



Course Code: PHL 252

Course Title: Introduction to Philosophy of Religion

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DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

FACULTY OF ARTS

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Course Guide for PHL 252: Introduction to Philosophy of Religion

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Introduction

Welcome to **PHL 252: Introduction to Philosophy of Religion**. PHL252 is a two (2) -Credit Unit Course that has a minimum duration of one semester. It is an Elective course for all B.A. philosophy degree students in the university. The course is meant to introduce students to the philosophical study of religion, by providing students with knowledge of the fundamentals of religion in the society. In other words, the Course will provide students with adequate knowledge of what they need to know about philosophy and religion. To achieve this, students will be introduced to the meaning, nature and origin of religion. The relationship between religion, society and morality will be examined. The idea of God, His activities and other spirits from the point of view of Metaphysics and cultural experiences, Mysticism and philosophical theology, Religious language, religious reasoning, Creationism and many other issues will be our focus in this course.

Course Objectives

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

- Define Religion, explain key concepts, as well as identify essential features of religion
- Explain the nature and origin of Religion
- Discuss the relationship between God, the sacred and mundane
- Evaluate the philosophical questions of the existence of Evil in the universe
- Analyse the idea of Religion and society and Religion and Morality
- Identify and explain the meaning of Myth, Symbol and Ritual
- Discuss concept of Philosophical Theology
- Examine the issues of Immortality, Reincarnation and Karma in religious traditions.

Working through this Course

To successfully complete this course, read the study units, do all assessments, participate in discussion forums, read the recommended books/texts and other materials provided and participate in on-line facilitation.

Each study unit has introduction, intended learning outcomes, the main content, conclusion, summary, self-assessment exercise and references/further readings. The introduction will give an insight into what you should expect in the study unit. The intended learning outcomes pose questions that will prepare you for what you should be able to do at the completion of each study unit. The main content provides a deeper analysis of issues discussed in each unit, while the summary is a recap of the issues discussed in the unit. The self-assessment exercise contain questions meant to test your understanding of topics taught in each unit. These questions will assist you to evaluate your learning at the end of each unit and to establish the extent to which you have achieved the intended learning outcomes. To meet the intended learning outcomes, knowledge is presented in text, arranged into modules and units. Click on the links as may be directed, but where you are reading the text offline, you will have to copy and paste the link address into a browser. You can also print and download the texts and save in your computer or external drive. Do not also forget to consult the texts recommended for further reading.

Study Units

Module 1

Unit 1: Introduction to Philosophy of Religion

Unit 2: The existence, nature and activities of God and other spirits from the point of View of Metaphysics and Cultural experiences.

Unit 3: The relationship between God, the sacred and mundane

Module 2

Unit 1: Creationism

Unit 2: Evolution

Unit 3: Analogy and Participation

Module 3

Unit 1: The question of evil in universe

Unit 2: The problem of evil

Unit 3: Determinism

Unit 4: Freewill

Module 4

Unit 1: The experience of the sacred and the communication with the Divine

Unit 2: Religious Language

Unit 3: Myth, Symbol and Ritual

Module 5

Unit 1: The origin and nature of Religion

Unit 2: Religious Reasoning

Unit 3: Philosophical Theology

Unit 4: Mysticism and Religion

Module 6

Unit 1: Religion and Society

Unit 2: Religion and Morality

Unit 3: Immortality via Resurrection, Karma and Reincarnation

Course Code: PHL 252

Course Title: Philosophy of Religion

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Module 1

Unit 1: Introduction to Philosophy of Religion

Unit 2: The existence, nature and activities of God and other spirit from the point of View of Metaphysics and Cultural experiences.

Unit 3: The relationship between God, the sacred and sacred

Unit 1: Philosophy of Religion

Contents:

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Intended Learning outcomes (ILOs)

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Definition of Philosophy

3.2 Definition of Religion

3.3 Definition of Philosophy of Religion

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Self Assessment Exercises

7.0 References/ Further Readings

1.0 Introduction

My dear student, you are welcome to the course on Philosophy of Religion. From the topic, you will realize that two component topics are in for espousing namely Philosophy and Religion. This means that in this course we are going to study what religion and philosophy mean on one hand and how philosophy uses its unique methods to help religion examine and apply these principles in order to resolve or attempt to resolve thorny or grey issues that arise from the study of religion on the hand. Prior to now it is expected that you are now abreast with the meaning of philosophy. In this unit therefore, we shall look at the basic things to be known about philosophy, religion and philosophy of religion.

2.0 Intended Learning outcomes (ILOs)

It is expected that by the end of this unit, you would be able to:

- define and understand philosophy
- define and understand what religion
- define philosophy of religion.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Definition of Philosophy

From its nature no one definition is adequate or sufficient to express the meaning of philosophy. This is because its meaning has changed over the course of the history of philosophy. Moreso, philosophers have different views on what philosophy is, its subject-matter and method at different times and circumstances. It is not surprising that those who engage in philosophical inquiry do not agree as to the essence of that activity because by its nature, this is bound to be so.

To understand the meaning of philosophy, therefore, it is necessary to examine:

- (1) Its literary or etymological meaning
- (2) The intellectual activities that were regarded as philosophy among the Greeks from

which the word is derived and how far the Greeks influenced the general conception of philosophy.

(3) Some broad views on its meaning

(4) The views of some philosophers on the meaning of philosophy.

Literary or Etymological meaning:

The word philosophy was taken from two Greek words, namely, Philo and Sophia.

Philo means love; while Sophia means Wisdom

From these two Greek words, we derive the etymological or literary meaning of Philosophy as love, wisdom; hence, to call a person a philosopher is to call him a lover of wisdom.

In the 6th Century B.C., a certain intellectual activity emerged in Greece. Man began to probe into various aspects of nature and existence. They were curious to know the origin, meaning and nature of all existence. They refused to rely on traditional answers to such questions and, therefore, engaged in critical reflection in order to understand the nature and essences of man, society and the environment as well as the gods, morality, knowledge, etc.

Philosophy as World-view:

One of the general notions of philosophy is world-view. This word is taken from a German word *weltanschauung* which means an outlook on life or world outlook. It provides explanation on the nature of the world and also serves as a basis or instrument for action and for change of the world.

In this work, we shall use the following concepts interchangeably- Reality, Existence, World, Universe, being- to mean all that exists or anything we can talk about. World-view is the basic picture one has about the universe and life. It refers to “basic beliefs which a people (or person) have about the origin nature and of the universe, life, existences; whether the ideas are explicitly stated or implied in action”. It is in this sense a way of life.

Bertrand Russell, a British philosopher regards philosophy as a discipline which occupies an intermediate ground between *theology* and *science*. Like *theology*, philosophy is speculative, but unlike theology it employs the method of science by appealing to human reason rather than dogma or faith.

A.R. Lacey, was a professional modern British philosopher who defined Philosophy as “The study of the most general and abstract questions that there are while questions of detail and particularity are left to the sciences”.

Since it is not our duty here to examine the issues with the definition of philosophy, it is needful that we state what we should mean in this work by philosophy namely a critical orientation and attitude towards the understanding of all aspects of reality without exception.

3.2 Definition of Religion

Religion also suffers the lack of definitional consensus: this is because different religionists define it variously. Thus, religion means different things to the psychologist, anthropologist, Marxist etc: all that we can surmise is that following from this, definitions by these people give us reductionist definitions at the best. The word religion has its etymological root in three Latin words namely, *Ligare* (meaning to bind), *Relegare* (meaning to unite, or to link), and *Religio* (meaning relationship) (Haring, 1964: 119). It could be drawn from the etymology that religion entails an essential relationship binding two entities namely the sacred and the mundane. It is on this construal that we must note that the concept of a deity is an essential aspect of religion as it is a relationship between man and a deity. A C Bouquet’s definition of religion captures this notion: “a fixed relationship between the human self and some non-human entity, the sacred, the supernatural, the self existent, the absolute or simply, God” (1941:16) we shall therefore take religion in this work to mean a relationship between man a transcendental Being, a wholly other in which man worships and expects a reward both now and in the afterlife. It is irrelevant whether this wholly other is real or a figment of the imagination of the believer; what is ideal is the influence that the transcendental being exerts on the believer- an influence emanating from a belief that the deity is real.

3.3 Philosophy of Religion

Philosophy of religion is the philosophical study of the meaning and nature of religion. It includes the analyses of religious concepts, beliefs, terms, arguments, and practices of religious adherents. The scope of much of the work done in philosophy of religion has been limited to the various theistic religions. More recent work often involves a broader, more

global approach, taking into consideration both theistic and non-theistic religious traditions. The range of those engaged in the field of philosophy of religion is broad and diverse and includes philosophers from the analytic and continental traditions, Eastern and Western thinkers, religious believers and agnostics, skeptics and atheists. Philosophy of religion draws on all of the major areas of philosophy as well as other relevant fields, including theology, history, sociology, psychology, and the natural sciences. Philosophy of religion thus is the application of philosophical principles in resolving the thorny and knotty issues encountered as man studies religion.

4.0 Conclusion

In this unit, we have examined the concepts of philosophy, religion and philosophy of religion. What is on prominent relief is that these concepts lack definitional univocity, however, we offered working definitions that are capable of guiding you towards proper understanding of the subject matter.

5.0 Summary

It could be summarized that the following were learnt from unit 1:

Understanding of the problematic with the definitions of both philosophy and religion.

The working definitions of philosophy as a critical orientation and attitude towards the understanding of all aspects of reality without exception; and religion as a relationship between man a transcendental Being, a wholly other in which man worships and expects a reward both now and in the afterlife.

Understanding of the meaning of philosophy of religion as the application of philosophical principles in resolving the thorny and knotty issues encountered as man studies religion.

Finally, the proper introduction of the subject matter as above.

6.0 Self Assessment Exercises

Define philosophy?

Define religion?

Discuss philosophy of religion?

7.0 References/ Further Readings

Bouquet, AC (1941), *Comparative Religion*, Middlesex: Penguin Books

Haring Bernard, (1964) *The Law of Christ*, New York: Newman Press, Vol. 111

Hick, John H (2013) *Philosophy of Religion*, New Jersey: Prentice Hall fourth Edition

Omoregbe, Joseph (2007) *A Philosophical Look at Religion*, Lagos: Joja Educational
Research and Publishers Ltd

Unit 2: The Existence, Nature and Activities of God and Other Spirits from the Point of View of Metaphysics and Cultural experiences.

Contents:

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Intended Learning outcomes (ILOs)

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Nature of God

3.2 The Existence of God

3.3 Activities of God and Other Spirit from the Point of View of Metaphysics and Cultural experiences.

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Self Assessment Exercises

7.0 References/ Further Readings

1.0 Introduction

In the previous unit, you have been led to the examination of the concepts of philosophy, religion and philosophy of religion. But in this unit, you will be examining the existence, nature and activities of God and other spirit from the point of view of metaphysics and cultural experiences. In doing this, you will appreciate the role of religion and philosophy in the existential experiences of humankind as he journeys in this cosmos. One thing will be on prominent relief amongst others namely that even though it is rationally not yet established that God exists, the notion of the beingness or reality of God is integral in the sub-consciousness of humankind as man tries to grapple with his existential experiences on this cosmos.

2.0 Intended Learning outcomes (ILOs)

By the end of this unit, you would be able to:

Understand the nature of God

Understand the existence or otherwise of God

Understand the activities of God and other spirits from the point of view of metaphysics and cultural experiences.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Nature of God

A central discourse in philosophy of religion is the understanding of God. In other words, what is the nature of God? It can be summarized that the nature of God is surmised in the concepts of God's Ultimacy as a reality that is all powerful. This can be seen from the majoritarian theme among philosophers of religion in the West as residing on the ultimacy of God, including questions about the nature and existence of God, challenges to the existence of God, language about God, and so on. Within every major religion is a belief about a transcendent reality underlying the natural, physical world. From its beginnings, philosophy of religion has been concerned with reflections on, as far as possible, how religions might understand the Ultimate Reality. Of a truth is that how the various religions conceptualize that reality differs, especially between Eastern and Western religions. In Western religion, primarily the three religions of Abrahamic descent—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—Ultimate Reality is conceived of and described in terms of a personal God who is creator and sustainer of all and perfect in every respect. Many other properties are commonly attributed to God as well, including omniscience, omnipotence, and immutability.

In most of the Eastern religions, including Buddhism, Taoism, and the Advaita Vedanta school of Hinduism, the Ultimate Reality is understood quite differently. It is not a personal creator God, but an absolute state of being. It cannot be described by a set of attributes, such as omniscience or omnipotence, for it is undifferentiated Absolute Reality. Taoists refer to it as the Tao; Hindus refer to it as Brahman; for Buddhists, the name varies and includes Shunyata and Paramatma. These different conceptions of the Ultimate Reality bring with them distinct

understandings of other significant issues as well, such as salvation/liberation, life after death, and evil and suffering, among others.

According to this view, the best one can do from a religious perspective is to have faith that there exists a metaphysically and axiologically ultimate reality and that from this reality an ultimate good can be attained.

There are certain other concepts of the nature and attributes of God approached in entitative, operative and transcendental paradigms. At the entitative level, God is seen as self-existing and thus explainable as:

Simplicity: this means that God's nature entails that He is pure, has no parts, perfectly simple and non-composed.

Unicity: this means that there can be only one God whose nature evinces uniqueness, non-plurality, indivisibility, and a self-subsisting essence.

Immutability: this means that God is all perfect and unchangeable.

Infinitude: this entails that by His nature as a self-subsisting entity, He is limitless and possesses the perfect actuality of all the perfection there is. It is in this sense that He is regarded as an *actus purus*, ie a pure act without any imperfection.

Eternity: this places God outside the realm of time as a being that is *atemporal* and supra-temporal. In this construal, God is without beginning or ending.

Omniscience: in this nature of God, He knows all things from the past, the present and the future.

Incorporeality: by this nature and attribute of God, He is shown to be non limited in matter. This results from the perception that what limits finite beings is their corporeality namely being enmeshed in matter. God is thus pure spirit, immaterial and outside space.

Immensity: this is the nature of God that does not confine Him to any place: He is in every place at the same time. He is thus regarded as a being in perfect immensity and thus can never be restricted to any space.

Impassibility: this is the nature of God that exonerates Him from pains of any kind. Pains are generally believed to arise from limitations and as God is limitless, He is absolutely impassible.

Ubiquity: this is the nature of God that places Him everywhere ontologically and therefore limitless, infinite and immense.

Omnipotence: this revolves around God's capability to do all things without limitations. He is thus regarded as all powerful with the creative generative capacity to bring to being all things at any time.

The operative nature and attributes of God, places Him as an immanent being understandable by reason. The following are the operative natural attributes of God:

Personality: this attribute confers on God the capacity to reason, will and communicate as a subjective being. Okoro captures this nature of God so succinctly thus:

Human beings are persons because they have the two aspects of supposit and rationality. God who is absolute being possessing unicity and simplicity, is an individual supposit. He is infinite substance, Being the creator, sustaining and concurring God vis-à-vis created beings, he knows, loves and cares for his creation in wisdom. He is absolutely personal, self-existing and self-possessing as well as being concerned for all other reality outside Him (2014: 41)

Causality: this is in God the ability to bring into being of anything arising from His knowing and willing capability. It also emanates from the following: wisdom, immanence, conservation, concurrence, consciousness, etc. God is thus regarded as ultimate Cause.

Freedom: God is regarded as an infinitely free being. He is a being capable of freely exerting His will and capacity to do anything. There are two ways to understand His freedom: 1. As a being in absolute freedom, He is free in Himself as a self-existing limitless being. 2. He is equally free as He creates His creatures: this is because His creative activities are acts done freely.

Infinite Intelligence: since God has all perfections in infinite and absolutist levels, He must also possess intellect in infinite and absolute degrees. He is thus in possession of absolute knowledge and intelligence thereby being all knowing.

Will: in God the object of will and intelligibility are one and the same; thus to say that He knows is to say that He wills. To will is therefore essentially a co-relate of knowledge in God.

The third nature and attribute of God is understandable in His transcendence. This means that He is beyond what humans possess and understand these attributes of God to mean. The following are some of the transcendental attributes and nature of God:

Order: the orderliness of God is such that goes beyond the ordinary. By order we understand the complete perfection of the fullness of a being. This is what makes a being exude harmony. The orderliness in God is such that it rejects anything capable of bringing disorderliness in Him. It is the degree of orderliness in God that harmonizes the divine attributes that give meaning to the nature of God.

Exemplarity: here God is perceived as the perfect exemplary model in which every other finite being must imitate. What this means is that God is that absolute and infinite that other beings share and inherit from that makes them derive their essence.

Delectability: this is the transcendental property of being wherein He is infinitely pleasing as the utmost perfection of the fullness of the being of His creations.

Distinctness: this is the transcendental attribute of God that confers in Him the distinct nature of making Him separate from all other creatures. His infinitude is attributively distinct in just the same way that a cause is separable from its consequent.

Intelligibility: this is the essential nature of God that positively renders Him capable of knowing things to perfection. This means that God knows all things from beginning to its end. From the foregoing, it is now obvious that the essential nature of God is infinitude and transcendence of all perfections.

3.2 The Existence of God

One of the very important discourses in the philosophy of religion is the question of whether there is God. In other words, does God really exist? If He does, are there any reasons or proofs to accept such views especially as He is a being that appears to be beyond the realm of empirical investigation? There are many perceptions to the existence of or otherwise of God namely: skepticism (doubting the existence of God simply because it is difficult to establish its existence), agnosticism (a philosophical disposition asserting that we can't know anything-the idea of God inclusive), atheism (the complete deniability of God's existence or His attributes), pantheism (the notion that God is fused in his creatures. This is best captured in the notion of *Deus sive naturas*, i.e, God or nature. This means that everything is in God and God is in everything), Deism (the notion that although God exists, He is remote from the affairs of His creatures because He does not exert any influence on their activities. Aristotle calls it *Deus Otiosis*, i.e, remote god), fideism (the acceptance of the existence of God) etc. in this section, you are going to study the arguments for or against the existence of God.

Arguments for and against the Existence of God

It is generally the case that religious adherents do not hold their religious convictions because of well-articulated reasons or arguments which support those convictions. However, reasons and arguments are sometimes used by believers to defend and advance their positions. Arguments for the existence of God have been utilized in natural theology and theistic

apologetics for at least two millennia. Three which have been prominent historically and still receive special attention in contemporary philosophy of religion discussions are the ontological, cosmological, and teleological arguments.

a. Ontological Arguments

First developed by Saint Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109), ontological arguments take various forms. They are unique among traditional arguments for God's existence in that they are a priori arguments, for they are based on premises that can allegedly be known independently of experience of the world. All of them begin with the concept of God and conclude that God must exist. If successful, ontological arguments prove that God's non-existence is impossible.

Anselm argues that God is a being than which none greater can be conceived. It is one thing to exist in the mind (in the understanding) and another to exist outside the understanding (outside one's thoughts; in reality). He then asks which is greater: to exist in the mind or in reality. His argument concludes this way:

Therefore, if that, than which nothing greater can be conceived, exists in the understanding alone, the very being, than which nothing greater can be conceived, is one, than which a greater can be conceived. But obviously this is impossible. Hence, there is no doubt that there exists a being, than which nothing greater can be conceived, and it exists both in the understanding and in reality. (Proslogion, chapter II, 54)

Since it would be a contradiction to affirm that the greatest possible being does not exist in reality but only in the mind (because existing in reality is greater than existing in the mind), one is logically drawn to the conclusion that God must exist.

