PHL 303
THEORIES OF KNOWLEDGE

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INTRODUCTION

This course exposes the students to various epistemological theories. Its aim is for the student be aware of principles, theories, sources and problems of knowledge from the traditional western epistemology to contemporary epistemology.

Epistemology as a branch of philosophy can be traced to ancient the period in Greek philosophy especially to Plato who was the first to turn Greek philosophy from metaphysical discussions on originative substance to discourse about human beings. Plato changed the face of philosophy at that period with his peculiar saying "Man know thyself". Plato's views on epistemology could be seen in Plato's MENO, THEAETETUS and the REPUBLIC.

It is the Socratic idea of knowledge that Aristotle, a student of Plato, analyses and establishes his notion of empirical knowledge. In his submission, Aristotle's idea of substance differs from the Socratic, but their notion of knowledge is almost the same. Knowledge as against belief, to both Socrates and Aristotle is an objective concept which requires justification. Modern philosophy as espouse by John Locke, David Hume and Rene Descartes, Gottfried Leibniz follows the footsteps of Aristotle and Plato respectively.

It was Edmund Gettier in his paper "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" that changed the course of mainstream epistemology. Gettier shows how the traditional definition of knowledge is inadequate to address the problem of acquisition and dissemination of knowledge by showing that the three conditions of justification, truth and belief (JTB) are only necessary but insufficient for knowledge.

In the wake of that analysis, a new form of epistemology was born. Gettier's analysis and criticism of traditional epistemology gave rise to Virtue Epistemology which seeks to explain knowledge as product of character traits of epistemic agents.

These developments elicit some questions such as (1) What is knowledge? (2) What is the relationship between knowledge and belief? (3) Is knowledge simply true belief or there is a need for justification? (4) What does justification consists of? (5) What is truth? (6) Are there other notions of knowledge asides justified true belief? These questions and related ones are what epistemologists are addressing. The aim of this course therefore is to expose how philosophers have answered these questions and the different reactions they have generated.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

In pursuant of this aim, the following are the objectives of the course:

- To understand the meaning, nature and principles of epistemology.
- To discuss Western epistemology from historical perspective with focus on the ancient, modern and contemporary arguments on truth, knowledge and justification.
- To critically examine the relationship between knowledge and human perceptual and character traits.

WORKING THROUGH THIS COURSE

The students are expected to engage in independent research on the topic discussed in this course. They should source for audio visual materials on YouTube, engage in tutorials and expand their knowledge by reading various online encyclopedia that treat topics in epistemology or philosophy in general.

STUDY UNITS

This course has 16 study units which are structured into 4 modules. Each module is broken down into 4 units as follows:

Module 1   Introduction to Epistemology

Unit 1   Definition and Meaning of Epistemology
Unit 2   Nature of Epistemology
Unit 3   Trends in Epistemology
Unit 4   Types or Branches of Epistemology

Module 2   Theories of Knowledge in Epistemology

Unit 1   Rationalism
Unit 2   Empiricism
Unit 3   Scientific Method of knowing
Unit 4   Scepticism

Module 3   Concept of Truth

Unit 1   Rationalism
Unit 2   Empiricism
Unit 3   Scientific Method of knowing
Unit 4   Scepticism

Module 4   Problems of Other Minds

Unit 1   Nature of mind
Unit 2   Functions of the mind
Unit 3   Solipsism
Unit 4   Testimony

References and literature for further readings

PRESENTATION SCHEDULE

This course has two presentations; one at the middle of the semester and the other at the end of the semester. At the beginning of the semester each student undertaking this course will be assigned a topic by the course facilitator, which will be made available in due time for individual presentations during forum discussions. Each presenter has 15 minutes (10 minutes for presentation and 5 minutes for questions and answers). On the other hand, students will be divided by the course facilitator into different groups. Each group is expected to come up with a topic to write on and submit same to the facilitator via the recommended channel. Both presentations attract 5% of total score.

ASSESSMENT

In addition to the discussion forum and presentations, two other papers are required in this course. The paper should not exceed 6 pages and should not be less than 5 pages (including references), typewritten in 12 font, double line spacing and in Times New Roman. The preferred reference style is MLA 6th edition (download an online copy). The paper topics will be made available in due time. Each carry 10% of the total mark.

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

https://plagiarism.org
https://www.library.arizona.edu/help/tutorial/plagiarism/index.html

Finally, all students taking this course must take the final examination which attracts 70% of the total mark.

HOW TO GET THE MOST OF THIS COURSE

For students to get the most out of this course, they must:
a)   Have 75% attendance through active participation in both forum discussions and facilitation.

b)   Read each topic in the course materials before it is treated in the class.
c)   Submit every assignment as and when due, as failure to do so will attract penalty.
d)   Discuss and share ideas among your peers; this will help in understanding the course more.
e)   Download videos, podcasts and summary of group discussions for personal consumption.
f)   Attempt each self-assessment exercise in the main course material.
g)   Take the final examination.
h)   Approach the course facilitator when having any challenges with the course.

FACILITATION

This course operates a learner-centre online facilitation approach. To support the students' learning process, the course facilitator will: 1. Introduce each topic under discussion. 2. Open the floor for discussion. Each student is expected to read the course materials, as well as related literatures and raise critical issues which he or she shall bring forth in the forum for discussion, for further dissection, summarises forum discussion, upload materials, videos, podcasts to the forum, and disseminates information via email and SMS if need be.

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MODULE 1   INTRODUCTION TO EPISTEMOLOGY

UNIT 1   DEFINITION OF EPISTEMOLOGY

CONTENTS

1.0   INTRODUCTION

This section is an exposition of the nature and tasks of epistemology as a branch of philosophy. It focuses on the etymology and the development of epistemology over the centuries. So, students will get acquainted with the origin and meaning of epistemology.

2.0   INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

- become acquainted with issues in epistemology
- understand the historical evolution of epistemology
- discuss different types of epistemology

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   Definition and Meaning of Epistemology

Epistemology is one of the branches of philosophy. It is a combination of two Greek words: *episteme* and *logos*. *Episteme* means knowledge while *logos* mean reason or study. So, the combination of the two words will mean the study or logic of knowledge. Epistemology in this sense is the branch of philosophy that concerns itself with knowledge acquisition and

dissemination. An epistemologist "*tends to invoke the goal of obtaining truth and avoiding error*" (Steup, 2001:162).

Epistemology can be seen as the discourse that is in charge of the architecture of knowledge. It tends to propose and suggest norms and principles that will enhance acquisition and dissemination of knowledge (Bewaji, 2007:14). It is in this sense epistemology is described as a normative discipline with the purpose to provide reasonable grounds for doubt and claims to knowledge. Ibrahim Adekunle reiterates that epistemology "seeks to establish frameworks within which we can construct genuine and accurate understanding of the world" (Ibrahim,2020: 4). It concerns itself with the nature, sources, limits, scope and questions of knowledge. Though its beginning can be traced to the pre-Socratic era but Plato seems to be the first philosopher who explored that area deeply and made it popular.

3.2   Traditional Definition of Knowledge

Plato in his dialogue *Theaetetus* writes about the dialogue between Socrates and Theaetetus. In this dialogue a student of Theodorus who is adjudged to be the most intelligent student of that school brought out a lot of things on the epistemological journey of the ancient Greek philosophers. It is in this book that attempts were made by Socrates the interlocutor to disprove erroneous and past assumptions of the educated people of Greece and made effort to put something else in place.

The problem of knowledge is the need to overcome some challenges of scepticism especially, the challenge of the definition of knowledge and the challenge of justification of knowledge claim. In the history of the ancient Greek philosophy the sophists who were Socrates' companions, were the first set of sceptics that challenged the existing criterion of knowledge. It is the attempt to provide an alternative and prove the sceptics wrong that led Socrates on an adventure to the school of Theodorus a teacher of Philosophy who chose his student named Theaetetus to assist in fashioning a definition of knowledge.

When Socrates asked Theaetetus, what is knowledge? his first response is that knowledge is what Theodorus teaches; like geometry, geography, philosophy etc. The import of this definition is that what teachers teach student(s) in class is what the teacher(s) know and the student(s) who acquire them acquired knowledge. but a critical look by Socrates points out to Theaetetus that, he only described types of knowledge, whereas, what Socrates expected is a definition that expresses knowledge in itself. Theaetetus definition is also wrong according to Unah, because it is circular. The *definiendum* appears in the *definiens* (Unah 2008). According to him 'once the word being defined appears in the definition,

it means that the word in question has not been defined. This means that, the person offering the definition has merely succeeded in connecting or linking the term (word) being defined to something else' (Unah, 2008:03). Whereas for Socrates epistemology does not concern itself with 'knowledge how' rather it focuses on 'knowledge that'.

At the second opportunity, Theaetetus defines knowledge as perception, since according to him whatever is perceived by anyone is known by the person. Perception can rightly give us the knowledge of taste, colour, odour, texture and sound, possessed by objects. Our physical senses become the windows to knowledge of the external world. Whatever information they relayed to us were accepted by us with certainty and assurance. This information becomes the bedrock of our behaviours and how we relate to the universe.

Perception as the basis or window to reality is the principle canvassed by empiricists who propounded the doctrine of empiricism which stipulates that 'knowledge has its origins in and derives all of its content from experience' (Velasquez, 2005: 379). Human senses of touch, taste, sight, smell and hearing, underlie the knowledge put forward by the natural sciences like, physics, chemistry, astronomy and geography. Thus, they have become the veritable tools for discovering truth especially by the empiricists. David Hume and John Locke were prominent empiricists. But it was Hume who carries empiricism to a logical conclusion. He followed empiricism and arrived at scepticism.

The problem of perception as the source of true knowledge is that the way object appears is relative to each perceiver. Protagoras a sophist earlier made a submission that "when the wind appears cold to me, then it is cold to me, however, if it appears hot to you then it is hot to you' (Stumpf & Fieser p.32). He concluded that "man is the measure of all things, of the things that are that they are, of things that are not that they are not."

