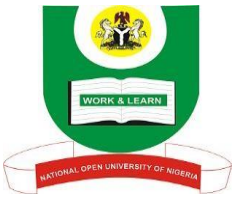

Course Code **PHL 203**

Course Title **Introduction to Epistemology**

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FACULTY OF ARTS

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COURSE GUIDE

Introduction

Welcome to PHL 203: Introduction to Epistemology

PHL 203 is a three-credit unit course that has minimum duration of one semester. It is a compulsory course for undergraduate students in Philosophy. The materials have been developed to equip you with the fundamental principles of the subject matter. This course guide gives you an overview of the course. It also provides you with information on the organisation and requirements of the course.

Course Objectives

By the end of this course you will be able to:

- Explain the subject matter of epistemology
- Establish the importance of epistemology to human existence.
- Analyse the meaning of knowledge.
- Identify and explain the types as well as the sources of knowledge
- Discuss intelligently the problems of knowledge
- Discuss the basic epistemological theories
- Analyse the concept of truth
- Identify and explain the types of truth
- Discuss the basic theories of truth
- Explain the link between belief, truth and knowledge
- Explain the meaning of scepticism
- Identify and explain the varieties of scepticism
- Analyse the arguments for and against scepticism
- Discuss the importance of scepticism to human affairs

Working through this Course

To complete this course, you are required to read the study unit, read suggested books and other related materials. You will also need to undertake practical exercises. The exercises are to aid you in understanding the concepts being presented. At the end of each unit, you will be required to submit written assignment for assessment purposes. At the end of the course, you will write a final examination.

Course Materials

The major materials you will need for this course are:

i. Course guide

ii. Study guide

iii. Assignment file

Study Units

There are 23 study units in this course divided into five modules. The modules and units are presented as follows:

Module 1	**Subject Matter of Epistemology**
Unit 1	The Nature of Epistemology
Unit 2	Epistemology and Related Disciplines
Unit 3	History of Epistemology
Unit 4	Trends in Epistemology
Unit 5	Epistemology and Human Existence
Module 2	**Meaning and Nature of Knowledge**
Unit 1	What is Knowledge?
Unit 2	Conditions of Knowledge
Unit 3	Knowledge Situation
Unit 4	Types and Sources of Knowledge
Unit 5	Problems of Knowledge
Module 3	**Basic Epistemological Theories**
Unit 1	Rationalism
Unit 2	Empiricism
Unit 3	Constructivism
Unit 4	Pragmatism
Module 4	**The Notion of Truth**
Unit 1	What is Truth?
Unit 2	Types of Truth
Unit 3	Major theories of Truth

Unit 4 Belief, Truth and Knowledge

Module 5 Scepticism

Unit 1 What is Scepticism?

Unit 2 Verities of Scepticism

Unit 3 Arguments for scepticism

Unit 4 Arguments against Scepticism

Unit 5 The Value of Scepticism

References/Further Reading

Aja, Egbeke (1993). Elements of Theory of Knowledge, (Enugu: Auto. Century Publishing Company).

Audi, Robert (1988). Belief, Justification and Knowledge: An Introduction to Epistemology (California: Wadsworth Publishing Company).

Crumley, Jack S. (2009). An Introduction to Epistemology, (New York: Broadview Press).

Omoregbe, Joseph (2011). Epistemology (Theory of Knowledge) A Systematic and Historical Study, (Lagos: Joja Press).

Ozumba, G. O. (2015). A Concise Introduction to Epistemology, (Makurdi: Mikro Ticha and Associates).

Tutor Marked Assignment (TMAs)

You will have to submit a specified number of the (TMAs). Every unit in this course has a Tutor Marked Assignment. You are required to attempt all the questions and you will be assessed on all of them but the best four performances from the (TMAs) will be used for 30% grading. When you have completed each assignment, send it together with a Tutor Marked Assignment form, to your tutor. Make sure each assignment reaches your tutor on or before the deadline for submissions.

If for any reason, you cannot complete your work on time, contact your tutor for a discussion on the possibility of an extension. Extensions will not be granted after the due date except under exceptional circumstances.

Final Examination and Grading

The final examination will be a test of three hours. All areas of the course will be examined. Find time to read the unit all over before your examination. The final examination will consist of questions, which reflect the kinds of self-assessment exercise and tutor marked assignment you have previously encountered. And all aspects of the course will be assessed. You should take the time between completing the last unit and taking the examination to revise the entire course.

Course Marking Scheme

The following table lays out how the actual course mark allocation is broken down.

Assessments	**Marks**
Assignments 1-3 (the best three of all the assignments submitted)	Four assignments, marked out of 10% totalling 30%
Final Examination	70% of overall course score
Total	**100% of course score**

Presentation Schedule

The dates for submission of all assignments will be communicated to you. You will also be told the date of completing the study units and dates of examinations.

Course Guide: Overview and Presentation Schedule

Unit	**Topic(s)**	**Weekly Activity**	**Assessment/End of Unit**
Module 1	**Subject Matter of Epistemology**		
Unit 1	The Nature of Epistemology	Week 1	Assignment 1
Unit 2	Epistemology and Related Disciplines	Week 2	Assignment 2

Unit 3	History of Epistemology	Week 3	Assignment 3
Unit 4	Trends in Epistemology	Week 4	Assignment 4
Unit 5	Epistemology and Human Existence	Week 5	Assignment 5
Module 2	**Meaning and Nature of knowledge**		
Unit 1	What is knowledge?	Week 1	Assignment 1
Unit 2	Conditions of knowledge	Week 2	Assignment 2
Unit 3	Knowledge Situation	Week 3	Assignment 3
Unit 4	Types and Sources of knowledge	Week 4	Assignment 4
Unit 5	Problems of knowledge	Week 5	Assignment 5
Module 3	**Major Theories of Knowledge**		
Unit 1	Rationalism	Week 1	Assignment 1
Unit 2	Empiricism	Week 2	Assignment 2
Unit 3	Constructivism	Week 3	Assignment 3
Unit 4	Pragmatism	Week 4	Assignment 4
Module 4	**The Notion of Truth**		
Unit 1	What is Truth?	Week 1	Assignment 1
Unit 2	Types of Truth	Week 2	Assignment 2
Unit 3	Major Theories of Truth	Week 3	Assignment 3
Unit 4	Belief, Truth & Knowledge	Week 4	Assignment 4
Module 5	**Scepticism**		
Unit 1	What is Scepticism?	Week 1	Assignment 1
Unit 2	Varieties of Scepticism	Week 2	Assignment 2
Unit 3	Arguments for Scepticism	Week 3	Assignment 3
Unit 4	Arguments Against Scepticism	Week 4	Assignment 4
Unit 5	The Value of Scepticism	Week 5	Assignment 5

How to Get the Most from this Course

You will be required to study the units on your own. However, you may arrange to meet with your tutor for tutorials on an optional basis at the study centre. Also, you can organize interactive sessions with your course mates.

Tutors and Tutorials

Information relating to the tutorials will be provided at the appropriate time. Your tutor will mark and comment on your assignments, keep a close watch on your progress and on any difficulties you might encounter and provide assistance to you during the course. You must take your tutor-marked assignments to the study centre well before the due date (at least two working days are required). They will be marked by your tutor and returned to you as soon as possible. Do not hesitate to contact if you do not understand any part of the study you have a question or problem with the assignments, with your tutor‟s comments on an assignment or with the grading of an assignment.

You should try your best to attend the tutorials. This is the only chance to have face-to-face contact with your tutor and ask questions which are answered instantly. You can raise any problem

encountered in the course of your study. To gain maximum benefit from course tutorials, prepare a question list before attending them. You will learn a lot from participating in discussion actively.

Summary

This course guide gives you an overview of what to expect in the course of this study. The course teaches you the basics about the meaning, nature and problems of human knowledge. We wish you success with the course and hope that you will find it interesting, insightful and useful.

Unit 1 The Nature of Epistemology

Contents

1.1. Introduction

This unit "The Nature of Epistemology" introduces you to the meaning, questions and aims of epistemology.

1.2. Learning Outcomes

It is expected that after studying this unit, you should be able to:

- define epistemology
- mention and explain the basic questions of epistemology
- state the aims of epistemology

1.3.What is Epistemology?

Like most philosophical terms, epistemology has been defined in a variety of ways. From the etymological perspective, it is seen as a derivative of the fusion of two Greek words *episteme* meaning “knowledge or understanding” and *logos* meaning “theory of or explanation”. Hence, epistemology is referred to as the theory of knowledge. It is one of the principal branches of philosophy which investigates the nature, scope, sources and validity of knowledge.

In view of the fact that human beings hold and express a wide range of opinions on a variety of issues, and the possibility of thinking we know based on these opinions when in reality we do not know. Epistemology examines our knowledge claims in order to determine what knowledge is and how it differs from mere opinion. At this point, it is important for you to take a look at some other definitions in order to better appreciate the point being made here:

According to Omoregbe (2011:VI) "epistemology is the study of human knowledge, the study of the nature of human knowledge, its origin, its scope, its limits, its justification, its reliability or otherwise, its certainty or otherwise". What this definition has clearly highlighted for your attention is that epistemology deals with human knowledge and all problems associated with it.

Ojong and Ibrahim (2011:39) obviously share the characterization of epistemology in the above definition. However, they emphasise that human knowledge is subjected to change and that epistemology investigates the processes and problems associated with it. In their own words, "it investigates the process of human cognition and all problems associated with its acquisition and justification".

In its study of human knowledge, epistemology seeks to establish frameworks within which we can construct genuine and accurate understanding of the world. This involves identifying and developing criteria and methodologies for determining what we know, how we know, why we know and what we can know.

In order to make the meaning of epistemology clearer and to expand the scope of the first three definitions, it is important for you to pay attention to the following elements of the above definitions of epistemology as listed by Blackburn (2008:118):

1. The origins of knowledge
2. The place of experience in generating knowledge
3. The place of reason in generating knowledge
4. The relationship between knowledge and certainty
5. The relationship between knowledge and the possibility of error
6. The possibility of universal/absolute knowledge
7. The changing forms of knowledge in the face of new conceptualizations

1.4. Basic Questions of Epistemology

This section is drawn from the elements of the definitions of knowledge discussed in the last section. In general, the discussions in epistemology fall under three basic questions. These are:

1.4.1. The Question of the Nature and Meaning of Knowledge

At the heart of epistemology is the question of the meaning and nature of knowledge. Naturally, the first question to consider in epistemology is knowledge. This is because understanding what knowledge is, is a pre-requisite to the questions about the sources and limit of our knowledge. That is, we cannot claim to have what we do not know; neither can we talk about how we come to know what we do not know. Furthermore, we cannot consider what is within our capabilities when we lack an understanding of what it is to know something.

The question "what is knowledge?" is the first basic question of epistemology. A consideration of this question raises other questions that concern what it means to know. Hence questions such as; What is belief? What is truth? What differentiates knowledge from mere opinion? Is knowledge different from belief? What are the pre-conditions for knowledge? What does it mean to know? How can we know that we know? Is true belief knowledge? These are questions that seek to unravel the meaning and nature of knowledge.

1.4.2. The Question of the sources of Knowledge

Generally, there is no knowledge that is derived from nowhere. Every knowledge claim is made on the basis of information received from a particular medium about an object of knowledge. In epistemology, a common concern with respect to knowledge is what sources of information are capable of giving knowledge. In view of this epistemologists have identified the following as some of the major sources of knowledge;

- **Reason:** This refers to the faculty of the mind that has to do with logic, analysis and rationality. It is the mental instrument which brings forth knowledge through rational investigation either by deducing truths from existing knowledge, or by learning things a priori. The view that reason is the primary source of knowledge is known as rationalism.
- **Sense Experience:** This refers to the activities of the five senses in receiving information from external objects. By seeing, hearing, smelling, feeling and tasting we form our conceptions of the world around us. The view that experience is the primary source of knowledge is called empiricism.
- **Intuition:** This refers to the immediate perception of truth without a conscious process of reasoning. It is an immediate moment of insight one suddenly finds within oneself. It is characterized by a sudden eruption of idea into consciousness. The view that intuition is a basic source of knowledge is called intuitionism.

- **Testimony:** This refers to the statement or declaration of a witness about a particular object or event. Some of the knowledge we hold clearly depends greatly on the words of others. For instance, knowledge of events before you were born or outside your immediate experience cannot be your personally generated knowledge.

  They are claims we make on the basis of what those who witnessed those events say. Thus, whenever we claim to know something on the basis of the statement or declaration of others we simply endorse testimony as a source of knowledge.
- **Revelation:** This refers to the process of disclosing or making manifest of some form of truth or knowledge through communication with a deity or other supernatural entities. For instance, Muslims believe that the Quran was revealed word by word by Almighty Allah (God) to Prophet Mohammed through the angel Jubril (Gabriel). The Christians also believe that the Bible was inspired by God through divine illumination of the human mind. Thus, revelation as expressed here is said to be a source of knowledge. However, revelation is not a source of knowledge for all, only few people claim to receive it.
- **Memory:** This refers to the faculty by which man stores knowledge. It is the source of knowledge of the past as it brings to the present what was in the past and is found relevant to the present. However, the reliability of memory as a source of knowledge is a subject of debate in epistemology.

In view of the fact that the above stated sources of knowledge have some inherent difficulties or challenges, epistemologists examine their reliability by raising questions that clears the air on the inherent problems of these sources of knowledge. Such questions include but not limited to. How do we know that we know? How do we know the external world? Are the senses reliable sources of knowledge? Is human reason free of error? Can we really trust the testimony of others? How do we justify the truthfulness of intuited ideas? Are there no possibilities of error in revelation?

1.4.3. The Question of the Limit or Scope of Knowledge

In a bid to explain the possibility of knowledge, philosophers construct theories which inadvertently delineate the scope, limit and extent of human knowledge. In their theories of knowledge, they outline the mechanisms involved in the process of knowledge acquisition. These mechanisms define the boundary of our cognitive capabilities. For instance, John Locke in his analysis of human understanding limits our knowledge to ideas derived through the mechanisms of sensation and reflection. Specifically, he says we can think about things only after we have experienced them. In other words, the extent of human understanding is definable within the ideas generated from sense experience. This means, we cannot know what we cannot experience through the senses. This form of analysis gives rise to questions about the limit or extent of human knowledge. This includes

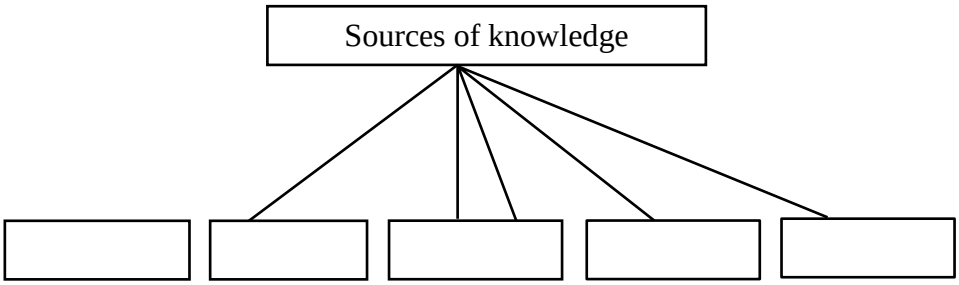
questions like: Is there a world outside the mind, if so, can we know it? Is appearance the same as reality? Can we know with absolute certainty? Can we know the real nature of things? Are we capable of knowing outside the frame of our experience? Are we capable of knowing every level of reality?

1.5. The Aims of Epistemology

The last section described the three ways of grouping the problems of epistemology. Let us now consider why these questions are raised in epistemology. Why do we need to ask questions about our knowledge claims? From the dawn of history, man has tried to understand the environment he lives in as he cannot live a satisfactory life in an environment he does not understand. According to Rescher (2003: xvii) the need for knowing one‟s way about, is one of the most fundamental demands of human condition. This is because human existence as argued elsewhere is a cloudy and complex phenomenon that requires an epistemic map to figure out how things are and how to navigate one‟s way through its treacherous currents and challenges. (Ibrahim: 2018) In this way, knowledge becomes an existential instrument for guidance and direction in life. In view of this importance of knowledge to human existence, epistemology as a normative discipline aims at providing standards for examining what knowledge is, how reliable the sources of knowledge are and how justified are our claims to knowledge. By so doing, epistemology also helps us in the acquisition of true beliefs and the avoidance of false beliefs. In practical terms, epistemology aims at what Crumley (200:16) describes as prudential goals. This simply means making decisions in a timely fashion. Furthermore, epistemology aims at providing a platform for assessing expert decision on critical aspects of our life. In addition, epistemology helps us to avoid falling into what Ibrahim (2017:128) termed “epistemic deception” That is the act of deceiving oneself of knowing what in actual fact one does not know. Finally, through its tenacious questioning of our sources of knowledge, epistemology aims at eliminating any form of dogmatic tendencies, as it helps us to develop informed beliefs which ultimately guide our decision-making in daily life.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Fill in the empty boxes



2. Put the following questions in the appropriate boxes below:

a. How do we know that we know?

b. Is there a world outside the mind?

c. What is knowledge?

d. How do we know that the external world exists?

e. Is human reason free from error?

f. What are the conditions of knowledge?

g. Does knowledge entail truth?

h. Is belief a condition of knowledge?

i. Can we really trust the testimony of others?