There have been many objections to this argument. One of the most well-known is based on the analogy of the greatest possible island and was developed by Anselm's fellow monk, Gaunilo. Utilizing a *reductio ad absurdum*, he argued that if we affirm Anselm's conclusion, we must also affirm that the greatest possible island exists. Since that conclusion is absurd, so too is Anselm's. Another important objection offered by Immanuel Kant was that existence is not a real predicate. Since existence does not add to the concept of a thing, and in Anselm's argument existence is treated as a real predicate (rather than, say, as a quantifier), the

argument is flawed.

b. Cosmological Arguments

Cosmological arguments begin by examining some empirical or metaphysical fact of the universe, from which it then follows that something outside the universe must have caused it to exist. There are different types of cosmological arguments, and its defenders include some of the most prominent thinkers spanning the history of philosophy, including Plato, Aristotle, ibn Sina, al-Ghazali, Maimonides, Aquinas, Descartes, and Leibniz. Three versions of the argument that have received much attention are the Thomistic contingency argument, the Leibnizian sufficient reason argument, and the kalam argument.

With the Thomistic contingency argument, named after the Medieval Christian theologian/philosopher Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), the claim is made that contingent things exist in the world—“contingent things” ostensibly referring to those entities which begin to exist and cease to exist and whose existence is dependent on another. St Thomas has five arguments or proofs he advanced for the existence of God namely:

Argument from motion: According to St Thomas, it is observable that motion pervades all that there is in the cosmos. But motion starts from the state of potency to that of act: no being can transit itself from potency to act except another brings it to such a state of act. Thus whatever that is moved is necessarily moved by another. This results from the fact that there is a series of movers in universe but this infinite series of movers cannot continue *ad infinitum*. We are necessarily confined to discovering the beginning of the series of motion which is by itself unmovable. This unmoved mover, he calls God.

Argument from efficient causality: this is similar to the first argument in that he observed that in the world of sensible things, there is an entrenched order of efficient causes. The reality is that nothing can cause itself. What is in reality is that one thing causes another and that other is caused by yet another but this can't go *ad infinitum*. There must be the beginning to these series of cause and that beginning is the first cause which is not caused by another, Aquinas called the first cause, the uncaused cause and identified it with God.

Argument from the contingency of being: It is next argued that not all things can be contingent, for if they were there would be nothing to ground their existence. Only a necessary thing (or being) can account for the existence of contingent things—“necessary thing” ostensibly referring to a thing which never began to exist and which cannot cease to exist and whose existence does not depend on another. This necessary thing (or being) is God.

Argument from the perfection of beings: in the world it is noticeable that there are grades of perfections in things. A thing is better than another; yet another is found to be better than the other one regarded as better. This is true vis-à-vis all qualities as justice, goodness, beauty etc. he argues that these comparisons are in regards to an absolute standard. This he calls maximum perfection. This maximum perfection according to Aquinas is the cause of the being of all things and the quality and perfection that is found in them at the various degrees. This maximum perfection and being of all things, he calls God.

Argument from teleology: Aquinas posits that there is teleology observable in nature. Teleology is the notion that things act with some ends or purpose in view. But non-rational beings especially cannot act with ends in view of their own accord. They can only be directed to such a purposive end by intelligence other than themselves. This intelligence is what he calls God.

It is evident that none of these arguments is original to Aquinas rather are traceable to Aristotle. They fail to convincingly establish the existence of God. Omoregbe criticizes his proofs for the existence of God thus:

... it makes God first in a series of causes in the universe, thereby implying that God is part of the universe, i.e, one of the beings in the universe. The third argument ... does not show that there must be only one necessary being responsible for the coming into existence of all contingent beings. Secondly, its principle that no being can bring itself into existence when pushed to logical conclusion would rule out the possibility of God being responsible for his own existence. It would imply that God too owes his existence to another being...(2007:88-89).

Another type of cosmological argument is the Leibnizian sufficient reason argument, so named after the German thinker Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646–1716). With this argument,

an answer is sought to the question “Why is there something rather than nothing?” For Leibniz, there must be an explanation, or “sufficient reason,” for anything that exists, and the explanation for whatever exists must lie either in the necessity of its own nature or in a cause external to itself. The argument concludes that the explanation of the universe must lie in a transcendent God since the universe does not have within its own nature the necessity of existence and God does.

Some recent versions of the cosmological argument grant that contingent things exist due to the causal events of other contingent things, but they then go on to inquire why the universe should exist at all when conceivably this could have not been the case. Utilizing elements of both Aquinas’s and Leibniz’s arguments, the central point of these recent versions is that with respect to anything that exists; there is a reason for its existence. What provides a sufficient reason for the existence of the universe? It cannot be another contingent thing (and on into infinity), for to explain the existence of any contingent thing by another contingent thing lacks a sufficient reason why any contingent thing exists. Timothy O’Connor argues this way:

If our universe truly is contingent, the obtaining of certain fundamental facts or other will be unexplained within empirical theory, whatever the topological structure of contingent reality. An infinite regress of beings in or outside the spatiotemporal universe cannot forestall such a result. If there is to be an ultimate, or complete, explanation, it will have to ground in some way the most fundamental, contingent facts of the universe in a necessary being, something which has the reason for its existence within its own nature. It bears emphasis that such an unconditional explanation need not in any way compete with conditional, empirical explanations. Indeed, it is natural to suppose that empirical explanations will be subsumed within the larger structure of the complete explanation. (2008: 76)

Teleological arguments in the East go back as far as 100 C.E., where the Nyāya school in India argued for the existence of a deity based on the order found in nature. In the West, Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics offered arguments for a directing intelligence of the world given the order found within it. There is an assortment of teleological arguments, but a common theme among them is the claim that certain characteristics of the natural world reflect design, purpose, and intelligence. These features of the natural world are then used as evidence for an intelligent, intentional designer of the world.

The teleological argument has been articulated and defended at various times and places throughout history, but its zenith were in the early nineteenth century with perhaps its most ardent defender: William Paley (1743–1805). In his book, *Natural Theology*, Paley offers an argument from analogy: since we infer a designer of an artifact such as a watch, given its evident purpose, ordered structure, and complexity, so too we should infer a grand designer of the works of nature, since they are even greater in terms of their evident purpose, order, and complexity—what he describes as “means ordered to ends.” Paley’s argument can be structured this way:

Artifacts (such as a watch), with their means to ends configurations, are the products of (human) design. The works of nature, such as the human hand, resemble artifacts. Thus the works of nature are probably the products of design. Furthermore, the works of nature are much more in number and far greater in complexity. Therefore, the works of nature were probably the products of a grand designer—one much more powerful and intelligent than a human designer. (1802:67)

A number of objections have been raised against Paley’s version of the design argument. Those offered by David Hume (1711–1776) in his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* are often taken to be archetype refutations of traditional design arguments. Among them are that the analogy between the works of nature and human artifacts is not particularly strong; that even if we could infer a grand designer of the universe, this designer turns out to be something less than the God of the theistic religions (especially given the great amount of evil in the world); and that just because a universe has the appearance of design, it does not follow that it is in fact designed; such an event could have occurred through natural, chance events.

We shall end this section by retracting the fact that it is not easy to rationally establish the existence of God in such a way that it will no longer be a philosophical issue. It has not yet attained the univocality of meaning usually attributable to any idea that has been resolved research wise. It therefore is still at the periphery of yet perennially unresolvable sphere of research.

3.3 Activities of God and Other Spirit from the Point of View of Metaphysics and Cultural experiences.

In this section, you are going to examine what constitutes the activities of God or other spirits from both metaphysical and cultural experiences. This dovetails from the discussions above where we had examined the arguments for the existence of God. But before doing this, we have to look at the notion of the concept of what God is. This is because our acceptance as humans as regards what God is will shape our perception of what His activities should be. The point at issue is what do we mean when we talk of God? It is evident that various cultures have portrayed the notion of God differently. For instance, the Abrahamic religions see anthropomorphism (conceiving God in human form or ascribing human attributes to God) as the real expression of God's nature. Here God's activities will be to divinize man's activities as that of God. Sometimes, when this attitude of externalizing man's attributes to God's, it tends to reduce or trivialize certain attributes of God such as omnipotence, omniscience etc. The Oriental cultures conceive God in the Vedas as Brahman, Tao etc. some individuals as Hegel, Eriugena, Whitehead conceive God as the Absolute, Nature and evolving and suffering being of process philosophy respectively.

Why do these cultures and persons border about God and His activities? There is little doubt as to whether there is any human culture that does not have a conception of God. This is why Miguel de Unamuno (a Spanish existentialist) sees man's nature as that, that is structured in such a way that it can't but border about God. Accordingly he asserts; "man is preoccupied about himself, about his own existence; the meaning and purpose of his existence, where he came from and where he is going, especially what will happen to him after death" (Unamuno 1954:114). This means that it is to address the question of immortality at the heart of man that leads him to think about the issues of God. This according to him leads to religion; religion and theology are basically anthropocentric. What this results to is that since this crave for self-perpetuation and immortality cannot leave man's desire, the issue of What God is can never be obliterated in man's day to day living.

From the above, one can aver that since man cannot stop thinking about God, he must conceive Him in one way or another. This is because world views condition the way God is conceived in a religion or the other as every religion is the bye product of the reflection of

such culture. Because culture is both the metaphysical and epistemological determinant for the understanding of human experience, it is a limiter to how such a people conceive reality as a whole religion inclusive. It is therefore important that we shall discuss the activities of God and other spirits on the bases of how cultures had made people to understand religion which is the determinant of how God is understood.

The psychological understanding of God and His roles:

Sigmund Freud was one of the psychologists who explained God in psychological parlance. Accordingly, he opines that the concept of God results from the child hood neuroses of carrying into adulthood the childhood image and reverencing for his father. It is usually a fact that children see their father as all powerful, all knowing etc. such when he grows up the tendency is that he still retains that all powerful father image and faced with the vagaries of life such as diseases, pains, death, barrenness, poverty etc, he seeks for the assistance of such a father as his real father used to do for him as a child. He seeks for protection, provision etc as his father used to do for him but as he finds none, he imagines a supernatural father figure who will take over that childhood role of the father. Freud concludes that the idea of God results from a child's projection of his father's image into adulthood.

He advised that this infantism is not something that humans must carry too far but must find a way to outgrow it. Thus he suggests that it is only through intellectual imbueement as in science and technology that one can overcome such childish orientation. From the foregoing one can see that seeing God in this light places him in the anthropomorphic stance of a loving father. There are so many shortcomings of this notion especially when humans use their limited expressive power in ascribing man's attributes to God. For instance, how can one use the word regret to explain God's attitude towards His children when one relates this to an all knowing God? God described in this Freudian notion performs no real activities except psychological ones as it is nothing but a figment of man's imagination. We must observe here that although religion thrives in the circle of lowly educated people, it does not mean that educated people do not believe in God. Albert Einstein, George Washington and Isaac Newton were thoroughly educated people who were also religious. We reiterate that God and other spirits perceived in this notion have no real and actual activities to perform.

Sociological Understanding of God and His Activities:

It was Emile Durkheim who posited that the notion of God was a creation of the human society. Accordingly, society created God and uses Him as a source of social control. This dovetails from his postulation that society is the originator of religion and since religion concerns itself with the stipulation of man's relationship with God, it follows that society created God. What was the purpose of creating God? It was simply to be able to mould, direct and control human perceptions for certain ends. Since the influence of the society on its citizens is enormous, the later externalize this societal influence and force in a personalized manner known as God. From the above, Durkheim surmised that God is nothing other than the personification of societal influence and the best attributes or qualities of society such as power, goodness, justices, knowledge etc in perfect forms. The almightiness of God is simply a projection of the might of the society and ipso facto what religionists regard as the commandments of God are simply the moral demands of the society created by powerful persons in order to control the society for their end.

Durkheim's explanation of the transcendence of God is such that since members of the society cannot explain the source of the ever pervading influence of society on them, they project it outside them. A serious challenge to this is the fact that some social reformers have criticized society: so if society is the source of the notion of God, how can it be criticized by members of such society by making appeal to forces beyond the society? What this brings to bear is that there is a force beyond the society. For instance, Socrates had condemned his society and appealed to a moral force against the society. From the above it becomes real that the activities of God and the spirits following Him is just geared to control of man in the society towards the greater end of some powerful men in the society.

The Theological theory of God and His Activities:

It was P Rossano that postulated this theory of God. According to him, the idea of both religion and God trace their origin from the very nature of man. This means that in man's innermost being is the crave for religiosity and God consciousness before the postulation of objective notion of God and religion. Omeregbe cites Rossano in this direction thus:

At the basis of religion, says the Italian theologian, P Rossano, is the religious man: before objective religious formulations comes the personal and subjective dimension of religion.... If therefore we go down into the depths of man, despite the variety of religious expressions and structure, we reach the humus from which the religious questions proceeds. Beyond the system and even the spiritual contrasts between East and West, and together with the differences between religion and religion, there is a historically constant disposition which orientates man in a specific way and tends to express itself in religious form. (2007: 13-14)

This is akin to the hollowness in man identifiable with restlessness which is irresistible until man rests in God expressed by St Augustine. This is what expresses itself in the various religions and makes man essentially a religious animal. Man cannot afford not to be religious. This is because the human spirit wants to understand its source and origin and this it does by tracing to infinite spirit. There is an emptiness and vacuum that this search epitomizes as a psychological manifestation of the human spirit search for the Infinite. What is on prominent relief from the above is as that man turns to religion in order to get answers to the fundamental questions of life. They are questions that are basic to human existence. Although the various religions claim to have answers to these questions, the issue remains as to how effective the answers are to the human person. For the theologians, it is obvious that man cannot but be religious. He is in total dependence to the will of God and the spirits. His activities must conform to the dictates of God and ipso facto the activities of God and other spirits are to direct and protect the affairs of man who is in absolute dependence to him.

The Marxist view of God and His Activities

Karl Marx had a radical detour of the conception of religion and God to emanate from the status of the exploited masses of the world that rent them to become exploitable. Accordingly,

he sees the capitalist society as throwing up the condition germane for the alienation of the human person from the good things of life. This arises from his acquiescence to Ludwig Feuerbach's view that God is just human projection of the best qualities of man and that religion arises from the self-alienation of man. Marx subtly differed from Feuerbach by detaching himself from the metaphysical abstractions observable in the latter's conception of the human essence. He saw as unnecessary any conception of "divine essence" that Feuerbach saw as man's essence. Marx in Noce (1972; 166), expresses this view when he asserts that "Feuerbach reduces the essence of religion to the essence of man. But the essence of man is not something abstract that is not immanent in every individual. In its reality it is the totality of social relations"

Marx based his criticism based on the fact that Feuerbach failed to appreciate man as a social being in which its belief in religion is a social product. Accordingly, his failure was the inability of getting to the remote cause of man's cringing to religion and ipso facto their alienation. If one asks the question what is the source and reason for man's recourse to religion and God; Marx would answer that it the exploitation of man and economic oppression of the masses by capitalism. This results to the recoiling of man to an imaginary expectation of a liberator or savior and this is God. Thus Marx summarized thus:

The religious misery is at the same time the expression of the real misery, and the protest against the real misery. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the feeling of a heartless world just as it is the spirit of the spiritless condition (Noce 1972: 207-208)

Marx never minced words on words about his concept of religion and God as he believed that it is just "the sentiment of the oppressor, the sigh of the oppressed and the opium of the mass". In this context the only activity of religion and God is an illusory one where the alienated masses use it to give themselves succor. In reality, it is nothing other than a self-projection that will help man to ameliorate pains. Man can only overcome the influence of religion whenever it realizes the illusory role it plays in the oppression and exploitative process. During the time, industrialists employed priests who prayed for three times in a day and preaching the

labourers to endure their disposition as it came from God.

Be these as they may, Marx's explanation does not capture the issue of religion in man as it actually is. Experience has proved that the alienated masses also are the real agents of the exploitation of the others. There is also the vacuum at the heart of man regarding the answers to the fundamental issues of life. At the moments of reckoning, man realizes this hollowness in his innermost being. However, there is some element of truth in Marx's view due to the fact that religions and the worship of God is more predominant with poor persons and under hardship. Obviously religion predated capitalism which is the root of exploitation.

Anthropological Notion of God and His Activities

It was L A Feuerbach who in his epochal work, *The Essence of Christianity* dismissed the idea of God as the worship of man's nature by debased persons who are bereft in proper understanding of his nature. According to him, man projects his own nature outside himself to be called God. In other words, man projects himself into objectivity and believes that this is God. For him, religion in its real essence is the belief in the truth and divinity of the nature of man. Man strips himself all his best qualities as his goodness, his justice, his power etc in the process of alienating himself from the viscidities of life. He does this by removing all limitations from the projected best qualities such as infinite goodness, infinite power, etc. one can see from this that all the divine attributes are nothing other than human attributes abstracted from man and projected to God. He concludes that religion is thus man's self-alienation as he removes his best attributes and gives them to God and becomes nothing.

Feuerbach however, sees this stripping of oneself of his best qualities as a dialectical process of self-knowledge acquisition. Man realizes that this imaginary projection of being that he terms God is a mere idolization and worship of himself and that there is not objectively real as God. It is only in realizing that he has been worshipping and praying to himself that he can overcome his self-alienation. What is on prominent relief here is that once man reconciles with himself when he recognizes that he has been worshipping and praying to himself, he stopped the practice of religion. This is because a finite being cannot know an infinite being

since his nature is limited. He admits that man has knowledge of infinitude only in the sense that it is the collection of man's nature. He makes real his theory by linking it with the Christian doctrine of incarnation where God reveals Himself as nothing but man. He concludes by saying that this situation enables God to be man in order for man to be God. (*Deus homo factus est; ut homo Deus fieret*). What can be seen in his argument can be summarized as man looking for his perfection in the idea of God. As he puts it: "The yearning of man after something above himself is nothing else than longing after the perfect type of his nature, the yearning to be free from himself, i.e, from the limits and defects of his individuality".(Feuerbach 1957:281).

From the foregoing, it can be agreeable that there is a sense in which Feuerbach's postulation is reasonable. Since the limitation posed in man by his nature places him at a difficulty in knowing things beyond this physical, he will certainly be left with the only option of projecting his best attributes as God. However, it is difficult to explain away the idea of God as a mere projection of man's best attributes. The hollowness created by man trying to understand himself in this universe by trying to find answers to the fundamental questions of life cannot be wished away as Feuerbach postulates. It is difficult to dismiss the idea of God and religion the way we have seen in the above section; what is obtainable is that God relates with man in such a way that He is worshipful and man reciprocates as a worshipper.

4.0 Conclusion

In this unit, we have examined the existence of God, arguments for the existence of God, and the activities of God and other spirits from the metaphysical and cultural points of being. We also saw the relationship between God, the sacred and the mundane as that of a worshipper and the worshipful. It is good that we have seen the origins and theories of the origin of God. You are in a better position to appreciate the notion of God, the sacred and the mundane by now.

5.0 Summary

From the foregoing, it can be summarized as follows that you have learnt the following:

The nature of God as is understandable by man

The various arguments postulated for the existence of God from man's perspective.

The difficulties in the establishment of God's existence

The various theories of the activities of God understandable in metaphysical and cultural paradigms.

6.0 Self-assessment Exercises

Discuss the ontological perspectives on the existence of God?

Examine the cosmological arguments on the existence of God?

Discuss the theological views on the activities of God?

