly, Aristotle does not indulge in such caprice. He was first Plato's most sagacious disciple; but later his conscience no longer allowed him to follow his master. The Platonic-Romantic type may call Aristotle dry, but at least he tries to be reliable, as far as is in his power.

Fourthly, For Plato, ideas point at a transcendent reality. For Aristotle, they point in that direction also, but their primary function is that of forming and ordering principles immanent in reality as it lies concretely before men. Out of this concept of the immanence of ideas in reality, Aristotle must arrive at the conclusion of a creative and consistent design in all nature, or, as the technical terminology has it, at a

teleological aspect of existence.

Fifthly, however, though both Aristotle and Plato arrive at similar conclusions as to the highest values, their approach is different. If two wanderers climb one day up to the peak of a high mountain from two different sides, they enjoy, at the end of their labour, the same view, but during their advance they see different parts of the world. Consequently, their total recollections of the day will vary. Even when looking down from the same peak, their impressions will not be totally alike. For the character of the past always tends to colour the immediate (Yogendra;2002:66).

Sixthly, we remember Plato's intellectual interests: music, mathematics and astronomy, and then dialectical philosophy. With Aristotle, an enormous area opens itself for intellectual pursuits. He himself wrote treatises on physics and biology, psychology as the study which lies in between the natural sciences and the humanities, politics as the most important of the social studies, and finally philosophy proper to be divided, if we use modern terms, into theory of knowledge and logic, aesthetics, ethics, and metaphysics. And as there exists for Aristotle no difference in importance between the different sciences, each of them being just as necessary as the other for an understanding of the universe, he does not acknowledge a definite hierarchy of sciences with the more abstract disciplines at the top. All “scientific knowledge is a mode of conception dealing with universals and things that are of necessity.” Hence, in whatever field of knowledge we may work, we have to discharge the same duty of thorough observation and logical proof of our assumptions.

Seventhly, the instruments through which, according to Aristotle, man perceives his environment are the senses. But sensing or perceiving, in order to be transformed into a somewhat lasting experience, needs both memory and the power of conceptualization. If a person's senses, memory, and conceptual powers are sufficiently matured, he cannot help but wonder at the colourful and changing world around him. The difficulties and differences between the thoughts of Plato and his pupil have originated in many divides in the area of philosophy up till the present age. The gap between empiricism and idealism was full blown between them.

Self-Assessment Exercise 3

1. Plato and Aristotle's idea of education has the same method (a) True (b) False
2. Both Plato and Aristotle criticize the Athenians for their lack of a unified public system of education and recommend measures which, for a people accustomed to more private forms of schooling, would have meant a complete revolution in the upbringing of the younger generation (a) True (b) False

1.6 Summary

In this unit, we have been able to consider the fundamental doctrines of education between two popular ancient scholars – Aristotle and Plato. We have been able to show the places of similarities and differences between the ideas that they present. All of these go on to establish the conviction of this course that even when we may see that ideas are ancient, they may still have relevance in contemporary times. Plato's and Aristotle's works on education has inspired several important scholars after them like Kant and Dewey among others.

1.7 References/Further Readings/Web Sources

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1.8 Possible Answers to SAEs

Self-Assessment Exercise 1: 1. (a); 2. (c)

Self-Assessment Exercise 2: 1. (d); 2. From birth to 7; 3. intellectual and moral

Self-Assessment Exercise 3: 1. (b); 2. (a)

End of Module Questions

1. Anaximander thought that the earth was _____ and not flat
2. _____ is the basic stuff of the universe.

3. Pythagoras was obsessed with _____ (a) Symbols (b) Artworks (c) Relics (d) Numbers
4. Pick the odd one concerning Pythagoras's ideas (a) Mathematics (b) Science (c) Archaeology (d) Music
5. The principle of harmony that things opposed to each other work together in a creative way is one of Heraclitus's central _____ for the world (a) Metaphors (b) Similar (c) Aphorism (d) Synecdoche
6. "What is can only produce what is and what is not cannot produce anything. In essence, there is nothing really new" is a statement by _____
7. According to Democritus, atoms are _____ in number
8. Two types of virtues that education teaches a man according to Aristotle are _____ and _____