On the nature of knowledge	On the source of knowledge	On the scope of knowledge

1.6. Summary

This unit on the subject-matter of epistemology described the meaning and nature of epistemology. It identified and explained the basic questions of epistemology. It also stated the aims of epistemology as a field of study.

1.7. Tutor-Marked Exercise

1. Define epistemology and identify three elements of your definition.
2. Identify and explain the basic questions of epistemology
3. Write short notes on the following sources knowledge
   a. reason b. sense experience c. testimony
4. What are the aims of epistemology?

1.8. References/Further Readings

Blackburn, Simon (2008). Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Crumley Jack S. (2009). An Introduction to Epistemology Broadview Press

Ibrahim, Adekunle A. (2017) "The Epistemology of Everyday Life" In Sapientia: Journal of Philosophy vol. 8.

Ojong, Kyrian A. and Ibrahim Adekunle A. (2011). Fundamental Problems of Epistemology, Calabar: Jochrisam Publishers.

Omoregbe, Joseph I. (1998). Epistemology (Theory of Knowledge): A Systematic and Historical Study. Lagos: Joja Publishers.

Rescher, Nicholas. (2003). An Epistemology Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge. New York: State University of New York Press.

1.9. Possible Answers to Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Reason, Sense Experience, Intuition, Testimony, Revelation

2.

a. How do we know that we know? = Sources of Knowledge

b. Is there a world outside the mind? = Scope of Knowledge
c. What is knowledge? = Nature of Knowledge
d. How do we know that the external world exists? = Sources of Knowledge
e. Is human reason free from error? = Sources of knowledge
f. What are the conditions of knowledge? =Nature of Knowledge
g. Does knowledge entail truth? = Nature of Knowledge
h. Is belief a condition of knowledge? = Nature of Knowledge
i. Can we really trust the testimony of others? = Sources of Knowledge

Unit 2 Epistemology and Related Disciplines

Contents

2.1. Introduction

This unit on "Epistemology and Related Disciplines" introduces you to the relation between epistemology and related disciplines which are psychology, metaphysics and logic.

2.2. Learning Outcomes

It is expected that after studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Establish the link between epistemology and psychology
- Establish the link between epistemology and metaphysics
- Establish the link between epistemology and logic

1.3. Epistemology and Psychology

The connection and departure between epistemology and psychology is necessary. This is simply because the central questions of epistemology and those that interest psychology are in most cases interwoven and intertwined. In view of this, one is bound to ask: where do the epistemological questions end and the psychological ones begin? And how are we to decide where a given question or problem about the mind and its objects requires an epistemological or a psychological solution? At present, there is no clear-cut distinction between epistemology and psychology as the areas of concern overlap. In fact, this may not come as much of a surprise as psychology, just as other

natural sciences, is traceable to the general understanding of the world called “philosophy”. This explains why the concerns of epistemology and psychology over laps. For this reason, whenever one expresses his/her interest in psychology, the question “Do you mean philosophical psychology

or experimental psychology?" becomes inescapable as many people consider the two as two sides of the same coin?

However, a distinction can be drawn; Psychology is an empirical science which tries to discover how our minds work. It is interested in what the various mental processes are and what causal laws operate among them. That is, psychology is concerned with the object of giving as complete an explanation as possible of mental happenings, both normal and abnormal. Its methods are those of natural science (Aja: 1993).These methods include observation, hypothesis formulation and experimentation. It is at this point that psychology seems to be severely handicapped as its subject of study (the mind) is not available for direct inspection but has to be inferred from the observed appearances and behaviour of human (or sometimes non-human) bodies. (Aja: 1993) Thus, psychology focuses on causal questions; it seeks to find out how minds work.

On the other hand, epistemology is interested in questions about what minds work on, what stuff they are made of, what its relation is to objects in the external world, to other minds, to events of history, and so on. In effect, epistemology is a theoretical discipline that studies the nature of the knowing process, the relationship between the knowing subject and the object of knowledge. That is, it focuses on the understanding of all factors inherent in a typical knowing situation and how these factors relate in order to generate knowledge. Furthermore, epistemology seeks to establish criteria to assess our knowledge claims, how reliable the sources of our knowledge are as well as how justified are our claims to knowledge. In this sense, on the one hand, epistemology is normative, as it sets standards for examining our knowledge claims. On the other hand, psychology is descriptive as it describes the causal connections and laws among mental processes.

Finally, both epistemology and psychology are prescriptive in nature as their insights form part of the information required in the understanding of the problems inherent to human existence.

1.4. Epistemology and Metaphysics

The term „metaphysics" literally means, "beyond the physical", or "beyond physics". It is a derivative of the Greek expression *ta meta ta physika* meaning that which comes after physics. It came from the position of an untitled book by Aristotle in the classification of his works made by Andronicus of Rhodes which focuses on subjects that transcend physics. The subject of physics dealt with the physical world while the subjects of metaphysics were then called "the treatise after the physical treatises (Fadahunsi: 2008) In this way, metaphysics is, then, thought of as the study of the ultimate nature of things or with a reality beyond that of immediate experience. This explains why metaphysics is seen as the branch of philosophy that investigates questions concerning the nature of reality and that moves beyond scientific inquiry to exploring questions about self, God, freewill and the origin of the universe (Pence: 2000) This description implies that metaphysics

focuses on abstract qualities than with a scientific observation and analysis of factual matters. Although the existence of physical entities is implicitly explained in metaphysical theories, it is however, not the major concern of metaphysics. In order to shed more light on the concern of metaphysics as discussed above, the following elements as listed by Aja (1999:2) outline the focus of metaphysics:

1.2.1. That which does not appear to the senses;

1.2.2. Abstract concepts such as essence, existence, goodness, etc.

1.2.3. Explanation of the nature of being;

1.2.4. Explanation of the origin and structure of the cosmos.

In relation to epistemology, the above explanation of the meaning of metaphysics shows that it concerns itself with knowledge beyond the physical. It is at this point that the link between metaphysics (the branch of philosophy that deals with the understanding of realities beyond the physical) and epistemology (the branch of philosophy that deals with the questions about the nature, sources and limit of human knowledge) is discernible.

The first point of call on the link between metaphysics and epistemology the fact is that they are both principal branches of philosophy. In effect, they both raise fundamental questions about the world and our place in it. The former investigates the nature of reality while the latter investigates the possibility of knowing the nature of reality. In order to understand this point clearly, you need to pay attention to Stumpf‟s (1999:5) explanation of the emergence of philosophical thinking. In his words "philosophy began when humans‟ curiosity and wonder caused them to ask the questions: what are things really like? And how can we explain the process of change in things? Two important points are discernible from Stumpf‟s explanation: (1) metaphysics and epistemology emerged with the emergence of philosophical thinking (2) metaphysical and epistemological questions overlap. For instance, as a metaphysical question, the former centres on the issue of how things are really like independently of our awareness of them. The latter being an epistemological question focuses on our attempt to uncover and know the underlying nature of things in order to be able to explain it.

These two fundamental questions were generated due to the gradual recognition that things are not exactly what they seem to be to us, that "appearance" often differs from "reality". Thus, human curiosity about the nature of the universe comes with epistemological questions such as: What can be known? What is it to know? How do we know what we know? Is there a one-to-one correspondence between our knowledge of things and the things in themselves?

The point being stressed above is that, it is unclear how metaphysics can be done without at least implicitly functioning with an epistemological framework or how epistemology can proceed without some forms of metaphysical presuppositions. That is, while it could be said that

metaphysics begs the question of epistemology, it could also be said that epistemology begs the question of metaphysics. That is, asking what can be known presumes or implies the existence of something that can be known, some sort of reality. After all, what is knowledge if it is not knowledge of something? Thus, metaphysics and epistemology are two sides of the same coin (philosophy). On one side of the coin, metaphysics is the study of finding out the way the world really is; on the other side of it, epistemology is the method or approach to the knowledge of the way the world.

1.5. Epistemology and Logic

One defining attribute of philosophers is the persistent effort to make their arguments well-stated and persuasive. In addition, they strive to make their positions clear, well-articulated, rationally compliant, cogent, precise and coherent. At the base of these attributes is logic. Logic therefore is the instrument of philosophical reflection; that which philosophers employ in guiding their thought.

In daily speech, we always express our beliefs about given issues. In order to clarify these beliefs we give reasons that are equally good, logic determines if the reasons we give are good enough to sustain our beliefs". (Onyeocha 1996:213) And when these beliefs are sustained with good reasons, we are at the threshold of the attainment of truth and by extension the acquisition of knowledge. In view of this, "logic is defined as that part of philosophy devoted to studying reason itself and the structure of arguments. It can be defined as the science and art of correct reasoning for it directs the mind in the attainment of truth. It can also be defined as the art of sound discourse". (Wallace 1977:13)

In relation to epistemology which is the theoretical examination of the processes involved in knowledge acquisition, logic is also concerned with knowledge. As against epistemology which reasons about knowledge, logic according to Gerald Runkle, (1978:8). "is not a reasoned discourse about anything! It is a case of thought turned back upon itself rather than being objectified in something external" That is, logic is simply thought thinking about thought. It is an examination of thought"s pattern and processes by thought. It is this abstractness that distinguishes logic not only from epistemology but from other disciplines; and this also makes it essential to them. Man by nature is a thinking being. It is a truism that sometimes our thoughts are misdirected and fall into error when they are not properly guided. This possibility of errors in thought and knowledge naturally raises the question whether rules can be laid down by adherence to which such errors can be avoided. In response to this question, logic concerns itself with identifying and applying these

rules and principles. Invariably, "logic is the study of the methods and principles needed to distinguish good (correct) from bad (incorrect) reasoning. (Aja 1993: 19).

Simply put, logic is the science of reasoning. Reasoning is a special kind of thinking in which inferences are drawn from judgments called premises to other judgments called conclusions. Through such inferences we claim knowledge of one thing or the other. In view of this, Onyeocha sees reasoning as "applying the reason; using the reason as a tool for acquiring knowledge, or for expanding knowledge that is already acquired.

This shows that logic is connected to epistemology as an instrument used in guiding and directing our thinking about the nature, types, sources and limits of knowledge. This ultimately is to ensure the validity of our knowledge claims.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Identify any three (3) disciplines related to epistemology.
2. Match the items in „A" with those in „B" to show the appropriate meaning of each.

A	B
Epistemology	a. the science of reasoning
Logic	b. empirical science that studies the mind
Psychology	c. theoretical study of the questions of knowledge

Conclusion

You can see from what we have studied in this unit that epistemology is related to some other disciplines such as; psychology, metaphysics and logic.

1.6. Summary

This unit on epistemology and related discipline discussed the connections and departures between epistemology and psychology, metaphysics and logic respectively.

1.7. Tutor-Marked Exercise

1. Write short notes on the link between
    a. epistemology and psychology
    b. epistemology and metaphysics
    c. epistemology and logic
2. briefly explain how knowledge is derived through reasoning
3. What do you think makes epistemology and psychology prescriptive disciplines?

1.8. Reference/Further Reading

Aja, Egbeke. (1993) Elements of Theory of Knowledge, Enugu; Autor-Century.

Runkle, Gerald (1978). Good Thinking: An Introduction to Logic. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Wallace, William A. (1977). Elements of Philosophy, New York: Alba House.

Onyeocha, Izu Marcel. (1996) Introfil: A First Encounter with Philosophy. Washington D.C: Council for Research in Values and Philosophy,

1.9. Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Psychology, Metaphysics and Logic

3.

A	B
Epistemology	theoretical study of the questions of knowledge
Logic	the science of reasoning
Psychology	empirical science that studies the mind

Unit 3: History of Epistemology

Contents

3.1 Introduction

This unit "The History of Epistemology" introduces you to the historical development of epistemology.

3.2. Learning Outcomes

It is expected that after studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Identify the personalities and explain epistemological themes in ancient Greek philosophy
- Identify the personalities and explain epistemological themes in medieval philosophy
- Identify the personalities and explain epistemological themes in modern philosophy
- Identify the personalities and explain epistemological themes in contemporary

philosophy.

3.3. Epistemology in Ancient Philosophy

The question “do we really have knowledge at all?” seems to be the first epistemological concern of the ancient Greek philosophers. The problem of motion was primarily the central focus of

philosophy at this era, however, inherently attached to this focus is the epistemological undertone that knowledge must be something unchanging or be unchangeable in any respect. In this sense, the pre-Socratic philosophers embarked upon an intellectual search for what can be considered as the primary, basic, unchanging primordial stuff behind all existent realities. “For Thales the primary stuff was water, for his successor Anaximander, it was unlimited, for Anaximenes, it was Air and for Heraclitus it was fire. (Ozumba 2001:12) In view of these divergent views on what accounts for unity in diversity, change in permanence, one in many, motion in stability and a host of other opposites it was assumed that no logically coherent account of these perplexing experiences could be given.

The above search for the unchangeable requirement or condition of knowledge became the propelling force behind the emergence of another epistemological theme. That is, the problem of perception in epistemology. This was captured vividly in the opposing philosophies of Heraclitus and Parmenides. Remember that in Unit 1 of this course material, we mentioned that the second basic question of epistemology is “The question on the sources of knowledge”. This question is actually the focus of the thesis-antithesis posture of Heraclitus and Parmenides in ancient philosophy. As Heraclitus stressed the fact of change, so Parmenides stressed the fixity and permanence of genuine reality.

The problem of perception in epistemology was initiated by Heraclitus as “stunning attack on the reliability of the senses in understanding reality.” Lamprecht (1955:12-13) presents Heraclitus‟ view on this issue as follows: “Most people are ignorant of even that which they see and hear. Eyes and ears are bad witnesses for men unless they have souls that understand the language… men who trust their observations of nature are like fools who are absent when present. The senses are faulty and apt to mislead, except when reason is able to penetrate beyond the surface appearance. Here, Heraclitus sees sense experience as an unreliable source of knowledge about reality. The senses therefore should not be trusted but subjected to the scrutiny of reason, as reason is the only effective means to the real nature of things. What appears, for him, is not real; the man who judges by sense alone will fail to grasp the law within nature; but the man who has sufficient reason will detect that all that he sees and touches changes in definite and intelligible ways. As such, “All things flow”, “flux alone is real”, change alone does not change.

In line with Heraclitus, Parmenides also sees sense-perception as a questionable source of knowledge of reality. According to Parmenides, as presented by Lamprecht (1955:14) “The world of many things and incessant flux, the world we seem to have visibly around us… is illusory and unreal … reality can only be defined in only one way, namely, as an unchanging, immovable and

indivisible unit". One important point to note here is that although Heraclitus and Parmenides are at variance as to the real nature of reality, that is, they see reality in different ways as changing and permanent respectively, there is however a common ground between them. This is the fact that they are both sceptical about the reliability or authenticity of what the senses present to us through perception.

In the post-Socratic era of ancient Greek Philosophy, Plato constructed a bifurcating epistemology that recognizes Heraclitus and Parmenides‟ change and permanence philosophies respectively. This is known as epistemological dualism or dualistic epistemology in which knowledge is classified into two levels: knowledge of forms and knowledge of appearance. In his epistemology, Plato ascribed truth, objectivity and permanence to the abstract realm of the forms while opinion, subjectivity and change belongs to the world of appearance, the physical world. He accepted the Parmenidean position that knowledge must be unchanging. The implication of this for Plato is that sense experience cannot be a source of knowledge, because its objects of knowledge are unchanging and can only be apprehended through reason by transcending sense experience into the realm of forms. In this way, Plato‟s theory of knowledge contains two major parts namely: the investigation into the nature of unchanging objects and the discussion of how those objects can be known through reason.

In the Republic (274-278) Plato employs the allegory of the cave to posit that the objects of perceptual experience are not objects of knowledge because they are subjected to change, are deceptive, less real and as such misleading. Rather the objects of truth and certitude are the ideals or forms, which are known intuitively by recollection as occasioned by a painful intellectual process known as dialectical reasoning. Here, Plato toes the line of Heraclitus on the view that everything in the world of appearance is in a state of constant flux, that is, things of this world experience perceptual change". The implication of the Platonic bifurcation is that no perception of any physical object (which he calls shadows) is absolutely and ontologically new. This is because the soul, the perceiving subject, has had a pre-physical experience of form of the shadows it is phenomenally experiencing now. In this sense, public physical objects only reflect what the soul had already experienced and now recalls. Thus, the objects of sensory perception are not real, since Plato rejects the reliability of sense perception in penetrating the real nature of things.

In his epistemology, Aristotle maintained the bifurcating approach of his master (Plato) on the problem of perceptual knowledge, but gave it a new interpretation. For Aristotle, everything that exists is some concrete individual thing, and everything is a unity of matter and form. "Substance, therefore, is a composite of form and matter" (Stumpf 1999:85) Contrary to Plato‟s dualism,

Aristotle holds that it is not possible to find matter without form or form without matter in nature; both elements are found in the perceptual object of knowledge. Contrary to Plato, Aristotle holds that form and substance of things dwell with things. There is no world of forms where things exist separate from their physical counterparts. In Aristotle‟s view, “Knowledge is possible as a fruit of observation and intellectual inquiry. Through our five senses (hearing, smelling, feeling, tasting, and seeing) we come to know about the things around us”. (Ozumba 2001:26) Aristotle frowns at Plato‟s rejection of the senses as reliable sources of knowledge. He affirms the efficacy of the senses as reliable instruments for knowledge.