What do you understand by the anthropological conception of God's activities?

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Module 2

Unit 1 : Creationism

Unit 2: Evolutionism

Unit 3: Analogy and Participation

Unit I

Contents:

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Intended Learning outcomes (ILOs)

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Creationism

3.2 Creatio Ex nihilo

3.3 Creatio in Nihilo.

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Self Assessment Exercises

7.0 References/ Further Readings

1.0 Introduction

We have been discussing some of the fundamental issues of Philosophy of Religion such as the nature and existence of God. In this unit, you will be examining what it means to create by God: the various kinds of creationist theories and the implications of such for human kind. Is creationism tenable? Or is a mythical theory? All these and more will be examined in this unit.

2.0 Intended Learning outcomes (ILOs)

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

Explain what creationism means

Identify the theories of creationism

Discuss the implications of creationism to humankind

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Creationism

There are various theories that have attempted to examine the origin of the universe; some idealistic and others materialistic. Creationism depicts the idealist's conception of the origin of the cosmos. The Holy bible provides a veritable elucidation of the creationist perception of how the universe originated. Accordingly God was the agentive factor who used his word (the

logos) to bring into being all that exists. Genesis (1: 1-end) embodies the account of the creation story. In verses 1 – 3, we see the introduction as;

In the beginning God created heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said; 'let there be light and there was light'

Reading down the chapter will describe how God created all the things that we know today capping it with man whom he gave the injunction to dominate the world. Many evidences abound as adduced by its proponents. For instance, as it regards the composite parts of man as the organ of sight must work together for there to be effective sight. With the evolutionary perspective, such organs would have been useless until it forms completely. Chukwuokolo (2007: 107) captures this when he cited Darwin thus:

So the question arises: could the undirected element of chance that is thought to be a driving force of evolution have brought all these parts together at the right time to produce such elaborate mechanisms? Darwin even acknowledges this as a problem. He writes, "to suppose that the eye ...could have been formed by (evolution) seem, I freely confess absurd, in the highest order."

Another evidence for the creationist is from awesomeness of the universe. For instance, the infinite complexity of the solar system as the revolution of the sun occurs with exactitude of precision since the beginning of the world. They liken it with the watch and the activity of the watch maker according to which you cannot get the watch without imagining the watch maker. The complexity of the cells and the brain also are giving as reasons for why the creationists accept their theory. If one compares the activities of the human brain and the most advanced computer, one will conclude the latter to be primitive and absurd.

Even amongst the ancient Western philosophers, some of them postulated creationist theories. Plato is known for the postulation of the Demiurge as the creative force of all things. In believing in the unquestionable eternity of matter, Plato describes the activities of the Demiurge as that of a craftsman and constructor. What we have examined so far is the notion of creation and some evidences in support of it. We shall now examine the kinds of

creationism.

3.2 Creatio Ex nihilo

There are contentions as to the nature of the creative exercise of God. While some analysts see Him as a creator whose work is to arrange things from raw materials already in existence before creation, others see Him as creating ab ovo, i.e, out of nothing. Creatio ex nihilo is the idealistic postulation that God created all things from nothing and without any prototype. When we look critically into the notion that God created things out of nothing, it reinforces the omnipotence of God as an all powerful being whose necessity can never be in doubt. Even when one pries into ancient Egyptian cosmogony, one will notice that from the Memphis tradition Ptah archetypal primeval creator was regarded as creating out of nothing.

However, amongst the early Greek philosophers one will observe that in explaining the origin and development of the universe, they sort answers to what was the ultimate reality, what was the cosmos made of and what was the origin and source of the world.

These philosophers arguing from their understanding of causality did not believe that the universe was created out of nothing. Chukwuokolo asserts in this direction categorically thus:

While many of them agreed that the order in the cosmos began in time, they denied the beginning of matter. For them, therefore, eternity of matter was unquestionable. They still avoided all forms of reverence and deification as did the Judeo-Christian schools by attributing the ingenuity of creation to either God or a universal consciousness or mind. (2007: 109)

One can aver that for the Greeks did not describe the origin of things *stictu sensu* but the birth of the cosmos from primordial ancestors. Thus seen, its language communicates the notion of craftsmanship as against creation.

3.3 Creatio in Nihilio

This is the creationist school that argues that it is difficult to see any conviction in the fact that the universe was created out of nothing rather that it was created out of or from something.

Even the Judeo-Christian tradition, they assert; came from primeval elements as Oceanus and chaos. That is why in Genesis 1: 2, the bible states, “And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” In writing like this the bible shows that certain elements were there before creation namely; deep, the spirit of God, waters and darkness. This casts doubt on the all powerful notion of God’s capacity.

Plato also describes creation in this mould. His Demiurge was just purposed to arrange things and not to create. This was the reason why he posits that there is no explanation of the origin of the raw materials of creation. Accordingly, he asserts that being, time, space etc were distinctly in creation before creation. Matter which was in disorderliness was in existence before creation; all the Demiurge did was to order these raw materials of creation in a generous manner. There is a clear indication that God is not omnipotent, omnipresence and omniscient. Aristotle also posits an un-moved mover who was not a creator but a mover. One can therefore conclude that the concept of creation in Greek cosmogony was not that of creation but a *roi faireneant* (do-nothing-king). This can account for His remoteness from his creation; perhaps why Aristotle describes God as a *Deus Otiosis* (a remote God). It will be noted that after creation there were some intractable and disorderly matter. This also makes for the evils in this world that operate beyond the realm of God’s control. The problem of evil will be discussed later but suffice it to say that the creation story is difficult to hold as convincing. I can end this by stating that the creationist view can at best be described as not the origin of things rather as a theoretical interpretation of a process as would one that was on earth but not part of the creative exercise.

4.0 Conclusion

In this unit you have examined thus far the meaning of creation, the kinds of creationist theories namely creatio in nihilio and creation ex nihilio. What is on prominent relief is the difficulty that one who did not observe a process and had no record of such process would face namely conjecturing of ideas in order to cover loopholes.

5.0 Summary

The following summarizes what has been learnt in this unit:

There are various theories that have attempted to examine the origin of the universe; some idealistic and others materialistic.

That Creationism depicts the idealist's conception of the origin of the cosmos

That there are two kinds of creationist theories namely; creatio in nihilio and creatio ex nihilio.

6.0 Self Assessment Exercises

What do you understand as creationism?

How would you react if we state that creatio in nihilio posited a do nothing King?

Is it tenable to posit the creatio ex nihilio principle?

7.0 References/ Further Readings

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Read Genesis 1: 1-end for full understanding of the biblical creation account

Unit 2

Contents:

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Intended Learning outcomes (ILOs)

3.0 Main Content

3.1 The Big Bang Theory

2.2 Evolutionism

3.3 Creative –Evolution

4.4 Analogy and Participation

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Self Assessment Exercises

7.0 References/ Further Readings

2.0 Introduction

In the last unit, we examined the idealist conception of the origin of the cosmos understood as creationism. We also examined its meanings, kinds and pitfalls. In this unit, you will be learning and examining the materialist interpretation of the origin of the cosmos, i.e, evolutionism. You will start with the big band theory, evolution theory and an attempt to reconcile the creationist and evolutionary theories. Is evolutionism tenable? Or is it a mythical theory? All these and more will be examined in this unit.

2.0 Intended Learning outcomes (ILOs)

By the end of this unit, you are expected to learn and discuss the following:

The meaning of the big bang theory

The notion of evolutionism

The meaning and nature of creative- evolution

The implications of evolution and creative-evolution for humankind

3.0 Main Content

3.1 The Big Bang Theory

We are motivated here by the thought provoking question of Heidegger; “why are there essents rather than nothing?” The attempt to answer this question we noted earlier piqued philosophers between the creationists and evolutionist divides. The big bang theory states that about twenty billion years ago the universe did not exist; not even did empty space but only the infinitesimal point of singularity: until there was the sudden explosion that gave rise to the universe as it is. The universe is a product of the cooling of the attendant cosmic soup that followed the big bang. It took many years of gradual cooling of the effect of the bang for both the inorganic and organic beings in the universe to manifest. This theory gives credence to the ever expanding nature of the universe as the bang is in an ever expanding mode since its first explosion.

At this stage it necessary to observe that if the big bang is anything, it cannot or has not been substantiated as regards when and how of its happenstance. Chukwuokolo casts further doubt to this theory thus:

Another problem for the big bang has emanated from the evidence of bubbles in the universe that are 100 million light years in size, with galaxies on the outside and inside. Stebbins (1971:21) noted that some Harvard astrophysicists had observed what they called a great wall of galaxies some 500 million light years in length across the northern sky.

The astronomers called seven Samurai, have found evidence of different cosmic conglomerations, which they call the great attractor, locatable at the southern constellations of Hydra the Centaurs (2008:10).

The point at issue is did the big bang ever exist? If space-time never existed, how could all these things have appeared from nothing? The answers to these remain intractable and a problem to modern cosmology.

3.2 Evolutionism

It was Charles Darwin (1976:10) who systematized the theory of evolution. According to him, the universe was not created by God but had to evolve gradually from inorganic to organic until it got to the human life level. He defined evolution as descent by modification where closely related species with common inheritance with differences from one another due to hereditary differences have accumulated since the separation of their ancestors. Evolution is seen as following a pattern or law which entails progression or transformation of things. What this means is that evolution is a continual adaptation of species towards perfection. Thus, the evolving universe is advancing towards perfection- a *terminus ad quem* and by necessity the present ought to be better than the future.

Certain misconceptions need be clarified for better understanding: evolution is not advocating that all lives are tending towards man as the most complex of all beings otherwise why has other species not metamorphosed to man? In addition, even though that the evolutionists as Darwin aver that the apes and man have common ancestors, it is doubtful whether the apes are man's ancestors. Evolutionism is not same as Darwinism as the later has been shown to be how a specie has evolved from another. The claim of evidence of evolutionism came from the following: biogeography, taxonomy, paleontology, genetics, embryology, comparative anatomy etc. We shall end this section with the following view of Chukwuokolo (2008:5);

At this juncture, it should be noted that evolutionism is not the explanation of the nature or origin of life itself. Rather, it is the theoretical interpretation of a process that describes how one specie was derived from another. Hence, such interpretation could be

mechanistic, teleological or vitalistic. They could also be theistic or atheistic. Thus, it could be argued that just as the development of an individual does not imply any single attitude towards life, so an acceptance of evolutionism does not intrinsically compel us towards any view of the interpretation of cosmogenesis material or idealistic.

Of more serious implication of the above is that contrary to the popularly held belief evolutionism does not necessary reject religion or denies God.

However, certain issues place doubt of the efficacy of evolution as the theory that explains the origin of the cosmos. For instance, it has not been able to account for when consciousness started in life. The irreducible complexities of certain organs as the eye, the brain etc show that it is not everything that evolved rather that there are situations that enhanced quantum leaps in the progression of lives. This theory has also anchored negative impacts and influences on the history of the evolution of ideas namely the principle of eugenicism which gave Hitler his ideological grounding. May I reiterate that evolutionism can at best be an attempt at the description or explanation of a process from the stand point of one who was not there when it happened.

3.3 Creative –Evolution

The attendant challenges that the inefficiency of both creationism and evolutionism in satisfactorily explaining the origin of the cosmos led to the third perspective of creative-evolution. It was Henri Bergson who first posited this view. According to him, the cosmic development is the history of the evolution of life. Omoregbe (1991:20) sums that “he conceives life as dynamite or bombshell which exploded at the beginning of the universe and its fragmented parts has ever since continued to explode in different directions in the universe” He sees evolution as a creative thing following from the above and hence; he rejects both the mechanistic and teleological perspectives of evolution.

The advantage of the above is that it explains satisfactorily the issues of the ever expanding universe as cosmologists are expressing in recent studies. However, Bergson’s creative-evolutionary theory does not capture the essence of what I understand by that term namely

eclectic posture. I argue that both theories complement each other. For instance, what was responsible for the sudden explosion that is known today as the big bang? If we assert that God caused the big bang, it will find the missing link of who was responsible for the big bang. Also, the argument that God's creation of the cosmos in six days can only be acceptable in mythical sense will be complemented by saying that beings came as a result of gradual evolution after God had uttered the creative words for things come into being. Six days seem absurd but longer evolutionary period seems more reasonable to accept. One can therefore posit that the three theories are but moments in the process of coming into being of things in the cosmos. The big bang was the beginning of the process, followed by the creative stage which was perfected by the evolutionary stage. Thus, I conclude by saying that combining the three processes helps us understand the origin of things as it is. One can see that with this new view, God can be said to in the final analysis been responsible for these moments in the origin of things.

3.4 Analogy and Participation

Analogy and Participation Analogy, as viewed by Aristotle is a theory of general logic, the theory of predication, which has only to be applied to the notable case of being. St. Thomas, on the other hand, generally introduces it as a mode of logical predication, the mode that is neither univocal nor equivocal but in between (analogical). Focusing on St. Thomas' philosophy, this section will determine how analogy can bring us to know God analogously. St. Thomas' emphasis is on the analogy of being, a principle that makes for a better understanding of analogy, when speaking of existence or metaphysics and knowing true epistemology. This, in turn, leads us to God who is all truth and has always existed. Since God is existence itself and us as human beings are participants in His Divine plan, there is a vast separation of what the human intellect truly understands about the Creator. St. Thomas rightly claims that it is through our senses that we can get to know things but since God is beyond our senses, the finite mind cannot adequately describe the infinite being that is. God, as St. Thomas has said, is pure existence in act since it can only be grasped through examples and illustrations. Potency belonging to those primary analogous notions that cannot be defined and

act that cannot be grasped, reveals one another with the understanding that act is included in every notion of potency but does not necessarily imply potency.

4.0 Conclusion

We have in this unit examined the principles of the origin of things considering big bang, evolution and creative-evolution. What is on prominent relief is that each of these taken separately cannot explain the origin of things but when they are taken in complementary sense, everything will fall into place.

5.0 Summary

We can summarize what we have learnt in the following:

Understanding what the big bang theory and its implication for humans is.

Ability to examine what evolution theory is and its various ramifications.

We reconciled the theories of evolution, the big bang and creation into creative-evolution and asserted their complementarity in explaining the origin of the cosmos.

6.0 Self Assessment Exercises

Discuss the big bang theory as a theory that explains the origin of things?

Examine creationism as the materialist interpretation of the origin of things?

Does creative-evolutionary theory reconcile the inconsistencies observed in both creationism and evolutionary explanation of the origin of things?

7.0 References/ Further Readings

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Module 3

Unit 1: Determinism

Unit 2: The question of evil in universe

Unit 3: The problem of evil

Unit 4: Freewill

Contents:

2.0 Introduction

2.0 Intended Learning outcomes (ILOs)

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Determinism

3:2 The question of evil in universe

3:3 The problem of evil

3:4 Freewill

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Self Assessment Exercises

7.0 References/ Further Readings

1.0 Introduction

In the last unit, we examined the issues of the origin of the cosmos in order to have a stronger standpoint on its implications for how man should live on earth. In this module that its units are taken simultaneously, you will learn and examine a very serious topic in the philosophy of

religion. This contains all the issues revolving around determinism, the question of evil in the universe, the problem of evil and freewill. Is evil a creation of God or is it an accidental part of the cosmos? Is evil a privation of good? All these and more will be addressed in this module.

2.0 Intended Learning outcomes (ILOs)

At the end of this module, you are expected to be able to discuss the following:

Determinism as a theory that explains the immanent laws in creation,
To be able to discuss the question of evil and its origin in universe,
the problem of evil and freewill and how they influence man's decisions

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Determinism

Determinism is the philosophical position that opposes the idea of freedom by positing that the universe is governed by iron-clad laws of nature that precludes the idea of freewill. This entails that such laws are web-like and inexorable such that anybody that talks of freewill does not understand the workings of the forces of nature. For instance, no matter what our position or belief is, we must obey the law of gravitation and cannot do otherwise. There are types of determinism:

Theological Determinism

Theological determinism is the view that God determines every event that occurs in the history of the world. While there is much debate about which prominent historical figures were theological determinists, St. Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, John Calvin, and Gottfried Leibniz all seemed to espouse the view at least at certain points in their illustrious careers. Contemporary theological determinists also appeal to various biblical texts (for example Ephesians 1:11) and confessional creeds (for example the Westminster Confession of Faith) to support their view. While such arguments from authority carry significant weight within the traditions in which they are offered, another form of argument for theological determinism

which has broader appeal draws on perfect being theology, or a kind of systematic thinking through the implications of the claim that God is—in the words of St. Anselm—*quo maius cogitari non potest*: that than which none greater can be conceived. The article below considers three such perfect being arguments for theological determinism, having to do with God's knowledge of the future, providential governance of creation, and absolute independence. Implications of theological determinism for human freedom and divine responsibility are then discussed.

Theological Determinism and Divine Responsibility for Evil

Besides explaining how, on their view, humans can be free and responsible for their own actions (or how the denial of human freedom is compatible with traditional theism), theological determinists must also face questions about God's moral responsibility for the evil in the world that, on their view, He determines. As with the former issue, their responses to the latter are many and varied. Below a number of distinct responses are discussed.

a. Theodicies and Defenses

Some theists attempt to offer a theodicy, or plausible explanation of why God has created a world in which evil exists. Others, uncertain of what God's actual reasons are, propose instead a defense, or possible explanation. One historic and popular explanation of why evil exists in a world created by God is the free will defense, first proposed by St. Augustine and developed by Alvin Plantinga (1974). According to this defense, the evil we witness in God's creation is not in fact God's doing at all, but the result of humans' misuse of their own freedom: God created humans to live in harmony with Himself and each other, but they freely chose to rebel against God and to sin against one another. Some proponents of this defense extend it to explain natural as well as moral evil, suggesting that all suffering in the world is ultimately due to sinful choices of fallen creatures, some of which lie behind the destructive natural forces of the world. However, the free will defense seems to assume that it was impossible for God both to create free persons and to determine all of their actions, such that they never do evil. In other words, it seems to assume an indeterministic conception of human freedom

incompatible with theological determinism. Thus, the traditional free will defense would not seem to be an option for theological determinists for the sin and suffering that make them possible.

b. Causing versus Permitting Evil

Even supposing the disvalue of all sin and suffering in the world is outweighed by the value of the moral development of creatures, another concern critics have raised is whether it is morally permissible for God to cause humans to sin in order to realize some good. Peter Byrne, in response to Paul Helm's deterministic theodicy, asks:

How does it square with the Pauline injunction that one should not do evil that good may come of it? The place of that injunction in traditional moral theology is to set limits to how far we can pursue good by way of doing evil as its precondition. There are some acts that are so heinous that one may not do them for the sake of the bringing about a greater good.... One may not murder that good may come of it. But Helm's God has precisely planned, purposed, and necessitated acts of murder and instances of other kinds of horrendous wickedness so that good may come of them. (2008: 200)

In response, some theological determinists have argued that the difference between God's causing humans to commit sin for the purpose of realizing some good (the theological determinist's view), and knowing that humans would sin if they were created in particular circumstances and choosing to create them in those circumstances anyway, for the purpose of realizing some good (the Molinist view), is morally insignificant. Indeed, theological determinists contend, even the open theist's view, according to which God allows horrendous evil that He could prevent—presumably for the purpose of realizing some good—raises similar questions about God's moral responsibility for evil. So, they maintain, this concern about divine responsibility should not be a reason to reject theological determinism in favor of such competing views of divine providence.