Another reason proffered by Socrates against knowledge as perception is that it fails to incorporate the role of memory. Human memory will be useless if perception is knowledge because when we remember there is no object or event to perceive. Memory builds on perception, it preserves much important information we acquire through the senses. It also preserves information about our mental lives (Audi, 2011:62).

The human memory preserves past and present events, it flashes them, recalls them and places them before the sight of human mind with images and representational data. The human mind which is the seat of memory provides the tools for justification and rationalization of these reflections or flashes. That is why Socrates believes that knowledge is the function

of the human mind rather than the senses. For him, knowledge is reasoning about perception (Theaetetus,186d).

It is in the light of the above that Socrates can be regarded as a moderate rationalist for his belief that the senses may be the windows through which we acquire beliefs but such beliefs must pass through the test of the intellect or reason in order to become knowledge. Knowing therefore is to be found not in experience but in the process of reasoning about it.
The position that reason alone without the aid of sense experience can furnish us with knowledge of the external world is known as Rationalism. Knowledge that is not about the world, like logic and mathematics are the focus of rationalists.

So, true judgment is not knowledge until one is able to show how it is arrived at. This will enable us to sift away the error and make a link between ones judgment and the fact that is open to us. In other words the knower should be able to give proof or show that his/her evidence is sufficient or how it is related to what we already know, because knowledge is an objective endeavour while true opinion is subjective. And by virtue of this objectivity, what the individual claims to know must fit into the public rational system; being armed with the above insight, both Socrates and Theaetetus agreed that knowledge is true opinion or true judgment plus account (202d).

At the end of this dialogue, Socrates appears unsatisfied with the definition of knowledge arrived at with Theaetetus because according to him, giving an account presupposes that the account itself is knowledge. If the account is knowledge, then we need an account of the account. In other words, each account will need a justification (210b). This approach is categorized as foundational or the inferential approach to knowledge.
In spite of this shortcoming, traditional Western epistemology took this definition as the best but only attempted to prevent the infinite regress. Various theories of justification like foundationalism, coherentism and foundherentism are attempts to meet the problem of justification in accepting the Socratic definition of knowledge.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

What do you understand by the term "Epistemology" ?

4.0   CONCLUSION

In this unit, we have considered the meaning of epistemology. Etymologically, it originates from two Greek words *episteme* and *logos*. We have examined the traditional definition of knowledge. As a branch of philosophy, it concerns itself with knowledge acquisition and

dissemination. We examined the traditional definition of knowledge according to Socrates. Socrates attempted to midwife the definition of knowledge through dialoguing with Theaetetus. Epistemology is basically in charge of everything about human knowledge; definition, type, justification, including sources of knowledge either in the Sciences or Arts.

5.0   SUMMARY

- Epistemology is one of the branches of philosophy
- Etymologically, the word epistemology is from two Greek words *episteme*
- (knowledge) and *logos* (study).
- The problem of knowledge has been the need to overcome some challenges of scepticism.
- Epistemology does not concern itself with "knowledge how" but "knowledge that".
- For Plato, knowledge is true opinion or true judgment plus account.

6.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Explain briefly the concept of knowledge in the dialogue between Socrates and Theaetetus.
2. What is the view your view about traditional idea of knowledge?

7.0   REFERENCES/ FURTHER READING

Audi, Robert (2011). *Epistemology: A Contemporary Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge.* New York: Routledge.

Bewaji J.I. (2007). *An Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge: A Pluricultural Approach*. Ibadan: Hope Publications.

Ibrahim Adekunle (2020). *Essentials of Epistemology.* Ibadan: Hope Publications.

Steup, M. (2001). *Knowledge, Truth and Duty: Essasys on Epistemic Justification, Responsibility and virtue*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press.

Plato (1967). *Plato's Theory of Knowledge: The Theaetetus and the Sophist of Plato* (7th impression) trans. By F.M. Comford, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd.

Unah, J. (2008). "Doing Epistemology with the Theaetetus" in Okoro Chiedozie (ed) *Essays in Epistemology and Philosophy of History* Lagos: Soladem Publishers.

Stumpf, S. and Fieser, J. (ND). *Philosophy: History and Problems* (sixth ed.) Boston: McGraw Hill.

Velasquez, M. (2005). *Philosophy: A Text with Readings* 9th ed. Belmont: Thomas Wadsworth.

UNIT 2   NATURE OF EPISTEMOLOGY

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1.0   Introduction
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1.0   INTRODUCTION

This unit examines the nature of epistemology. It also examines themes in epistemology and in asking the question "what is knowledge?", it attempts an analysis of the types of knowledge.

2.0   INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of his unit, you will be able to:

-     understand the nature of epistemology
-     understand the questions that underpins knowledge
-     discuss different types of knowledge.

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   Themes in Epistemology

Epistemology as an academic course focuses on questions such as: What is knowledge? Is knowledge possible at all? If it is possible, how can it be acquired? Is there any limit to knowledge possession? Historically, the concern for knowledge in epistemology has focused mainly on propositional knowledge. Though, there are other concern of knowledge like knowledge of how (practical knowledge), knowledge of (specific knowledge), that epistemologists analyse. It concerns itself with the principles, sources and limit of propositional knowledge which, in this case, is 'knowledge that'.

Since all disciplines deal with knowledge, epistemology is then universal in its appeal. When philosophy is described as a second order level of

discipline, it is because it investigates and seeks justification on the knowledge claims and assumptions of other disciplines, which are in the first order discipline. One cannot be mistaken if it is concluded that it is epistemology that gives philosophy the outlook of keeping other disciplines on their toes. Even when we consider other branches of philosophy like metaphysics and ethics as important, the main discussion with the first order disciplines are epistemic in nature. For instance, when the Ionians were theorizing about the originative substance of the physical universe, their stands are epistemological, even when they were engaged metaphysical discourse. Tales claim that 'water is the originative substance' is made from an epistemic standpoint of knowing the characteristic of water.

The tasks of analyzing and developing the nature, scope and principles of human knowledge have become the focus of epistemology over the centuries. Epistemology recognizes the ability of human beings to grasp reality, evaluate and interpret its contents. It also acknowledges that human beings make mistakes or fall into error in the attempt to interpret reality. So, as a branch of philosophy, epistemology prides itself in developing criteria, methodology, theories, principles of knowledge that would make humans to avoid error or limit their mistakes in the attempt to know.

Almost all human beings wish to comprehend the world they live in and as such they construct different principles that can make them achieve this purpose. Nevertheless, many people are contented with certain limit of knowledge. Only few people like philosophers attempt to go deeper in this objective search for truth or knowledge. Epistemological analysis is able to show that many claims to knowledge or truth are dubious, false or inadequate, since they are either inconclusive or barely justifiable. Such anomaly is what epistemology as the study of the theories, sources and methodologies of knowledge tends to correct by developing solid basis for knowing.

However, epistemologists are not those who necessarily point to the way of knowledge but they include those who negate the possibility of knowledge, given certain conditions. In this view, rationalists and empiricists who gave the conditions an epistemic agent must meet and sceptics who argued that those conditions are not sufficient are epistemologist. Given this background Plato, Descartes, Locke, Hume, Gorgias and Protagoras are epistemologists. Though, Hamlyn (1977:9) sees epistemology "as a set of defense-works against skepticism" yet the sceptics are also epistemologists. As a matter of fact, sceptics have their own idea of what knowledge is, but when they could not found sufficient ground in their search for non-doubtable claims they resulted to denial of knowledge.

So in epistemology different themes and questions are germane. They have become critical focus for epistemologists over the centuries. For instance, questions like "what can we know? What are/is the sources of knowledge? What is the relationship between knowledge and belief? Is knowledge certain, objective, absolute or only true opinion, subjective, relative? What are the requirements of knowledge?

3.2   What is Knowledge?

This question is presented in a simple manner but the answer may not be that simple. Just as it is difficult to have a univocal definition of philosophy, knowledge as a concept too is not easy to define. One of the reasons is that there are different types of knowledge, though the question assumes that something must be binding these types of knowledge to warrant all of them tagged the same. While this may be correct, it is not a straight task for epistemologists.

3.3   Types of Knowledge

Epistemologists are able to identify three types of knowledge, namely knowledge-of, Knowledge-how and knowledge-that.

Knowledge-of: It is about information on a particular thing or events. It depicts familiarity with something or someone.

Knowing how: To have skill in doing something. This is what Duncan Pritchard (2010:4) refers to as ability knowledge. For example, one could prove that one knows how to ride a bicycle just by climbing and riding one.

Knowledge that: It is propositional knowledge which requires theoretical justification or presenting facts about a thing.

3.4   Sources of Knowledge

i.   Perception
This is a source of knowledge popularize by the empiricists and scientists. They argued that human physical senses of sight, taste, smell, touch and hearing are windows through which we can know reality. The universe to them is full of physical objects and as such it is only the physical senses that can apprehend them. Perception affords us firsthand information about the physical environment while other sources are secondhand or at best supportive to perception.

ii.   Reason

Contrary to the empiricists, rationalists avow that reason or the human intellect is the only source of indubitable knowledge. The physical senses can only can only provide beliefs which are subject to the scrutiny of the intellect. The changing nature of physical objects is a problem to perception, it is only the mind that can discover the enduring characteristics of these objects, as such it is the only reliable source of knowledge. To rationalists' physical objects are combination of ideas like texture, colour, size, shape, and it is only the mind that can apprehend ideas not perception.

iii.   Revelation

This is a source of knowledge that is external to human beings in the sense that the individual receives ideas or information from a source outside it. Such individual does not have control on such information since he/she does not decide when and how to apprehend the revealed information. This source of knowing is common to religious adherents.

iv.   Testimony

Testimony is from the word testify, which is to report or affirm a claim or position. To hear from another agent about an event is to receive information from a witness. Under this category of source, we have information from authority or experts, from majority opinion, from culture and other individuals who are trustworthy. Testimony in this vein is predicated on moral authority and character of an informant.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

List and explain the three types of knowledge

4.0   CONCLUSION

In this unit, we have considered the nature of epistemology. Epistemology concerns itself with questions about knowledge. Historically, epistemologists focus on propositional knowledge. Also, knowledge is universal in nature in that it investigates and seeks for justification on the knowledge claims and assumptions of other disciplines. Epistemology recognizes the ability of human beings to grasp, evaluate and interpret reality. So it develops criteria, methodologies and principles that would make humans avoid errors or mistakes in their quest to know. Also, there are three branches or doctrines that enunciate the criteria necessary for knowledge acquisition and justification, which are rationalism, empiricism and skepticism.