Aristotle‟s epistemology aims to tackle the problem of unifying appearance and reality created in Plato‟s dualism. He therefore explains perception as the awareness of things as they appear to us. That is, I am perceptually aware of an object not the way it actually is but the way it appears to me. Thus, my knowledge of it is subjective. It is not the knowledge of how the object is, rather how I perceive it to be. To be able to discern how the object is in itself, I must be able to separate the essence of a thing from its particular categories or qualities. These two elements are contained in the perceptual object, not in any transcendental world. The essence of a thing is that primary element without which it would cease to exist. For instance, “if we can know the essence of a thing say, “tableness” as separate from the particular qualities; round, small brown, there must be some universal essence that is found wherever or whenever one sees a table and this essence or substance must be independent of its particular qualities.” (Stumpf 1999:86).It is however important to note here that epistemological dualism as presented by Plato and Aristotle in the ancient period is exclusively polarized (form and object are separated) in the former while it is essentially polarized (form and object are unified) in the latter.

3.4. Epistemology in Medieval Philosophy

The medieval period of philosophy was characterized by the confluence of faith and reason. It is a period of rational justification of faith. St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas are two notable representatives of this period. In his epistemology, Augustine gave pre-eminence to the soul over the body. He classified knowledge into two basic levels namely: lower forms of knowledge (sense knowledge) and higher forms of knowledge (knowledge of God). According to him, sense knowledge is derived through sensation. Sensation involves the use of the bodily sense organs to sense physical objects. Augustine holds that sense knowledge occupies the lowest level of knowledge because it gives us the least amount of certainty. This problem is occasioned by two things: “first, the objects of sense are always changing and, second, that the organs of sense change. For these two reasons, sensation varies from time to time and between persons” (Stumpf 1997: 127)

On the higher level of knowledge, Augustine holds that the human mind apprehends eternal truths from the objects of knowledge. When particular objects are sensed by the sense organs, the mind moves from there to higher level of general truth that transcends individual differences. The highest level of knowledge is, for Augustine, the knowledge of God. Sensation, therefore, provides the material for the ascension of the mind from the lower level of knowledge to the higher level of knowledge. According to Augustine, we become aware of the higher level of knowledge through divine illumination. In his words as quoted by Stumpf (1997:129). "There is present in [us] … the light of external reason, in which light the immutable truths are seen" Thus, divine illumination is not the origin of our ideas, but only that which lightens up our judgment in order to recognize necessary and eternal truths as contained in our ideas originally derived through sensation and contemplation of the mind.

In line with Aristotle, St. Aquinas affirms the efficacy of the human mind to arrive at certainty on any subject. He holds that the human mind is able to grasp the real nature of things within sensible things. It does this by abstracting the universal from the particular objects. For Aquinas it is the stimulation of the senses that enable the soul to actualize its potentiality. While the senses know the particularity of things, the intellect (mind) deals with the forms or universals. However, the particularity and universality of things dwell in the same object. There is no idea that is innate to the mind, all ideas are products abstracted from the objects by the mind. Thus, there could be no knowledge without sense experience, for nothing could be in the intellect that was not first in the senses.

3.5. Epistemology in Modern Philosophy

In the previous unit, it was shown that the analysis of knowledge was clothed in the garment of theology. What we can know and how we can know it is basically situated within faith. In the modern period, however, there was a paradigm shift as it was preceded by the renaissance period and the rise of modern science. The renaissance is the age of re-awakening of the human spirit which had hitherto laid dormant during the medieval period. This age experienced a paradigm shift from medieval synthesis of philosophy and religion to the rebirth of interest in Greek and Roman Literature. This period therefore gave back to philosophy its freedom from theology. On the other hand, the emergence of modern science on the strength of the renaissance turn-around opened up new methods of understanding nature devoid of religious interpretations.

In view of the above, some early modern thinkers such as Francis Bacon and Thomas Hobbes were fascinated by the methods of science and saw it as a new way of developing knowledge. As such, they sought to empty these methods for philosophical reflections. By so doing,

they created a sort of synthesis between sciences and philosophy, thereby kick-standing the modern period of philosophy.

The modern period of philosophy is characterized by the rivalry between rationalism and empiricism. The response of these two schools on the source of objective knowledge set the tone for philosophical reflections of this period. The rationalists school is represented by Rene Descartes, Baruch Spinoza and Gottfried Leibniz. Collectively, the rationalists claimed that we can only reach knowledge through logico-mathematical reasoning devoid of any sense experience. For the empiricists represented by John Locke, George Berkeley and David Hume, the route to knowledge is sense experience though they differ in emphasis on this claim. This makes it possible to identify different empiricist posture: Locke was representative empiricist, Berkeley an idealist-empiricist, while David Hume the most consistent empiricist.

Faced with this epistemological divide between rationalism and empiricism, Immanuel Kant proves to be a mediator between the two schools by postulating the possibility of synthetic a priori truths. This, in Kant‟s view is the case as knowledge is possible only within a complementary efforts of the senses and the mind. The human mind is conceived by Kant as a pragmatic agent that utilizes its categories in constructing knowledge out of the raw materials provided by sense experience. Hence, Kant‟s view is seen as constructivism.

It is important to note here that a detailed discussion of the epistemological thoughts of these three schools (rationalism, empiricism and constructivism) is not the primary focus of this unit. The focus of this unit is to highlight the epistemological positions dominant in the modern period. A detailed discourse on this is presented in the module three of this course guide.

3.6. Epistemology in Contemporary Philosophy

Epistemology in the early contemporary period took an idealistic turn. This is because post-Kantians like Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel rigorously pursued epistemology from the standpoint of absolute idealism. This idealistic tradition continues with the works of Neo-Hegelians like McTaggart and Bradley. In this light, epistemology became more and more esoteric and metaphysical as what can be known or how it can be known is tied to the manifestation of the Absolute idea.

In response to this absolute idealization of knowledge, a group of philosophers in the early part of the twentieth century reached a consensus that linguistic analysis is the major task of philosophy. This movement is known as the analytic philosophy or linguistic philosophy. It is important to note that these labels are umbrella terms that cover divergent views prevalent in the contemporary period of philosophy. One defining feature of these analytic philosophers is the belief that “analysis is the correct approach to philosophy and that language is its primary subject matter.”

(Lawhead 2002: 499) In view of this, these philosophers believe that the quest to acquire knowledge about the world is now the concern of science.

In effect, epistemology as a discipline is subsumed under scientific inquiry, and what is left for philosophers on knowledge matters is to clarify the meaning of knowledge claims by science. Moritz Schlick as quoted by Lawhead (2002:499) captures this point clearly when he says "science should be defined as the „pursuit of truth" and philosophy as the „pursuit of meaning". Lawhead (2002:500) divided analytic philosophy into five stages or movements as follows:

3.6.1. Early Realism and Analysis – introduced by G.E. Moore and Bertrand Russell in his early period. They focused on the search for clarity by means of piece-meal analysis of particular propositions.

3.6.2. Logical Atomism - Development by Bertrand Russell in his later works from 1914 – 1919 and in Ludwig Wittgenstein"s early work, the Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus (1921). Russell and Wittgenstein here see the task of philosophy as constructing a logically perfectlanguage whose syntax would mirror the metaphysical structure of the world.

3.6.3. Logical positivism – Developed in the works of the members of the Vienna Circle like Moritz Schlick, Rudolf Carnap, Otto Neurath, Feigl and A. J. Ayer. These philosophers sought to purge epistemology and philosophy of all metaphysical inclinations.

3.6.4. Ordinary language Philosophy: The Wittgenstein"s Model – developed from the radical shift in direction taken by Wittgenstein in his later period. Here, he rejects the notion of a logically perfect language in stages (2) and (3) of analytic philosophy. Ordinary language is perfectly adequate in our quest for knowledge; all that needs to be done is for analytic philosophy to cure philosophers of their distortions

3.6.5. Ordinary Language Philosophy: Conceptual Analysis – This was initiated by such thinkers as Gilbert Ryle and John Austin. They engaged in systematic explorations of traditional philosophical topics, using ordinary language as a guide for mapping the regions of our conceptual landscape.

The pursuit of analytic or linguistic approach to knowledge led epistemology to transcend its traditional mode of analysing knowledge as handed down by Plato and Descartes in foundationalism to a non-foundational epistemology. This resulted in the development of insights from epistemologists like Edmund Gettier, Roderick Chisolm, Keith Lehrer: John Kekes, Alvin Goldman, Ernest Sosa, Jonathan Dancy, C. I. Lewis, among others, which gave impetus to the justified-true-belief analysis of knowledge. W. V. O Quine took this tendency further by postulating a naturalized epistemology. This results in the divergence of views in the relativistic conception of knowledge which fully developed in the postmodern conception of knowle

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Identify the different historical periods of epistemology.
2. Faced with this epistemological divide between rationalism and empiricism, _____ proves to be a mediator between the two schools by postulating the possibility of synthetic a priori truth.
3. The pursuit of analytic or linguistic approach to knowledge led epistemology to transcend its traditional mode of analysing knowledge as handed down by Plato and Descartes in foundationalism to _____

Conclusion

You can see from chat we have studied in this unit that the history of epistemology is aligned with that of philosophy as each period of philosophy contains epistemological themes such as meaning, sources and limits of our knowledge.

3.7. Summary

This unit on the history of epistemology outlined the major periods in the development of the discipline and the key personalities as well as the major epistemological views.

3.8. Tutor-Marked Exercises

1. Briefly discuss Plato‟s epistemology as a synthesis of Heraclitus‟ and Parmenidean discourse on perception.
2. Briefly discuss the role of faith in medieval epistemology.
3. Briefly discuss the significance of the renaissance and modern science in the development of epistemology in modern philosophy.
4. Distinguish between the Wittgenstein‟s model and the conceptual analysis model of ordinary language philosophy.

3.9. Reference/Further Readings

Lamprecht, Sterling P. (1955) Our Philosophical Traditions: A Brief History of Philosophy in Western Civilization. New York: Appleton Century Crofts.

Lawhead, William F. (2002). The Voyage of Discovery: A Historical Introduction to Philosophy. 2nd Edition – U.S.A: Wadsworth.

Ozumba, G. O. (2001). A Concise Introduction to Epistemology. Calabar: Jochrisam

3.10. Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Ancient, Medieval, Modern and Contemporary Period
2. Immanuel Knat
3. a non-foundational epistemology

Publishers.

Plato, (1997) Republic (Trans.) Davies J. Llewelyn and David James Vaughan. London: Wordsworth.

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Unit 4 Recent Trends in Epistemology

Contents

4.1 Introduction

This unit on the Recent Trends in epistemology introduces you to new developments in epistemology.

4.2 Learning Outcomes

It is expected that after studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Identify new developments in epistemology
- Explain any new development in epistemology

4.3. Evolutionary Epistemology

The term evolutionary epistemology (EE) was coined by Donald Campbell. It is a naturalistic approach to epistemology as it emphasises the centrality of natural selection to our cognitive abilities. It is an alternative approach to the understanding of our cognitive process and it is traceable to the Darwinian revolution of the nineteenth century. Evolutionary epistemology, according to Ozumba (2005: 201) is an "epistemological system which is based upon the conjecture that cognitive activities are product of evolution and selection and that … evolution itself is a cognition and knowledge process". It sees human beings as the product of evolutionary development, and as such, as natural beings. By extension, their capabilities for knowledge and belief are also the products of a natural evolutionary development. Thus, there are some reasons to suspect that knowing, as a natural activity, could and should be treated and analysed along lines compatible with its status, that is, by the method of natural sciences.

Evolutionary epistemology is a recent attempt to address epistemological questions from an evolutionary standpoint. It involves, in part, deploying models and metaphors drawn to characterize and resolve issues arising in epistemology and therefore provides us with insights into how natural selection influences and shapes man‟s capabilities for knowledge.

4.4. Feminist Epistemology

Feminist epistemology is a recent trend in the analysis of knowledge. It is a position that articulates the place of values and emotions in cognitive inquires. Central to feminist epistemology is the concept of a "situated knower". This holds that a knower is not just a dispassionate inquirer but one situated to reflect within a given cognitive context which determines the knowing outcome. It argues that women are seen as inferior knower to their male counterpart because of the failure to recognise the fact that knowing is gender situated. Thus, it strives to utilise gender as an epistemic matrix in the analysis of knowledge.

This trend of epistemology argues that humanity requires a new epistemology, that is, a new conception of knowledge, different from the traditional epistemology which sees knowledge within the "S-knows-that P" explanatory paradigm. It argues that traditional epistemology assumes that a person, S, knows some proposition, P, if S satisfies certain set of conditions which are belief, truth and justification. In this way, traditional epistemology assumes that it does not matter who S is, S‟s subjectivity makes no difference in the assessment of S‟s claims to knowledge. In this sense, knowledge claims, especially scientific claims, are assumed to be objective and unbiased. In feminist epistemology, this is a mistake as the observer‟s subjectivity influences the inquiry. As such, we need to pay more attention to the nature and situation of S in the articulation of what counts as knowledge.

This feminist epistemologist criticism of traditional epistemology is against the background of the cultural stereotype of women as emotional beings. This conception perpetuates gender disparities in the process of understanding our emotional reactions towards objects or events. It fails to recognise the epistemic role of emotion in various experiences as it shapes the values that condition our knowledge of the world. As such, there is no such thing as an objective observer, that is, an observer free of value bias. To suppose that knowledge can be achieved only by distancing the investigator from his or her emotions is a mistake since knowledge is, at least in part, a function of our emotions. Thus, the androcentric character of traditional epistemology is a misconception of what the knowing process entails. Feminist epistemologists include Lorraine Code, Alison Jaggar, Simone de Beauvoir and Mary Wollstonecraft.

4.5. Genetic Epistemology

The word "genetic" is derived from the word "genesis" which means the origin of something. This explains why genetic epistemology (GE) holds that to understand what knowledge is, is to investigate its psychological and historical origin. In his book, *Genetic Epistemology* (GE) Jean Piaget outlines one of the current trends in the consideration of what validates or justifies a claim to knowledge. He links the validity of knowledge to the model of its construction and holds that the method in which knowledge was obtained or created affects the validity of that knowledge.

In his words, "genetic epistemology attempts to explain knowledge, and in particular scientific knowledge, on the basis of its history, its sociogenesis, and especially the psychological origins of the notions and the operations upon which it is based". These notions and operations are drawn in large part from common sense so that their origin can shed light on their significance as knowledge of a somewhat higher level.

Piaget believes that knowledge is a biological function that results from the actions of an individual and is borne out of change and transformation from one stage of life to another. He also states that knowledge consists of structures, and comes about by the adaption of these structures with the environment.

4.6. Humanizing Epistemology

The word "humanizing" is derived from the word „humane" meaning "having human face". In this sense, humanizing epistemology seeks to turn the attention of epistemological discourse to the moral dimension of knowledge. This trend of epistemology was initiated by Chris Ijiomah who in his book, *Humanizing Epistemology* (2014) contends that

contemporary epistemologists focus their attention on the process, evaluation or condition of knowledge at the expense of "what knowledge simply as the justification of their positions and not in terms of service to humanity. Philosophy, in his view, has also fallen victim of the attitude exemplified by naturalized and re-normalized epistemologies. He notes that though the primary attraction to knowledge may be to satisfy our curiosity; he adds that the ultimate aim of knowledge is to understand and organize reality in order to minister to the existential needs of man and his well-being. In this sense, morality becomes an inextricable component of knowledge. According to Ijiomah (2014:14) "knowledge is practically a moral affair". In view of this, to humanize epistemology is to see knowledge as having an end; the solution of the problem that generated and justified it. This means that to know is an acceptable phrase only when it has a corresponding action that satisfies human needs. In effect, knowing involves acting in a humanistic direction. In this way, humanizing epistemology conceives knowledge as a potentiality that finds its essence in actualization. It starts from a mere disposition and terminates in a behavioural act. Thus, knowledge for the humanist epistemologists cannot be complete without the humanizing or moral side of it.

4.7. Naturalized Epistemology

Naturalized Epistemology is a recent trend in epistemology traceable to W.V.O. Quine. It is the attempt to natural sciences such as cognitive psychology, evolutionary biology and semantics. It is argued that the method of these sciences could be profitably used for epistemology. This involves reducing epistemology to empirical psychology and semantics, thereby treating it as a natural science. This means that epistemology should be naturalized or conducted in a scientific spirit, with the object of investigation being the relationship, in human beings, between the inputs of experience and the outputs of belief.

Quine is of the view that the assimilation of epistemology into psychology would contribute to progress in philosophy as it is experienced in the natural sciences. According to Quine (1997:2) "this ruling out of boundaries could contribute to progress … in philosophically interesting inquires of scientific nature". He argues further that in a naturalized epistemology, our experience of the world will no longer be justified by rational construction in terms of the stimulation of our sense-organs by objects. Rather, our justification will be confined to the study of the genesis and causal relations of our knowledge.

4.8. Social Epistemology

The term "social epistemology" is a nomenclature that marks the social turn of epistemology. It is an epistemological position that emphasizes the need to examine the connection between social realities and cognitive processes. Audi (1999) sees social epistemology as "the study of the social dimensions or determinants of knowledge, or the ways in which social factors promote or perturb the quest for knowledge". In effect, epistemology takes a social turn whenever it investigates the basic epistemological questions about the nature, sources, and scope of knowledge with the consideration of how the individual is embedded in social circumstances and how he/she relies on other people and aspects of social environment in order to gain knowledge.