3.2 Logical Problem of Evil

The existence of evil and suffering in our world seems to pose a serious challenge to the belief in the existence of a perfect God. If God were all-knowing, it seems that God would know about all of the horrible things that happen in our world. If God were all-powerful, God would be able to do something about all of the evil and suffering. Furthermore, if God were morally perfect, then surely God would want to do something about it. And yet we find that our world is filled with countless instances of evil and suffering. These facts about evil and suffering seem to conflict with the orthodox theist claim that there exists a perfectly good God. The challenge posed by this apparent conflict has come to be known as the problem of evil.

The problem of evil is certainly the greatest obstacle to belief in the existence of God. When I ponder both the extent and depth of suffering in the world, whether due to man's inhumanity to man or to natural disasters, then I must confess that I find it hard to believe that God exists. No doubt many of you have felt the same way. Perhaps we should all become atheists.

But that's a pretty big step to take. How can we be sure that God does not exist? Perhaps there's a reason why God permits all the evil in the world. Perhaps it somehow all fits into the grand scheme of things, which we can only dimly discern, if at all. How do we know?

As a Christian theist, I'm persuaded that the problem of evil, terrible as it is, does not in the end constitute a disproof of the existence of God. On the contrary, in fact, I think that Christian theism is man's last best hope of solving the problem of evil.

In order to explain why I feel this way, it will be helpful to draw some distinctions to keep our thinking clear. First, we must distinguish between the intellectual problem of evil and the emotional problem of evil. The intellectual problem of evil concerns how to give a rational explanation of how God and evil can co-exist. The emotional problem of evil concerns how to dissolve people's emotional dislike of a God who would permit suffering

3.3 The Question of Evil in the Universe

The question of evil in the universe examines both the logical and probabilistic arguments against God from suffering and evil. The problem of evil is certainly the greatest obstacle to

the belief in the existence of God. When I ponder both the extent and depth of suffering in the world, whether due to man's inhumanity to man or to natural disasters, then I must confess that I find it hard to believe that God exists. No doubt many of you have felt the same way. Following from this perhaps we should all become atheists.

But that's a pretty big step to take. How can we be sure that God does not exist? Perhaps there's a reason why God permits all the evil in the world. Perhaps it somehow all fits into the grand scheme of things, which we can only dimly discern, if at all. How do we know?

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Now let's look first at the intellectual problem of evil. There are two versions of this problem: first, the logical problem of evil and second; the probabilistic problem of evil.

According to the logical problem of evil, it is logically impossible for God and evil to co-exist. If God exists, then evil cannot exist. If evil exists, then God cannot exist. Since evil exists, it follows that God does not exist.

But the problem with this argument is that there's no reason to think that God and evil are logically incompatible. There's no explicit contradiction between them. But if the atheist means there's some implicit contradiction between God and evil, then he must be assuming some hidden premises which bring out this implicit contradiction. But the problem is that no

philosopher has ever been able to identify such premises. Therefore, the logical problem of evil fails to prove any inconsistency between God and evil.

But more than that: we can actually prove that God and evil are logically consistent. You see, the atheist presupposes that God cannot have morally sufficient reasons for permitting the evil in the world. But this assumption is not necessarily true. So long as it is even possible that God has morally sufficient reasons for permitting evil, it follows that God and evil are logically consistent. And, certainly, this does seem at least logically possible. Therefore, I'm very pleased to be able to report that it is widely agreed among contemporary philosophers that the logical problem of evil has been dissolved. The co-existence of God and evil is logically possible.

But we're not out of the woods yet. For now we confront the probabilistic problem of evil. According to this version of the problem, the co-existence of God and evil is logically possible, but nevertheless it's highly improbable. The extent and depth of evil in the world is so great that it's improbable that God could have morally sufficient reasons for permitting it. Therefore, given the evil in the world, it's improbable that God exists.

Now this is a much more powerful argument, and therefore I want to focus our attention on it. In response to this version of the problem of evil, I want to make three main points:

1. We are not in a good position to assess the probability of whether God has morally sufficient reasons for the evils that occur. As finite persons, we are limited in time, space, intelligence, and insight. But the transcendent and sovereign God sees the end from the beginning and providentially orders history so that His purposes are ultimately achieved through human free decisions. In order to achieve His ends, God may have to put up with certain evils along the way. Evils which appear pointless to us within our limited framework may be seen to have been justly permitted within God's wider framework. To borrow an illustration from a developing field of science, Chaos Theory, scientists have discovered that certain macroscopic systems, for example, weather systems or insect populations, are

extraordinarily sensitive to the tiniest perturbations. A butterfly fluttering on a branch in West Africa may set in motion forces which would eventually issue in a hurricane over the Atlantic Ocean. Yet it is impossible in principle for anyone observing that butterfly palpitating on a branch to predict such an outcome. The brutal murder of an innocent man or a child's dying of leukemia could produce a sort of ripple effect through history such that God's morally sufficient reason for permitting it might not emerge until centuries later and perhaps in another land. When you think of God's providence over the whole of history, I think you can see how hopeless it is for limited observers to speculate on the probability that God could have a morally sufficient reason for permitting a certain evil. We're just not in a good position to assess such probabilities.

2. The Christian faith entails doctrines that increase the probability of the co-existence of God and evil. In so doing, these doctrines decrease any improbability of God's existence thought to issue from the existence of evil. What are some of these doctrines? Let me mention four:

a. The chief purpose of life is not happiness, but the knowledge of God. One reason that the problem of evil seems so puzzling is that we tend to think that if God exists, then His goal for human life is happiness in this world. God's role is to provide comfortable environment for His human pets. But on the Christian view this is false. We are not God's pets, and man's end is not happiness in this world, but the knowledge of God, which will ultimately bring true and everlasting human fulfillment. Many evils occur in life which maybe utterly pointless with respect to the goal of producing human happiness in this world, but they may not be unjustified with respect to producing the knowledge of God. Innocent human suffering provides an occasion for deeper dependency and trust in God, either on the part of the sufferer or those around him. Of course, whether God's purpose is achieved through our suffering will depend on our response. Do we respond with anger and bitterness toward God, or do we turn to Him in faith for strength to endure?

b. Mankind is in a state of rebellion against God and His purpose. Rather than submit to and worship God, people rebel against God and go their own way and so find themselves alienated from God, morally guilty before Him, and groping in spiritual darkness, pursuing false gods

of their own making. The terrible human evils in the world are testimony to man's depravity in this state of spiritual alienation from God. The Christian is not surprised at the human evil in the world; on the contrary, he expects it. The Bible says that God has given mankind over to the sin it has chosen; He does not interfere to stop it, but let's human depravity run its course. This only serves to heighten mankind's moral responsibility before God, as well as our wickedness and our need of forgiveness and moral cleansing.

c. The knowledge of God spills over into eternal life. In the Christian view, this life is not all there is. Jesus promised eternal life to all who place their trust in him as their Savior and Lord. In the afterlife God will reward those who have borne their suffering in courage and trust with an eternal life of unspeakable joy. The apostle Paul, who wrote much of the New Testament, lived a life of incredible suffering. Yet he wrote, "We do not lose heart. For this slight, momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen, but to the things that are unseen, for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal" (II Cor. 4:16-18). Paul imagines a scale, as it were, in which all the sufferings of this life are placed on one side, while on the other side is placed the glory that God will bestow on his children in heaven. The weight of glory is so great that it is literally beyond comparison with the suffering. Moreover, the longer we spend in eternity the more the sufferings of this life shrink toward an infinitesimal moment. That's why Paul could call them "a slight and momentary affliction"—they were simply overwhelmed by the ocean of divine eternity and joy which God lavishes on those who trust Him.

d. The knowledge of God is an incommensurable good. To know God, the source of infinite goodness and love, is an incomparable good, the fulfillment of human existence. The sufferings of this life cannot even be compared to it. Thus, the person who knows God, no matter what he suffers, no matter how awful his pain, can still say, "God is good to me," simply by virtue of the fact that he knows God, an incomparable good.

These four Christian doctrines greatly reduce any improbability which evil would seem to

throw on the existence of God.

3. Relative to the full scope of the evidence, God's existence is probable. Probabilities are relative to what background information you consider. For example, suppose Joe is a student at the University of Colorado. Now suppose that we are informed that 95% of University of Colorado students ski. Relative to this information it is highly probable that Joe skis. But then suppose we also learn that Joe is an amputee and that 95% of amputees at the University of Colorado do not ski. Suddenly the probability of Joe's being a skier has diminished drastically!

Similarly, if all you consider for background information is the evil in the world, then it's hardly surprising that God's existence appears improbable relative to that. But that's not the real question. The real question is whether God's existence is improbable relative to the total evidence available. I'm persuaded that when you consider the total evidence, then God's existence is quite probable.

3.4 Freewill

It was Rousseau who observed that man is free and everywhere he is in chain. It is an axiom for the proponents of freedom that man uses his freewill otherwise why do we hold people responsible for their actions. But closer scrutiny of human freedom of human behaviour seems to cast a cloud of doubt on human freedom. For instance, science has established both biologically and psychoanalytically that human behaviour are complexes of pre-determined impulses. Thirst and hunger results from physiological impulses and they compel us to make choices. Are the result and choices free? Philosophers are divided on this: while some held that there is freedom others deny same. Those who deny freedom (determinists) see the universe as a complex of iron clad laws. Even human behaviours are part of these complexes and ipso facto can never be free. While the existentialists opine that man is free and capable of making rational choices, Sigmund Freud and his ilks that propagate determinism argue that the idea of freedom is as a result of lack of understanding of the cosmic laws that influence human actions.

Be these as they may, Kant's seminal view is noteworthy. According to him, the issue of human freedom cannot be conclusively settled by speculative or metaphysical reasons. It is only man's moral experience that is paradigmatic in this search. In effect, it is man's moral experience that compels him to accept the freedom of man's will otherwise all our moral and legal experiences will be null and void. Though each side to the problem seems convincing, the problem is actually interminable. Also there is no doubt whether there are both determinism and freewill, but for the fact that I can decide to fast irrespective of the compelling physiological needs of hunger shows that I can still exert my freewill in spite of the deterministic condition arising from hunger.

4.0 Conclusion

In this module, we have examined the meaning and nature of determinism, the question of evil in universe, the problem of evil and freewill. We posit that there is a way that these can limit God's omnipotence, omniscience and omnipresence.

5.0 Summary

From the above, we summarize what you have learnt as follows:

The ability to discuss determinism and its kinds,

The capability of understanding the nuances of the question of evil in universe,

The capacity to appreciate the problem of evil and freewill

To be able to examine critically the place of God in all these.

6.0 Self-Assessment Exercises

What do you understand as determinism?

Do you absolve God from the problems of evil in the universe?

Do you agree that man is free?

7.0 References/ Further Readings

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Paul Helm (2008) *The Providence of God*, Oxford: Reformation Heritage Books p. 200

Module 4

Unit 1: The Experience of the Sacred and the Communication with the Divine

Unit 2: Religious Language

Unit 3: Myths, Symbol and Ritual

Unit 1: The Experience of the Sacred and the Communication with the Divine

Contents:

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Intended Learning outcomes (ILOs)

3.0 Main Content

3.1 What is the sacred?

3:2 Understanding the profane

3:3 Divine Communication and Communion

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Self Assessment Exercises

7.0 References/ Further Readings

1.0 Introduction

In the last module, we examined the questions of determinism, evil, freewill and the place of God in all these. We were able to establish that though there is determinism in the affairs of man, it does not negate freewill in man. In this unit, you are going to examine the meaning of the concept of the sacred, the profane or mundane and how they communicate with each other. Questions as to whether the mundane ever communicates with the divine are of essence in this unit.

2.0 Intended Learning outcomes (ILOs)

By the end of this unit, it is expected of you to :

Define and discuss the notion of the sacred

Define and discuss the notion of the profane

And examine in the problematic of their communication.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 What is the sacred?

The term, the sacred, has varying implications: the one is understood in the context of a power, being, mind etc capable of have a transformative effect on the lives and destinies of those who believe in it. Religious persons use such concepts, as the ultimate reality, transcendental, holy, mystery, divine, pure etc to denote this domain. On the other hand, sacred is used in the sense of having relation with the sacred. In this sense, anybody or object that is used in the process of relating with the Ultimate reality is regarded as sacred. It is in this pedestal that one can regard stones, priests, animals, forests, etc as sacred. From the above discussions, Sacred is an important technical term in the appreciative study, understanding and interpretation of religions.

From the different interpretations of the sacred offered by scholars, common characteristics were recognized namely that it is separated from the common world also known as the profane. It designates the ultimate and total value essence of life. Etymologically, the term

sacred comes from the Latin word *sacer* meaning, restricted. Something is designated as sacred if it is unique or extraordinary. Such notions of pure, unpure and or pollutant are also used to designate the sacred. In ancient Rome the word *sacer* meant that capable of polluting a person or a thing that contacts it or a person or thing restricted for divine use. This notion of impure state is characterized by weakness, illness, misfortune, and even death. To become pure therefore means to get into the sacred realm, done through purificatory rituals or fasting and meditation or asceticism. Once a person attains purity, he transforms to the divine and leaves the profane, impure, corrupt world. Such a change is usually observed by a ritual act of rebirth or baptism.

Mans' Contradictory Response to the Sacred

It is obvious that the sacred contains notions both of a positive, creative power and a dangerous feeling that requires stringent prohibitions and abnegations; the natural human reaction is both of fear, dread and fascination. This should be the basis of the elaboration of human understanding of the holy from this basic ambiguity. It is only based on this understanding that it is only the sacred that can fulfill man's innermost needs, aspirations and hopes that justifies the reverence that man shows to the sacred. But stretching this view shows that it is composed both of trust and terror. From the above, we observe that the sacred is the limit of human effort both as that which meets human frailty and that which impedes human activity; and on the other hand, it is the limitless possibility that catapults humankind above the limiting temporal–spacial structures that constitutes human existence.

Another area of individual's reaction to the numinous quality of the sacred is the restrictions and the taboos expressive of the creative power of the sacred. This is more understandable if the social mechanism of no literate societies is analyzed. Lets divided the society into two: for instance whatever is forbidden, sacred and restricted for one group is "free" for the other group. In some senses, as in supplying certain needs- goods, food, and wives—each group is dependent on the other for basic needs. Here the sacred is seen to be manifested in the order of

the social–physical universe, in which these tribal members live. From their prism it means that to disrupt this order, this natural harmony, would be sacrilegious, and the culprit would be severely punished. This understanding of the sacred makes a person naturally, one of a pair; that is never complete as a single unit. In this sense, reality is appreciated as one of directed relationships; vertically, hierarchically and others being in horizontal, corresponding relationships

A more significant contradiction is that the sacred manifests itself in concrete ways that are also profane. Transcendentally, this mystery is recognized in specific concrete symbolism, acts, ideas, images, personalities, or communities. This is explainable when the unconditioned reality is manifested in conditioned ways. This is known as the dialectic of the sacred in which the sacred may be understandable in any way in religious history: just like totems (a stone, an animal, tree or the sea). The ambivalence of the sacred appearing in profane ways also entail that although every system of the sacred differentiates between those things it regards as sacred or as profane, yet the sacred manifests in different forms for different people; this means that what is profane for some may be sacred for the others.

3:2 Understanding the profane

Religion has been defined as a social institution involving beliefs and practices based on recognizing the sacred by the profane. In the last section, we have dealt with the sacred; what then is the profane. The profane can be understood from the perspective of those things not relating to that which is sacred or religious - secular. A person that is not initiated into any religious rites or any esoteric knowledge could be described as a profane man

Emile Durkheim a French sociologist commonly regarded as the 'father of sociology.' extensively studied the functions of religion in the society and distinguish between the sacred and the profane. Accordingly, he sees most of the day to day things we come across in life as ordinary. When you examine every day routine of a person - driving a car, going to work, playing football - these things are all common and are regarded as common routines of everyday life. These Durkheim would regard as profane - those ordinary aspects of our daily

existential routines. While those other activities or things are set apart as extraordinary, awe-inspiring and reverential are categorized as the sacred namely relating to the supernatural.

Watching our football team play in the stadium is profane. Eating our favorite delicacy would be considered profane. But reading the holy writs as the Bible is sacred for Christians in the same way that Jewish people revere the Torah as sacred and Muslims deify the Qur'an. Religion, thus, is a social institution delineating beliefs and practices on the bases of the recognition of the sacred by the profane.

In understanding the profane ritual forms important parts of the social institution of religion. These are those ceremonial activities depictive of the recognition the sacred; for instance, anytime Christians receive Holy Communion, it is a formalized ritual distinct from eating unleavened or leavened bread and drinking a glass of wine say at home or in a party. They are regarded as a sacred mystery symbolizing of the body and blood of Jesus Christ. It is in celebrating these rituals that the members of various religious groups are bound together. It is the same with the African Traditional Religion (ATR) Worshippers when they partake in the meats of sacrifices. From the foregoing, anything outside the realm of the sacred is regarded as the profane and vice versa.

3:3 Divine Communication or Communion

In this section, we are faced with the deep challenges of how a mere mortal communicates with the immortal. It is more so especially as we have found in the previous discussions the challenges of establishing God's existence; the problems of evils and the origin of man's notion of God and religions. So we start by noting that there is no conclusive evidence of God providing any clear or obvious communications to humankind. It is all knowledge about itself transmitted verbally from human to human. However, there are instances of claims of some revelations to individual people which have unfortunately bred contradictions. But irrespective of certain number of clear false messages and their attendant messengers, there are instances of convincing messages and strict orders of mandate that such messages must be believed. For example, many holy writs demand that adherents must believe in the messages,

messengers and signs as sacred responsibilities and behaving otherwise attracts terrible punishments for those who fail to behave accordingly. One serious fallout of this is an inherent fundamental epistemic problem the impossibility of any other person to verify the original message.

The question that logically flows from the above is does humans really communicate with God or the spirits? If yes; how and through what medium or media? Let us start by saying that it appears that all evidence to the man and God communication points to human-psychology being the source of this divine communications. This problematic has led to uncountable and uncontrollable errors, mistranslations, disagreements, multiplication of sects resulting into divisions and then disputes, conflicts, violence and war. So the communication in Traditional world religions all began with the oral transmission of stories allegedly from God to prophets or seers or priests and from prophets to others humans. However, this has been universally proven to be a very unreliable pattern or medium for preserving the truth emanating from such communication.

Another means of communication is the media of series of Prophets from God. The holy bible has a chequered history of communication between the Israelites and Jehovah their God. Before Moses met the burning bush, Abram had a convincing claim of communication with God that resulted to his leaving his original home and brethren to migrating to another place. But with Moses' encounter, it triggered a series of more frequent instruction ranging from the command to exit Egypt to a promised land; in the wilderness, the Decalogue was given via this medium of divine instruction to Moses. Subsequently, other Prophets like Elijah, Elisha, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Ezekiel etc came into the scene with messages from God to His people; such messages transformed generations of people.

It is also very evident that most Scriptures and Religions allegedly embody what God wants humans to know. Any survey of the Bhagavad-Gita, the Mahabharata, the Bible, concerning the tenets of such religions. The Abrahamic religions have the Bible or the Torah as strong repository of messages, histories, laws and instructions on how to live on earth. Again, evidences abound that they are allegedly communicated to the people through the prophets or messengers regarded as extraordinary humans sent by God for such unique messages to humanity. As have been noted earlier, it is difficult to be collaborated by others; thus it is always said that religions are beyond the realm of reason but faith. This is the root of all religious crises.