5.0   SUMMARY

- Concern for knowledge in epistemology has focused mainly on propositional knowledge.
- Epistemology is concerned with questions about the nature, sources, scopes and limitations of knowledge
- The three branches of epistemology are rationalism, empiricism and skepticism.
- The three types of knowledge are: knowledge of, knowledge how and knowledge that.
- There are different sources of knowledge which can be categorized as primary and secondary sources.

6.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1.   Briefly discuss the nature of epistemology.
2.   What are the themes in epistemology?

7.0   REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

Pritchard, Duncan (2010). "Recent Work on Epistemic Value" in *American Philosophical Quarterly* Vol. 44, no 2 April.

Hamlyn W. (1977). *The Theory of Knowledge.* London: MacMillan Press

UNIT 3   TRENDS IN EPISTEMOLOGY

CONTENTS

1.0   INTRODUCTION

This unit examines trends in epistemology. It attempts an exposition of epistemology from the ancient Greek period to the contemporary times. It presents *epoche* in epistemology such as traditional epistemology, evolutionary Epistemology, feminist Epistemology among others.

2.0   INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of his unit, you will be able to:

•   understand the historical development of epistemology
•   understand the different *epoche* in epistemology
•   identify the roles of various philosophers in the development of epistemology.

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   Traditional Epistemology

The ancient Greek period marked the beginning of epistemological theorizing. The rivalry between Socrates and the Sophists was responsible for critical discussion on the nature of knowledge, the distinction between knowledge and belief and more importantly, the nature of truth. While the Sophists like Protagoras and Gorgias posit that knowledge is relative and truth is unattainable, Socrates affirmed that objective knowledge is

possible including absolute truth. According to Plato, Socrates argues that a person knows if and only if:
i.   The person's claim is true
ii.   The person believes the claim
iii.   And the person is justified in believing the claim.

It was this template that modern philosophers like Descartes who represents the rationalists and John Locke who represents the empiricists adopted. For Descartes, justification of knowledge is rooted in reason and for Locke it is based on experience. This notion of knowledge as justified true belief was accepted for a long time before an American philosopher Edmund Gettier did an analysis on knowledge as justified true belief. The result of this analysis is that justification, truth, belief are only necessary conditions for knowledge but are insufficient. Gettier shows the inadequacy of this notion of knowledge with two counterexamples that reflect what is now called the Gettier problem.

3.2   Evolutionary Epistemology

This trend borrows from Charles Darwin's evolutionary theory of gradual development in human capacities and mental inclination. It sees knowing as a process, which is dependent on the natural development of human psyche. On this basis knowledge can be understood within the analysis of these natural factors of evolution. The term was first used by Donald Campbell (1974).

According to Michael Bradie evolutionary epistemology involves deploying models and metaphors drawn from evolutionary biology in the attempt to characterize and resolve issues arising in epistemology and conceptual change (https://plato.stanford.edu.com/Evolutionary Epistemology).

There are two strands of this epistemology; the first argues that the development of human brains and cognitive mechanism are responsible for rational knowledge. The second focuses on human traits with the methodology of using metaphors in biology to explain the emergence of ideas and epistemic theories (Bradie, 2020). The aim of traditional epistemologists, like Descartes and Locke is to build and clarify conceptions of knowledge with a normative culture whereas evolutionary epistemology adopts the descriptive approach to the issue of knowing.

3.3   Feminist epistemology

It sees as an anomaly the efforts of traditional epistemologists like Descartes that gives untrue credence to reason alone. While the mind in this regard has become a metaphor for rationality, the body is made to

represent emotion. So, the task of Descartes is to put forward the thesis that rationality is only possible when emotion is relegated or exorcised from human thinking process. Descartes' position just like Locke's, also places a dichotomy between the subject who cognizes and the object which it cognizes.

These two positions are what the feminist epistemologists like Susan Bordo and Lorraine Code among others argue against. Bordo argues that knowledge is embodied produced from a standpoint by a body that is located as a material entity among other material entities (Hekman, 1995:16). Feminist epistemology crosses as a critique of traditional epistemology especially that of Descartes. The conclusion of Descartes in his 'Meditation'; "I think therefore I am" stripped the thinking mind of bodily experiences which neglects human's ability to sit or stand (relax bodily posture) during or epistemic exercise.

Feminists took this stance against traditional epistemologists because it is believed that females are emotional beings while men are rational beings. It is this same ground that made St Paul in the Bible to admonish women to keep quiet in the church and when they have any question to ask, they should ask their husbands at home.

However, Elizabeth Anderson holds that feminist epistemology is better understood as a branch of materialized, solid epistemology that studies the various influences of norms and conceptions of gender and gendered interest and experiences on the production of knowledge (Anderson, 1995:50).

Alison Jagger in her exposition believes that knowledge is a product of emotions, since emotion is an important motivating force in decision making and acquisition of knowledge. She argues that there is nothing like dispassionate investigation; the only thing is that during investigation or search for knowledge people may not be aware of their emotions. Lack of awareness in this regard is not the absence of emotion (1989:161).

3.4   Virtue Epistemology

In responding to Gettier's claim, a set of philosophers known as fourth-conditionalists, aver that there is a need to tighten the traditional conditions of knowledge with additional fourth condition. The attempts to do this gave rise to the claim that the Gettier problems arose because there is too much concentration on the effort to strengthen the belief of epistemic agents to the detriment of the psychological status of epistemic agents. Borrowing from Aristotle's virtue ethics, these epistemologists argue that the conditions of knowledge can be strengthened when one considers the virtue or character-traits of epistemic agents. They claim

that Gettier problem only arises for an externalist rather than an internalist.

3.4.1 What is Virtue Epistemology?

Virtue Epistemology and its practitioners, represent a group which sought to change the focus of epistemology. Their philosophy was informed by their belief that intellectual agents and communities are the primary source of epistemic value and primary focus of epistemic evaluation. Knowledge according to them, is not dependent on the evaluation and justification of beliefs; instead, it is based on the intellectual virtue of the agents involved. Virtue Epistemologists seek to return cognitive relations and performance to the cognisor's properties as opposed to what is done by traditional epistemologists. The focus of epistemology, according to virtue epistemology ought not to be on the evaluation of beliefs, but the evaluation of the intellectual virtue or vices of cognitive agents. Many virtue epistemologists believe that virtues are instrumentally valuable. Braaten for instance, suggests that "virtues are valuable because they enable us to create community which is intrinsically valuable" (Braaten, 1990:5). Zagzebski describes virtue in two ways: first virtues are valuable because they are happiness based. Secondly, they are intrinsically valuable because their characteristic is not explained by their relation to something else (Zagzebski, 1996:77, 81-82).

3.4.2 Virtue Reliabilism

It is a virtue theory that encompasses diverse epistemic principles which try to explain knowledge or justification in terms of capacities of the epistemic agent. Reliabilism is concerned with the degree of truth over falsity that a process or method will yield for an agent. For Goldman, "a cognitive mechanism or process is reliable if it not only produces true beliefs in actual situations, but would produce true beliefs… in relevant counterfactual situations" (Goldman,1976:771). Reliabilism is an externalist theory of justification that holds that the source of justification can be external to an agent's subjective conception of the situation. This view means that cognitive awareness is neither necessary nor sufficient to justify beliefs because an agent can reasonably and responsibly rely on false principles, in any case the question of rationalist and responsibility does not arise in the case of ordinary perceptual or introspective judgments. However, Linda Zagzebski, in her formulation of reliabilism, attempts to combine both internalist and externalist factors, even though she maintained that her theory can be properly called an externalist conception:

My theory counts as externalist by Bonjour's definition, but its hybrid character sets it apart from the more strongly externalist theories in the

contemporary literature, notably the popular theories of reliabilism (1996:299).

3.4.3 Virtue Responsibilism

The other part of virtue epistemology is the one that emphasise the character of epistemic agent. Virtue responsibilism also emphasises intellectual virtue but focused on the character traits that help to achieve true belief. The focus of responsibilism is not on primary mechanism like perception and memory as reliabilism but in certain intellectual traits that are more valued as virtuous than others.

The attempt here is to take into consideration the experiences and behaviours of human beings in knowledge and the social dimensions in which knowledge exists. Responsibilism differs from reliabilism in not just focusing on the result of attaining the truth only but also taking into consideration the mode of acquiring true beliefs. For example, if Jane and John arrived at the same set of true propositions, but if investigation shows that Jane learnt all her true propositions from John, even though both are correct, we will normally ascribe superiority to John intuitively as the originator. The reason is not farfetched, it is because John adopted virtuous trait of character while Jane only knows simply through faculty-based traits. After all, beautiful piece of academic essay is not accredited to the person who plagiarized; rather credit is given to the original writer. So, honesty as a virtuous trait is emphasized in academics or intellectual matters.

Lorraine Code (1987) argues that knowledge is a social affair and as such epistemology should recognize that the main epistemic virtue is responsibility which is the recognition that we are responsible for our beliefs and their functions in wider society. In her words: "It is only those who in their knowing, strive to do justice to the object to the world they want to know as well as possible who can aspire to intellectual virtue" (1987:59).