Social epistemology is a paradigm shift in the understanding of the determinants of knowledge from subjective epistemology to group epistemology – subjective epistemology is the traditional approach to cognitive questions that focuses largely on how the individual comes to know about the world, other minds and other subject matters. In this sense, traditional or subjective epistemology seeks to establish the resources available to the individual in terms of evidence, experience and what sort of capabilities such as reason, intuition can be brought to bear to resolve epistemological questions such as what can I know? How do I know it? What is reasonable for one to believe? What justifies one"s knowledge about things? There are three basic approaches to social epistemology. We shall classify them in this study guide as:

4.8.1. Social Dependency of Knowledge: This approach to social epistemology underscores the social dependent character of the individual on certain kinds of social factors in the process of knowing and forming reasonable beliefs. It views social epistemology as simply a description of how social factors influence beliefs, without concern for the rationality or truth of these beliefs.

4.8.2. Integrative Specialism: This is the division of labour approach to intellectual inquiry. It is the dimension of social epistemology that investigates how individuals (experts) work together to acquire knowledge. This is usually obtainable in the content of a research team or other teams of investigators where each expert focuses on a segment of the research for quality investigation. The findings of each specialist are then integrated in order to achieve the main objective of the research. An example of this form of social epistemology is what is termed interdisciplinary inquiry where division of epistemic labour is required.

4.8.3. Group-Individual knowledge: This approach to social epistemology investigates the possibility of reducing group knowledge to the levels of individuals within the group. Here, the individual comes to know something only because that knowledge is parasitic on what the group knows. For instance, if we say that the federal

government of Nigeria knows that state policing is an imperative for national security this entails that the official(s) of government knows this on the basis of the knowledge of the body which they belong.

4.9. Moral Epistemology

Zimmerman (2010:1) sees moral epistemological as "the study of whether and how we know right from wrong. The expression „moral epistemology" suggests a sort of link between epistemology and ethics. Epistemology on the one hand is the study of the nature and justification of knowledge. It is the critical evaluation of belief and knowledge. According to Audi (1999:223) epistemology is the study of (a) the defining features, (b) the substantive conditions, (c) the limits of knowledge and justification. (Audi 233) On the other hand, ethics is the philosophical study of morality. It is the branch of philosophy which deals with the morality of human conduct. It is the critical evaluation of human conduct in respect of its moral worth. Lacey (1976:60) sees it as "an inquiry into how men ought to act in general, not as a means to a given end but as an end in itself".

From the above definitions, it is clear that epistemology and ethics are both concerned with evaluation: epistemology deals with evaluation of beliefs and knowledge, ethics with evaluation of conduct. This common concern has attracted the interest of philosophers to examine the ways in which the two kinds of evaluation relate to one another. Philosophers" exploration of these relationship; have resulted into one of the current trends in epistemology tagged „moral epistemology". Moral epistemology is the discipline at the intersection of ethics and epistemology, that studies the epistemic status and relations of moral judgements and principles, (Audi 508). It has developed out of an interest common to both ethics and epistemology. In epistemology, the focus is on the questions of justification and justifiability of statements or beliefs, while in ethics, it concerns the justification and justifiability of actions as well as judgements of actions and also general principles of judgements. So, moral epistemology is the study of what would be involved in knowing, or being justified in believing moral propositions. It is therefore the sub-discipline of epistemology that examines the foundations of moral judgement. It basically raises questions about our justification for claiming that what is moral must be seen in a certain way. In other words, it examines the epistemic framework within which we come to know that an action is good or bad That is, how do we figure out what is good action or bad action? Thus, moral epistemology investigates the sources and patterns of moral understanding. And it examines the epistemic issues in moral theories. Moral epistemology questions the epistemic warrant for the claim that morality

should be in a certain way. It raises questions such as: To what extent does morality consist in or depend on knowledge? Is moral knowledge possible? How do we know right from wrong? Can normative claims be true or false? If so, how can they be known to be true or false? If not, what status do they have, and are they capable of justification, how can they be justified? Does the justification of normative claims differ with respect to particular claims and with respect to general principles? Moral epistemology studies these and related questions about our understanding of virtue and vice.

4.10. Integrative Epistemology

Integrative Epistemology is a recent approach to epistemology that provides an all-inclusive explanatory model for our cognitive process. It is an offshoot of integrative humanism, a philosophical movement established by G. O. Ozumba in 2010 with the publication of his book, *Philosophy and Method of Integrative Humanism*. This philosophical movement emphasizes a ratio-spirit-centric approach in understanding human existence, interpreting human affairs and a rigorous philosophical attitude which takes into consideration, the spiritual and mundane dimension of human existence and reality. It is a philosophical position that adopts a guided but open minded approach to issues of knowledge as they affect humans directly or indirectly. This attitude takes a synoptic view of all parts of reality.

Integrative epistemology is a response to the exclusive explanatory posture of most epistemological theories from the ancient, medieval, modern, and contemporary as well as postmodernist periods of philosophy. It recognizes the contributions of these theories as they have shown that each angle of perception of reality is unique and necessary in our attempt to understand reality.

In a way to create a comprehensive epistemological explanatory model, integrative epistemology holds that the insightful elements of the various epistemic models such as empiricism, rationalism, constructivism, causal theory of knowledge, reliabilism, and so on must be integrated within a content of inquiry. Knowledge, therefore, according to Ozumba (2015:229) must be contextual, goal-oriented and integrative. In this sense, knowledge becomes integratively contextualized, justified-true-belief. In line with this, Ibrahim (2017:278) sees the strength of integrative epistemology in the principle that "it recognizes and encouraged individual ingenuity and collective necessity in any epistemic process; as the unit (s) strengthens the whole while the whole serves as a protective belt to the process of knowledge acquisition". Knowledge for the

integrative humanists is meaningful only when it takes into cognizance the form of life, context, ideas, state of affairs and the beliefs necessary for such knowledge.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. _____ Epistemology establishes the link between epistemology and ethics.
2. _____sees knowledge as integratively, contextualized justified -true.
3. _____ is an approach to social epistemology which investigates the possibility of reducing group knowledge to the levels of individuals within the group.

Conclusion

You can see from what we have studied in this unit that there are various recent trends in epistemology. These are evolutionary epistemology, genetic epistemology, feminist epistemology, feminist epistemology, humanizing epistemology, social epistemology, naturalizing epistemology and integrative epistemology.

4.11. Summary

This unit on the trends in epistemology discussed various trends in contemporary epistemology.

4.12. Tutor Marked Exercise

1. Identify and discuss the approaches to social epistemology
2. Discuss integrative epistemology as an inclusive model of inquiry
3. Briefly discuss the feminist epistemologist. Critique of traditional epistemology

4.13. Reference/Further Readings

Lamprecht, Sterling P. (1955) Our Philosophical Traditions: A Brief History of Philosophy in Western Civilization. New York: Appleton Century Crofts.

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Plato, (1997) Republic (Trans.) Davies J. Llewelyn and David James Vaughan. London: Wordsworth.

4.14. Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Moral Epistemology
2. Integrative Epistemology
3. Group-Individual Epistemology

Unit 5 Epistemology and Human Existence

Contents

5.1. Introduction

This unit discusses the importance of knowledge to human life and the place of epistemology in human existence.

5.2. Learning Outcomes

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- Outline the importance of knowledge to human life
- Define belief
- Identify and explain types of beliefs

- State how belief systems are formed
- State the importance of epistemology to daily life

5.3. Knowledge and Human Existence

Human existence is like a dark jungle in the absence of knowledge. This is because knowledge is the light and compass with which the jungle of life is navigated. This explains why Aristotle, as quoted by Bartlett (1992:27), says "all by nature desire knowledge" this expression has become a major defining attribute of human life. The rationale for human curiosity to know is the fact that man cannot live a satisfactory life in an environment he does not understand. Knowledge is therefore a situational imperative for us as it makes us feel cognitively at home in our habitat. As Rescher (2003: xvii) puts it, "… the need for knowing one‟s way about, is one of the most fundamental demands of human condition." This perhaps explains, why contrary to God‟s admonition, man (Adam and Eve) decided to eat from the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil as well as right and wrong. We may have to sympathize with man for this defiant act since according to Christian (1990:174) "to know … is to survive and not to know or not to asses one‟s environment … is to lose the fight for survival".

One important attribute of knowledge in human life is that it is expected to guide and direct the course of our actions. This is the moral condition of knowledge which makes man an "epistemoral being", that is, one who is held responsible and accountable for his choice of actions as dictated by his knowledge to distinguish between truth and falsehood. This means that from the moment we acquire knowledge, we carry about with us a touchstone to distinguish between truth and falsehood, good and evil as well as right and wrong. In line with the foregoing, Ijiomah (2013:15-16) outlined the importance of knowledge to human existence as follows:

5.3.1. It adds to the positive process of our evolution. This means that it transfers us as a baby into an adult world. That is it takes us away from a life of immediacy; what we see, touch, hear or what is given, to the world of implications.

5.3.2. It is for our survival. In this sense, knowledge helps us to think, imagine, plan, investigate, and weigh the pros and cons as to enter into "a meaning contract" without which no good end can be achieved.

5.3.3. Knowledge helps us to take good decisions. It does this by providing us with logic ofrelations.

5.3.4. Knowledge helps us to be moral; this is because consciousness of what is right or wrong acts as a sanction against our conscience.

5.3.5. It makes inter-subjectivity possible

5.3.6. It ministers to our needs in many ways

5.3.7. It is constitutive in that positive changes in our societies depend on the level of our understanding.

In this unit, our attention is not basically to explain the meaning of epistemology as this is contained in Unit 1, Module 1 of this study material. Our focus in this unit is to establish the place of epistemology in human existence. However, a working definition of epistemology is not out of place. In connection with the objectives of this unit, Chaffee (2005:437) sees epistemology as "the area of study devoted to the questions of how to develop informed beliefs, construct knowledge, and discover truth" In this sense, epistemology seeks to establish normative criteria for what is to count as knowledge, truth and belief. This is achievable through the examination of the sources, nature and validity of knowledge. As we engage in this epistemic exercise, we develop the awareness of the need to separate genuine knowledge from opinion or mere belief.

In everyday life, becoming aware of the true nature of knowledge and belief, and how these thought systems affect us emotionally and behaviourally, is critical to achieving personal development and the satisfaction of everyday basic necessities. This is because our actions in daily life are usually conditioned by what we think is right based on certain beliefs or convictions we have. These beliefs help us explain why the world is the way it is and how we ought to behave. The totality of our beliefs forms a belief system which represents our philosophy of life. Then, what exactly are beliefs? How do we actually form belief systems?

According to Ibrahim and Ogar (2012:103) beliefs are conceptual tools in the understanding of the world we live in … they are building blocks of knowledge". Beliefs are the interpretative lens through which evaluation, conclusion or prediction about the world takes place. In addition, beliefs also help us to express judgment on people"s opinion, based presumably on convincing reason or evidence. The point to note here is that in everyday reasoning, we do not determine if a conclusion is valid solely on the basis of the statements we are given. Instead, we restructure the statements presented to us according to our interpretative lens (belief system) and then decide if a conclusion follows from the restructured statements. Thus, our belief system provides us with the conceptual framework within which we guide our decision making.

The above shows clearly that our belief system constitutes the intellectual foundation for our personal development and consequently determines how we perceive and relate to the world around us. Chaffee (2005:437) describes the ambivalent nature of belief system as he compares it to road maps that guide our destruction. He says that "your belief system constitutes the "map" you use to inform your decisions. If your mental map of the world is reasonably accurate, then it will provide reliable guidance in helping you figure things out and make intelligent decisions. On the other hand, if your mental map is not accurate, then the results are likely to be unfortunate and even disastrous.

In view of the fundamental role belief system plays in our life there is need to critically examine our belief system. This helps us to know the difference between what we really know and what we think we know as this empowers us to avoid falling into epistemic deception. This is the point where epistemology becomes relevant to human existence. The importance of epistemology to human existence includes the fact that it:

1. Helps us to fight absolute scepticism. Life will be meaningless where there is nothing to believe.
2. Saves us from epistemic deception as it helps us to differentiate between what we know from what we think we know.
3. Develops in us the awareness of our belief forming process.
4. Helps us to fight against dogmatism as we are equipped to constantly examine our beliefs.
5. Makes inter-subjectivity possible as it prepares us to see things in the other person‟s perspective.
6. Deepens the level of our understanding both as an individual and as a society.
7. Enhance our chances of building a better society.
8. Empowers us to build well thought out decision making process by providing us with logic of relations.
9. Enhances our moral consciousness as it provides us with better frameworks of understanding our moral choices.
10. Boost our chances for survival as knowledge is an existential imperative
11. Examine our belief system in order to determine if they are justified or not.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. makes man to feel at home in his habitat
2. To know is to survive True/False
3. _____are conceptual tools in the understanding of the world.

Conclusion

You can see from what we have studied in this unit that knowledge is of great importance to human existence.

5.4. Summary

This unit on epistemology and human existence discussed the importance of knowledge in human life. It outlined the meaning and types of belief. It highlights how a belief system is formed. Finally, it discussed the importance of epistemology to human existence.

5.5. Tutor Marked Exercise

5.5.1. "Knowledge is an existential imperative to man" Briefly discuss.

5.5.2. Identify and explain the two types of belief.

5.5.3. Briefly discuss the role of a belief system in human existence.

5.5.4. State the importance of epistemology to human existence.

5.6. References/Further Reading

Bartlett, J. (1992) Familiar Quotations. Boston: Little Brown.

Rescher, Nicholas (2003) Epistemology: An Introduction to the Theory of knowledge. New York: State University of New York Press.

Christian, James (2003) Philosophy. An Introduction to the Art of Wondering 8th Edition. U.S.A: Wadsworth.

Ijiomah, C. O. (20130 "Conceptualizing Epistemology" Kyrian Ayiba Ojong and Elijah Okon John (eds.) Living Issues in Epistemology Uyo: El-Johns Publishers.

Chaffee, John (2005) The Philosopher‟s Way: thinking critically about Profound Ideas: New York: Pearson Prentice Hall.

Ibrahim, Adekunle A. and Joseph N. Ogar (2012) "Wisdom, Knowledge and Belief" Asira E. Asira et al (eds) Topics in Contemporary Epistemology. Calabar: Jochrisam Publishers.

5.7. Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Knowledge

2. True

3. Belief

Module 2: Meaning and Nature of Knowledge

Unit 1 What is Knowledge?

1.1 Introduction

This unit “what is knowledge?” focuses on the usage of the expression “to know” and the definition of knowledge in epistemology.

1.2. Learning Outcomes

It is expected that after studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Identify and explain the different usages of the expression “to know”
- Define knowledge as used in epistemology.

1.3. The usages of the Expression “To know”

In the grammatical sense, the word „knowledge“ is the noun form of the verb “to know”. To know in this sense means to be in a cognitive state of mind as regards a particular state of affairs. This state of affairs can be categorized into three classes which equally represents the major usages of the word „know“. These are:

i. Knowing how: This has to do with the ability to engage in a certain activity. Usually, it is a learned ability like “to know how to swim or drive a car, to know how to behave myself” (Ayer 1956:8). It involves having the technical know-how or being aware of the steps involved in carrying out a task. It also includes knowing how to do something without having learnt it. That is, knowing by instinct or being genetically programmed to act in specific way. For instance, babies know how to cry immediately after birth.

ii. Knowing by acquaintance: This is based on direct non-propositional awareness of something. It occurs by receiving the perceptual features of an object of sense experience through physical contact. For instance, “knowing in the sense of being familiar with, a person or a place; or knowing something in the sense of being able to recognize or distinguish it, as when we claim to know an honest man when we see one or to know butter from margarine (Ayer 1956:8)

iii. Knowing that: This is the propositional sense of the word „knowledge“. It involves knowing that something is the case. It is a declarative affirmation of a state of affair.

That is, claiming that some situations or state of affairs actually occurs or exists. You do not have knowledge until you are in a position to claim that something is the case. Knowledge is simply propositional; it involves an expressive awareness of truth. Simply put, it is the sense, or senses, in which to have knowledge is to know that something or another is the case (Ayer 1956: 8).This is the sense in which the word "knowledge" is used in epistemology.

1.4. What Knowledge is

The question „what is knowledge?“ is a basic and problematic question in epistemology. This is because what knowledge entails has been a centre of controversy in epistemological discourse. However, the attempt here is to give what can be seen as a working definition of knowledge. Knowledge can be defined as the state of awareness of a given fact or information. It is simply the state of understanding or information acquired through learning or experience. This explains why the *Chambers Encyclopaedic English Dictionary* (1994: 703) sees knowledge to be any of the following; „to be aware of something; to be certain about it; to learn and remember something; to have understanding or grasp of the object of knowledge; to be familiar with something; to be able to recognize or identify something; ability to distinguish between things; to have enough experience and training; to be intimate with something".

In epistemology, one thing that stands out about any definition of knowledge is the attribute of certainty. Being certain about our claim to knowledge provides clear-cut criteria for separating knowledge from non-knowledge or belief and opinion. Knowledge therefore carries the mark of certainty, assurance and indubitability. If we are mistaken about what we claim to know, are we still justified in claiming to know it? Obviously not! It is actually the search for this condition of certainty that gave rise to the standard and famous definition of knowledge in epistemology as justified true belief. This definition holds that knowledge entails three necessary and jointly sufficient conditions, namely, belief, truth and justification. That is, if you claim to know a proposition; you must believe it, it must be true and there must be good reasons to justify that you know it. Although, there is an on-going debate over the adequacy of this definition of knowledge in epistemology, it still remains the centre of our understanding of what knowledge is.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Knowing can be categorized into three classes namely
2. In epistemology, what are the three conditions of knowledge?
3. Identify any five (5) ways knowledge can be defined.