Communications have been made with God through the works of arts. These artistic works convey the innate feelings of the adherents as it regards their feelings about God. In the Hindu tradition, Krishna is usually drawn as a human-like being with many hands and many legs depictive of the limitless capabilities of what human normally do with hands or legs. Sometimes one sees carved images depicting a certain attribute of God. In African Traditional Religion (ATR) some Igbo have some wooden carvings that show the all-knowing, all-powerful, all-fertile attributes etc of God. Belief has it that some of these artworks are said to have been sent down to humans by God to demonstrate one thing or another. In this same mold, there are some artistic materials used for divination; such helps humans in communication with God in order to 'know' His mind. The Urim and Thummim, the cowries, wooden gongs etc serve in this regards.

We have tried to examine the level and media of claims for the communication with God. We equally observed an inherent fundamental epistemic problem of the impossibility of any other person to verify the claimed communication. It is even worsened when we notice cacophonous messages from different religions' claims as emanating from God Really the existence of contradictory religions appear to tell us that either God is evil or He doesn't care what we believe; which messages from god can you trust. In my opinion I hold that communication with God is otiose thus leaving the arena to conjectures.

4.0 Conclusion

In this unit, we have examined the meaning and nature of the sacred, understanding the profane and divine communication and communion. There is apparent communication between the sacred and the profane. The take away is really that the existence of contradictory religions appears to tell us that either God is evil or He doesn't care what we believe; which messages from god can you trust as being communicated from the sacred to the profane.

5.0 Summary

From the above, we summarize what you have learnt as follows:

The ability to discuss what the sacred means,

The capability to examine the notion of the profane and

whether there is any communications that exist between the profane and the sacred.

the existence of contradictory religions appear to tell us that either God is evil or He doesn't care what we believe; which messages from God can you trust. In my opinion I hold that communication with God is otiose thus leaving the arena to conjectures.

6.0 Self Assessment Exercises

Examine the concept of the sacred?

What do you understand by the profane?

Do humans communicate with God?

7.0 References/ Further Readings

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Unit 2: Religious Language

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Intended Learning outcomes (ILOs)

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Religious Language and Belief

3.2 Is Religious Propositions Meaningful?

3.3 Do Religious Propositions express what they mean?

3.4 Religious Propositions are Context specific in Meaning

4.0 Conclusion

6.0 Summary

7.0 Self Assessment Exercises

8.0 References/ Further Readings

1.0 Introduction

We engaged ourselves in the last unit with the examination of the concepts of the profane, the sacred and the possibility of communications existing between them. In this unit, you are going to examine religious language and belief. By doing this you will be engaged in understanding what religious propositions mean in the context of their expression of God. This arises as a result of the difficulties created by using language that is supposed to communicate human experience in communicating supra-human experiences as that of God. This worsens when certain philosophic schools argue against the possibility of expressing God in human language. For Kant, the noumenal world is not expressible in human parlance while

the Islamic school of negators asserts that humans have no language to discuss about God. The issue here is whether human language and ipso facto his experience can communicate the notion of God. Or is there other senses in which human expression of God communicate meaningfulness? Are religious propositions meaningful? Do Religious Propositions express what they mean? Are Religious Propositions Context specific in Meaning? These questions will engage your attention in this unit.

2.0 Intended Learning outcomes (ILOs)

At the end of this unit, it is expected that you learn the following:

The difficulties encountered by humans while using human language that is designed to express human experiences to communicate transcendental experiences.

You will learn whether there is any senses in which human expression of God communicate meaningfulness.

You will learn whether religious propositions are meaningful or otherwise.

You will grapple with the challenges of religious propositions expressing what they actually mean.

You will learn that religious propositions are context specific in their meanings.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Religious Language and Belief

A. Logical Positivism

The practice of philosophy, especially in the analytic tradition, places emphasis on precision of terms and clarity of concepts and ideas. Religious language is often vague, imprecise, and couched in mystery. In the twentieth century this linguistic imprecision was challenged by philosophers who used a principle of verifiability to reject as meaningless all non-empirical claims. For these logical positivists, only the tautologies of mathematics and logic, along with

statements containing empirical observations or inferences, were taken to be meaningful. Many religious statements, including those about God, are neither tautological nor empirically verifiable. So a number of religious claims, such as “Yahweh is compassionate” or “Atman is Brahman,” were considered by the positivists to be cognitively meaningless. When logical positivism became prominent in the 19th century, philosophy of religion as a discipline became suspect. In the 20th century, the approach of the logical positivists became a problem. Thus, a new language emerged.

b. Realism and Non-realism

After the collapse of positivism especially the logical aspect, two streams emerged in philosophy of religion regarding what religious language and beliefs are about: realism and non-realism. The vast majority of religious adherents are religious realists. Realists, as used in this context, are those who hold that their religious beliefs are about what actually exists, independent of the persons who hold those beliefs. Assertions about Allah or Brahman, angels or demons, resurrection or reincarnation, for example, are true because, in part, there are actual referents for the words “Allah,” “Brahman,” and so forth. The implication is that statements about them can and do provide correct predications of the behavior of Allah and Brahman and so forth. If Allah or Brahman do not actually exist, assertions about them would be false. Non-realists are those who hold that religious claims are not about realities that transcend human language, concepts, and social forms; religious concepts, and social forms; religious claims are not about realities “out there”; they are not about objectively existing entities. Religion is a human construct and religious language refers to human behavior and experience. Ludwig Wittgenstein is a major proponent that built non-realist language in religion.

3:2 Is Religious Propositions Meaningful?

As we have noted above, Wittgenstein expressed unequivocally that religious expressions are meaningless. At the wake of positivism, logical positivism saw meaningfulness of propositions only in those that can be empirically verifiable. Consequently, any proposition of religion and metaphysics that are usually beyond sense experience is regarded as meaningless

and of no impact for humans. It is therefore regarded as nonsensical as it does not conform to the criterion set out by the logical positivists in ascertaining the meaningfulness or otherwise of propositions. Perhaps, A J Ayer's statements will help us to appreciate this posture better:

The mention of God brings us to the question of the possibility of Religious knowledge. We shall see that this possibility has already been ruled out by our treatment of metaphysics....for to say that 'God exists' is to make a metaphysical utterance which cannot be either true or false. And by the same criterion no sentence which purports to describe the nature of the transcendent God can possess any literal significance.... All utterances about the nature of God are nonsensical (1946: 114-120)

Ayer cajoled all those making statements about the existence of God, soul, life after death etc as those making meaningless expressions as these are beyond verification. He however, made distinctions of verification in principle and practical verification. Any proposition that is capable of being verified in the future but not at present due mainly because of the stage of science is thus verifiable in principle. These categories of propositions are meaningful. Philosophers such as John Hick criticized him on this ground by arguing that religious propositions are verifiable in principle as it can be verified in the future when science advances. This follows logically from the assertion that even eschatological propositions are neither false nor true. For instance, if there is absence of life after death, humans cannot know until after death; how then can someone deny its verifiability?

It is evident that to assert that religious propositions are meaningless as the logical positivists have argued is to appreciate the difficulties encountered in communicating religious experiences. This perhaps was attempted to be resolved by the pragmatic school of philosophy. Pragmatism asserts that statements are meaningful when they have practical import on humankind and vice versa. William James one of the proponents of pragmatism sees the whole essence of belief and thinking in leading the believers to action. Accordingly, meaningful propositions must have 'cash values', that is, practical consequences on humans. We shall conclude this session by saying that it is doubtful whether religious thinking are meaningful as their imports have served in assuaging mankind's deepest aspirations.

3:3 Do Religious Propositions express what they mean?

Another challenge encountered by religious language and belief are expressed by Ludwig Feuerbach and R B Braithwaite. Accordingly, religious propositions are meaningless as they convey different meanings from what they express. Feuerbach claims that he has discovered the real meaning of God as the subject of religion. Accordingly, he sees the concept of God as the projected language of man beyond himself; any statement about God therefore is not about God in reality as there is nothing amounting to Him but a statement conveying man's perfect nature. Thus the yearnings of man after a being beyond himself is just expressive of a longing after the perfection of man's nature. This means that he wants to be freed from himself in an imperfect sense, that is, from the limits and imperfection of his limitations. From this, expressions as 'God is infinitely good' would simply mean that man by nature is infinitely good: 'God is almighty' would mean that man's perfect nature is almighty.

Feuerbach surmised that all expressions about God is nothing other than feelings about man in his perfect state thereby reducing theology to anthropology.

On his part, Braithwaite sees religious belief as assertions of morality committing the believer to a certain way of behavior. He asserts that the meaningfulness or meaninglessness of statements is dependent on how it is used. However, it is noteworthy to observe that he does not believe that moral assertions are likened to emotivism of Hare where moral assertions are attributable to the expression of one's feelings. It is a commitment to a fundamental method of behavior. From this standpoint, he distinguishes moral principle from religious principle; accordingly, religion does not propose moral principles in an abstract sense. But religion expresses moral principles via anecdotes of story lines usually fictitious but commits adherents to these principles. Thus, for Braithwaite, religious stories as fictitious as they are; are not meant to be believed to be true rather they serve the evocative psychological function of stirring intentions, commitment and resolution of believers. From what we are discussing above, one can see that all he tried to do is to equate religious functions to morality. We can conclude this section by observing that it is difficult to conclusively argue that religious statements do not mean what they were intended. Believers were not intent on equivocation

but taking definitive positions on a wholly other which they believe in as God. It is even more ridiculous to note that religious assertions are akin to moral statements. This is because lots of religious founders did not see their message from the moral perspective rather they brought beliefs and dogmas that ended up transforming believers morally.

3.4 Religious Propositions are Context specific in Meaning

Another way that philosophers have viewed religions propositions is in the context of understanding its mean given any situation. This was enthroned by the revision of the initial position of Wittgenstein who latter saw language as a game where its meaning id dependent of the context of usage. Any other notation of meaning arises from ignorance of the nature of language. Accordingly, the later Wittgenstein allows religious language some meaningfulness only when people situate them in specific context of usage. Thus the meaning of any religious language must be found in the manner of usage within the logic of the language game and never outside it. Theology for him in this context is a ‘grammar’ that is self contained in its standard of intelligibility. This is why he insisted that the question of the existence of God should be treated differently from that of the existence of any other being because they exist at different levels of language game. This he exemplified better when he makes comparisons between the Christian notion of Jesus Christ as son of God and the Muslim assertion of Jesus Christ as just a prophet but not a son of God as He can never have a son. For him, the two religions are not contradicting themselves as they operate at two different levels of language games. Since, they do not speak the same language, they appear not to understand each other.

This position got adherents who reduced the moral burdens that philosophy has put religion into by maintaining the escapist perspective that all those who criticize religious propositions as ignorant of their contexts. For instance Malcolm Norman asserts that God cannot be understood without the unique experience that enthrones it. Karl Barth’s view of religious language as emanating from ‘a community of faith’ and that anyone outside this community is incapable of understanding this is depictive of this understanding. However, some others criticized this notion of language game as a paradigm for the explanation of religious propositions. Philip asserts that the equation of religious language to a ‘self contained and

isolated game' betrays lack of the appreciation the strong connection between religion and the outside world. On his own, R.W Hepburn in his critique of Wittgenstein's language game, asserts that the language game is incapable of explaining the traditional Christian theology. He sums up his view by saying that since religious language is garnered in the same context of other human experiences, it cannot be understood in any isolated language game. This is evident in the fact that people who profess atheism still understand the language of theism. We can therefore state at this stage that our efforts here revolve around the reality of the difficulty and the limitation of using our language in communicating supra-normal realities.

4.0 Conclusion

In this unit, we have examined the issues relating to the problems generated by religious language. In doing this, we have discussed the various notions of the meanings of religious language. What is evidently very clear is that people are interminably piqued on what religious propositions convey. However, proper attention to the issues raised above, will help you to appreciate the nitty- gritty of the challenges thrown up by the usage of language in religion.

5.0 Summary

The following can be said to be the summary of what you learnt from this unit:

that there are more critical perspectives to the issues of what religious propositions actually mean.

that this actually became an issue during the rise of positivism and ipso facto, religious language got faced with suspicions.

what religious language and belief amount to

whether religious propositions are meaningful

whether religious propositions express what they mean

and whether religious propositions are context specific in meaning

6.0 Self Assessment Exercises

Discuss in comparative terms the notions of the logical positivists and pragmatists on the meaningful or meaningless of religious propositions?

Examine in rational terms the view of Ludwig Feuerbach and R.B Braithwaite concerning the meaning of religious propositions?

Are religious propositions meaningful?

7.0 References/ Further Readings

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Unit 3: Myths, Symbol and Ritual

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Intended Learning outcomes (ILOs)

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Understanding Myths

3:2 Understanding Symbols and Totemism

3:3 Rituals in Religions

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Self Assessment Exercises

7.0 References/ Further Readings

1.0 Introduction

Philosophically, there is no doubt that there is difficulty in the understanding of the meanings of the propositions of religious concepts. The issues emanating from the above statement were fully discussed in the last unit. In this unit, you are going to learn three basic concepts namely myths, symbols and rituals with the more serious attention to their nature, orientations are limitations. As usual there will be an attempt to philosophically engage their implications for human society. This is because religion has held man spell bound as he tries to grapple with the other life while in this present incarnation and in the afterlife. In fact religious understanding because more interesting with the understanding of myths, symbols and rituals. This is because although some (if not all) of them emanate from the profane, yet they assume sacred postures in a way that they are revered.

2.0 Intended Learning outcomes (ILOs)

By the end of this unit, it is expected that you understand

the critical place of myth, symbols and rituals in religion.

You will also be in a better position to appreciate their centrality in the religious understanding and behavior of humankind.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Understanding Myths

The word *myth* is a derivative of the Greek *mythos*, with a range of meanings from “word,” “saying,” “story,” to “fiction”. Unfortunately, since myths are characterized with the narration of events sometimes weird with no attempt at proving them, it is mostly regarded as simply stories with no factual standing. It has become a synonymous falsehood or, at best,

misconception. At this stage, it is noteworthy to state that in the [study of religion](#), however, it should be distinguishable from stories that are merely untrue.

Myth is a symbolic narrative, usually originating from antiquity and traced to the tradition of those holding it. It ostensibly relates to actual events that are related with religious beliefs. This is different from symbolic behaviour places or objects. [Myths](#) are intended to mask gods or superhuman beings and extraordinary events or circumstances in an antique period that is unspecified yet is understood as a reality different from ordinary human experiences. *Mythology* thus implies the study of [myth](#) and its placement to a particular religious tradition.

A philosophical issue arises when we observe that there is no attempt to justify mythical narratives or even to render them rationally plausible. We seem them been presented as [authoritative](#), factual, even when the narrated events are at variance with reason, the order of things or ordinary experience. It can be stated from this basic religious understanding, *myth* is also understandable to refer to an ideological belief especially when that belief objectivizes a quasi-religious faith; an example would be the Christian eschatological myth of the trinity.

Myths usually have their rooting from a past period or are time-specific and society based. This is why from a society other than one's own one can recognize the myths that are dominant in one's own time but find it difficult understanding that of other societies. There other issue with myth is that of having its authority not by proving itself but by merely presenting itself. Accordingly, the authority of a myth goes without adducing any proof making but can be been rejected or overcome in some manner by another, more [comprehensive](#) one. We can deduce from the above that religion is a purveyor of myths and that without it, religion cannot hold sway on the minds of adherents. No wonder why reason is seen as a threat to religious understanding and reasoning. Otherwise if we examine some of the mythologies of religion, one may the humanity of some of its adherents.

3:2 Understanding Symbols and Totemism

A symbol is an iconic representation with the intent of serving the purpose of symbolizing some deeper meanings of what it represents. It also serves for the unification of members in a

way that they see themselves as unique and different from the others. This symbolism presents adherents of religions with a certain level of responsibility when people identify them with such faiths. A catholic priest for instance who wears his symbolic collar is not only identified in reverence by Catholics but also expected to exhibit behavioural tendencies appropriate for the priest. Several religious symbols exist that distinguishes followers of a sect or belief namely; the crucifix, the moon and star, the star of David also known as the pentagram, chaplets, the swastika etc. in these meanings are derivable from these objects not necessarily because of their aesthetic values but because of what they represent. The crucifix for instance represents the object of the salvific suffering of Jesus Christ who was the originator of the faith. It is in the symbolismic interactions of these otherwise profane materials with the adherents of any religion that religions bond their adherents.

On its own, a totemic understanding is a system of [belief](#) where humans or religious adherents are regarded to have [a](#) relationship mystically or otherwise with a spirit-being, such as animate or inanimate beings as stones, trees, mammals etc. Conceptually, a totem is revered within a given family group or society where it serves as their emblem or symbol.

The Encyclopedia Britannica traces the term *totem* as

derived from the [Ojibwa](#) word *ototeman*, meaning “one’s brother-sister kin.” The grammatical root, *ote*, signifies a blood relationship between brothers and sisters who have the same mother and who may not marry each other. In English, the word *totem* was introduced in 1791 by a British merchant and translator who gave it a false meaning in the belief that it designated the [guardian spirit](#) of an individual, who appeared in the form of an animal—an idea that the Ojibwa [clans](#) did indeed portray by their wearing of animal skins. It was reported at the end of the 18th century that the Ojibwa named their clans after those animals that live in the area in which they live and appear to be either friendly or fearful. The first accurate report about totemism in [North America](#) was written by a Methodist missionary, Peter Jones, himself an Ojibwa, who died in 1856 and whose report was published posthumously. According to Jones, the Great Spirit had given *toodaims* (“totems”) to the Ojibwa clans, and because of this act, it should never be forgotten that members of the group are related to one another and on this account may not marry among themselves. (<https://cdn.britannica.com/15/29515-004>)

The nature of totemism is such that they are usually derived from nature in a mystical way that betrays a common origin of such natural icons with man in a way that their origins are not questionable. Totemism may be in such ideological, mystical, emotional, reverential, and genealogical rapport with a [society](#) or specific individuals with animates or inanimate known as totems.

Generally, totems are regarded reverentially as a companion, relative, protector, ancestors, or helper usually ascribable to supra-human capabilities. They are in turn regarded in veneration, and fear. In Mmaku my home town, totems are reverentially named with the intent of symbolic assimilation ascribed to them. Two prominent totemic animals in the said town are green snakes and white monkeys and they are regarded as ancestors. [Taboo](#) is pronounced against killing, eating, or touching these totemic objects. In fact, I once had an encounter with the green snake where it was rolling on my body while I had my siesta; on waking I ran one side and it ran the other way in such a friendly manner. It is believed that these animals can never harm anyone that believes in kinship with the totems.

Worthy of note at this stage is that even though that most often totems are associated with ritual behavior patterns, yet they are not a religion but symbols of a natural kinship that are expressive of the kinship of adherents with the totems. A level of misunderstanding exists where people delude adherents as worshipping these totems but this is misunderstanding of the essence of the affinity that exist between worshipers and the totems. It is because of this misunderstanding and mixture or alternation of totems with religious elements of [magic](#), other beliefs like ancestor worship, metempsychosis or [animism](#) that some people do cajole believer as worshipping animals or stones etc. generally, two kinds of totems exist namely: group and individual. A group totemism revolves around the social or [collective](#) identification of totems. It is typified the mystic identification of animate and inanimate beings with unilineally kinship groups and or local groups and families. This type of totemism was common among peoples in Africa and Asia. On the other hand, when an individual is in [intimacy](#) and protection of an animate or inanimate being, imbibing the grant of special power to such individual, individual totemism is said to have been observed.