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Briefly discuss the different trends in epistemology.

4.0   CONCLUSION

In this unit, we have examined the trends in epistemology beginning from the ancient Greek period to contemporary time. In debating with the Sophists, Socrates conceptualizes the traditional definition of knowledge which was followed by modern epistemologists until Gettier faulted the age long concept with two counter-examples. Meanwhile evolutionary

epistemology sees knowledge as a process that is dependent on the natural development of human psyche. We also considered the position of feminist epistemologists like Susan Bordo, Lorraine Code, Elizabeth Anderson among others who argued against the traditional position of modern epistemologists like Descartes and Locke who placed the mind over and above the body which they considered as the seat of emotion. Bordo argues that knowledge is embodied produced from a stand point by a body that is located as a material entity among other material entities. Then as a result of the issues brought forward by Gettier, virtue epistemology arose. Proponents hold that intellectual agents and communities are the primary sources of epistemic value and primary focus of epistemic evaluation. For them, knowledge is not dependent on the evaluation and justification of beliefs instead it is base on the intellectual virtue of the agents involved. We also considered two types of virtue epistemology which are virtue reliabilism and virtue responsibilism.

5.0   SUMMARY

Plato laid down the first definition of knowledge holding that if a person's claim is true and believes in it and such a person is justified in believing that the claim is true, then it can be counted as knowledge.

- Knowledge can be dependent on the natural development of human psyche in the opinion of evolutionists.
- Feminist Epistemology argues against the traditional position of placing reason and perception over emotion.
- Virtue epistemology holds that the focus of epistemology ought not to be on the evaluation of beliefs, but the evaluation of the intellectual virtue or vices of cognitive agents.

6.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1.   What do you understand by virtue epistemology?
2.   Explain the traditional conditions of knowledge.

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UNIT 4   TYPES OR BRANCHES OF EPISTEMOLOGY

CONTENTS

1.0   Introduction
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        3.2   Formal epistemology
        3.3   Mainstream epistemology
        3.4   Meta-epistemology
4.0   Conclusion
5.0   Summary
6.0   Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0   References/Further Reading

1.0   INTRODUCTION

In this unit 1 examine different branches of epistemology by undertaking a conceptual clarification and exposition of formal epistemology, modal epistemology among others.

2.0   INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

- understand the various branches of epistemology
- explain the various branches of epistemology
- discuss various epistemologists and their philosophies.

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   Modal Epistemology

This is the area of epistemology that concerns itself with the analysis of possible knowledge. In other words, it asks the questions: (a) How can we know that a claim is possibly true even when we do not know that it is true or false? (b) How can we know that a claim which we know to be true is necessarily true?

3.2   Formal Epistemology

It can also be seen as a way of using logic and scientific paradigm like probability and computational method to evaluate epistemic propositions or ideas. (Adekunle, 2020:11) formal epistemology is a broad area of

knowledge that is also seen as mainstream epistemology. It incorporates Descartes use of deductive logic to arrive at his "cogito ergo sum".

3.3   Mainstream epistemology

This seeks necessary and sufficient conditions for the possession of knowledge. Descartes statement is expected to be a "starting point for objective discovery of reality" (Delius et al, 2005:33). Descartes mathematical tool was employed to arrive at certainty of knowledge. Francis Bacon employed the use of inductive method in his *Novum Organum*. He subjected knowledge to facts and proposed elimination of circumstantial evidence and biases of the mind if adequate knowledge of nature or fact is to be attained (Delius et al, 2005: 35). Bacon was particularly interested in processes and their regularities. Vineant Hendricks tagged such knowledge process Nomological epistemology "because it requires the occurrence of beliefs to be lawfully connected to the facts of the world themselves (2006:36).

3.4   Meta-epistemology

This can be defined as the theory of the theory of knowledge. Just as meta-ethics, deals with the analysis of the language and methodology of ethical judgments, meta-epistemology focuses on "theorizing like… reason for belief, evidence and probability, agency, responsibility and semantics of epistemic claims and theories (Christos Kyriacon).
Meta-epistemology is a developing field that asks questions such as "Do we need to know that we know in order to know? Do we need to have cognitive access to reasons or evidence in order to be justified? This epistemology also engages in non-reductive conceptual analysis approach to knowledge as done by Williamson Timothy (2000) in "Knowledge and Its Limits." He argues that knowledge cannot be reduced to evidence, belief or truth. Linda Zagzebski (1996) also suggests that we should replace concepts like justification with intellectual virtue in order to avoid the Gettier type of problems where justification does not guarantee truth.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Briefly discuss formal epistemology.

4.0   CONCLUSION

In this unit, we examined the various branches of epistemology. Modal epistemology concerns itself with the dichotomy between possible knowledge by probing the validity of our knowledge claims. Also, formal epistemology can be seen as a way of using logic and scientific paradigm like probability and computational method to evaluate epistemic

proposition or ideas. Also, meta-epistemology asks questions such as "Do we need to know that we know in order to know? Do we need to have cognitive access to reasons or evidence in order to be justified?

5.0   SUMMARY

- Modal epistemology concerns itself with the analysis of possible knowledge.
- Formal knowledge uses logic and scientific paradigm like probability and computational   method to evaluate epistemic propositions or ideas.
- Meta-epistemology asks questions about knowledge, its possibility, validity and accessibility.

6.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Why is formal epistemology considered as mainstream epistemology?
2. What is meta-epistemology?

7.0   REFERENCES/ FURTHER READING

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**MODULE 2   THEORIES   OF   KNOWLEDGE   IN
EPISTEMOLOGY**

Unit 1   Rationalism
Unit 2   Empiricism
Unit 3   Scientific Method of knowing
Unit 4   Skepticism

UNIT 1   RATIONALISM

CONTENTS

1.0   INTRODUCTION

Since philosophy engages in systematic logical study of ideas, some
epistemologist decided to put in place a formal answer to the doubts
generated by the Sophists in the ancient period of philosophy. The first of
these philosophers is Plato who founded the school of rationalism. They
believe that there are basic axioms which could serve as a foundation for
attaining knowledge (Honer *et al*, 1999: 70). Ideas and self-evident
propositions are for them a good ground to build indubitable knowledge.
And since the mind is the house of ideas, rationalists posit that the human
intellect or reason is the source of genuine, clear and distinct knowledge.

2.0 INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

•   understand epistemic theories
•   have a good grasp of sources of knowing in epistemology

- discuss the different approaches to ideas of knowledge.

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   Rationalism

This is the school of thought that holds that knowledge is derived through logico-mathematical reasoning. (Ozumba, 2001:50). The chief representatives of the rationalist school are Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz. The rationalists adopted the logico-mathematical method with the belief that it is the only instrument by which the mind can attain indubitable, clear and distinct knowledge without any sensual apprehension. Knowledge, to the rationalists, comes not from experience but from a mental process that is intuitive and deductive. In the words of Descartes: "These two methods are the most certain routes to knowledge, and the mind should admit no others. All the rest should be rejected as suspects or error and dangerous" (1911:5).

A common feature of the rationalists' position is the claim that the mind is equipped with certain innate principles that exist prior to the perception of objects. The mind through these innate principles unravels independent truths without necessarily experiencing them. These independent truths are self-evident, they do not need experience to validate them, and they are necessarily true. These are:
i)   Logical truths. e.g if the statement X is true and the statement "if X, then Y" is true, then it necessarily follows that the statement Y is true.
ii)   Mathematical truths e.g if X is larger than Y and Y is larger than 'z, then X is larger than Z.
iii)   Metaphysical truths e.g an object with contradictory properties cannot exist. (No matter how long we search, we will never fine a round square).
iv)   Ethical principles e.g it is morally wrong to maliciously torture someone for the fun of it.

3.1.1 Rationalist Method

Rationalists employ deduction as a justifier. They aim at validity and soundness of arguments. A deductive argument is valid, if it is impossible to accept the premises and reject the conclusion. However, as a matter of fact, some deductive arguments have false premises and a true conclusion, and some valid deductions have all false statements (both premises and conclusion). Arguments of this nature are only valid due to their form rather than their content or the fact they contain. (Cohen and Copi, 2002: 49). A deductive argument is sound if it is valid and all its premises or statements are true, that is both the premises and conclusion are as a

matter of fact correct. Soundness is the ultimate evaluation of deduction, and good deductive arguments aim at that. Schema of deduction (disjunctive syllogism):
P or Q or R or S
But not Q, not R, not S
Therefore, P

The inference of P is obvious in the above argument because no one can conclude otherwise. If P, Q, R and S are members of the same set and Q, R and S are eliminated, P will be the only surviving opinion. According to Descartes "we must note that while our experiences of things are often deceptive, the deduction or pure inference of one thing from another can never be performed wrongly by an intellect which is in the least degree rational" (quoted by Ezebuilo,2020:111).Although, the rationalists employed the logico-mathematical model as the foundation of their epistemological programmes, they, however, did so in varying degrees.

3.2   Plato's Rationalism

According to Plato, it is the human intellect that can apprehend forms which do not fade or get degraded with time. For Plato sense experience or perception can only provide us with merely relative truths while reason is what can give us absolute truth (Sahakian, 1968: 53). Plato situates knowing in the realm of ideas. He opined that the phenomenal world is just a copy of the ideal world which harbours the real objects of knowledge. And the changes in the nature of objects in the phenomenal world is a testament that objective knowledge or truth cannot be gotten from perception. Plato opines that all genuine knowledge is innate.

Aristotle's epistemology is opposed to Plato's dualism of the distinction between universal ideas and particular phenomena. According to him, ideas are not the real thing. He argues that every phenomenon is real because of its form. These forms which Plato called ideas actually exist in the objects themselves. It is the forms which allow us to identify an object even when some characteristics change. And it is through this experience that phenomena can be identified. So, truth or knowledge is a product of experience. Whereas investigation for Plato cannot lead us to knowledge, since it is difficult to recognize what someone does not know even when one comes across it (Plato, 1956:41).