Conclusion

You can see from what we have studied in this unit that in epistemology knowledge is defined as justified true belief.

1.5. Summary

This unit on what knowledge is described knowledge as a state of awareness and as a justified true belief.

1.6. Tutor-Marked Assignment

1.3.1. Explain the attribute of certainty in knowledge

1.3.2. Why is the definition of knowledge problematic?

1.3.3. Briefly explain the definition of knowledge as justified true belief.

1.7. References/Further Readings

Ayer, A. J. (1956). The Problem of Knowledge, London: Penguin Books.

Allen, Robert (1994) Chambers Encyclopaedic English Dictionary. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

1.8. Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Knowing how, knowing by acquaintance, Knowing that
2. Justification, true and belief
3. Knowledge can be defined as the state of awareness of a given fact or information. It is simply the state of understanding or information acquired through learning or experience. Knowledge can be seen as any of the following; „to be aware of something; to be certain about it; to learn and remember something; to have understanding or grasp of the object of knowledge; to be familiar with something; to be able to recognize or identify something; ability to distinguish between things; to have enough experience and training; to be intimate with something".

Unit 2: Conditions of Knowledge

Content

2.1 Introduction

This unit introduces you to the basic conditions of knowledge as justified true belief.

2.2. Learning Outcomes

It is expected that after studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Identify the basic conditions of knowledge
- Explain belief as a condition of knowledge
- Explain truth as a condition of knowledge
- Explain justification as a condition of knowledge.

2.3. Belief as a Condition of knowledge

In the analysis of knowledge in epistemology, usually appears as the first condition of knowledge. This is because belief serves as a starting-point in the process of knowledge acquisition. For someone to claim knowledge that P (where P stands for any proposition or statement) it necessarily follows that the person believes that P. Knowing P implies believing P. in this sense, belief is a condition of knowledge. But, what is a belief?

According to Pence (2000:6) "belief is a mental acceptance of a statement as true". This means that the truth of a claim is affirmed simply by accepting it to be so, without any act of rigorous questioning. In effect, beliefs are the conceptual tools of understanding and serve as building blocks of knowledge. They represent the interpretative lens within which evaluation, conclusion, or prediction about the world take place.

There are two principal views on the nature of beliefs: the dispositional view and the state-object view. The dispositional view sees beliefs as dispositions to behave in a certain way, and nothing more. For instance, to believe that the drink before me is poisoned is to be disposed to act in a manner appropriate to its being poisoned. That is, to avoid drinking the beverage at all costs and to prevent others from drinking it as well. Alexander Bain (1859:351) shares this behavioural description of belief when he writes that "belief has no meaning except in reference to our action; not mere conception that does not directly or indirectly implicate our voluntary exertions can ever amount to the state in question". The state object view, on the other hand, states that belief consists of a special relation between a person and an object of belief. There are two elements within this

view; a person‟s state of believing and the object of belief. This means that, to believe that God exists is to be related in a special manner to God (the object of belief). Thus, belief is relational in nature. That is, there is a link between the one that believes and what is believed.

Although, the two views stated above see belief differently, there is a point of agreement between them. This is the point that a belief is dispositional psychological state of an individual towards the object of belief. This shows that to know requires that a knower be psychologically connected to a known proposition. So, to know something is to believe it, however, to believe it, is not to know it since belief can typically be false. This means that knowledge requires belief but belief does not require knowledge.

2.4. Truth as a Condition of Knowledge

The analysis of knowledge in epistemology shows that truth is a necessary and basic requirement for knowledge. To know P, requires that P is true. That is, to know it is to know it to be true. If something is in the actual sense known, then it categorically cannot be false. For instance, you know that all Nigerians are West Africans only if it is true that they are all West Africans. Thus, knowledge has a truth requirement. According to the traditional conception of knowledge, knowledge without truth is inconceivable. It is in view of this important place of truth in the conception of knowledge that truth has become a subject of analysis among philosophers. They seek to find out the nature and the constitute elements.

In response to the question "what is truth?" many philosophical theories have emerged with the attempt to articulate the meaning and nature of truth. However, the dominant approaches to the definition of truth are correspondence, coherence and pragmatic theories. The analysis of these theories is the focus of unit 3 of module 4 of this study guide.

2.5. Justification as a Condition of Knowledge

Knowledge is not simply true belief. Some beliefs are the result of lucky guess and surely do not qualify as knowledge. That is, a groundless conjuncture might be true, and be believed by a person, but still would not constitute knowledge. For instance, a football spectator predicts that a match will be a goalless score line. And as it turns out, that is what it is. "I knew it!" he exclaims in triumph. We feel irritated because we are convinced that he did not really know it; he only guessed it and the guess turned out in his favour. The question here is, what is lacking? What is lacking is the evidence. To know it, he must have good reason to believe it. His statement cannot be just a "shot in the dark". Knowledge requires that a belief condition is satisfied, it also requires that the satisfaction of the belief condition be appropriately related to the satisfaction of the truth condition. And ultimately, the truth must not be stumbled upon, it must have adequate evidence or reason which justifies it. Justification is the reason or evidence presented to back up a true belief which makes it to stand up to scrutiny.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Belief required knowledge
   True/False
2. To know P, is to know that P is true
   True/False
3. Identify the two principal views on the nature of belief.
4. Identify the three approaches to the meaning of truth.

Conclusion

You can see from what we have studied in this unit that belief, truth and justification are the basic required conditions for knowledge in epistemology.

2.6. Summary

This unit on conditions of knowledge discussed the three basic conditions which are belief, truth and justification.

2.7. Tutored-Marked Exercises

1. Identify and explain the three basic conditions of knowledge
2. Write short notes on the following
   a. State-object view of belief
   b. Dispositional view of belief
3. Clearly establish the link between belief and knowledge

2.8 References/Further Reading

Pence, Gregory (2000). A Dictionary of Common Philosophical Terms. McGraw-Hill. Company.

Bain, Alexander (1859). Emotions and the Wills. London: Longman.

2.9 Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercise

1. True
2. True

3. The dispositional view and the state- object view.

4. Correspondence, coherence and pragmatic theories

Unit 3: Knowledge Situation

Contents

3.1 Introduction

This unit "knowledge situation" introduces you to the basic elements required in a typical knowing process.

3.2. Learning Outcomes

It is expected that after studying this unit, you should be able to:

a. Define knowledge situation
b. Identify and explain the required elements in the process of knowing.
c. Present a diagrammatic sketch of knowledge situation

3.3.What is knowledge situation?

Knowing about the world around us is a process that involves certain elements. This process involves the interplay of the knowing elements in order to arrive at what is to be described as knowledge. In view of this, Aja (1993:28) defines knowledge situation as "the interaction of factors that directly or indirectly contributes to the knowing process. It concerns the question of the relation of the knower (self), sense data experienced and things known (world)".

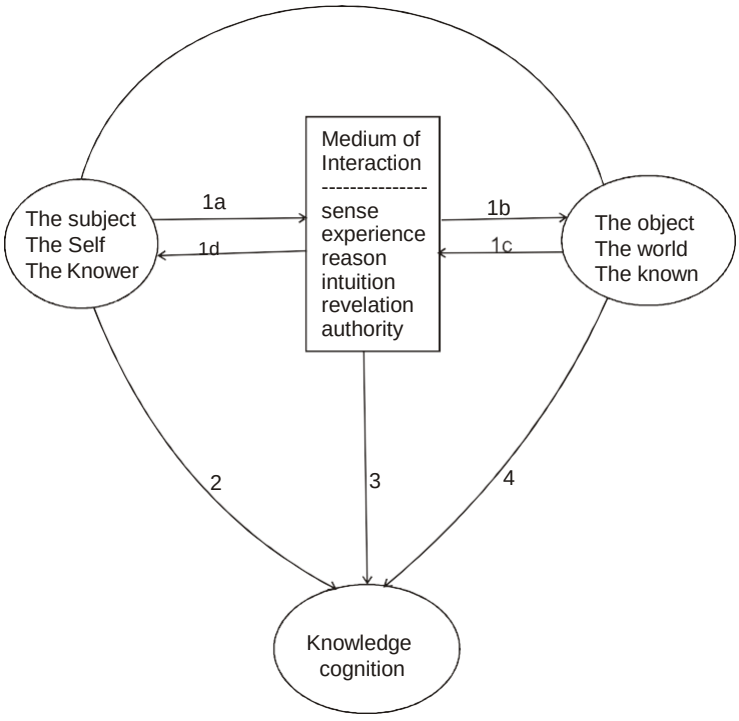
A careful look at the above descriptive of knowledge situation reveals three basic elements required for a knowing process to take place. These are: the knower (subject), the known (object) and the medium of knowledge. This means that any analysis of knowledge must

take into account the nature of the knowing subject, the objects to be known, and the means of coming to know the object. That is, there is an inseparable link between the knower and the known within any epistemic context.

Thus, any account of knowledge that fails to recognize the interactions between there three elements is prone to giving an incomplete picture of the knowing process. Aja (1993:75) shares the above characterization of the knowing process. However, he emphasizes that the knowing process starts from the point of ignorance and terminate at the point of knowing. In his words "… there is no knowledge, except when someone knows something. The one who knows is the subject, the something known is the object. The object is either the object to be known or the object that is known. The whole point to coming to know things is to pass from ignorance, in which case the subject is separated from the object, to knowledge, in which case the subject, by various means, comes to be related to the object in certain ways. These relations … constitute knowing the object." It is instructive to note that the means of contact between the subject of knowledge and the object of knowledge is not limited to sense experience. It also involves in various means which (depending on the context) includes: intuition, revelation, reason and authority.

3.3.1 Diagrammatic Representation of Knowledge Situation

In order to give a clear picture of the discussion in unit 3.1, this unit presents knowledge situation in a diagramme form with a logical symbolization that makes it easy to absorb.



The above diagram shows that there are three basic elements required in the process of knowing. These are; the subjective, mediative and objective. This equally shows that the knowing process may be initiated by either the subject or the object as the case may be. The former may seek understanding as shown in arrows 1a and 1b; while the latter may unfold itself to the knower as shown in arrows 1c and 1d. Finally, arrows 2, 3, 4 show the contributory role of the three elements required in a typical knowing process. Thus, knowledge is the outcome of a mediated interaction between the subject (the knower) and the object (the known).

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Identify the mediums of interaction between the knower and the known.
2. Identify the three elements in the knowledge situation
3. What determines the medium in a knowledge situation?

Conclusion

You can see from what we have studied in this unit that the process of knowing involves an interaction between the basic elements involved in the knowing process.

3.4 Summary

This unit of knowledge situation described the elements required in the process of knowing. It explained the interaction between the elements as a necessity for knowledge acquisition.

3.5 Tutor-Marked Exercise

1. What is knowledge situation?
2. Identify and explain the required elements in a knowledge situation
3. Briefly explain the process involved in knowing something.
4. Give a diagrammatic representations of knowledge situation

3.6. References/Further Reading

Aja Egbeke (1993). Elements of Theory of Knowledge, Enugu: Auto-Century, 1993.

3.7. Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercise

1. It concerns the question of the relation of the knower (self) , sense data experienced and things known (world)
2. These are: the knower (subject), the known (object) and the medium of knowledge.
3. The means of Knowing: whether sense experience, reason, authority, Testimony, etc.

Unit 4: Types and Sources of Knowledge

Contents

4.1 Introduction

This unit "types and sources of knowledge" introduces you to the basic classification of and the sources.

4.2.Learning Outcomes

It is expected that after studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Identify and explain the types of knowledge
- Identify the sources of each type of knowledge
- State the problems associated with each type of knowledge

4.3.Empirical knowledge

This type of knowledge is derived through the use of the senses; it is based on the confirmation of experience, observation and experiment rather than theory. By seeing, hearing, smelling, feeling and tasting, we form our conceptions of the world around us. It therefore means that through the instrumentality of the windows of the mind (the senses),

we receive information that enhances our chances of knowing how the world around us operates. The senses, according to the empiricists, are the channels through which we receive information from the external world. All knowledge received through the mediation of the senses will count as empirical knowledge. This explains why sense-experience is said to be the source of empirical knowledge. Thus, empirical knowledge is knowledge derived and validated by sense experience. It is also known as scientific knowledge, *a posteriori* knowledge, or synthetic knowledge. Empiricism as a theory of knowledge preaches this type of knowledge as the only genuine knowledge.

The problem with empirical knowledge is basically on the possibility of deception by the senses. That is, the senses are prone to many errors such as hallucination and illusion. This simply means that our senses due to their error prone nature and process of operation may deceive us in some situations when care is not taken.

4.4.Rational Knowledge

This is the type of knowledge derived through a process of pure reasoning that is devoid of human caprices, guess or sheer imagination. It is a rationative knowledge based on the principles of logic and mathematics. This explains why the rationalists who are the proponents of this type of knowledge claim that knowledge comes through logico-mathematical reasoning. The truths of rational knowledge are established outside our personal feelings and they are valid universally. In this realm of knowledge, objective meanings and logical relations are the paradigm of justification. The principles of rational knowledge may be applied to sense experience, but they are not deduced from it as they are simply a priori in nature. This is why rational knowledge is otherwise known as *a priori* knowledge as it is derived through the use of reason. The rationalist philosophers according to Ozumba (2015:45) hold that the mind of man is created with certain innate principles and truths which are known independent of experience.

It is however important to note here that rational knowledge does not account for all human knowledge as certain human experiences are better understood within an empirical paradigm, that is, within sense experience. For instance, we cannot rationalize about the salty nature of a particular pot of soup; rather we need the sense of taste (tongue) to establish its being salty or not. In addition, rational knowledge is not an immediate knowledge; it takes a process to achieve.

4.5. Intuitive knowledge

This is the type of knowledge acquired through a sudden eruption or immediate awareness of an idea with the use of intuition. Intuition is the pure light of the mind that is clear, distinct and direct. Intuitive knowledge is the knowledge a person finds within a moment of insight without going through a conscious process of reasoning. It is a direct insight gotten from the contact of the mind with an object of knowledge. It is an immediate, precise, and sudden idea that comes into the mind like a flash. Thus, it is a subjective knowledge that is not open to public scrutiny through observation or experiment. Rather, it is simply treated as an insight and considered as true intuitively.

4.6. Revealed Knowledge

This type of knowledge comes through the interaction between a mundane being (man) and a supernatural being (God). It requires the exercise of faith in the Supreme Being who discloses certain truths to man. These revealed truths are contained in various holy books of various religious bodies. Simply put, revealed knowledge is that type of knowledge that a divinely disclosed, uncovered or made manifest to man.

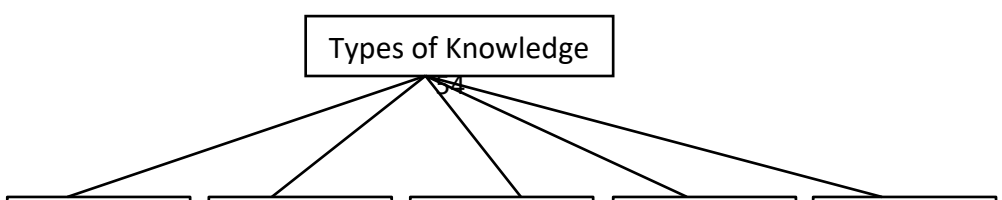
This process of uncovering is generally referred to as revelation. This explains why revelation is seen as the source of revealed or divine knowledge. It is however, not open to observation, empirical test or rational analysis as it is restricted to a personal encounter between the Supreme Being (who reveals divine truth) and the receiver.

4.7.Authoritative Knowledge

This is the type of knowledge acquired neither on the nature of the object of knowledge nor on the insight of the subject of knowledge but on the basis of someone else‟s authority. That is, it is an established knowledge which we accept without doubt simply because we feel there is no need to do so as they are validated by the claims of authorities in the field in question. For instance, the claim that light travels at 186,281 miles per second are taken for granted simply because authorities in science say so. In a nutshell, authoritative knowledge is knowledge accepted on the strength of an authority‟s claim. It is important to note, however, that authorities are not always right and we may be mistaken or misled when we take their views for granted.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Fill in the empty boxes with this



2. Fill in the boxes with the appropriate types of knowledge derived from each stated sources

a. Sense experience
b. Revelation
c. Reason
d. Authority
e. Intuition

Conclusion

You can see from what we have studied in this unit that human knowledge can be classified into five basic types based on the various sources through which they are derived.

4.8 Summary

This unit on the types and sources of knowledge identified and discussed human knowledge in five basic classes based on the various sources of knowledge.

4.9 Tutor-Marked Exercise

1. Identify and explain the basic types of knowledge
2. Compare and contrast intuitive knowledge and rational knowledge
3. Compare and contrast revealed knowledge and authoritative knowledge.
4. Briefly discuss empirical knowledge pointing out its shortcomings

4.10. References/Further Reading

Ozumba G. O. (2015) A Concise Introduction to Epistemology. Makurdi: MikroTicha.