Individual totemism is expressed in a such kinship way where simultaneous existence is assumed between totem and its owner in a close bond of life and fate that in case of the injury, sickness, and or death of either the owner or totem, the same fate would befall the other. There is a deeper mystery than the non initiate can understand and appreciate. In fact, in my place the death of the owner of the totem is foretold by the abnormal behavioural pattern of the totem to the owner. For instance, it might continue to follow the owner around and yelping consistently or it might exhibit signs of sickness such that those who understand will make preparation for the exit of the owner. A take away from all these discussions is the anthropomorphic dispositions of religions; and this is where the atheists (those who do not believe in God) hinge their strongest evidences against religion.

3:3 Rituals in Religions

In this section, we shall concentrate on the notion of rituals in religions. What then is a religious ritual? When a performer has developed a pattern of behavior or routine that is symbolic in a ceremonial and important way for any community of believers, a religious ritual is said to have been engaged in. Basically rituals are an integral part of daily routine as they abound in many forms of engagements. Religious rituals are pregnant symbolic meanings and functions. This is obvious when we observe that they are informed public or private exhibition of the commitment of persons to the faith in a belief system. In its essential importance, rituals are means of bridging the closeness of the profane that usually are the beneficiaries of rituals to the realm of the divine or the sacred in order to exert influence of the supernatural. It is believed that once such a ritual is performed it facilitates the attainment of power associated with the esoteric being that is propitiated. You should take note that anytime that there is the enactment of rituals the beneficiary is believed to have been transported out of the ordinary realm of profane (mundane) living in order to have the opportunity to be transformed into a higher order capability to become closer to the divine. Aspects and kinds of

rituals abound throughout the religious cultures of the world. Let's examine the common elements and themes of ritual:

There are beneficiaries to every ritual and a purpose for administering or undertaking the ritual. When the ritual is personalized, the beneficiary is generally the person who performs it; in this case the person who performed the ritual is the ultimate beneficiary. If the beneficiary is different from the individual for whom it is performed then a mediated ritual is performed. Consequently, the inanimate objects for which or with which the ritual is enacted serves to increase the vital benefit of the remote beneficiary. An example of this is a purificatory or sanctificatory ritual done to purify or sanctify a place or object. Procedurally anytime this occurs both the place or thing blessed and the objects used in the ritual regarded as sanctified and purified. Mediated rituals appear to be the most portent because they are performed by qualified and authorized officiants.

Other rituals can be representational or presentational; while the former has emblematic value, the latter shares in the inner import of that which is emblemized. This is more understandable when we discuss the roles and functions of rituals. A marriage ceremony for instance, alters the status of the participants spiritually, legally and socially. Some other times, the performance of rituals are periodized. A periodic ritual occurs when rituals are undertaken at regular sequence or intervals, such as daily, weekly, monthly, annually etc. Its import is to mark time in order to either establish or maintain a link between the performers and their beliefs. During Easter period, series of Christian rituals are performed in this season that cannot be done at any other period. This simply captures the periodic nature of this kind of ritual. For Imitative or sympathetic rituals participants ceremonially remember or symbolically reenact special events in religious traditions of a sacred past. A typical example is the Christian practices of baptism performed to imitate its founder Jesus Christ's baptism.

Penitential or Corrective is usually given for abnegative reasons of penance for offenses or sins committed by the performer. The ritual of fasting, alms giving directed by the officiant to the penitent in order to find the 'face' of God are typical instances of this ritual. During Easter, Christians are expected to fast in order to attract God's goodwill, grace and mercy. The

rituals called rites of passage are emblematic of one's transition through the ladders of life; it ranges from conception throughout life until death, and in after-life. They signify changes in people's lives where they are conferred with identity and status in their religious community, taking them from one state of physical and social being to a greater one. The Nazarine observances of where children do not remove their natural hair lock until seven or fourteen years mark such rite of passage. The ritual of baptism or ordination, into the body of Christ or a renunciant religious order as priesthood or a sisterhood provide other instances of the ritual of rite of passage.

Arts constitute veritable grounds as ritual. When worshippers make vows and engage in ritual dancing, singing or chanting, music, and the various forms of visual art then arts are used for ritual purposes. These have religious foundations and will continue to form essential part to most religious traditions. The creation and performance of these ritualized routines are seen as ritual enactments. Incantations, musical orgies for divination, all sorts of ritual dances for favour from the divine, carvings, sculptures of all forms representing deities etc are good instances of arts as rituals. From the fore going, it can be concluded that rituals are indispensable part of religion.

4.0 Conclusion

In this unit you have examined the notions of myths, symbols and rituals in religion. The principle of these and their fundamental nature in religion can never be over emphasized. But you noted also that myths, symbolic totems and rituals rarely find justifications on the whys of their beliefs; this is the fundamental challenges of the religious

.

5.0 Summary

We can summarize what we learnt from this unit as follows:

The ability to discuss and understand the critical place of myth, symbols and rituals in man's relationship with the divine

You are in a better position to appreciate their centrality in the religious understanding and behavior of humankind.

You have learnt that there are rarely any rational justifications for the belief in myths, totemic symbols and rituals but mere belief.

6.0 Self Assessment Exercises

1. Should there be an equation of totem with God in the practice of religion?
2. Discuss mythology in religion and how they influence worshippers?
3. Are rituals integral parts of religious worship?

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Module 5

Unit 1: The Origin and Nature of Religion

Unit 2; Religious Reasoning

Unit 3; Immortality

Unit 1; The Origin and Nature of Religion

Contents:

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Intended Learning outcomes (ILOs)

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Nature and Origin of Religion

3.2 The psychological Theory of the Nature and Origin Religion

3.3 The Sociological Theory of the Nature and Origin Religion

3.4 The Theological Theory of the Nature and Origin Religion

3.5 The Marxist Theory of the Nature and Origin Religion

3.6 The Anthropological Theory of the Nature and Origin Religion

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Self Assessment Exercises

7.0 References/ Further Readings

1.0 Introduction

In the previous unit, we discussed the critical place of myth, symbols and rituals in man's relationship with the divine. I believe that you are now in a better position to appreciate their centrality in the religious understanding and behavior of humankind.

But in this unit, you will be examining the existence, nature and origin of Religion. In doing this, you will appreciate the role of religion in the existential experiences of humankind as he journeys in this cosmos. One thing will be on prominent relief amongst others namely that even though these various perspectives on the origin and nature of religion tried to remove objectivity to religious orientation, it has become more realistic to agree that religion is both inherent and objectively real outside man.

2.0 Intended Learning outcomes (ILOs)

It is expected that by the end of this unit, you would be able to:

- Understand the nature of religion
- Understand the origin of religion
- Understand the activities designated as religious.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Nature and Origin of Religion

In this section, you are going to examine what constitutes the activities designated as religion. This is because our acceptance as humans as regards what God is will shape our perception of what His activities should be. The point at issue is what do we mean when we talk of Religion? It is evident that various cultures have portrayed the notion of God and religion differently. For instance, the Abrahamic religions see anthropomorphism (conceiving God in human form or ascribing human attributes to God) as the real expression of God's nature.

Here understanding God's activities will be to divinize man's activities as that of God in a religious atmosphere. Sometimes, with this religious attitude of externalizing man's attributes to God's, religion tends to reduce or trivialize certain attributes of God such as omnipotence, omniscience etc. The Oriental cultures conceive religion in the Vedas as Brahman, Tao etc.

Why do these cultures and persons border about God and His activities and ipso facto religion? There is little doubt as to whether there is any human culture that does not have a conception of God and religion. This is why Miguel de Unamuno (a Spanish existentialist) sees man's nature as that, that is structured in such a way that it can't but border about God. Accordingly he asserts; "man is preoccupied about himself, about his own existence; the meaning and purpose of his existence, where he came from and where he is going, especially what will happen to him after death" (Unamuno 1954:114). This means that it is to address the question of immortality at the heart of man that leads him to think about the issues of God and religion. This according to him leads to religion; religion and theology are basically anthropocentric. What this results to is that since this crave for self- perpetuation and immortality cannot leave man's desire, the issue of what God is can never be obliterated in man's day to day living.

From the above, one can aver that since man cannot stop thinking about God, he must conceive Him in one way or another in one religion or the other. This is because world views condition the way God is conceived in a religion or the other as every religion is the by product of the reflection of such culture. Because culture is both the metaphysical and epistemological determinant for the understanding of human experience, it is a limiter to how such a people conceive reality as a whole religion inclusive. It is therefore important that we shall discuss the activities of termed religious and how cultures had made people to understand religion which is the determinant of how God is understood.

3.2 The psychological Theory of the Nature and Origin Religion

Sigmund Freud was one of the psychologists who explained religion in psychological parlance. Accordingly, he opines that the concept of God results from the child hood neuroses

of carrying into adulthood the childhood image and reverencing for his father. It is usually a fact that children see their father as all powerful, all knowing etc. such when he grows up the tendency is that he still retains that all powerful father image and faced with the vagaries of life such as diseases, pains, death, barrenness, poverty etc, he seeks for the assistance of such a father as his real father used to do for him as a child. He seeks for protection, provision etc as his father used to do for him but as he finds none, he imagines a supernatural father figure who will take over that childhood role of the father. Freud concludes that the idea of God results from a child's projection of his father's image into adulthood.

He advised that this infantism is not something that humans must carry too far but must find a way to outgrow it. Thus he suggests that it is only through intellectual imbue ment as in science and technology that one can overcome such childish orientation. From the foregoing one can see that seeing God in this light places him in the anthropomorphic stance of a loving father. There are so many shortcomings of this notion especially when humans use their limited expressive power in ascribing man's attributes to God. For instance, how can one use the word regret to explain God's attitude towards His children when one relates this to an all knowing God? God described in this Freudian notion performs no real activities except psychological ones as it is nothing but a figment of man's imagination. We must observe here that although religion thrives in the circle of lowly educated people, it does not mean that educated people do not believe in God. Albert Einstein, George Washington and Isaac Newton were thoroughly educated people who were also religious. We reiterate that God and other spirits perceived in this notion have no real and actual activities to perform.

3.3 The Sociological Theory of the Nature and Origin Religion

It was Emile Durkheim who posited that the notion of religion and God was a creation of the human society. Accordingly, society created God and uses Him as a source of social control. This dovetails from his postulation that society is the originator of religion and since religion concerns itself with the stipulation of man's relationship with God, it follows that society created God. What was the purpose of creating God? It was simply to be able to mould, direct

and control human perceptions for certain ends. Since the influence of the society on its citizens is enormous, the later externalize this societal influence and force in a personalized manner known as God. From the above, Durkheim surmised that God is nothing other than the personification of societal influence and the best attributes or qualities of society such as power, goodness, justices, knowledge etc in perfect forms. The almightiness of God is simply a projection of the might of the society and ipso facto what religionists regard as the commandments of God are simply the moral demands of the society created by powerful persons in order to control the society for their end.

Durkheim's explanation of the transcendence of God is such that since members of the society cannot explain the source of the ever pervading influence of society on them, they project it outside them. A serious challenge to this is the fact that some social reformers have criticized society: so if society is the source of the notion of God, how can it be criticized by members of such society by making appeal to forces beyond the society? What this brings to bear is that there is a force beyond the society. For instance, Socrates had condemned his society and appealed to a moral force against the society. From the above it becomes real that the activities of God and the spirits following Him is just geared to control of man in the society towards the greater end of some powerful men in the society.

3.4 The Theological Theory of the Nature and Origin Religion

It was P Rossano that postulated this theory of God. According to him, the idea of both religion and God trace their origin from the very nature of man. This means that in man's innermost being is the crave for religiosity and God consciousness before the postulation of objective notion of God and religion. Omeregbe cites Rossano in this direction thus:

At the basis of religion, says the Italian theologian, P Rossano, is the religious man: before objective religious formulations comes the personal and subjective dimension of religion.... If therefore we go down into the depths of man, despite the variety of religious expressions and structure, we reach the humus from which the religious questions proceeds. Beyond the system and even the spiritual contrasts between East and West, and together with the differences between religion

and religion, there is a historically constant disposition which orientates man in a specific way and tends to express itself in religious form. (2007: 13-14)

This is akin to the hollowness in man identifiable with restlessness which is irresistible until man rests in God expressed by St Augustine. This is what expresses itself in the various religions and makes man essentially a religious animal. Man cannot afford not to be religious. This is because the human spirit wants to understand its source and origin and this it does by tracing to infinite spirit. There is an emptiness and vacuum that this search epitomizes as a psychological manifestation of the human spirit search for the Infinite. What is on prominent relief from the above is as that man turns to religion in order to get answers to the fundamental questions of life. They are questions that are basic to human existence. Although the various religions claim to have answers to these questions, the issue remains as to how effective the answers are to the human person. For the theologians, it is obvious that man cannot but be religious. He is in total dependence to the will of God and the spirits. His activities must conform to the dictates of God and ipso facto the activities of God and other spirits are to direct and protect the affairs of man who is in absolute dependence to him.

3.5 The Marxist Theory of the Nature and Origin Religion

Karl Marx had a radical detour of the conception of religion and God to emanate from the status of the exploited masses of the world that rent them to become exploitable. Accordingly, he sees the capitalist society as throwing up the condition germane for the alienation of the human person from the good things of life. This arises from his acquiescence to Ludwig Feuerbach's view that God is just human projection of the best qualities of man and that religion arises from the self-alienation of man. Marx subtly differed from Feuerbach by detaching himself from the metaphysical abstractions observable in the latter's conception of the human essence. He saw as unnecessary any conception of "divine essence" that Feuerbach saw as man's essence. Marx in Noce (1972; 166), expresses this view when he asserts that "Feuerbach reduces the essence of religion to the essence of man. But the essence of man is not something abstract that is immanent in every individual. In its reality it is the totality of social relations"

Marx based his criticism based on the fact that Feuerbach failed to appreciate man as a social being in which its belief in religion is a social product. Accordingly, his failure was the inability of getting to the remote cause of man's cringing to religion and ipso facto their alienation. If one asks the question what is the source and reason for man's recourse to religion and God; Marx would answer that it the exploitation of man and economic oppression of the masses by capitalism. This results to the recoiling of man to an imaginary expectation of a liberator or savior and this is God. Thus Marx summarized thus:

The religious misery is at the same time the expression of the real misery, and the protest against the real misery. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the feeling of a heartless world just as it is the spirit of the spiritless condition (Noce 1972: 207-208)

Marx never minced words on words about his concept of religion and God as he believed that it is just "the sentiment of the oppressor, the sigh of the oppressed and the opium of the mass". In this context the only activity of religion and God is an illusory one where the alienated masses use it to give themselves succor. In reality, it is nothing other than a self-projection that will help man to ameliorate pains. Man can only overcome the influence of religion whenever it realizes the illusory role it plays in the oppression and exploitative process. During the time, industrialists employed priests who prayed for three times in a day and preaching the labourers to endure their disposition as it came from God.

Be these as they may, Marx's explanation does not capture the issue of religion in man as it actually is. Experience has proved that the alienated masses also are the real agents of the exploitation of the others. There is also the vacuum at the heart of man regarding the answers to the fundamental issues of life. At the moments of reckoning, man realizes this hollowness in his innermost being. However, there is some element of truth in Marx's view due to the fact that religious and the worship of God is more predominant with poor persons and under hardship. One obvious point also is that it is religion predated capitalism which is the root of exploitation.

3.6 The Anthropological Theory of the Nature and Origin Religion

It was L A Feuerbach who in his epochal work, *The Essence of Christianity* dismissed the idea of God as the worship of man's nature by debased persons who are bereft in proper understanding of his nature. According to him, man projects his own nature outside himself to be called God. In other words, man projects himself into objectivity and believes that this is God. For him, religion in its real essence is the belief in the truth and divinity of the nature of man. Man strips himself all his best qualities as his goodness, his justice, his power etc in the process of alienating himself from the viscidities of life. He does this by removing all limitations from the projected best qualities such as infinite goodness, infinite power, etc. one can see from this that all the divine attributes are nothing other than human attributes abstracted from man and projected to God. He concludes that religion is thus man's self-alienation as he removes his best attributes and gives them to God and becomes nothing.

Feuerbach however, sees this stripping of oneself of his best qualities as a dialectical process of self-knowledge acquisition. Man realizes that this imaginary projection of being that he terms God is a mere idolization and worship of himself and that there is not objectively real as God. It is only in realizing that he has been worshipping and praying to himself that he can overcome his self-alienation. What is on prominent relief here is that once man reconciles with himself when he recognizes that he has been worshipping and praying to himself, he stopped the practice of religion. This is because a finite being cannot know an infinite being since his nature is limited. He admits that man has knowledge of infinitude only in the sense that it is the collection of man's nature. He makes real his theory by linking it with the Christian doctrine of incarnation where God reveals Himself as nothing but man. He concludes by saying that this situation enables God to be man in order for man to be God. (Deus homo factus est; ut homo Deus fieret). What can be seen in his argument can be summarized as man looking for his perfection in the idea of God. As he puts it: "The yearning of man after something above himself is nothing else than longing after the perfect type of his nature, the yearning to be free from himself, i.e, from the limits and defects of his individuality".(Feuerbach 1957:281).

From the fore going, it can be agreeable that there is a sense in which Feuerbach's postulation is reasonable. Since the limitation posed in man by his nature places him at a difficulty in

knowing things beyond this physical, he will certainly be left with the only option of projecting his best attributes as God. However, it is difficult to explain away the idea of God as a mere projection of man's best attributes. The hollowness created by man trying to understand himself in this universe by trying to find answers to the fundamental questions of life cannot be wished away as Feuerbach postulates. It is difficult to dismiss the idea of God and religion the way we have seen in the above section; what is obtainable is that God relates with man in such a way that He is worshipful and man reciprocates as a worshipper.

4.0 Conclusion

In this unit, we have examined the origin, nature and conception of religion as emanating from cultural understanding of God. We also saw the relationship between God, the sacred and the mundane as that of a worshipper and the worshipful. It is good that we have seen the origins and theories of the origin of God and ipso facto religion. You are in a better position to appreciate the notion of God, the sacred and the mundane that enthrone religious sentiments. One thing should be noted here namely that an apparent repetition of an earlier unit is that religion is intertwined with the notion of God such that it will be difficult to discuss one without the other.

5.0 Summary

From the foregoing, it can be summarized as follows that you have learnt the following:

The nature of religion as is understandable by man

The various arguments postulated as to how religion originated.

The difficulties of the discussion of God's nature outside religion

The various theories of the activities designated religious understandable in metaphysical and cultural paradigms.

6.0 Self-assessment Exercises

Evaluate the Marxist perspective on the nature and origin of religion?

Examine the sociological nature and origin of religion?

Discuss the theological views of religion?

What do you understand by the anthropological conception of the origin of religion?

7.0 References/ Further Readings

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Unit 2; Religious Reasoning

Contents:

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Intended Learning outcomes (ILOs)

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Understanding Reasoning

3.2 Understanding faith in religion

3.3 Religious Reasoning

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Self Assessment Exercises

7.0 References/ Further Readings

1.0 Introduction

In the last unit, we exhaustively discussed the nature of religion as is understandable by man; the various arguments postulated as to how religion originated; the difficulties of the discussion of God's nature outside religion; the various theories of the activities designated religious understandable in metaphysical and cultural paradigms. In this unit, our attention will be focused on the relationship between faith, reason and religion. In this we shall show that by their nature; faith and reason are contradictory yet man is expected to act rationally all the times. Religious reasoning should therefore be engaged with the challenge of trying to make meaning out of the apparent irrationality of faith. It is this that justifies our discourse on religious reasoning.