3.3   Cartesian Rationalism

After the ancient period, Rene Descartes a French philosopher who is generally referred to as the father of modern rationalism argues that the contrary of every matter of sense experience is possible. Descartes insisted that every idea must be subjected to doubt until truth or falsity

can be demonstrated with the same perfect certainty as a mathematical proof (Sahakian, p. 135). For Descartes, the senses cannot give knowledge that is immune to doubt. The only thing he believes cannot be doubted is that 'I' exist. He therefore concluded that "I think, therefore I exist".

Thinking through reason then becomes the prerequisite to knowledge of both the self and the external world. Descartes argues that: … "inasmuch as reason already persuades me that I ought no less carefully to withhold my assent from matters which are not entirely certain and indubitable than from those which appear to me manifestly to be false, if I am able to find in each one some reason to doubt, this will suffice to justify my rejecting the whole" (Popkin and Stroll, p. 215). In essence, Descartes is saying that if there is any reason for doubt, then whatever is the claim is unreliable. For him, Among my ideas, some appear to be innate, some to be adventitious, and others to have been invented by me. My understanding of what a thing is, what truth is, and what thought is, seems to derive simply from my own nature. But my hearing a noise, as I do now or seeing the sun or feeling the fire, comes from things which are located outside me, or so I have hitherto judged. Lastly sirens, hippogriffs and the likes are my own invention. (see Cottinghom 1991: 153).

3.4   Gottfried Von Leibniz

Following in the same rationalist tradition, Gottfrield Leibniz avers that we can acquire true knowledge through the mind accessing innate propositions because knowledge reduces to propositions functioning where the mind has access through God. Truth is perceived through the mind methodologically with the aid of God through monads. His works on this topic include *Monadology*, and *New Essay in Human Understanding.* In his words:

The sense, although they are necessary for all our actual knowledge are not sufficient to give us the whole of it, since the senses never give anything but instances, that is to say particular or individual truths. Now all the instances which confirm a general truth however numerous they may be, are not sufficient to establish the universal necessity of this same truth, for it does not follow that what happened before will happen in the same way again… From which it appears that necessary truth, such as we find in pure mathematics and particularly in arithmetic and geometry, must have principles whose proof does not depend on instances, nor consequently in the testimony of the senses, although without the senses it would never have occurred to us to think of them…" (Leibniz 1989, pp. 150 – 151).

He distinguishes two types of truth: 1.Truth of facts which is a posteriori 2.Truth of reason which is a priori. Truth of facts to him is accidental and the opposite or non-occurrence of it is possible. Truths of reason in his opinion are necessary and permanent truths which can be uttered without contradiction. He explains that truth of reason is governed by the principle of sufficient reason. According to the principles of sufficient reason nothing happens without a reason

3.5   Baruch Spinoza

Baruch Spinoza's contribution to philosophy is recorded in his *Theological Political Treatise* and *Ethics*. He was influenced largely by Descartes. According to him, there are three degrees of knowledge. The first is sensual and independently gotten from experience or imagination. The second is on the level of reason. It is the level of scientific knowledge – observation and experimentation. The third is the highest and true knowledge in-itself. It is intuitive knowledge.

Descartes was an influence on Benedict Spinoza especially in the rationalist method of inquiry. He adopted the deductive and mathematical method espoused by Descartes who is commonly referred to as the father of modern philosophy. Spinoza asserts that "I will therefore write about human beings as though I were concerned with lines and planes and solids" this method indeed reflects in his book *Ethics* where he moves from axioms and definitions to infer philosophical ideas {Sahakian p. 141}. He argues that by definition, God is an absolute being with infinite attributes. So, the attempt to prove that something exists is an attempt to affirm the existence of God, since by definition God consists of everything that exists (Sahakian, P.143). For him whatever is, is in God and without God nothing can be or be conceived (Spinoza,1677 part 1 proposition 15).

3.6   Critiques of Rationalism

Reason is supposed to present self-evident truth, but "the rationalists themselves hardly agree on the basic truths from which they reason" (Hunt, p. 72). Plato, Descartes and Leibniz, all postulated diverse and distinct philosophies of mind whereas the mind is supposed to be basic to rationalism. Also what we call self-evident truths are culturally dependent, therefore, not absolute. For instance, the saying "Orunmila Baba ifa" (Orunmila the father of ifa). One can hardly understand Ifa without knowing Orunmila because the mention of Orunmila elicits the idea of Ifa. One can infer this statement to be analytic in nature from Yoruba cultural perspective. However, this may not be upheld by a Western mind since some may argue that Ifa divination is a bogus claim even when historical existence of Orunmila can be granted. According to

Popkin and Stroll, the world of Platonic ideas or Descartes innate ideas is neither visible nor tangible (p. 240). The development and the truths that sense experience has generated in the sciences is a pointer that we may not need indubitable knowledge "for the ordinary purpose of life" (Popkin & Stroll, p. 242).

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

What is the basic assumption of rationalism towards knowledge?

4.0   CONCLUSION

In this unit, it is expected that the students would have been able to have a fair grasp of the history of rationalism in the Western tradition of philosophy. The positions of the prominent scholars of rationalism, as well as how they arrived at their verdicts is a testament of the notion of reason as foundational to how we come to know things in the world. Moreover, the fundamental relationship among all of them is the common understanding that to get a clear picture of the world, via reason, such knowledge must be clear and distinct without any form of doubt.

5.0   SUMMARY

- Rationalism is the school of thought that holds that knowledge is derived through logico-mathematical reasoning.
- Knowledge, to the rationalists, comes not from experience but from a mental process that is intuitive and deductive.
- For Plato sense experience or perception can only provide us with merely relative truths while reason is that can give us absolute truth
- The only thing Descartes believes cannot be doubted is that the 'I' exist. He therefore concluded that "I think, therefore I exist".
- For Spinoza, there are three levels of knowledge – sensual, reason and intuition. The last is the highest and truest.

6.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1.   On what basis can reason and intuition serve to make knowledge possible?
2.   What is the basic idea of the Cartesian dictum: "I think therefore I am."?

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UNIT 2   EMPIRICISM

CONTENTS

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       3.3   Inductive Method
       3.4   Critiques
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1.0   INTRODUCTION

The position that it is possible to have knowledge of the external world via nothing but the sense organs is the main position of empiricism. The empiricist tradition of philosophy is of the position that all knowledge arises out of sense perception. Without sense perception, it is not possible to have knowledge. In this unit, the task is to consider some of the theories of perception that empiricists have put forward as the basis for their position that all knowledge derive from sense perception. In addition, this unit also considers the meaning and nature of empiricism with some of the fundamental problems and criticism that have been leveled against the theory of knowledge.

2.0   INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

This unit will assist students to be able to:

•   Develop a firm grasp of the empiricist tradition of knowledge.
•   Understand the main ideas and proponents of empiricism
•   Be familiar with the objections that have been leveled against empiricism

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

The search for certainty of knowledge is not limited to the rationalists alone. Aristotle, who is one of the students of Plato, contrary to his teacher, argues that human knowledge is acquired from experience. He berated the idea of forms postulated by his teacher as an effort at creating additional entities to existing ones. In modern period, John Locke, David Hume and Bishop Berkeley argue that perception is the basis of

knowledge. They argued against the rationalist postulations of innate knowledge and assert that knowledge is acquired through sensory organs like eyes, nose, tongue, skin and ears. Observation is key to the world of empiricism and empirical facts are its bedrock. Knowledge in this sense is *a posteriori* unlike that of the rationalists which is *a priori*.

3.1   What is Empiricism?

Empiricism employs the principle of regularity, resemblance and casualty to arrive at reliable knowledge of the external world. In summary, experience is the best source of knowledge. Resemblance principle explains that the similarities among objects or phenomenon are enough to arrive at a generalization about them (Honer *et al*, 1999: 69). The principle of resemblance is also invoked by empiricists to make a definite claim about nature. It is assumed that if two things resemble each other enough then we can make the same generalization about them. From tasting a green orange, yesterday, one can say that another green orange will taste the same way with that of yesterday if they are of the same species. Regularity is based on the order in nature which warrants the discovery of general laws that allows for predictions of events and behaviours of things. Empiricists depend on the principle of regularity because nature is seen as orderly in its operations, based on immutable laws that are constant. Based on these laws, history of objects can be studied and on this information prediction of future or present occurrence can be made. The principle of causality is hinged on contiguity and nearness of events or things to predict their causes or effects.

A version of empiricism is sensationalism or radical empiricism because of its stance that "knowledge is the result of a complex neurochemical process" (Honer et al., p. 69). They aver that every knowledge is traceable to a particular sense experience.

Empiricism, in opposition to rationalism holds that our knowledge is derived from the senses: taste, hearing, smell, touch, sight. These according to the empiricists are the channels through which we receive information from the external world. The chief representatives of the empiricist school are John Locke, David Hume and George Berkeley. Central to the various empiricist theories is the belief that all knowledge comes from perception. John Locke in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* argues that at birth the human mind is tabula rasa or a clean slate, upon which experience is written. According to John Locke, what we perceive are ideas and they are received through sensation and reflection. He holds that there is nothing in the intellect that was not originally in the senses. Berkeley in *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human knowledge* argues that perception is a prerequisite for the ontological status of reality such that whatever appears to us through

sensation is real. To be, therefore, is to be perceived (*esse est percipi*). That is, what cannot be perceived does not exist.