4.11. Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Empirical Knowledge, Rational Knowledge, Intuitive Knowledge, Revealed knowledge, Authoritative knowledge
2. A= Empirical knowledge, B= Revealed Knowledge, C= Rational Knowledge, D= Authoritative Knowledge, E= Intuitive Knowledge

Unit 5: Problems of Knowledge

Contents

5.1 Introduction

This unit introduces you to the major problems associated with the process of knowledge acquisition.

5.2. Learning Outcomes

It is expected that after studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Identify the major problems of knowledge
- Explain perception as a problem of knowledge
- Explain memory as a problem of knowledge
- Explain abstraction as a problem of knowledge

5.3. Perception

The term „„perception"" has its origin in the Latin *percipio* which means obtaining of knowledge through the senses, and apprehension with the mind" (Reese, 1980: 442). Pence (2000:41) sees perception as the activity by which we with input from the senses, become conscious

of and interpret the world around us into meaningful information. In line with this definition, Allen (1994:953) explains that perception is "the process whereby information about one‟s environment received by the senses is organized and interpreted so that it becomes meaningful. Perception, according to Ozumba (2015:67), refers to the "awareness of external objects through the senses, or the mind‟s awareness of its own internally generated ideas or the awareness of ideas received from the senses".

A careful look at the above definitions of perception reveals that perception is a process with three levels of activities: sensation, reflection and reaction. Sensation is the immediate awareness of external objects through the senses; reflection is the mind‟s analysis of received sense data from the senses for understanding, and reaction is the behavioural output occasioned by the understanding gotten from the mind‟s activities. In this way, perception as a process begins in sensation which occurs when any one of our sense receptors (eye, nose, ear, skin, or tongue) is triggered by the appearance of sense data. These sense data are then subjected to our mental framework (the mind‟s categories) for analysis in order to gain understanding. Finally the understanding gained through the mind‟s activities generates reaction in the form of selecting a course of action among several options. Thus, to perceive is to:

i. Become aware of, directly through any of the senses;
ii. Become aware of, in one‟s mind; achieve understanding
iii. Become reactive, generate behavioural output.

There are serious problems involved with perception as a source of knowledge of the external world. Abel (1976:28) sounds a note of caution on perception. In his words "I know that the grass is green, because I can see it. Surely nothing is simpler than that! But sense perception as a basis for knowledge needs to be examined closely". The truth of the matter is that in the process of perception certain challenges obstruct the efficiency of the senses. These challenges includes: faulty sense organs, delusion, illusion, deception, misperception, hallucination, time-lag, phantasmagoria as well as social convention and belief system. These are serious problems that question the reliability of perception as a source of knowledge of the eternal world. The fact that we can be mistaken about our perception, due to the problems pointed out earlier, puts a question mark on the certainty and reliability of our knowledge. How are we sure we ever perceive the real things and that our accounts of them are true?

However, it is important to note that irrespective of the problems associated with sense perception. It still remains the fundamental access to the eternal world. As such, it proves to be the source of our knowledge of the external world. In view of this, Abel (1976:33) says "the road that leads from my sense perception to my knowledge of a world outside me is full of gaps, brambles

and obscurities. But it is the only road I have; if I refused to travel on it because of its risks, I would not ever get outside of me". It is in recognition of this ambivalence of perception that man has taken to perceptual enhancing gadgets (like telescope and microscope) in an attempt to boost his perceptual powers.

5.4. Memory

The term "memory" according to Audi (1999:479) is "the retention of or the capacity to retain, past experience or previously acquired information." Schnick and Vaughn (1999:204) quoting Cicero define memory as "the receptable and sheath of all knowledge" Memory, according to Ozumba (2001:84) is "the mind‟s store of remembered events, impressions, knowledge and ideas … that part of mind where ideas, impressions, knowledge are stored". One important point to note in these definitions is that memory is the mechanism of the mind to bring to the present past events or ideas. It is the mental record of what we need to know about the past. It is in view of this that memory is seen as the act of remembering, that is, recollecting what which is in the past when the need arises. It therefore means that, memory is an important element in the process of knowing. If we cannot remember what we have learnt, the scope of knowledge and its durability will be seriously limited.

In respect to knowledge, there are two major questions about memory: (1) what is the content of memory? (2) What does it mean to know on the basis of memory? In response to the first question there seems to be agreement that memory contains an image (mental representation) of a past object or event. However, the problem here is on the role of memory image in the knowledge of the past. The question is if there is a one-to-one correspondence between the object and event we experienced in the past and the image of same stored in memory. Does the content of our mind (memory image) have the same veracity as the object existing outside the mind? The problem this question generates is that there is no way we can jump out of our memory to cross check if the content of our mind is the same as the object of perception. An extension of this problem is the challenge of forgetfulness, misrepresentation, and time-lag occasioned by the gap between when we experienced the object and when we are re-calling it. It is argued that this gap reduces the liveliness and veracity of the memory image. In view of this, the authenticity of memory as a source of information is seriously dented.

The second question focuses on the justification of memory knowledge. From the definition of memory presented earlier, you will notice that memory is only required whenever the real objects are no longer directly available. So, when asked what makes you think you know, you surely will refer back to your memory by sayings "I remember it!" In this case your internal memory image

becomes both the reference point and the point of justification. Here memory becomes the judge in its own case. Also, if remembering that P, is knowing that p if and only if one believes that p because it seems to one that one remembers p, then the status of memory as a source of knowledge becomes problematic. This is because the justification of such knowledge becomes an endless chain of self-reference justification.

5.5. Abstraction

The term "abstraction" is derived from the Latin *abstractus* which means "to draw from" This means that abstraction is a process of drawing out or extracting something from another. Christian (2003: 200) sees abstraction as "an idea created by the mind to refer to all objects which possessing certain characteristics in common, are thought of in the same class" For Omoregbe (2007:141) abstraction is "the process by which universal ideas are formed from particular images formed in the mind from sensation" In the same vein, Hornby (1974:5) describes abstraction as "a visionary idea, the idea of a quality apart from its material accompaniment". In view of these definitions, abstraction involves the extraction of qualities or properties from particular concrete objects and treated as independently existing realities with universal applicability. This means that in the process of abstraction, a quality is extracted and taken as a generic term housing a class of objects as if it has an independent existence different from the objects represented. For instance, when we use the generic term "man" we have merely extracted the essence of all men and made it stand as a standard against which any particular man is to be considered man. It is therefore treated as an independent existing general idea that represent the totality of men.

In respect to knowledge, abstraction is like a double edged sword with positive and negative tendencies. In its positive sense, it helps us to cope with the myriad things that we experience in daily life. For instance, if we have to create a name for every particular object we ever encountered and a separate word for every single event we experience, then we would clearly be in trouble. In no time we would run out of words with which we fix each single item in our minds for recollection. To avoid this problem, the mind resorts to abstraction. With it, all objects or events with similar qualities are grouped into a singular package with a label. According to Jaegwon, (1998:1) abstraction helps us to organize the multiple sensory information into manageable structures. In his words, "we do this by sorting them into groups … describing them in terms of their properties and features, as "large" or "small", "tall" or "short", "red" or "yellow" or "swift". Once this is done, individual objects would no longer be necessary rather the whole package becomes the centre of our concern.

In its negative sense, abstraction, by ignoring the particular objects of knowledge, creates an epistemic gap between the knower and the real objects of knowledge, the genuinely perceivable

objects of our knowledge. Hence, abstraction takes us far away from the real things and goes after their essence. If we are not sure of physical objects, then can we be certain of abstract entities? In addition, if knowledge is established on the context of justification, how do we justify the knowledge of unreal, imaginative and abstract entities?

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Perception as a process involves three levels of activities namely:_____, _____and _____
2. Identify any five challenges of perception in the knowing process
3. ___ _____is the mental record of our knowledge of the past
4. The Latin word abstractus literally means

Conclusion

You can see from what we have studied in this unit that perception, memory and abstraction as useful as they are also constitute problem in the process of knowledge acquisition.

5.6. Summary

This unit on the problems of knowledge identified and explained the major problems of knowledge in the form of perception, memory and abstraction.

5.7. Tutor Marked Exercise

1. Identify and explain the three levels involved in the process of perception
2. Briefly explain the problem perception poses to the knowledge of the external world.
3. Briefly discuss the problem of memory knowledge.
4. Briefly discuss the ambivalent nature of abstraction in the process of knowledge.

5.8. Reference/Further Readings

Reese William L. (1980) Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion: Eastern and Western Thought, New Jersey: Humanities Press.

Pence Gregory (2000) A Dictionary of Common Philosophical Terms. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Allen, Robert (1994). Chambers Encylopedia English Dictionary: Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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Hornby, A. S. (1974) Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary. London: Oxford University Press.

Jaegworn, Kim (1998) Philosophy of Mind. U.S.A: Westview Press.

Omoregbe, J. I. (2007) Knowing Philosophy. Lagos Joja Press.

5.9. Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Sensation, Reflection and Reaction
2. Any of these five: Faulty sense organs, Delusion, Illusion, Deception, Misperception, Hallucination, Time-lag, Phantasmagoria as well as social convention and belief system
3. Memory
4. To draw from

Module 3: Major Theories of Knowledge

Unit 1 Rationalism

Contents

1.1. Introduction

This unit introduces you to rationalism as a theory of knowledge.

1.2. Learning Outcomes

It is expected that after studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Define rationalism
- Identify and explain the Central Principles of rationalism
- Identify key personalities of rationalism

1.3. What is Rationalism?

The question of the origin of knowledge is one of the most important questions of philosophy. One of the major answers to this question is given by a school of thought known as rationalism. The term „rationalism" is derived from the Latin word *ratio,* meaning reason. By definition therefore,

rationalism is a theory of knowledge that emphasizes reason or the intellect as the primary and only reliable source of knowledge. Lamprecht (1955:231) sees rationalism as "the principle that human reason is the final authority in all matters of opinion and conduct". Knowledge derived through reason is said to be a priori knowledge as it is achieved from rational abilities which nature has endowed us with. Although there were elements of rationalism in the teachings of Parmenides, Heraclitus, Socrates and Plato in the ancient period, rationalism became a full-fledged epistemological theory with the teachings of the continental rationalists. The most notable rationalists in the history of philosophy are: Rene Descartes, Baruch Spinoza and Gottfried Leibniz.

1.4. Central Principles of Rationalism

Rationalism as a theory of knowledge focuses on reason as the only reliable source of knowledge. In as much as the rationalists emphasize reason as a source of knowledge, they do this in varying degrees and nomenclatures. These are:

1.4.1. The emphasis on the doctrine of innate ideas. The doctrine of innate ideas stipulates that man possesses certain natural intellectual principles that exist prior to experience. These principles and concepts are born in us; present in our minds at birth, as part of our natural human endowment. This is a central claim of rationalism.

1.4.2. The rationalists are united in the belief that genuine knowledge comes through the mental processes of intuition and deduction. Intuition refers to a direct and immediate knowledge of something while deduction is the derivation of further truths or knowledgefrom the intuited ones through inference.

1.4.3. The rationalists affirm the existence of self-evident truths. This refers to axiomatic propositions that are clear, distinct and self-affirming. According to the rationalists, self- evident truths serve as solid foundation through which all our knowledge can be derived without recourse to experience. These self-evident truths are independent of our experience. According to Ojong and Ibrahim (2011:142).This is a method of operation the rationalists copied from logic and mathematics which they see as rational inquiries. This explains why Ozumba (2001:231) sees rationalism as "a school of thought that holds that knowledge is derived through logico-mathematical reasoning". Experience only confirms their reasonableness and logicality and is in no way responsible for their existence". This is usually the starting point of rationalists" reflective activity.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. The word Rationalism is a derivative from the Latin_____-
2. Knowledge derived through reason is known as _____
3. According to the rationalists, knowledge comes through two mental processes which are _____and _____

Conclusion

You can see from the discussion in this unit that rationalism is a major response to the question on the origin of knowledge. It emphasizes reason as the source of genuine knowledge.

1.5. Summary

This unit on rationalism discussed rationalism as a major theory of knowledge. It identified and explained the defining attributes of rationalism. It also identified the key personalities of rationalism.

1.6 Tutor-Marked Exercises

1. What is rationalism?
2. Identify and explain the defining attributes of rationalism
3. Explain the role of intuition and deduction in the rationalist method of inquiry.

1.7.References/Further Reading

Lamprecht, Sterling P. (1995). Our Philosophical Traditions: A Brief History of Philosophy in Western Civilization. New York: Appleton Century.

Ojong, Kyrian A. and Ibrahim Adekunle A. Fundamental Problems of Epistemology, Calabar: Jochrisam, 2011.

Ozumba, G. O. (2001) A Concise Introduction to Epistemology Calabar: Jochrisam.

1.8. Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Ratio
2. A priori Knowledge
3. Intuition and Deduction

Unit 2 Empiricism

Contents

2.1. Introduction

This unit introduces you to empiricism as a theory of knowledge.

2.2. Learning Outcomes

It is expected that after studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Define empiricism
- Identify and explain the defining features of empiricism
- Identify key personalities of empiricism

2.3. What is Empiricism?

Empiricism is the second general view of the basis of knowledge. The word "empiricism" is derivative of "empirical" which means physical or sensual. In this sense, empiricism is the view that all knowledge, with the possible exception of logic and mathematics, derive from experience. Miller (1992:220) sees empiricism as "the theory that all knowledge of actual,

existing things is delivered through the five senses". When empiricists say that experience is the basis of our knowledge, they mean sense experience, and therefore that the five senses (sight, sound, touch, taste and smell) are the foundation of all our knowledge.

According to Ojong and Ibrahim (2011:154) the central theme of empiricism as a theory of knowledge is captured by the statement that "nothing is in the mind which was not first in the senses". This is in opposition to the rationalists‟ notion of innate ideas as the source of our knowledge. Contrary to rationalism, an empiricist explains the contents of our mind, our knowledge and its acquisition within sense-based experience and observation. It takes experience as the touchstone of truth and the meaning we ascribe to it. It is however important to note that prior to the modern times Aristotle and St. Aquinas have expressed some forms of empiricism in their teachings. This is distinguished from British empiricism that represents the modern sense of empiricism. Modern empiricism finds expression in John Locke, George Berkeley and David Hume.

2.4. Central Principles of Empiricism

Empiricism comes with varying emphasis and degrees on sense experience as the source of our knowledge. As a theory of knowledge empiricism is generally understood as the position that sees sense experience as the source of our knowledge. But, the empiricists‟ arguments on this come with varying emphasis and degrees. The central principles common to empiricists‟ arguments are:

2.4.1. Rejection if Innate Ideas. The empiricists are united in the rejection of the rationalists‟ postulation of innate ideas. They claim that there are no such things as ideas before experience. All our ideas in the past, present and future are all products of sense-experience. There is nothing in the mind that was not initially in the senses.

2.4.2. The metaphor of *tabula rasa* or blank tablet. The empiricist as a follow up of their rejection of innate ideas described the mind as an empty slate devoid of any mark prior to experience. According to them, there was nothing inscribed on the mind from birth. That is, the mind is at birth a blank tablet, devoid of any inscription. This means that anything written on the tablet (mind) is written by the five senses.

2.4.3. The primacy of sense-experience. This is the hallmark of the empiricist response; sense-experience is according to the empiricist, the basis of human knowledge. Whatever is not given to us in experience is not knowable. All knowledge is *a posteriori* in nature, meaning derived and circumscribed by sense-perception.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. _____is one of the major principles of Empiricism.
2. According to the empiricists, sense experience is based on the five senses. These are _____, _____, _____, _____ and _____
3. The metaphor of Tabula Rasa can be alternatively called _____

Conclusion

You can see from the discussion in this unit that empiricism is the second major response to the question on the origin of knowledge. It emphasizes sense experience as the source of our knowledge.

2.5. Summary

This unit on empiricism discussed empiricism as a major epistemological theory. It identified and explained the defining features of empiricism. It also identified the two major brands of empiricism as well as the key personalities in each.

2.6 Tutor-Marked Exercise

1.What is empiricism?

2.Identify and explain the defining features of empiricism

3.Discuss the empiricists‟ metaphor of tabula rasa as a response to the rationalists‟ notionof innate ideas.

2.7. References/ Further Readings

Ojong, Kyrain A. and Ibrahim Adekunle A. (2011) Fundamental Problems of Epistemology Calabar: Jochrisam Publishers.

Miller. L. (1992) Questions that Matter: An Invitation to Philosophy. New York: McGraw-

Hill.

2.8 **Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercise**

1. Rejection of innate Ideas
2. Sight, Sound, Touch, Taste and Smell
3. Blank Tablet

Unit 3 Constructivism

Contents

3.1 Introduction

This unit introduces you to constructivism as a theory of knowledge.

3.2. Learning Outcomes

It is expected that after studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Define constructivism
- Identify and explain the defining features of constructivism
- Identify key personalities of constructivism

3.3 What is Constructivism?

The epistemological debate over the source of our knowledge of the external world dominated the modern period of philosophy. This debate was a two cornered fight between rationalism and empiricism. The rationalists claimed that we can have knowledge

independent of experience through reason. While rejecting this thesis the empiricists countered with the opposing thesis that all genuine knowledge is derived from experience. Faced with this divide between the rationalists and the empiricists, Immanuel Kant concluded that each position was partially correct and partially wrong. Thus, he attempts to

construct a mediatory view that incorporates the insightful elements of both rationalism and empiricism. In this sense, Kant‟s theory of knowledge is generally described as constructivism while Kant himself is identified as either a rational empiricist or an empirical rationalist. This is because of his bridge building status between rationalism and empiricism.