2.0 Intended Learning outcomes (ILOs)

By the end of this unit, we expect that you would be able to:

define and understand reason and reasoning

understand, define faith and its relation with religion

finally understand what it means to have reasoning in religion.

3.1 Understanding Reasoning

As you already know, the branch of philosophy that enhances human reasoning process is logic. Logic deals with the ability to distinguish between good and bad reasoning. Reason on its own has contributed to giving philosophy the pride of place in human affairs; this is also true philosophy is regarded as mankind's greatest intellectual tradition. Reason entails a

[conscious](#) ability and effort at establishing and verifying [facts](#), and justifying [beliefs](#) and assumptions based on set rules. Reason, is also sometimes referred to as [rationality](#).

Reasoning is a process of [thinking](#), [cognition](#), and [intellect](#) exertion following laid down rules and regulation. Reasoning encompasses these wide areas of [deductive reasoning](#), [inductive reasoning](#), [dialectical reasoning](#); and sometimes may include other modes of reasoning regarded as informal, like [intuitive reasoning](#) and [verbal reasoning](#). We shall note that in some socio-political settings logical and intuitive reasoning do conflict, whereas in other situations they are complementary rather than conflictual. A typical example is [mathematics](#) where intuition is an absolute requirement for the arriving at a [formal proof](#).

Since reasons are used to justify decisions; support explanations of natural phenomena; explain the actions of individuals then reasoning is the application of reason in every day social intercourse. It can also be understood as providing good, or the best ground for accepting any issue as when evaluating a moral decision. Having presented reason and reasoning, let's now move to faith.

3.2 Understanding faith in religion

Religion deals with faith and such issues as are considered under it lack the rational criteria of proof as would in reason. For instance, the notion of God is not approachable scientifically the way one would study the physical things of our environment, rather He can be understood through faith. Faith, etymologically is derived from the Latin word *fides* translatable as having confidence, trust in a being or concept. Religiously, faith is seen as [confidence](#) or [trust](#) in a thing that is not physically verifiable yet is believed to have some practical consequence; confidence in particular system of [religious belief](#). The difference between a religionist and a skeptic revolves around the perception of faith as warrantable trust whilst the later sees faith as belief without evidence. We can surmise from the fore going that [faith](#) is the belief in the reality of something that does not require evidential grounding and may not be establishable by [empirical](#) or [rational](#) means.

It is noteworthy at this stage to note that no one can just stand up to accept and trust a thing without evidential proof without following stages. It was [James W. Fowler](#) who proposed stages of faith-development. According to him, faith as an activity of committing, trusting, and relating to reality based on certain assumptions has stages that help to enhance it. I reproduce these postulations of Fowler below:

Stages of faith

1. Intuitive-Projective: a stage of confusion and of high impressionability through stories and [rituals](#) (pre-school period).
2. Mythic-Literal: a stage where provided information is accepted in order to conform with [social norms](#) (school-going period).
3. Synthetic-Conventional: in this stage the faith acquired is concreted in the [belief system](#) with the forgoing of personification and replacement with [authority](#) in individuals or groups that represent one's beliefs (early-late adolescence).
4. Individuative-Reflective: in this stage the individual critically analyzes adopted and accepted faith with existing systems of faith. Disillusion or strengthening of faith happens in this stage. Based on needs, experiences and paradoxes (early adulthood).
5. Conjunctive faith: in this stage people realize the limits of [logic](#) and, facing the paradoxes or [transcendence](#) of [life](#), accept the "mystery of life" and often return to the sacred stories and symbols of the pre-acquired or re-adopted faith system. This stage is called negotiated settling in life (mid-life).
6. Universalizing faith: this is the "enlightenment" stage where the individual comes out of all the existing systems of faith and lives life with universal principles of compassion and love and in service to others for upliftment, without worries and [doubt](#) (middle-late adulthood (45–65 years old and plus) (found on <https://rcdow.org.uk.att.aff>))

Reality of life has taught us that there is no that faith inclined individuals pass through these six stages in order to get grounded in faith. We can surmise that faith operate at the realm

where it appears to be contradictory with reason. This perhaps justifies the notion of religious reasoning.

3.3 Religious Reasoning

From the discussions above, faith and reason are contradictory. Faith on its own is the instrument that religion uses to express itself; whereas reason looks for rational and evidential justification. How they can there be religious reasoning? Since the major object of religion-God- cannot be analyzed scientifically but through religious reasoning, or faith it is imperative to appreciate that this is a special reasoning process. Faith is often criticized as unintelligent delusion of accepting those things that are rarely supported by evidence of reason or fact. This view may not be entirely very true or correct. Instances are abounding where a medically condemned person became healed due to faith on an entity that is not establishable by reason known as God. I have seen someone that was condemned and discharged from the hospital on the ground that he had no hope medically for survival the bout of cancer attacks. He came home with the faith that God was going to heal him; consequently, he invited a faith healer whose administration of prayer truly healed him. He is still alive today. The Catholic eschatological tradition sees that as a rational response to God by the religious person; a sort of the reasoning of the religious mind.

Many in the current philosophico-legal orientation perceive religious reasoning as irrational absurdity that is divisive and dangerous. Accordingly, scholars of this persuasion agree that this perception affects the outcome of both free exercise and establishment of cases. But this is perspectival because even though one side holds that to treat all religious claims as irrational absurdities capable of being divisive and dangerous is unjust; while, the other side thinks that this is correct and needs to be enforced.

Religious reasoning as it is firmly advocates for tolerance in accepting the perspective those whose major guiding motivation as faith; arguing that each has its own foundation of reasoning. However, in so far as we have seen instances as that of the medical condemnation

that I cited earlier, there are other areas where one can wholly see rational absurdity in religious faith. A man that I know also refused to take medications due to his insistence on healing by faith; today he goes on clutches as the diabetic sore that attacked him led to the amputation of the affected leg. This would have been forestalled did he accede to reason.

4.0 Conclusion

In this unit, you have examined the principles of reason, reasoning, faith and religious reasoning. These principles are so fundamental that any attempt to evaluate religion from the lens view of philosophy must understand them as different modes of thought needed at different levels of study or engagement. If you stick to their understanding, you would have gained informed perspective on these aspects of philosophy of religion.

5.0 Summary

We can summarily state that you have learnt the following from this unit:

the meaning and nature of reason when discussed in religious parlance

the meaning and nature of faith as that which grounds religious understanding

and the meaning and nature of religious reasoning.

6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

Examine the meaning and nature of reason and religion?

Discuss the import of the meaning and nature faith to humanity?

Evaluate the place of reasoning in religion?

7.0 References/ Further Readings

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Unit 3; Philosophical Theology

Contents:

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Intended Learning outcomes (ILOs)

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Philosophical theology

3.2 Mysticism and Religion

3.3 Who is a Mystic?

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Self Assessment Exercises

7.0 References/ Further Readings

1.0 Introduction

In the last unit, we dwelt on the understanding of the meaning and nature of reason when

discussed in religious parlance, the meaning and nature of faith as that which grounds religious understanding and the meaning and nature of religious reasoning. In this unit, you will examine the meaning of philosophical theology in the attempt towards the rightful and appropriate understanding of the 'knowledge' of God. Thereafter you will examine mysticism and religion in order to understand the value of mysticism to religious experiences of humankind

2.0 Intended Learning outcomes (ILOs)

Our expectation is that by the end of this unit, you are going to be more informed about the following:

- the meaning of philosophical theology
- the meaning of mysticism and
- you will be able to discuss who a mystic is.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Philosophical theology

Philosophical theology is the application of the philosophical principles of reflection, language, and methods in the process of doing theology. It is also perceived as a part of philosophy of religion, providing veritable methods of reflection on different doctrines or theological concepts through the use of the philosophical investigative styles. Philosophical theology is operated in two methods namely: trying to appeal to evidence available apart from divine revelations to establish the truth of religious claims. The other is to use philosophical techniques to demonstrate the consistency and plausibility of theological claims. This second methods is akin to apologetics that pervaded the methods of doing philosophy in the mediaeval era where philosophy was regarded as the handmaid of theology. This is the sense in which the former applies natural theology to evaluate or examine Christian claims; the later applies philosophical techniques to understand theological convictions gotten from divine

revelation.

But there is a challenge here; how can theology which is mainly based on revelation be yoked together in the quest to arriving at knowledge? This is more so where theology which is based on beliefs and assumptions starts to exploit the radically different methods of philosophy which is purely based on critical methods and evaluative evidential conclusions to arrive at truth. The point at issue becomes can theology ever arrive at truth and knowledge? The above led to the debate as to whether or not theology and philosophy should both be involved in man's arduous efforts at arriving at the truth. Again, on its own, should divine revelation be on its own in this effort at arriving at the truth of living in the cosmos? Three orientations emerged; the first insists that the two should be completely divested from each other as they ought to have nothing to do with each other. Yet the second feels a sense of necessity in philosophy and reason being applied to rightly understand divine revelation. A moderate approach was also adopted where it was argued that although philosophy ought to be a useful tool for understanding theology, but it should not be depended upon entirely.

At this stage it is worthy of note to state that philosophical theology ought to be a neutral tool for the study of theology; this means that it can be used in a right way or a wrong ways depending on priority and motivation of the user. For effective understanding, if one tries to examine and understand God's principles by relying on man-made constructs, such a one will certainly meet with disappointments. This can be seen as the crux the issue of philosophical theology. On the other hand, once we are motivated by a genuine love and a desire to 'know' and understand God principles, using one's mind to this effect will be more rewarding. Philosophy is not truth itself and in itself but has remained a stickler to the truth. Thus, philosophy becomes an instrument for a better understanding and appreciation of the truth. There is therefore no doubt that the inspired, inerrant words of God are absolutely necessary for humanity in understanding its place in the scheme of things in reality; any philosophy incapable of understanding this is defective.

3.2 Mysticism and Religion

Let us start again by refreshing our minds on what religion is; it is an attempt at following the path of seeking God objectively by ways as reading scripture, understanding worship manuals or dogmas etc. In effect, religionists believe and follow these doctrines and their faith blindly without questioning or examining their beliefs. Mysticism is a spirituality geared towards his illumination by following the path of seeking God within oneself in order to establish direct communion with Him.

Illustratively we can state that religionists are akin to those students who have great memories to memorize, repeat whatever they read; but are unable to meditate on the read materials due to lack of critical capabilities. Whereas, mystics are likened to those

other students who question and reflect on all they have read in order to have deeper understanding. Their understanding is as a result of critical reflections and meditations on their beliefs in order to turn such beliefs into conviction; they don't believe blindly.

Mysticism is to be understood as the practice of religious ecstasies, that is, religious experiences through meditation and contemplation on higher ideals the consequent result of this is the attainment of insight in ultimate or hidden truths, resulting to human transformation regarded as divine and thus originating religious practices and experiences. One unique point of the experiences gotten through mysticism is the understanding and appreciation of reality as a single unity. Mystics of different persuasions have attested to this reality as axiomatic of their experiences.

3.3 Who is a Mystic?

As philosophy students, you should not cave in to the propaganda of using words as “mystic” for scare mongering. A mystic is one who advances from mere beliefs in religious systems to actually experiencing inner experience through meditation and contemplation. Every religion

has those they regard as mystics and attest to the fact that following the path of meditation and contemplation can lead people to the level of illumination that mystics delight in as the ultimate desire of every mystic.

Some terms are used to describe those who have attained to the attendant state of awareness derivable from the mystical experiences. Such concept as conversion, enlightenment, transformation, holiness and cosmic consciousness convey this state of new experience. Siddhartha Gautama the founder of Buddhism expressed his inner satisfaction as a transformed entity known as Buddha meaning light. This results from the luminescence of light that the enlightenment experience brings to the individual who so experiences it. Anybody who receives this transformation grows to find God in his inner recess and does not find God from the religious intercourse of daily doctrinal memorization of ideas as is done in the church. Church leaders lose such one to deeper commitments garnered during the insight and enlightenment. Those who are devoid of this experience keeps coming back to church, and thus keeping the clergy in business.

However, it is noteworthy to state that this is not usually the result of negative and mercantile orientation on the part of religious clergies but just that one can't give what one does not have. It is obvious that from the way some of these religious men glibly discountenance mysticism and mystics, it's clear that many clergy have never enjoyed enlightenment or illumination themselves, and obviously they cannot convey what they have never experienced. It is no doubt why it is always said that 'theological training without spiritual experience is deadly'. It is ideal to end this unit by saying that human religious experiences should culminate in mysticism.

4.0 Conclusion

From this unit, we believe that you have learnt the meaning of philosophical theology. This is germane in our understanding of how best to approach the study of religion and God. You also have examined the concepts of mysticism and mystics with the recommendation that all those sincerely seeking for God should endeavour to attain God consciousness luminescence which is the end point of mystical insights.

5.0 Summary

We believe that the following forms the summary of what you have learnt from this unit:

Philosophical theology is the application of the philosophical principles of reflection, language, and methods in the process of doing theology.

Mysticism is a spirituality geared towards his illumination by following the path of seeking God within oneself in order to establish direct communion with Him;

that a mystic is one who advances from mere beliefs in religious systems to actually experiencing inner experience through meditation and contemplation.

6.0 Self Assessment Exercises

Discuss the term philosophical theology?

How does mysticism differ from religion?

Is a mystic a weird person who is an object of scare mongering?

7.0 References/ Further Readings

O'Connor, Timothy (2008), *Theism and Ultimate Explanation: The Necessary Shape of Contingency*, Oxford, Blackwell,

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Module 6

Unit 1: Religion and Society

Unit 2: Religion and Morality

Unit 3: Religion and Immortality

Unit 1: Religion and Society

Contents:

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Intended Learning outcomes (ILOs)

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Religion and Culture

3.2 Religion and Peace in the world

3.3 Religion and knowledge

3.4 Religion and Politics

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Self Assessment Exercises

7.0 References/ Further Readings

1.0 Introduction

In the last unit, we exhaustively examined the notion of philosophical theology as the application of the philosophical principles of reflection, language, and methods in the process of doing theology. We also examined mysticism as a spirituality geared towards man's illumination by following the path of seeking God within oneself in order to establish direct

communion with Him; that a mystic is one who advances from mere beliefs in religious systems to actually experiencing inner experience through meditation and contemplation. In this unit, will expose you to the fundamental values of the nexus between religion and society. The following basic questions will be addressed: can religion ever give man lasting peace? Does it provide knowledge? Does religion provide human with better understanding of culture? Of what value is religion to democracy?

2.0 Intended Learning outcomes (ILOs)

It is my expectation that at the end of this unit, you will be fully abreast with the following:

- proper understanding of the role of religion to culture
- adequate understanding of the import of religion to world peace
- whether religion can knowledge
- if the level of influence of religion to politics

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Religion and Culture

Culture is generally regarded as the totality of the way of life of a people. Religion is an integral part of culture; this is because culture enthrones elements of religion. The doctrinal underpinning of religion emanates from the world view of the people in interpreting reality and man's place in it. This is why the most portent way of understanding a religion is to understand the culture that enthroned it. For instance, the elements of the religious cultures of the disposition of the dead one when analysed will enhance our understanding of how to appreciate man as a product of culture. In an area like Tibet with its rocky environment having gold deposits regarded as sacred, dead bodies are broken and chopped into pieces and thrown to the scavengers. In Africa, with its tropical weather capable of spreading diseases, dead bodies are buried. In other climes like India, cremation was regarded as the best way of the disposal of the dead.

Following from the above instances, it will be out of place for any of the cultures to chide the

other and claim superiority to the other. The same way that they get culture shock is the same way those religious shocks are gotten from people with different religio-cultural orientations. This is the reason we condemn early European visitors to Africa who derogated the African religion. There is no rational sense that anyone can denigrate another's religion since all religions are products of culture. Since the existences of people in different cultures are made through the accidents of birth and religion is an integral of culture, no religion should claim superiority over the other.

3.2 Religion and Peace in the World

Humans aver that religions ought to be path to world peace; but we have discovered that some religions have turned themselves to source of crises. This arises from the attitude where adherents of a religion try to lord it over the others. In doing this, intolerance, discriminations, rife, wars of varying categories resulting to serious negation of peace become the order of the day. Other sources of the above are scriptural incongruities allegedly dictated by God. There is no doubt that the spate of violence, wars and terrorisms in the world are linked one way or the other to religion. In the circumstance, religion instead of serving for the unification of humanity gives way to the dis-unification of the forces that bind society.

You will notice that once a religion perceives its doctrines as the only genuine, superior and only sanctioned one by God, it engenders the crisis. This notion is captured succinctly by Chukwuokolo (2011; 1)

The realm of the sacred thus is supposed to create satisfaction and fulfillment among the persons who subscribe to them. In order to find satisfaction, man has held tenaciously to the resultant cultural cum religious reactions to the ultimate answers to the issues of his existence. This results in the fact that religion has certain indubitable influence and hold on its adherents. Surprisingly, this religion that was supposed to be a binding force for peace and unity in society has turned into a sword of Damocles hanging obviously over the world, creating the threat of the third World war by corrupting the minds of its adherents in fanatical frenzy. Voltaire captures this fact as follows: Once fanaticism has corrupted a mind, the malady is almost incurable... the only remedy for this epidemic malady is the philosophical spirit, which spreads gradually at last, tames men's habit and prevents the disease from starting... even the law is important against these attacks of rage; it is like reading a court decree to a reviving maniac.

However, it is not only crises that religion engenders. For instance, African Tradition Religion which can be described as the religion of peace by its disposition to tolerance is a model for harmonious relationship for humanity. It has neither preached superiority nor authenticity above any other religion. In fact, one of the most important values of African Traditional Religion is its excessive co-existential posture; the spirit of live and lets live is of supreme essence.

3.3 Religion and knowledge

At this juncture, it is necessary to answer one of the questions raised earlier namely; does religion add to knowledge? There is a sense in which this question raises a contradiction. To know is to have indubitably certain claim most often based on conclusive evidence that follows a given procedure. There is a sense in which knowledge dovetails from truth. This is because for a thing to be regarded as knowledge, it must be true and truth on its own must be indubitably certain. To attain this certitude, such knowledge must be derivable from conclusive evidence.

Religion on its own is based on faith and belief; but beliefs may not be gotten from conclusive evidence. This is because we have many occasions where beliefs and assumptions we hold especially in religion are found to be false. Following from this argument, it can be said that knowledge is illuminating and therefore superior to belief. It is also an ontological fact that to know involves belief because you cannot get a conclusive evidence of what you do not believe. But belief does not include knowledge because believing does not imply knowing as people have been found to believe what they have no knowledge of as the belief in God. We can now assert that religion does not provide humans with knowledge but belief; yet belief has been found to be more persuasive to mankind than knowledge. Even though beliefs appear to contradict facts that are also knowledge, yet people take them more seriously than knowledge. For instance, that God is an all caring father negates the evils of suffering in the world but people will not heed to the opposite which knowledge, that is, that people are under the bondage of suffering and God does not appear to care.