3.2   Realism as a Theory of Perception

This is the philosophical or epistemological theory that what we perceive or know are the objects as they are presented to us in experience (Ozumba, 2001: 91). It holds that the mind knows independent things not ideas alone. According to this theory, there is a demarcation between the knower and things known just as the knower exists independently of the known object, so also is the existence of the known object independent of the perceiver. That is, objects exist on their own even when there is no one to know, they exist. By implication, it is not only what is known that exists; there is a huge possibility of unknown existing objects. There are different strands of realism, namely, naive realism, transcendental or ultra realism and scientific realism.

Naive realism is the most common belief about perception, probably universal in childhood. It holds that we perceive things exactly the way they are. That is, nothing exists beneath what we perceive. So, appearance for the naive realists is equal to reality. G. E, Moore (1925) conceives perception as simply a common sense analysis of knowledge acquisition. He claims that what we mean when we see physical things is simply a collection of sense data. His use of the phrase "actually see' and the notion of "direct apprehension' suggests that 'sense data' are things over which there is no possibility of doubt. So, his common sense view of perception and knowledge came under the conception of naive realism.

Transcendental or ultra realism is otherwise referred to as, Plato's beard or forms. It is Plato's approach to understanding reality. Ozumba sees it as a theory which holds that physical things are not real (2001:91). Physical things in Plato's view are copies of the original or real things in the world of forms. These forms are perfect, permanent, transcendental, immutable and pure. The mind only get to know them through a rigorous intellectual process, for their knowledge will give meaning to the physical objects in the physical world.

Scientific realism is a theory that upholds the efficacy of scientific gadgets such as microscopes - and telescopes in understanding the real nature of things which goes beyond the grasp of the naked eyes. It is the view that reality is beyond what we see or that there are certain perceptual realities that are only knowable to the scientific enterprise. Hence, there is a basic difference between a casual observer and a scientist. For instance, a casual observer looking at a plant will see it merely as a collection of leafs and stems, the scientist may see a combination of chemical substances for

curative purposes. So what is real to the eye of a layman may not be real to the scientist or vice versa (Ozumba, 2001: 92).

These theories of perception of the empiricists are predicated on inductive method of knowledge acquisition. As it has been said earlier empiricism depends on the principles of regularity and resemblance to make judgments about the external world. The perception about how things behave is valid because empiricists are able to infer from the past to the future or present. This is the hallmark of inductive generalization.

3.3   Inductive Method

Inductive argument can be called the method of the empiricists having placed premium on the principles of regularity and resemblance. This method of reasoning cannot be said to be valid even though they are reasonable because the relationship between the premises and conclusion are not so tight; by which we mean, there is always a gap. Inductive arguments have premises that talk about the past and the conclusion about the present or the future. So, the information in the conclusion is over and above the ones in the premises. It is for this reason the evaluation of induction is about degree of strength; it is either weak or strong. Induction can also be sound if the information is supported by a law of nature or if there has been no instance of failures in the information provided by the premises, for example the rising of the sun and the operation of gravitational force. Information in the premises of inductive argument should not be false, except in hypothetical cases even though the conclusion can be false because induction deals with facts. Inductive inference, in this wise has predictive power. Schema of induction:

All observed A's are B's. Therefore, the next A will be a B.

Support is what conclusions enjoy from the premises. While the supports of deductive argument guarantee certainty of the conclusion that of induction is only probable. The conclusion is claimed to follow its premises only with probability (Cohen and Copi, 2002:45).

3.4   Critiques

Empiricism is definitely oblivious of the deceitful tendencies of sense perception. The facts of illusion, hallucination and the dichotomy between appearance and reality teach us to be cautious of facts from experience. One can infer that empiricism seems not to be well equipped to separate fact from fancy (Honer et al, p. 70).

John Locke in spite of his empiricist stance admits that experience can only provide knowledge of qualities or characteristics of substance, but

could not apprehend the substance itself. This is the reason for surrendering that a "substance is what I know not about".

David Hume too confesses that neither *a priori* nor *a posteriori* means could apprehend knowledge of cause and effect and by extension inductive generalization. He argues that it is the attitude of the mind to think a cause is responsible for its effect.

If you have followed this journey of the problem of perception to the proposal that there are multiple ways of structuring experience, then, you are welcome to the theory of **relativism in epistemology.** Epistemological relativism is the claim that there can be no universal, objective knowledge of reality because all knowledge is relative to the conceptual system of either the individual or one's culture. In other words, epistemological relativism is the belief that the world has not one story, but many stories. (Lawhead, 2003:927). By implication of this topic being considered, no two persons can perceive an object in the same way for they are limited either by their personal differences or cultural differences. That is, perceptual experience is subject to individual mental or cultural dispositions.

This idea of relativity in the perception of reality is the central message of Nietzsche's idea of "perspectivism". According to him, we do not have any objective knowledge at all. The only reality we can know is the reality that is subjectively constructed by each individual. From this standpoint Nietzsche rejected the notion of public independent objects or fact. According to him; "No fact is precisely what is there, only interpretation is. We cannot establish any fact "*in itself*": perhaps it is folly to want to do such a thing" (1975:57).

There cannot be any non-interpreted "fact" or "truth", for everything we encounter through perception is seen from one perspective or another. This position has led to the development of varieties of relativist's idea of perception in contemporary epistemology e.g. feminist epistemology. These are pointers to the inadequacies of the empirical method of apprehending reality.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Discuss the basic argument of the empiricism of John Locke and David Hume

4.0   CONCLUSION

For this unit, the fundamental and basic idea of empiricism has been established. What needs to be said is that the position that it is only

through our sense organs that we may claim to have knowledge of things may be true at a certain level. However, there are situations where it is difficult, if not impossible to establish reliable or certain knowledge on the senses. It is on this conviction that the "perspectivism" of Nietzsche is relevant to the discourse of the multiple ways through which knowledge may be acquired.

5.0   SUMMARY

- For empiricism, knowledge relies on perception
- Empiricism employs the principle of regularity, resemblance and casualty to arrive at reliable knowledge of the external world.
- Empiricism is the basis of scientific realism or materialism
- Inductive arguments have premises that talk about the past and the conclusion about the present or the future.

6.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Attempt a contrast between the idea of empiricism and the method of inductive arguments.
2. What are the obvious limitations or shortcomings of empiricism?

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UNIT 3   SCIENTIFIC METHOD

CONTENTS

1.0   INTRODUCTION

For the present unit, the task concerns a philosophical examination of the epistemic foundation of the methodology of science. In other words, what this unit intends to do is to consider the various ways through which the scientific method thrives and how reliable the approach to understanding reality is. This unit will consider the various ways through which knowledge is derived via the scientific method and some of the methodological posers raised by some foremost philosophers such as Karl Raimund Popper.

2.0   INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOME

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

• have a firm grasp of the connection between epistemology and the methodology of science
• have a deep understanding of the scientific methodology
• realise that the methodology of science is not foolproof.

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

It should not be strange to discuss scientific epistemology as a separate theory of knowledge. While empiricists rely on observation and perception, just like the scientists, science goes further to approving the use of extra-perceptual tools in the acquisition of knowledge. The notion that the earth was at the centre of the universe is a product of relying on crude observation of the sun rising in the east and setting in the west. But with the aid of scientific tools and apparatus, it was discovered that it is the sun that is actually at the centre of the universe while the earth rotates round it.

3.1   The Nature of Scientific Methodology

It is important to understand that scientific knowledge is more than pure observation. The search for knowledge in the sciences is a combination of empirical and rational procedures (Honer *et al.* p.73). Honer, *et al.* listed scientific procedures as follows:

a.   Awareness and definition of a problem
b.   Observation and collection of relevant data
c.   Organization or classification of data
d.   Formulation of hypothesis
e.   Deductions from hypothesis
f.   Testing and verification of the hypothesis

In the opinion of many scholars, science and its procedure is the most reliable source of knowledge and truth, given its developmental studies (Velasquez, 2005: 403). The rejection of a piece of claim as knowledge always receives the appellation: unscientific.

To say a knowledge claim is unscientific is another way of saying, it is unverifiable or unrealistic. According to Velasquez, to be scientific is to be based on sensory observation. This has led to many theories of determining if a knowledge claim is scientific or not.

3.2   The Doctrine of Verificationism and its Critics

In order to demarcate the non-science from the science A.J. Ayer and the members of the Vienna cycle propose a theory of verificationism. According to this theory, a claim is knowledge or truth if it is verifiable in experience. In other words, if observation could lead us to determine its truth then it is knowledge. Rudolf Carnap who is also a member of this group proposed a theory of confirmation. In this sense, a claim is true if observation or other pieces of evidence could lead us to confirm a claim. So, the more the evidence, the truer the claim.

The **strong version** of verificationism states that a proposition is meaningful if conclusive grounds are provided for its observation. It does not consist merely in specifying possible, confirmable grounds for observation or empirically testing the observations so specified, but the actual certainty of such grounds. This means that all statements not referring to immediate datum of experience are considered nonsensical. The absurdity of this strong version is clear. For example, it means that statements expressing past events, and which cannot be verified now are also meaningless.

The **weak version** states that we need not insist on conclusive verification before meaningfulness is permitted in a proposition. A proposition is

therefore meaningful if we can specify possible present or future observations which can verify the statement. These possible observations need not be practically possible. They need only be conceptually, hypothetically and conceivably possible. For example, the statement "there exists a mountain of cheese in the moon" is meaningful if we can specify what observational process is needed to verify it.

Karl Popper thinks that addition of evidence does not make a claim true. For him, when a fact is used to support another fact, the ultimate result will be infinite regress or circular regress. He argues that every observation is theory laden and as such no fact is sacred to support another fact. He therefore proposes falsification as a way of determining truth. For Popper, "a real scientific theory is not just one that is confirmed by some observations, but one that survives repeated attempt to prove it false" (Velasquez, p. 409). Karl Popper (1959) in *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* emerged as a major critic of inductivism, which he saw as an essentially old-fashioned strategy. Popper replaced the classical observationalist-inductivist account of the scientific method with falsification as the criterion for distinguishing scientific theory from non-science. All inductive evidence is limited since we do not observe the universe at all times and in all places. We are not justified therefore in making a general rule from this observation of particulars.