In his analysis of how knowledge is possible, Kant agrees with the empiricists that all knowledge begins with experience and must be related to experience. But he disagrees with them that all knowledge derives from experience. According to Kant (1961:171) "that all our knowledge begins with experience there can be no doubt … But through all our knowledge begins with experience it by no means follows that all arises out of experience".

In Kant‟s view man is made up of two major epistemological tools that work together to give knowledge. These are: sensibility and understanding. Kant as quoted by Ojong and Ibrahim (2011:171) "Sensibility is the capacity of the human mind to receive the contents of sense perception which are representation of objects. Understanding is the active power, of thinking about the objects of sense perception or intuition." That is, sensibility is the passive power; it only receives sensory intuitions while understanding is an active power that enables us to organize the sense perception into meaningful object.

In effect, the two powers (sensibility and understanding) play a complementary role in the process of knowledge acquisition. In Kant‟s words (1961:93) "To neither of these powers may a preference be given over the other. Without sensibility no object would be given to us, without understanding no object would be thought. Thought without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind… these two powers or capacities cannot exchange their functions. The understanding can intuit nothing, the senses can think nothing. Only through their union can knowledge arise". Kant explains further that all objects of sensation must be experienced within the limits of space and time. Space and time are pure forms of sensibility which are prior to sense perception. The human mind in Kant‟s view is structured in such a way that no object can appear to us except in space and time. This is because they are the referential framework within which we are capable of receiving objects.

In addition to the forms of sensibility (space and time) there are also pure forms of understanding; the categories or general structures of thought that the human mind contributes in order to understand physical phenomena. With these categories the human mind synthesizes the contents of sense perception for analytic unity. These categories are principles or rules of thinking or understanding. In view of this, Kant describes the knowledge that comes out of this process as synthetic *a priori* knowledge. Against the exclusive nature of rationalism and empiricism, Kant‟s constructivism sees knowledge as product of the contribution of inputs from sense experience and rational faculty. Rather than

our mind being the passive recipients of sense experience, Kant believes that the mind actively structures these experiences, using rational principles that are innate to us. This constructivism is the position that knowledge is "constructed" out of the joint operation of the mind and the senses. The mind provides the form while the senses contribution the content. And with these two materials knowledge is constructed.

3.4. Central Principles of Constructivism

Sensibility and understanding as the sources of knowledge. Kant‟s constructivism bridges the gap between rationalism and empiricism.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Constructivism as a theory of knowledge is a bridge between_____and _____
2. Kant holds that all knowledge begins and ends in sense experienceTrue/False
3. According to Kant, Man has two major epistemological powers.These are_____and ___
4. Space and time are the forms of _____

Conclusion

You can see from the discussion in this unit that constructivism is a mediatory view between rationalism and empiricism on the question of the origin of knowledge. It emphasizes the complementary role of sense experience and reason in the acquisition of knowledge.

3.5. Summary

This unit on constructivism discussed Kant‟s mediatory role between the rationalists and empiricists. It explained the complementary nature of sense experience and reason in the process of knowledge acquisition.

3.6 Tutor-Marked Exercise

1. Define constructivism

2. Explain what makes Kant an empirical rationalist
3. Discuss the role of sensibility and understanding in Kant‟s constructivism
4. What is the role of space and time in Kant‟s analysis of knowledge

3.7. References/Further Reading

Ojong, Kyrian A. and Ibrahim Adekunle A. (2011) Fundamental Problems of EpistemologyCalabar: Jochrisam Publishers

Miller. L.(1992) Questions that Matter: An Invitation to Philosophy. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Kant, I. Critique of Pure Reason, Norman Kemp Smith (Trans.) New York: St Martins Press, 1961.

3.8. Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Rationalism and Empiricism

2. False

3. Sensibility and understanding

4. Sensibility

Unit 4: Pragmatism

Content

4.1 **Introduction**

This unit introduces you to pragmatism as a theory of knowledge.

4.2. Learning Outcomes

It is expected that after studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Define pragmatism as a theory of knowledge
- Explain the pragmatist idea of knowledge
- Identify personalities in pragmatism

4.3.What is Pragmaticism

The questions "what can we know?", and "how can we know it?" is the concern of any epistemological theory. The responses to these questions are determined by what such theories of knowledge take as the nature of reality. Pragmatism as a theory of knowledge

evaluates theories or beliefs in terms of the success of their practical application. This is based on the belief that reality is not an abstract entity beyond practical conception. Reality to the pragmatists is neither dependent on nor independent of man‟s idea of it. They contend that reality amounts to the "interaction" of the human being with his environment. According to Aja (1993:67) reality to the pragmatists is "the sum total of what we "experience," man and his environment are the variables of determining what reality is. They are equally responsible for what is real. What reality is dependent on man‟s interpretation of it based on his experience within his environment. Thus, what is not

experienced cannot be real to man. The pragmatists conceive change as the essence of reality and as such we must always be prepared to alter the way we do things. In essence, the end and means of human activities must be flexible and open to continuous revision.

4.4. Central principles of Pragmaticism

From the foregoing, it is clear that pragmatism is a "philosophy of meaning and truth". (Blackburn 2008:286). In view of its conception of truth and reality, it affirms the instrumental or utility character of knowledge. According to Aja (1993:67) pragmatism approaches knowledge as an organism that:

4.4.1. Adapts to and interacts with its environment;

4.4.2. Uses ideas as instruments or plans of action; and

4.4.3. Retains ideas that work as true and discards those that fail as false

In response to the question on how knowledge is derived, pragmatism emphasizes the experimental method as a source of knowledge. Knowledge, according to it, is basically what we do and open to the test of criticism through verification. So, knowledge must be evaluated on personal needs, verification, consequences and output. The pragmatists see knowledge as a social and objective phenomenon that is situated within the framework of workability or practicability, Notable personalities of pragmatism include John Dewey, William James and Charles Sanders Pierce.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. According to pragmatism_____is the essence of reality.
2. "The real is the experienced" True/False

Conclusion

You can see from what we have studied in this unit that pragmatism sees knowledge as what has practical value or what works.

4.5 Summary

This unit on pragmatism discussed the epistemological views of pragmatism.

4.6 Tutor-Marked Assignments

1. What is pragmatism?
2. Briefly discuss the pragmatists‟ idea of reality.
3. Briefly discuss the pragmatists‟ conception of knowledge

4.7. References/Further Reading

Aja, Egbeke. (1993) Elements of Theory of Knowledge. Enugu: Auto-Century Publishers.

Blackburn, Simon. (2008) Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy. New York: Oxford University Press.

4.8 **Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercise**

1. Change
2. True

Module 4

The Notion of Truth

Unit 1 What is Truth?
Contents

1.1 Introduction

This unit introduces you to the meaning of truth, the differences between truth and falsehood. And also states the criteria for truth.

1.2. Learning Outcomes

It is expected that after studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Define truth
- Differentiate truth from falsehood
- Identify the criteria for truth

1.3.The Meaning of Truth

The notion of truth is one of the central issues in epistemology. This is because epistemology deals with knowledge and knowledge is only knowledge if it is true. This

qualifies truth as one of the basic conditions of knowledge. No proposition can be said to be true if it contains falsehood. What then is truth?

The above question seems to seek for a one-sentence answer. This is obviously not the case as truth is one of the most difficult concepts to define. Truth in all situations connotes what ought to be as it captures the way things actually are. Truth is therefore what is real, what is certain and that which remains what it is in the face of differing situations and circumstances. Truth is not subjected to human whims and caprices and is free from any form of error, since it is discovered but not invented. According to Omeregbe (2011:39) the human mind only discovers it, it does not invent it. It is in this sense, that Pontius Pilate in John 18:38 says "I find in him no fault at all". This suggests that truth is the absence of fault. It is spotless, without blemish and necessarily connotes a state of perfection. A better understanding of truth is possible if we adhere to a definition that embraces all its necessary and sufficient criteria. In this sense, truth involves stability, transcendentality, objectivity, and non-contradictory status. Truth in a simple term is the opposite of falsehood.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Fault is an intrinsic value of truth
   True/False
2. Truth is a state of imperfection
   True/False
3. The following are attributes of truth EXCEPT
   a. Stability b. Objectivity c. Relativity d. Transcendentality

Conclusion

You can see from what we have studied in this unit that truth is a state of perfection. And it stands out and cannot be subjected to any form of human manipulation.

1.4. Summary

This unit on what is truth discussed truth from its enduring characteristics and criteria. It stated the difference between truth and falsehood.

1.5. Tutored Marked Assignments

1.5.1. What is truth?

1.5.2. Identify and explain any three attributes of truth.

1.5.3. State any five criteria of truth

1.5.4. Differentiate truth from falsehood

1.6. References/further Readings

Omeoregbe, Joseph (2011) Epistemology: A Systematic and Historical Study. Lagos: Joja Educational Research and Publishers, 2011.

Ozumba, G. O. (2015) A Concise Introduction to Epistemology. Makurdi: Mikro Ticha.

1.7. Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercise

1. False

2. True

3. Relativity

Unit 2 Types of Truth
Content

2.1. Introduction

This unit introduces you to the basic types of truth.

2.2. Learning Outcomes

It is expected that after studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Identify and explain types of truth
- Give instances of each type of truth

2.3. Absolute Truth

This refers to truth that is the case at all times, in all places and in all circumstances. It is an enduring state of affairs that cannot change no matter the situation. It transcends the physical variations of things: it is not dependent on human whims and caprices. It is eternal,

unchanging static and the same at all times and ages. For instance, it is absolutely true that man is mortal and that all circles are round.

2.4. Objective Truth

This is the truth arrived at independently from individual subjectivity. It connotes truth without the bias occasioned by individual‟s perception, emotion or imagination. It is a product of inter-subjective verifiability. It has the quality of being publicly available for all to assess and confirm. It is otherwise known as scientific truth. For instance, it is objectively true that matter has weight and occupies space, a straight line is the shortest route between two closest points, water boils at 100c, the capital city of Nigeria is Abuja.

2.5. Subjective truth

This is the truth that is based on the subjective opinion of individuals as occasioned by the person‟s perspective, feelings, emotions or sentiments. Here the individual is the measure of what is true or what is false. For instance, when an individual says I have an idea in my mind, we do not have a way to confirm or deny this statement. He is the judge of the truth value of this proposition. Even if he tells us what the idea is, we cannot say if it is true or false. In this matter, he is the measure of truth as he alone can say if the idea is what he had in mind or not.

2.6. Relative Truth

This refers to truths that are relative to some particular frame of reference such as situation, circumstance, place, time, position, location, language and culture. It is determined from a relative angle of perception. For instance, it is relatively true that stealing is good when you are hungry or telling a lie is acceptable as long as you are helping someone.

2.7. Linguistic truth

This type of truth is derived from the structure and the use of language. There are three levels of linguistic truth. The first has to do with the conformity with acceptable rules of grammar, the second with the language game of a particular group of people and the third is the correspondence of the idea expressed by language to existent state of affairs. In considering linguistic truth three terms are of primary importance: meaning, sense and reference. For instance the word RUGA (Rural Gracing Area) in Nigeria elicits different reactions depending on the meaning of each group of people attach to it. The Southerners and Northerners seem not to have the same meaning for it. So, the truth of RUGA depends

on the meaning it elicits in the mind of the people. It has become a language game among Nigerians. Ozumba (2015:57) illustrates linguistic truth with the example that when a scientist says "God does not exist – we may mean that God cannot be observed, but in the form of life of Christianity such a statement will evoke serious attack as such a scientist is considered an apostate and an infidel.

2.8. Pragmatic truth

This type of truth is conceived from the perspective of usefulness, utility and workability. In this sense, something is true if it works in practice or utilized in solving a particular challenge. Truth becomes definable within the context of its satisfaction of human needs. If it fails to solve problems or prove useful in one way or the other, then, it is considered not to be truth, that is falsehood.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. _____truth depends on individual standard of judgment.
2. Truth based on a particular frame of reference is called _____
3. _____ is a type of truth from the perspective of usefulness, utility and workability.

Conclusion

You can see from what we have discussed so far that truth can be classified into six types: absolute, objective, subjective, relative pragmatic and linguistic.

2.9. Summary

This unit on the types of truth discussed six major type of truth and gave instances in which each can be located.

2.10. Tutored Marked Assignments

1.Distinguish between absolute truth and objective truth
2.Distinguish between subjective truth and relative truth

3.Write short notes on the following:
Linguistic truth

Pragmatic truth

2.11. References/Further Reading

Ozumba G. O. (2015) A Concise Introduction to Epistemology, Mikro Ticha and Associate Makurdi.

2.12. Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Subjective Truth
2. Relative Truth
3. Pragmatic Truth

Unit3 Major of Theories of Truth

Content

3.1 Introduction

This unit introduces you to the major theories of truth.

3.2. Learning Outcomes

It is expected that after studying this unit, you should be able to

- Identify the major theories of truth
- Identify the problems in each theory of truth

Major theories of Truth

In epistemology, the meaning and nature of truth has remained a controversial issue as theories and views abound. However, there are three major approaches to determine what truth is. These are the correspondence, coherence and pragmatic theories.

3.3. Correspondence Theory of Truth

This correspondence theory defines truth as correspondence between judgments and facts. It states that a proposition is true if it "corresponds" to some actual state of affairs; to some existing situations. For instance, someone says there are five oranges in the tray, and I look, take a count, and I say "that is true", that is, the proposition corresponds with the fact. This theory holds that, beliefs are true if we discover upon verification that there are facts to confirm such beliefs. But if, on the other hand, the beliefs cannot be confirmed by facts then such beliefs are false. It simply conceives truth as basically an affair or agreement between judgments and external realities. However, as straightforward as the correspondence theory of truth appears, it contains certain inadequacies. One of such inadequacies is in its reductive approach to truth. It reduces truth to empirical matters and as such fails to account for normative issues, faith, mathematical and logical statements.

3.4. Coherence Theory of Truth

The coherence theory of truth holds that a proposition is true if it is a member of a coherent set. It views truth as a relation between judgment and the system to which it belongs. In view of this, to say that a proposition is true is to say that it "coheres" or is in line with a specific comprehensive system of propositions. According to Hospers (1981:116) "Coherence is a relation among propositions, not a relation between a proposition and something else (a state-of-affairs) which is not a proposition." Contrary to the correspondence theory of truth, which sees truth as the correspondence of proposition to the state of affairs, the coherence theory situates truth in the logical relation among a set of propositions. Thus, a proposition P is not coherent with another proposition or set of propositions if, anywhere within the set, there is a not p; the negation or denial of p. In this situation, truth is not established since truth requires that propositions are not only consistent with each other but gives mutual support to one another.

However, coherence theory of truth runs into problem at the point it disconnects propositions from the way the world is. This necessarily suggests that coherence is

inadequate for the sort of truth required by knowledge. That is, knowing things as they are not as captured by propositions.

3.5. Pragmatic Theory of Truth

The pragmatic theory of truth is the view that to say proposition is true is to say that it is useful or it works in a certain way. A proposition is true if whatever it affirms is practicable and realizeable while it is false if it is not. According to Dewey (1920:156) "a proposition"s active, dynamic function is the all important thing about it … the hypothesis that works, is the true one". In a nutshell, truth is the verification of a proposition or the successful working of an idea. One major problem with the pragmatic theory of truth is that it reduces truth to a subjective or relative concept. It allows for an idea to be true, based on individual or situational usefulness. An idea may work for one person or in a situation but fail in the other. So, if it works for you but not for me, is it then true for you but not for me?

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Identify the three major theories of truth
2. _____is the relation among propositions
3. According to the pragmatist, a proposition is true when it corresponds with fact. True/False

Conclusion

You can see from what we have studied in this unit that there are three major theories of truth: correspondence, coherence and pragmatic.

3.6. Summary

This unit on the theories of truth discussed the major theories of truth in epistemology.

3.7 Tutor-Marked Exercise

1. "A proposition is true if it corresponds to a state of affairs" Discuss.
2. Compare and contrast the correspondence theory and the coherence theory of truth.
3. Briefly discuss the pragmatic theory of truth pointing out its shortcomings.

3.8. References/Further Reading

Dewey, John (1920) Reconstruction in Philosophy. New York: Holt.

Hospers, John (1981). An Introduction to Philosophical Analysis. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

3.9 Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Correspondence, Coherence, Pragmatic

2. Coherence

3. False

Unit 4 Belief, Truth and Knowledge

Contents

4.1. Introduction

This unit introduces you to the link between belief, truth and knowledge.