3.4 Religion and Politics

It is important to state that it is not only negative values that religion impacts to the society. There are positive values that have been life enhancing thereby putting man at the centre of the scheme of things in the cosmos. That religious instruction and belief impact on individual morals and ipso facto society's moral ethos can never be over emphasized. What this implies is that religion plays a fundamental role to society worthy of attention..in the churches during catechisms people were taught the virtues of not telling lies, obeying those in authority, obeying the law, casting votes as if one is doing all these in obedience to God. This is effectively so because people believe that disobeying the laws tantamount to disobeying God as He had kept reward or punishment for people accordingly. Thus, it is validly right to assert that democracy works because people voluntarily obey your laws even when they not supervised by any law officer.

Having asserted the above view, it becomes duty-bound for government to allow freer hands on the part of religious leaders to effectively impact religious values and ethos on worshippers to help to deepen democracy. It is necessary that it is only charismatic leaders that can mobilize citizens to positive social actions in the face tyranny. Religious institutions should be encouraged to continue to play positive roles in shaping social, educational and moral issues following democratic channels. Understanding these worthy courses, properly motivated persons deserve to be given their right of place in the democratic process —there should be no time that religious or secular democratic voices should be sanctioned or silenced.

4.0 Conclusion

In this unit, you have examined the notion of religion and society. You have also seen that religion can have both positive and negative values. A serious issue for concern is that its impact to the civil or open society can be harnessed to entrench good governance.

5.0 Summary

We can summarize that you have learnt the following from this unit:

The clear understanding of the epistemic impact of religion to society,

that religion is intertwined with culture such that cultures enthrone religious outlook of individuals in the society

that religion is a potent factor for either enhancing or deteriorating world peace

religion is also an enhancer of democratic ideals

6.0 Self Assessment Exercises

Is there any way that religion relates with society?

Can religion enhance the democratic process?

How does religion contribute to peace in the world?

7.0 References/ Further Readings

Chukwuokolo, J.C (2011) “Towards The Rationalization of The Sacred For More Veritable Societies” in Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies (Romanian Journal for the Academic Society for the Research of Religions and Ideologies) Volume 10, No 29, Pp. 87-111 available on <http://jsri.ro/ojs/>

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Unit 2: Religion and Morality

Contents:

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Intended Learning outcomes (ILOs)

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Religion and Morality

3.2 Relationship between Religion and Morality

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Self Assessment Exercises

7.0 References/ Further Readings

1.0 Introduction

The last unit provided us the opportunity for clear understanding of the epistemic impact of religion to society; that religion is intertwined with culture such that cultures enthrone religious outlook of individuals in the society; that religion is a potent factor for either enhancing or deteriorating world peace and that religion is also an enhancer of democratic ideals. In this unit, it is our desires to examine the nature of morality in the context of religion in order to establish whether there is any relationship that exists between them. It is expected that prior to this lecture you would have had some ideas of morality and religion separately but have never considered two of them together nor considered the possibility of their having no relationship. You shall be made to understand these concepts adequately.

2.0 Intended Learning outcomes (ILOs)

You are expected to understand the following:

- the meaning and nature of morality in religious discourses;
- ethics and the relationship between religion and morality if any.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Religion and Morality

Religion and morality are not synonymous. Morality does not necessarily depend upon religion, though for some, this is "an almost automatic assumption. Conceptually and in principle, morality and a religious value system are two distinct kinds of value systems or action guides." In the views of others, the two can overlap. According to one definition,

morality is an active process which is, "at the very least, the effort to guide one's conduct by reason, that is, doing what there are the best reasons for doing, while giving equal consideration to the interests of all those affected by what one does." Value judgments can vary greatly between religions, past and present. People in various religious traditions, such as Christianity, may derive ideas of right and wrong from the rules and laws set forth in their respective authoritative guides and by their religious leaders. Equating morality to adherence to authoritative commands in a holy book is the Divine Command Theory. Polytheistic religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism generally draw from some of the broadest canons of religious works. There has been interest in the relationship between religion and crime and other behavior that does not adhere to contemporary laws and social norms in various countries. Studies conducted in recent years have explored these relationships, but the results have been mixed and sometimes contradictory. The ability of religious faiths to provide value frameworks that are seen as useful is a debated matter. Religious commentators have asserted that a moral life cannot be led without an absolute lawgiver as a guide. Other observers assert that moral behavior does not rely on religious tenets, and secular commentators point to ethical challenges within various religions that conflict with contemporary social norms.

Morality and religion is the relationship between religious views and morals. Many religions have value frameworks regarding personal behavior meant to guide adherents in determining between right and wrong. These include the Triple Gems of Jainism, Islam's Sharia, Catholicism's Canon Law, Buddhism's Eightfold Path, and Zoroastrianism's "good thoughts, good words, and good deeds" concept, among others. These frameworks are outlined and interpreted by various sources such as holy books, oral and written traditions, and religious leaders. Many of these share tenets with secular value frameworks such as consequentialism, freethought, and utilitarianism.

Religion and morality are not synonymous. Morality does not necessarily depend upon religion, though for some, this is "an almost automatic assumption." According to The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Ethics, religion and morality "are to be defined differently and have no definitional connections with each other. Conceptually and in

principle, morality and a religious value system are two distinct kinds of value systems or action guides." In the views of others, the two can overlap. According to one definition, morality is an active process which is, "at the very least, the effort to guide one's conduct by reason, that is, doing what there are the best reasons for doing, while giving equal consideration to the interests of all those affected by what one does." Value judgments can vary greatly between religions, past and present. People in various religious traditions, such as Christianity, may derive ideas of right and wrong from the rules and laws set forth in their respective authoritative guides and by their religious leaders. Equating morality to adherence to authoritative commands in a holy book is the Divine Command Theory. Polytheistic religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism generally draw from some of the broadest canons of religious works. There has been interest in the relationship between religion and crime and other behavior that does not adhere to contemporary laws and social norms in various countries. Studies conducted in recent years have explored these relationships, but the results have been mixed and sometimes contradictory. The ability of religious faiths to provide value frameworks that are seen as useful is a debated matter. Religious commentators have asserted that a moral life cannot be led without an absolute lawgiver as a guide. Other observers assert that moral behavior does not rely on religious tenets, and secular commentators point to ethical challenges within various religions that conflict with contemporary social norms.

3.2 Relationship between Religion and Morality

Within the wide range of ethical traditions, religious traditions co-exist with secular value frameworks such as humanism, utilitarianism, and others. There are many types of religious values. Modern monotheistic religions, such as Islam, Judaism, Christianity (and to a certain degree others such as Sikhism) define right and wrong by the laws and rules set forth by their respective gods and as interpreted by religious leaders within the respective faith. Polytheistic religious traditions tend to be less absolute. For example, within Buddhism, the intention of the individual and the circumstances play roles in determining whether an action is right or wrong. Barbara Stoler Miller points out a further disparity between the morals of religious traditions, stating that in Hinduism, "practically, right and wrong are decided according to the categories of social rank, kinship, and stages of life. For modern Westerners, who have been

raised on ideals of universality and egalitarianism, this relativity of values and obligations is the aspect of Hinduism most difficult to understand."

According to Stephen Gaukroger: "It was generally assumed in the 17th century that religion provided the unique basis for morality, and that without religion, there could be no morality." This view slowly shifted over time. In 1690, Pierre Bayle asserted that religion "is neither necessary nor sufficient for morality".[9] Modern sources separate the two concepts. For example, The Westminster Dictionary of Christian Ethics says that,

For many religious people, morality and religion are the same or inseparable; for them either morality is part of religion or their religion is their morality. For others, especially for nonreligious people, morality and religion are distinct and separable; religion may be immoral or nonmoral, and morality may or should be nonreligious. Even for some religious people the two are different and separable; they may hold that religion should be moral and morality should be, but they agree that they may not be.

4.0 Conclusion

It can be seen that in this unit, you have learnt the meaning of morality, morality in religion and the relationship that exists between religion and culture. If you internalize them, you will be in a better position to apply these concepts.

5.0 Summary

Below are the overviews of what you have learnt in this unit:

the goal, meaning and nature of morality

the relationship between morality and religion.

6.0 Self-Assessment Exercises

Is there any relationship between morality and religion?

Can a non religious person be said to be morally upright?

7.0 References/ Further Readings

Bernard, Haring (1964) *The Law of Christ*, New York: Newman Press, Vol. 111

Bouquet, AC (1941), *Comparative Religion*, Middlesex: Penguin Books

Unit 3: Immortality in Religion

Contents:

1.0 Introduction

2.0 Intended Learning outcomes (ILOs)

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Why Immortality

3.2 Immortality and Resurrection

3.3 Immortality Karma and Reincarnation

4.0 Conclusion

5.0 Summary

6.0 Self Assessment Exercises

7.0 References/ Further Readings

1.0 Introduction

In that last unit, we examined the meaning and nature of morality in the society, in doing this, we established that there is a relationship between morality and religion but also asserted that a non religious person can be moral inclined. At this stage, it is essential that we look at a very fundamental issue in the philosophy of religion namely the issue of whether man's existence transcends beyond this present incarnation or body. In this unit, you will concentrate and focus on the notion of immortality, resurrection, karma and reincarnation. Our intention is to engage on the reason d'être of religion in instituting the belief in immortality. Is man immortal? Are there conclusive evidences for believing on the immortality of the soul? Is there a resurrection of humans after death? Karma and reincarnation; which one is more plausible in the explanation of man's place in the cosmos? All these questions and more shall engage us in this unit.

2.0 Intended Learning outcomes (ILOs)

We are hopeful that at the end of this unit, you would be able to have informed perspectives on the following:

why the notion of the immortality of the soul?

To be able to understand the notion of resurrection and immortality

To be able to evaluate immortality and Karma as they relate to humanity;

To evaluate the notions of immortality and Reincarnation

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Why Immortality?

One of the greatest yearnings of man is to understand what happens to him after death. This is why the most recurring theme of existentialism is the dread of death. Man is understood as a frail and factitious being that cannot help himself and hence; dreads what unfailingly comes to him- death. Man began to think of the possibility of attaining an immortal status in order to find adjustment to the strange and hostile world where destiny deals a blow against him. It is noteworthy to observe that in the course of its religious experiences, most religions accept the

challenge of immortality as an axiom of the reality of human nature. While some others disagree that there is no conclusive evidence to assume the immortality of the soul.

Plato for instance, struck first at this challenge in Western philosophical tradition. He gave sundry reasons why he believed in the immortality of the soul. First he used the theory of the contraries; there is up and down, man and woman, beginning and ending, life and death. He believed that there would be no way that life will not follow death and hence a life after death. This becomes challenging when you engage this trend of thought; the examples of the contraries that he used are conclusively observed where the issue of life after death is at the speculative level and thus not guaranteeable. He also used the argument from pre-existence. This stems from the belief that the soul existed in the world of form before joining the body and thus will shade the body at death and continue to live. His other arguments notwithstanding, it is difficult to conclusively give evidence for the belief in immortality.

St Augustine as a neo-Platonist also advanced some arguments for the immortality of the soul. According to him the soul is the very principle of life and can never admit the contrary principle which is death. This implies that as humans received the life principle which is the soul in man, it is not possible for that same man to continue with the opposite principle of death which is contrary to God. Perhaps the most attractive of all Augustine's argument for the immortality of man is his theory from happiness. According to him, man is made in such a way that he has the desire for perfection and thus happiness. This happiness must be attainable otherwise he won't have this desire. But this perfect happiness is not achievable in this world; he concludes that it must be in the afterlife that this will be achieved. These arguments are neither convincing nor conclusive evidentially but we cannot wish away the notion of immortality.

Another person whose idea is of interest to us in this regard is the Spanish Existentialist, Miguel De Unamuno. According to him, the innermost desire of man is immortality. It is an irresistible urge in man that controls all his existential activities ultimately. Man's instinct for self-preservation is at the root of this quest for immortality. In his words;

Knowledge is employed in the service of the necessity of life and primarily in the service of the instinct of preservation. This necessity and this instinct have created in man the organs of knowledge and given them such capacity as they possess. Man sees, hears, tastes, and smells that which necessary for him to see, hear, touch, taste, and smell in order to preserve his life (Unamuno 1954:23)

He goes further to adumbrate his view when he argued that it is the desire for the immortality of man has expressed in his search for God via the religions of the world. For him, it was in attempt to establish the immortality of the soul through his moral argument that Kant arrived at his proof of the existence of God. In other words Kant's ultimate concern was the establishment of the immortality of the soul and not that of God. Unamuno's attitude to the immortality of the soul was instructive as one would have thought that his would have used his argument to go ahead to establish immortality but he ended just discussing its origin in man. For him, immortality originates from man's attempt at self preservation and ipso facto, he decided to crave for immortality in various ways, fame, procreation etc. Whether there is immortality really, Unamuno took to an atheistic and agnostic posture. According to him, there either be immortality or not but life presents us with this desire. The desire on its own is not rationally conclusive whether it exists or not. He therefore affirms Russell's posture that "it is not rational arguments, but emotions that cause belief in future life" (Russell in Unamuno:70). As we end this section on why immortality, we can affirm our agreement that even though that it is not rationally acceptable that to establish immortality, it not easily dismissible bearing in mind some serious concerns in the heart of man about his exit from this cosmos.

3.2 Immortality and Resurrection

In the previous discussion we examined the meaning and origin of immortality. We shall now examine the meaning of resurrection as a conception of immortality. Resurrection states a belief in the rising again to life of all the human beings who have died before the final judgment that will determine the eternal resting place of the person.

It is also conceived as the rising from the dead of a being who is believed to still retain his individuality in an immutable state. [Christianity](#) uses it as its main wooing point during evangelism because its founder Jesus Christ was said to have resurrected from death. It is also found in later [Judaism](#) that furnished some basic ideas which were expanded in Christianity and Islam. The Biblical resurrection is that believes in the unification of man's spirit an immortal part after leaving body at clinical death and taking a new spiritual body. This new spiritual body becomes a temporal thereby being unable to be hindered in time and space. It can travel to places instantaneously unhindered. Christians are expected to have these sorts of bodies eternally.

At this point we should distinguish between resurrection and resuscitation. What Jesus did when he raised Lazarus from the sepulcher was a resuscitation and not resurrection. After his resuscitation, Lazarus took back his original body that later Lazarus died again and remained dead. The hope for resurrection will happen during the Parousia of Jesus Christ that He will resurrect all those who have been born again. A new spiritual body that has been prepared for their spirits will be made available to them.

There are elements of thoughts on resurrection in Ancient Middle Eastern religion. However it was restricted to the gods as in the resurrection of the Babylonian vegetation god Tammuz. It was not certain whether they ever thought of the possibility of the resurrection of individual persons in their eschatological postulations. For the Greco-Roman thought, elements of belief in the [immortality](#) of the [soul](#) existed, but the belief in the resurrection of the body appeared not to have been articulated. On their own, the Hellenistic mystery religions had elements of symbolic resurrection, or rebirth of the spirit, such as seen with the goddess Isis, but it never recognized any postmortem corporeal resurrection. Thus Egyptians believed that eventually resurrection will take place and so elaborate mummification ritual for treating the dead body was developed. Similar has been the case in other religions.

From what we have presented so far, it is difficult for anybody to be able to convincingly and conclusively sway another on this belief rationally. This is because it is operating at the realm of belief and conjecture; no one will be able to disprove it also as it could be said like the

logical positivists that a verification or proof in principle is possible.

3.3 Immortality, Karma and Reincarnation

It was Martin Heidegger the philosopher of death, who harped on the inevitability of death and man's unpreparedness about it. According to him, it's time of happenstance is such that once anyone is born, such a one is old enough to die. The irony of life is that humans carry on as if they were immortal; but life is only meaningful when we appreciate death. This is why almost all sacred writings gave themselves the task of preparing humans for the afterlife. This is why eschatological views of the afterlife as heaven and hell dominate them. Elements of using the afterlife as means of controlling human behavior take over human affair. The essence of this is to have succor after life with the underlying philosophy as the continuity of life even after death.

Are humans bound to live again after death? If yes, why would they live again? In what body and what would be their mission in that second, third or fourth chance? The attempt at the answering of these and other similar questions are what believers in reincarnation and karma have hazarded. The karmic path of human life is such that challenges different perspectives in religions; especially when it is discussed with reincarnation. Reincarnation and karma are beliefs in the cyclic mechanism which are meant to govern human beings as they live their lives on earth. It is based on the on the ground that the soul has a particular history of experience and travels in time through different bodies (animal and human). Accordingly, this "biography" of souls contains its account of stewardship, and thus forms a sort of continuous assessment of the decisions made in each of the past lives.

Karma is therefore a system of the payment of debt or acceptance of rewards repositied in this biography of the soul. Reincarnation serves as a vehicle for the payment debt or receipt of reward through the cycles of birth and re-birth in the sense that the sanscrit and vedic writings

term samsara (birth, death and re-birth). Thus seen, it is germane to note that in the karmic return, the aim is to pay or collect debts or rewards acquired in past lives, while reincarnation complements to the idea that one life is not enough to learn everything a soul needed to learn to end this cycle of birth, death and rebirth. The ultimate aim of reincarnation is to help in the purification of the soul of man in order to be able to unite with God regarded as the Universal Consciousness,

It is clear that there are serious articulations of this belief amongst most human cultures. Socrates and Plato believed in reincarnation, and so did Tertullian; he defended this idea right from the very first Christian Church. For Buddhism the karmic reincarnation is to make humans in the present life to face the consequences of our actions or inactions of their past lives, according to the principle of action and reaction; cause and effect. The Indian Yogic view is akin to the transition of soul from body to body as if such body is changing into new clothes. It goes through all the living species and evolves towards godhead after its karmas (Sanskrit for actions/deeds) are resolved through various births.

Karma and reincarnation is difficult to be placed as regards its plausibility or otherwise. When we look at the cycle of life of trees from falling off of seeds, germination, growth, death and decay, we observe a miniature sense of reincarnation. The tree decays for another to germinate and grow. It is not the same as human procreation where one gives birth while he is alive. One may ask how come that it applies only to trees but not humans? It also serves as a moral unification principle for the human family; an Igbo today but may reincarnate Peruvian tomorrow. Does this not solve the problem of racism if understood in this sense? Hick states it differently in this way:

On this view karma, with reincarnation as its mythological expression, is really a moral truth teaching of universal moral responsibility. All our deeds affect the human future, as the life of each of us has in its turn been affected by those who have lived before us. Instead of the individual threads of karmic history, there is the universal network of karma of humanity. Understood in this manner, the idea of reincarnation is a way of affirming the corporate unity of the human race and the responsibility of each toward the whole of which he or she is a part. (1990:140)

In making due with this, it is pertinent to state that this either neither proved rationally and conclusively nor can it be rejected for its moral and unification values for humanity.

4.0 Conclusion

In this unit, it is good that you have examined the issue of the immortality of life. This you did by learning the meanings of karma, reincarnation and immortality. Our hope is that if you understand its principles, you would have been made a better person morally for the society.

5.0 Summary

We can surmise that you have learnt the following in this unit:

that the notion of immortality is an inescapable desire in humankind
that this notion of immortality is expressed in resurrection, karma and
reincarnation.

What is of prominent relief is that although immortality is not established
rationally and thus exists in the mythical sphere, it is not dismissible due to its
high moral values for humankind.

6.0 Self Assessment Exercises

Discuss immortality as a veritable tool for societal moral regeneration?

How true is it to say that resurrection is an emotive expression of immortality of the human soul?

What do you understand by Karma?

7.0 References/ Further Readings

Hick, John H, (1990) *Philosophy of Religion* New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc

Unamuno, De Miguel, *Tragic Sense of Life*. New York: Dover Publishers Inc, P 23

Bertrand Russell Why I am Not A Christian cited in Unamuno P. 70