According to Popper (1963), scientific theory should make predictions which can be tested, and a theory should be rejected if its predictions are shown not to be correct. He argued that science would best progress using deductive reasoning as its primary emphasis. Critical rationalism is a way turning inductive observation to deductive generalization. Popper gives the following example. Europeans for thousands of years had observed millions of white swans. Using inductive evidence, we could come up with the theory that all swans are white. However, exploration of Australasia introduced Europeans to black swans. Popper's point is that no matter how many observations are made which confirm a theory, there is always the possibility that a future observation could refute it. Induction cannot yield certainty.

The formidability of a claim against the attempt to falsify it makes it more reliable. Thomas Kuhn, an American philosopher of science, thinks that Popper's falsifiabilism does not address the actual way research is done in the sciences. For him, there is tradition of doing research in science, just like other disciplines. He avers that "the community of scientists accepts the basic theory, uses it as a guide to research and tends to hold onto it, even if some observations shows up that do not fit into the theory (Velasquez, p. 411). But as soon as many contrary observations to the theory create anomalies, old theories are revealed and new theory is generated. Under these circumstances, the community will adopt the new

theory, because it works better. This explains shift in paradigm from one period to another. Scientific knowledge therefore rather than be accumulations of theory, takes a leap in a revolutionary way. Kuhn with this argument develops a pragmatic method of thinking in the sciences.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

What are the general steps for the methodology of scientific explanation?

4.0   CONCLUSION

The agenda of this unit has been to uncover some of the basic or general ideas concerning the methodology of scientific discovery. The aim is to be able highlight the ways through which the scientists go about their business of making sense of the world via the observations of regularities for the sake of prediction. However, much as the scientific method is usually prized for its universal appeal and application, it needs to be said that some philosophers such as Karl Popper, Thomas Kuhn, to name a few, have succeeded to show that the scientific method is fallible and always in need of revision by scientists themselves.

5.0   SUMMARY

- The search for knowledge in the sciences is a combination of empirical and rational procedures
- Verification is the view that a claim or proposition passes as knowledge or truth if it is verifiable in experience
- For critics of science like Popper, a real scientific theory is not just one that is confirmed by some observations, but one that survives repeated attempt to prove it false.

6.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1.   In what ways do rationalism and empiricism inform the scientific method and discovery?
2.   How relevant is Popper's criticisms of the scientific method?

7.0   REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 4   SCEPTICISM

CONTENTS

1.0   INTRODUCTION

In this present unit we will consider the third theory of knowledge in epistemology – skepticism. As the previous units have shown, the idea that reason, for rationalism and the sense perception, for empiricism, are the basic sources of knowledge. Skepticism on the contrary, argues that it is not possible to have reliable knowledge that is absolutely true. One will think that skepticism is more or less a fallibilistic approach to knowing about reality but it can be seen as a theory of knowledge; though a negative one. In this unit, the strands of skepticism will be considered. Its disagreement with the rationalist and empiricist accounts will also be considered as attention then turns to some of the problems that also bedevil skepticism.

2.0   INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

This unit will help students:

- To understand the basic disagreements among the three popular epistemic theories
- To realize that there is a fallibilistic and cautious call by skepticism against the excesses of certainties.
- To have an understanding of the core doctrine of skepticism and its limitations.

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

Skepticism as an epistemological theory is originally associated with ancient Greek Sophists like Gorgias, Protagoras and Thracymachus. The term originates from the Greek word *skeptiko* which means to doubt.

Some scholars have asked whether skepticism is a theory of knowledge (like empiricism and rationalism) or not. This is because it has a negative position on possibility of knowledge.

3.1   The Idea of Skepticism

However, one can answer the above question in the affirmative though skepticism is the view that objective or absolute knowledge is impossible. Sceptics however, arrived at this view because they have their own conception of what knowledge should be. Their negativity only arose when they could not find knowledge claim that measured up to their standard. The foundation of skepticism can be said to emanate from early Greek philosophers like Heraclitus who argues that "everything is in a state of flux" (including knowledge). He sees change as a defining factor of reality. So, when Gorgias and Protagoras posit that nothing can be known for certain, by leveraging on the changing nature of reality. The phenomenon of change creates the dichotomy between appearance and reality.

Epistemology in the view of W. Hamlyn is seen as a set of defence – work against skepticism. It is in this vein that epistemologies of the rationalists and empiricists are described as sets of answers to skepticism.

3.2   Types of Skepticism

Skepticism started with the belief that there is no knowledge that is immune to doubt. But with time, it graduated to asserting the impossibility of knowledge and a denial of truth. This is why for Hamlyn "skepticism is the philosophical position that we cannot know anything or that, we can never be sure we have attained knowledge" (quoted by Bewaji, 2007, p. 254).

There are three types of skepticism: universal, limited and methodological skepticism. Universal skepticism denies any kind of knowledge. Nafelx Brandit (1965:374) captured this form of skepticism as saying "there is no proposition in which any person can reasonably place more confidence than its contrary."

Limited skepticism is slightly different in the sense that it does not believe in objective knowledge but does not frown at subjective knowledge. It admits that individuals can know something but the problem of justifying or communicating it to others is questionable. Just as Gorgias asserts "…even if it is known, it cannot be communicated to others". Both forms of skepticism question the sources of human knowledge or our ideas of rationality in general.

However, there is another form of skepticism that thinks that human sources of knowledge are reliable but we must question their products in order to arrive at something enduring. This is methodological skepticism that uses doubt as a method of arriving at objective knowledge. This is demonstrated by Rene Descartes in *Meditations on First Philosophy* and David Hume in his critique of causality and inductive knowledge.

Sceptics claim that human perception which is mostly the starting point of knowledge is unreliable, since our senses most of the time deceives us by giving us conflicting information about the external world.

3.2.1 Arguments against Perception

The epistemological problem over the reliability of perception as a medium to unravel the true nature of things is underscored by the various lapses involved in the process of perception. These lapses have been presented in different argument forms as question marks on the acceptability of perception as a reliable source of information about the external world. These arguments are:
i)   **The Time-Lag Argument**:
According to this argument, there is always a time lag, even if only very short, between an object being so and our perceiving it. It points out the possibility of a sudden absence of the physical or extra mental object (that causally stimulates the senses) even before the object can be said to be perceived. In other words, the external object of indirect awareness may cease to be present at the moment of perception. This possibility is put forward as a reason to support the position that the object of direct awareness is the one which is the mental representation of the indirect object that mediates between the subject and the physical object. This suggests a change in the object between the time before it is perceived and the time it is perceived. Therefore, there is the possibility of a change in the object we actually perceived and the object we claim to have perceived. That is, there may be a difference between the object perceived and what we claim to have perceived.

ii)   **The Argument from Illusion**
Illusion is any perceptual situation in which a physical object is actually perceived, but in which that object perceptually appears other than it really is. The central form of the argument from illusion is based on the fact that genuine perceptual experiences are qualitatively indistinguishable to the perceiver at the relevant time from illusory experiences (Dancy,1981:153). Examples of illusions are the instances of perceiving a stick as appearing bent when immersed in water or a white wall that appears blue under a blue light and so on (Hyslop, 1983:533).

The force of illusion is underscored when the perceiver is not at the moment of illusion aware that he or she is having an illusion. The argument from illusion is in most cases presented in the following order.

Firstly, when one is subject to an illusion, one is aware of a thing having a particular quality, say A, which the real public object supposedly being perceived does not actually have. Secondly, whether the quality A is perceived erroneously or relatively, there is something which actually possesses this quality. Thirdly, since the real object in question is, by hypothesis, not the quality that has been illusorily perceived, and then it is either that one is not aware of the public real-object after all or is indirectly aware of it. Fourthly, there is therefore, no non-arbitrary way of distinguishing from the point of view of the subject of an experience, between the phenomenology of perception and illusion.

iii)   **The Argument from Hallucination:**
The argument from hallucination does not differ much from the argument from illusion. The essence of this argument is to point out the possibility of having an experience (hallucination) whereby one, at the moment of this experience, cannot distinguish it from a veridical perceptual experience. Perhaps hallucinations may differ in the sense that objects of immediacy may not be playing the role of mediating between a public object and the subject. In other words, the content of experience in hallucinations may not admit of the presence of a public direct object at the moment of hallucinatory immediacy. So, at the moment of hallucination, there may be no public physical object, which causes the stimulation of the senses as a necessary condition for perception.

In summary, skepticism is a challenge on the reliability of human senses of perception and reason, it questions or places doubt on the nature of truth and the mode of justification to knowledge claim.

3.3   Critique of Skepticism

Methodological skepticism has been commended as contributing to the development of knowledge. But whole scale or universal skepticism has suffered backlashes.

First, there is the argument that the denial of knowledge has not obeyed the logical polar concepts in language. This argument points out that there are some concepts that can be understood in polar or pairs. For instance, the word 'up' is meaningful when one understands the opposite 'down'. In the same vein, go and come, good and bad, knowledge and ignorance are polar. If the sceptics argued that no one knows and everyone is ignorant, it becomes baffling how the word ignorance will be meaningful when knowledge does not exist.

Secondly, it has been argued that for every word there is always a paradigm case that it describes. If there is no case of knowledge then the word should not have existed. So, if the word knowledge exists then there is at least a paradigm case which the word describes.

Thirdly, the claim that no one can know is inconsistent and seems contradictory. Since to claim that no one knows anything is an affirmation that the sceptics know that no one knows, it follows that the sceptics absolutely know that no one knows anything is true.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Of the three types of skepticism, which is the most beneficial for the progress of knowledge and why?