4.2. Learning Outcomes

It is expected that after studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Establish the link between belief, truth and knowledge
- Present a pictorial definition of the link between belief, truth and knowledge

4.3.The Link between Belief, Truth and Knowledge

In response to the sceptical attack on the possibility of knowledge, Plato in his books, *Meno* and *Theatetus* presents a defence on the possibility of objective knowledge. By so doing, he laid the foundation for what is generally referred to in epistemology as the traditional or standard account of knowledge. In these books, he outlines what distinguishes knowledge from right opinion or true belief. In his words, "knowledge is more honourable and excellent than true opinion because it is fastened by a chain". (*Meno* 1990:189). In this definition of knowledge, knowledge has the mark of certainty and stability with the aid of a fastening chain. A fastening chain is Plato‟s metaphoric depiction of what is required in addition to true belief to give knowledge. Plato provides the answer in his *Theatetus* (1979:545) when he says "true opinion combined with definition or rational explanation, is knowledge". Hence, from Plato‟s analysis it is inferred by epistemologies that knowledge is nothing other than a justified true belief. That is, a person X knows a proposition P if and only if:

(i) P is true;

(ii) X believes that P

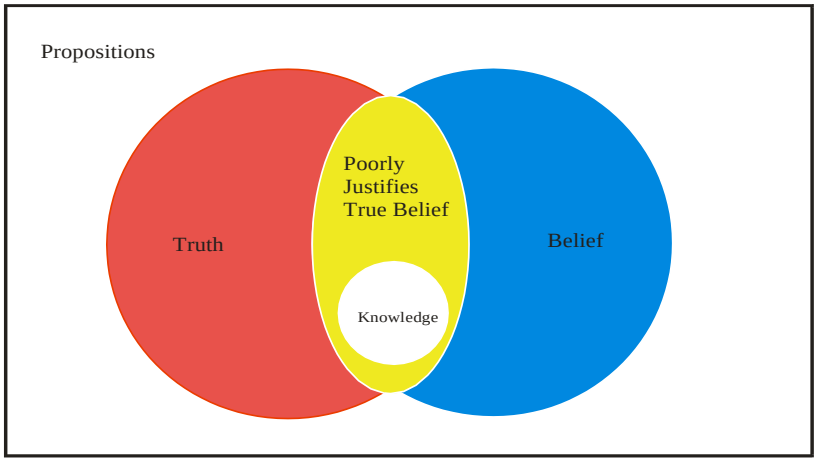
(iii) X is justified (presents a rational explanation)

From the above analysis the link between belief, truth and knowledge becomes obvious in the first two propositions. The conditions of belief and truth are indicated, as such, we must believe something and that which we believe must be true. According to Ibrahim (2011:134)" Knowledge requires true belief ... we cannot know a proposition unless we believe it, and we obviously cannot know it if it is not true. We cannot know that rectangles are round because rectangles are not round. We just can‟t know what is not so. And if we know that rectangles are not round, then we must believe that rectangles are not round" Then, what is it to believe a proposition? And what is it to be true?

In epistemology, on the other one hand, to believe proposition simply means to have any cognitive content which is held as true even in the absence of proof or evidence. For instance, to believe that the sky is blue is to think that the proposition "the sky is blue" is true even if the sky is visibly white. This means that whether someone‟s belief is true or false is not a pre-requisite for the belief. On the other hand, if something is known, then it must be believed.

4.4. Diagrammatic Representation of the Definition of Knowledge

In an attempt to have a clear picture of the definition of Knowledge, and the link between belief, truth and knowledge, you need to pay keen attention to the diagram below.



Euler diagram representing the definition of knowledge

Adapted from https://www.pinterest.com

As you can see in the diagram above, the red section of the first circle represents truth while the blue section of the second circle represents belief. The yellow section of the diagramme is the intersection between truth and belief which represents poorly justified true belief. The white circle within the point of intersection between belief and truth represents knowledge, that is, justified true belief. Thus, knowledge is a subset of that which is both true and believed.

Self-Assessment

1. What is Plato‟s word for justification?
2. To know it, is to believe it to be true. True/False
3. List the three conditions of knowledge

Conclusion

You can see from what we have studied in this unit that belief, truth and knowledge share a strong connection.

4.5. Summary

This unit on belief, truth and knowledge discussed the necessary connection between belief, truth and justification. It presented a diagrammatic representation of this connection.

4.6 Tutor-Marked Exercises

1.State the traditional definition of knowledge and present it in a logical form

2.Discuss the link between truth and

knowledge Discuss the link between belief

and knowledge

3.With the aid of a diagramme, explain the link between belief, truth and knowledge.

4.7. References/Further Reading

Ibrahim, Adekunle A. (2011). "Inquiry into the Defining Conditions of Knowledge Claim: An Exercise from the Perspective of Integrative Epistemoogy" In *Filosofia Theoretica: An African Journal of Innovation and Ideas* Vol. 1. No 1.

Plato, "Meno" (1990). The Great Books of Western World (ed.) Mortiner J. Alder Chicago. Encyclopedia Britannica Inc.

Plato "Theatetus" (1999) Plato‟s Theory of Knowledge (ed) F.M Cornford. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

4.8 Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercise

1 Rational Explaanation
2 True
3 Justification, True, and Belief

Module 5

Scepticism

Unit 1 What is Scepticism?

Content

1.1. Introduction

This unit introduces you to the meaning of Scepticism.

1.2.Learning Outcomes

It is expected that after studying this unit, you should be able to:

- State the meaning of the word „scepticism“
- The meaning of scepticism as a philosophical position.

1.3.Meaning of Scepticism

The word "scepticism" comes from the Greek word *skeptikos* which means "to enquire" "to question" to reflect on," "consider," or "examine," So it is not surprising that it is usually associated with doubting, searching, suspending judgment. In this sense, to be sceptical is to doubt; question or disbelieve. A sceptic therefore is one who doubts, disbelieves, disagrees with generally accepted conclusions. In view of this considerations, Miller (1992:182) defines scepticism as "a doubting or incredulous state of mind; disbelieving attitude". According to Pence (2000:48) scepticism in its must general use refers to "a disbelieving and questioning state of mind; as a philosophical principle, it rejects the notion that real knowledge or truths are possible" scepticism according to Blackburn (2008:327) is a denial that knowledge or even rational belief, either about specific subject matter … or in any area whatsoever".

As a philosophical position, scepticism denies the possibility of knowledge. It is therefore, a philosophical attitude, which expresses doubt as to the possibility of certain knowledge, or any knowledge for that matter. Central to scepticism are the claims that (1) absolute knowledge is unattainable (2) judgments must be continually questioned and doubted (3) certainty is an approximation or relative.

Self-Assessment Exercises

1. The word scepticism is derived from the Greek _____
2. To be sceptical means to be_____or _____
3. _____is one who disagrees with general acceptable conclusions

Conclusion

You can see from what we have studied in this unit that scepticism means or attitude of expressing doubt or the possibility of knowledge.

1.4. Summary

This unit on what scepticism is discussed the meaning and the central claims of scepticism.

1.5 Tutored Marked Assignment

1.What is scepticism?

2.Who is a sceptist?

3.State any three central claims of scepticism

1.6. References/Further Reading

Blackburn Simon (2008) Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy. New York: Oxford University Press.

Miller, L. (1994) Questions that Matter. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Pence, Gregory (2000) A Dictionary of Common Philosophical Terms, U.S.A McGraw-Hill.

1.7 Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Skeptikos
2. Doubt or Question
3. Sceptic

Unit 2 Varieties of Scepticism

Content

2.1 Introduction

This unit introduces you to the varieties of Scepticism.

2.2. Learning Ouctomes

It is expected that after studying this unit, you should be able to:

- Identify the varieties of Scepticism
- Explain the claim of each variety of Scepticism
- Identify personalities in each variety of Scepticism

2.3.Moderate Scepticism

While he adjective „moderate‟ is attached to Scepticism, it entails a liberal approach to the question or the possibility of knowledge. This brand of Scepticism accepts the possibility of certain forms of knowledge which are limited to individual differences. If a sceptic is someone who at one time or another had doubts or who suspends judgment about something, then it means that there are times when he passes judgment within his personal conviction. In this sense, we are all sceptics because none of us can know everything, and surely you would be sceptical about someone who claims the he did. The statement "I don‟t know everything" implies that one knows something, although it may be limited to the person. This is why Protagoras says knowledge is a possibility within s subjective sense. Ojong (2010:5) quotes Protagoras as saying "man is the measure of all things: of those that are, that they are; and of those that are not; that they are not". This position amounts to some form of epistemological relativism. The position that one determines what he knows or does not know or what there is, or there is not. Thus, moderate Scepticism with the emphasis on the subjective nature of knowledge put back some hope in the quest for knowledge. However, the position rules out the possibility of objective knowledge.

2.4. Absolute or Extreme Scepticism

Absolute Scepticism is the most troublesome brand of Scepticism as it rules out the possibility of knowledge in totality. The extreme sceptics claim that no knowledge is possible in any given context. The argument here is that of knowledge is to be acquired by a subjective being (man) and relative to the conditions and context he finds himself, how then, can we ascertain the possibility of objective or absolute knowledge? It therefore means that there is no absolute or common knowledge at all. Extreme Scepticism is traceable to Gorgias of Leotini (525B.C) who expounded an extreme form of Scepticism. His argument according to Miller (1992: 183) is expressed in his three theses that

(1) Nothing exists

(2) If something did exist, we could never know it, and

(3) If we would know it, we could never express it

Gorgias argument as expressed here takes scepticism to its extreme and continues to hunt whoever cares to philosophize on the concept of knowledge.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. _____is a liberal approach to the question of the possibility of knowledge

2. According to_____, man is the measure of all things.

Conclusion

You can see from what we have studied in this unit that scepticism is of two major varieties: moderate and extreme.

2.5. Summary

This unit on the varieties of scepticism discussed moderate and extreme scepticism as two major varieties of Scepticism.

2.6 Tutored-Marked Assignment

1.Mention the two varieties of scepticism

2. State Protagoras‟ sceptical position and indicate the variety of scepticism it is

3. State Gorgias‟ sceptical argument and indicate the variety of scepticism it is

4. “All men are sceptics” Discuss briefly.

2.7. References/Further Reading

Miller, L. (1992) Questions that Matter: An Imitation to philosophy. New York: MaGraw-Hill.

Ojong K. A. (2010). The story of epistemology Calabar. Jochrisam Publishers.

2.8 Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Moderate scepticism

2. Protagoras

Unit 3 Arguments for Scepticism

Contents

3.1 Introduction

This unit discusses the major arguments for scepticism.

3.2.Learning Outcomes

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

(4) State and explain the relativity thesis for scepticism

(5) State and explain the symbolization thesis for scepticism

3.3. Relativity Thesis

The relativity thesis of scepticism rests on inter-relation of objects or events. In our attempt to make sense of things, we only do this in respect of their relativeness to other things and not in themselves, for instance, between light and heavy, strong and weak, up and down. Thus, that which is on the right is not so in itself, but is so understood in virtue of its position with respect to something else; for, if it changes its position, the thing is no longer on the right. Secondly, the relativity thesis rests on the difference of our perceptions as individuals and in varying circumstances of perception. It is argued that if two persons were to observe the same object, their sensations would be different, because each would occupy a different position in relation to the object. In fact, if a person is to observe an object at two different positions or times, his sensation would be different, simply because he has changed the position or time of sensation. What has changed is either the circumstance of the observer, the time or both. Consequently, the outcome would differ in relation to the changes in the observer or the time of sensation. This explains why Protagoras concluded that knowledge is relative to each person and each circumstance.

3.4. Symbolization Thesis

This argument is a derivative of Gorgias‟ three propositional argument. Gorgias, according to Stumpf (1999:33), denied that there is any truth or knowledge at all as follows: (1) that nothing exists, (2) that if anything exists it is incomprehensible, and (3) that even if it is comprehensible, it cannot be communicated. The symbolization thesis is derived from the third proposition in Gorgias‟ argument. Here, Gorgias argued that we communicate with words, but words are only symbols or signs and no symbol can ever be the same as the thing it symbolizes. For this reason, knowledge can never be communicated.

Self-Assessment Exercise

1. ___ _____and_____are the main arguments of Scepticism
2. The two indices of the relativity thesis are_____and _____
3. _____is derived from the third proposition of Gorgias‟ argument

Conclusion

You can see from what we have studied in this unit that the argument for Scepticism is based on the relativity and symbolization theses.

3.5.Summary

This unit on the arguments for scepticism discussed the relativity and symbolization theses of the sceptics.

3.6.Tutor Marked Assignments

1.Briefly discuss the relativity thesis of scepticism

2.Briefly discuss the symbolization thesis of scepticism

3.Discuss the major differences between the relativity and symbolization theses.

3.7. References/Further Reading

Stumpf, Samuel E. (1999). Socrates to Sartre: A History of Philosophy. New York: McGraw. Hill.

3.8.Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Relativity thesis and Symbolization Thesis
2. On inter-relation of objects, and on the difference of our perceptions as individuals.
3. Symbolization thesis

Unit 4 Arguments against Scepticism

Contents

4.1 Introduction

4.1. Introduction

This unit discusses the major arguments for scepticism.

4.2. Learning Outcomes

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- State the self-reputing argument against scepticism
- State the infinite-regress argument against scepticism

4.3. Scepticism as Self-refuting Proposition

One major defining attribute of propositions is that they make claims about many things. When, however, a proposition is itself one of the things it makes a claim about, it sometimes turns out to be self-refuting. This means that if the proposition makes a universal claim about what it claims; if it is true then it must be false. An example of a self-refuting proposition is: "All generalizations are false". If all generalizations are false, then the claim itself, which is a generalization, must be false. According to Miller (1992:190) the proposition "This sentence is false" is basically puzzling. If it is false, then it must be true; if it is true, then it must be false!

The above argument is a prototype of the claim of absolute Scepticism "We can be certain of absolutely nothing" or "all knowledge is doubtful" St. Augustine as presented by Omoregbe (2011:10) argues that universal Scepticism is self-contradictory. If a person claims that nobody can know anything for certain, he should be asked whether he knows what he is saying. Or if a person says nobody can be sure of anything, he should be asked whether he himself is sure of what he is saying. If the person says "yes" then he is contradicting himself. It is self-contradictory for a person to say that he knows that nobody can know anything or that he is sure that nobody can be sure of anything.

4.4. Scepticism as Infinite Regress of Ignorance

Recall that the first charge, as presented earlier, against absolute scepticism is that the assertion that they know nothing is self-refuting. For they maintain, with absolute assurance, that we cannot maintain anything. Otherwise stated: If we cannot know anything, then how do we know that we cannot know anything? That is, if absolute scepticism is true, then it must be false. In defence of absolute Scepticism, it has been argued that the sceptic was not, in fact, even certain that he was not certain of anything. However, this kind of argument would continue endlessly as follows:

1.We cannot know anything

2.We cannot know that we cannot know anything

3.We cannot know that we cannot know that we cannot know

anythingIs it not necessary that at some point, there is a basis for one‟s

claims?

Self-Assessment Exercises

1. Identify the two major arguments against absolute scepticism
2. State one self-refuting propositions.

Conclusion

You can see from what we have studied in this unit that absolute scepticism is a self-refuting and infinite regress of ignorance.

4.5. **Summary**

This unit on the argument against scepticism discussed the self-refuting and infinite regress nature of scepticism.

4.6 Tutor Marked Assignments

4.7.1. Discuss scepticism as a self-refuting argument

4.7.2. Discuss scepticism as an infinite regress of ignorance.

4.7. **References/Further Reading**

Omoregbe J. I (2011) Epistemology: A Systematic and Historical Study. Lagos: Joja Educational Research and Publishers.

Miller, L. (1992) Questions that Matter: An Invitation to Philosophy. New York: McGraw-Hill.

4.8 Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Self-refusing argument and Infinite Regress of Ignorance argument

2. All generalizations are false. If all generalizations are false, then the claim itself, which is a generalization, must be false.

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Unit 5 Value of Scepticism

Contents

5.1 Introduction

This unit introduces you to the value of scepticism

5.2. Learning Outcomes

It is expected that after studying this unit, you should be able to

- Appreciate the value of scepticism to man
- State the values of scepticism

5.3. Value of Scepticism

Scepticism as a position that questions the possibility of objective knowledge becomes valuable to our existence as it provides a critical lens on the ideas we live by. In this sense, Russell (1982:1) states the central value of Scepticism to us when he says that "it is undesirable to believe a proposition where there is no ground whatever for supposing it true". The values of scepticism in human life are as follows:

1. Scepticism frees our mind from assumptions which inhibits us to think freely and rationally.
2. It is a propelling force for humanity"s quest to discover truth and certain knowledge
3. It helps us to distinguish between what we think we know and what we really know.
4. As a doubting enterprise, it forces into the open new insights and ideas on the justification of our knowledge claims
5. It exposes and brings to our awareness the error prone nature of the senses.
6. It shows the ambivalence of language in the process of knowing.
7. It stimulates our ability to think deeply through the perniciousness of its questioning
8. It is an antidote to gullibility
9. It is a cure for the disease of dogmatism
10. It propels us to seek rational explanation for our beliefs.
11. It is key to the avoidance of mental anguish which may result whenever our assumptions fail to meet our expectations
12. Scepticism in its most positive sense is a critique: an enterprise of demystification. In this sense, it exposes and uncovers all forms of baseness of thought.

Self-Assessment Exercises

1. Scepticism is a negative attitude to knowledge. True/False
2. Scepticism is a set of unreasonable propositions. True/False

Conclusion

You can see from what we have studied in this unit that scepticism is valuable to human life.

5.4. Summary

This unit on the values of scepticism stated the various values of scepticism to human life.

5.5. Tutor-Marked Assignments

1. State any ten (10) values of scepticism to human life.
2. “Scepticism is an antidote to gullibility”. comment.

5.6. References/Further Reading

Russell Bertrand (1928)““ On the Value of Scepticism““www.panarchy.org

5.7 Possible Answer to Self-Assessment Exercise

1. False
2. False