4.0   CONCLUSION

The main idea of skepticism is that it is not possible to have knowledge in a way that doubt or error may be ruled out. Skepticism does not just arrive at this verdict via mere wishful thinking or attempts to simply show that the human intellect is defective primordially. It employs the time-lag argument, the argument from illusion and the hallucination argument to establish its stake that it is not possible to have unquestionable knowledge.

5.0   SUMMARY

- Skepticism as an epistemological position is originally associated with ancient Greek Sophists like Gorgias, Protagoras and Thracymachus
- There are three types of skepticism: universal, limited and methodological skepticism.
- Methodological skepticism has been commended as contributing to the development of knowledge.

6.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1.   What is the basic difference between limited and universal skepticism?
2.   Mention and discuss the versions of skepticism of the following scholars: Thracymachus, Protagoras, Georgias, Rene Descartes, David Hume.

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MODULE 3   NATURE OF TRUTH

Unit 1   Rationalism
Unit 2   Empiricism
Unit 3   Scientific Method of knowing
Unit 4   Skepticism

UNIT 1   AN   EXPOSITION   OF   THE   TRADITIONAL CONCEPTIONS OF TRUTH

CONTENTS

1.0   Introduction
2.0   Intended Learning Outcomes
3.0   Main Content
         3.1   An Exposition of the Traditional Conceptions of Truth
4.0   Conclusion
5.0   Summary
6.0   Tutor-Marked Assignment
7.0   References/Further Reading

1.0   INTRODUCTION

The discourse in this unit is an exposition on the nature of truth, its multifaceted dimensions, different perspectives to truth, and the arduous challenge of distinguishing truth from falsehood. It begins by tracing the traditional understanding of truth, how the understanding of truth has evolved among scholars over time, and the challenge at arriving at epistemological truth.

2.0   INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

- understand the nature of truth
- explain the different perspectives to truth
- describe a brief historical overview of the development of the concept of truth
- identify the challenge of attaining the truth.

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   An Exposition of the Traditional Conceptions of Truth

It is often taken for granted that we understand what truth is based on our daily use of the term, but a critical analysis of what truth is, reveals it to be a very complex concept whose nature has remained elusive to philosophers. The notion of truth is a central issue in epistemology. This is because epistemology deals with knowledge, and knowledge is only knowledge if it is true as it qualifies as one of the basic conditions for knowledge. The quest for certitude of knowledge is an attempt to establish beyond doubt (scepticism), the truth of our epistemic claim (Jimoh, 2017:121). The principal issue here is: what is truth? What does it mean for a claim to be described as true? What are the conditions of truth?

Truth is a characteristic of propositions or beliefs. Every civilization and philosophical *epoche* has devoted a considerable concern for the concept of truth. In the biblical period, Pilate the king asked Jesus, "what is truth?" Jesus responded that "I am the truth…" thereby suggesting a metaphorical definition of truth. During the ancient period of philosophy, the search for truth preoccupied the philosophies of Plato, Descartes, Aristotle and the Sophists. Truth was seen as an ingredient of knowledge that confers certainty on epistemic claims. In today's civilization, it has become a tool to discern between information that can pass as a body of genuine knowledge (Orangun, 2001:71). The importance of this concept cannot be overemphasized in epistemic theorizing.

Plato sees truth as something that exists outside the human mind, in a form that is immutable and eternal. For Aristotle, truth exists in the world of experience, which is also external to human beings. Rene Descartes finds truth in clear and distinct ideas in the mind of human beings (Ruch, 1997:175). Truth for him, comes from within rather than from outside human beings.

E. Kehinde opines that truth generally conveys a sense of objectivity and attainment of a standard (2000:80). This implies that truth in all situations connotes what ought to be as it captures reality the way it is. It is not subjected to human whims and caprices and is free from any form of error. According to Omeregbe (2018: 39) it cannot be invented; it can only be discovered by the human mind. Paul Horwich describes truth as "the quality of those propositions that accord with reality, specifying what is in fact the case" (1999:929). He views truth as a property possessed by propositions. In similar vein, E.J. Lowe views truth as a property expressed by a truth predicate 'is true'. However, there are theories of truth which support the above views and they shall be discussed later.

The question of truth permeates every discourse be it science, religion, mathematics, philosophy, politics, economics, and history. The question of truth lies at the heart of most epistemological problems. It is doubtful if the concept of belief, knowledge and justification can be analyzed or explained without making a recourse to answer the question ''what is truth?'' To determine the soundness or acceptability of our belief, we must consider truth (Velasquez, p.44).

In most everyday discourse the nature of truth is taken for granted. Many accept different claims to truth depending on how they feel about the claim. For instance, the claim ''I love you till death'' is mostly not given a serious or deep consideration during solemnization of marriage. Such pronouncements are taken as given and it requires no probing. During oath-taking in political and court settings 'I shall say the truth and nothing but the truth' is always uttered by actors in public service yet one will wonder at the end of their service whether they actually lived up to this claim. The statement 'of course I am telling you the truth' in everyday discussion can only be sustained if nobody asked the question, 'what is truth?'

The question of truth historically, has been answered in different ways. This is so because truth is not seen as a homogenous concept. There is moral truth just as there is scientific truth. Religious truth seems not to be the same with philosophical truth. However, in spite of these diverse ways of looking at truth, what is obvious is that truth stands contrary to falsity. A religious truth may not be the same with philosophical truth, but a religious truth is opposed to a religious falsehood.

A metaphorical story is told of the relationship between truth and lie:
The Truth and the Lie meet on the road one day. The Lie says to the Truth: *"It's a marvelous day today"!* The Truth looks up to the skies and sighs, for the day was truly beautiful. They walk together for a while, until they reach a beautiful well. The Lie tells the Truth: "The water in the well is very nice, let's take a swim together!" The Truth, once again suspicious, tests the water and discovers that it indeed, is very nice. They undress and start the bathe. Suddenly, the Lie jumps out of the well, puts on the clothes of the Truth and runs off towards a nearby village. The furious Truth leaps out of the well and runs to find the Lie and get her clothes back. The Villagers, seeing the Naked Truth, are horrified and look away with contempt and rage. The poor Truth returned to the well and disappeared, forever hiding her shame. And since that day, the lie travels the world, clothed as the Truth (https://storytelling.co.za/thenakedtruthandlie).

The philosophical import of the above story is the notion of truth as naked or uncovered for those who apprehend it. That the lie is now walking in the clothes of the truth portends a problem of differentiating between the

real truth and the disguised lie in truth clothes. So, one can say that there is a thin demarcation between lie and truth. It takes personal experience to be able to identify what is what. The idea that the truth is now hiding in the well suggests the belief that to find or grasp the truth one must search deeper. The lie is on the street, easy to grasp but the truth to be found requires commitment and extra effort.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

What do you understand by the term, "truth"?

4.0 CONCLUSION

It is obvious that there is a sense in which the subject of truth seems elusive. As such, many give up hope of ever attaining the truth. Thus, their recommendation is one of perpetual skepticism and to give up all hope of ever arriving at the truth. While this attitude has its benefit within certain contexts, truth is not altogether impossible. It may prove difficult, but there is always the possibility of arriving at the truth. Hence the need to continually keep digging deep till it is arrived at.

5.0 SUMMARY

- Truth is a common place word but its meaning goes deeper than its everyday usage
- Truth has different understanding and application in different contexts
- There is no unanimous definition of truth because of its multifaceted nature
- Its existence and usefulness has been a debate from centuries to the present day
- Arriving at the truth is a herculean task but it is not altogether impossible

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. discuss the nature of truth as understood in two fields of study
2. outline a brief historical overview of the concept of truth.

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UNIT 2   CLASSICAL THEORIES OF TRUTH

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          3.2   Coherence Theory of Truth
          3.3   Pragmatic Theory of Truth
          3.4   Semantic Theory of Truth
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1.0   INTRODUCTION

This unit discusses the classical theories of truth, viz. correspondence, coherence, pragmatic and semantic theories of truth. As we shall see, despite the shortcomings of these theories, they all make unique contributions to the goal of understanding the nature of truth in different perspectives.

2.0   INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

•   identify and explain the classical theories of truth
•   evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the classical theories of truth
•   understand that there are different ways of determining if a claim is true.

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   Correspondence Theory of Truth

Correspondence theory is one of the classical theories of truth. It asserts that truth is an agreement between what is said or believed and fact. According to Bertrand Russell, there are facts external to us, when our beliefs correspond with these facts, then truth is served (Velasquez, 2005:445). Fadahumsi (1997:42) defines it as a correspondence of thoughts with something outside thoughts. It means that there is a thought of a claimant which attempts to describe a reality outside the claimant, successful description of this reality is truth while a failed or incorrect

description is falsity. A statement like, "there is a cat on the roof" is only true if there is indeed a cat on the roof.

This is the most natural and widely held notion of truth. It defines truth as correspondence between human judgment and facts. It holds that any declarative statement or preposition is true, if what it asserts is exactly what is the case. Thus, the proposition "The table in my study is black" is true only if there is in fact a black table in my study. According to Kolawole Owolabi (2000:60), the correspondence theory conceives truth as basically an affair between judgments and external realities. That the truth of any proposition is established when there is agreement between the position made and the reality. Alternatively, this theory according to Robert Audi (2011:287) is the notion that the truth of our belief is not mind dependent. Lemos avers that the correspondence theory of truth basically makes two claims:

(i)   A proposition is true if and only if it corresponds to the facts or A proposition is false if an only if it fails to correspond with facts. (Lemos, 2002:9).

In spite of the common sense approach of the correspondence theory, it is not without some limitations. For instance, it does not help us to resolve questions of truth in those fields where there are no "facts" (Honer,1999: 60).

According to Woozley (1978:126), "It gives consideration only to empirical statements or beliefs about empirical facts neglecting other forms of beliefs". The implication is that it does not accommodate non-empirical belief. The proposition such as God is Omnipotent cannot be adequately applied to such a theory. Likewise, how can we demonstrate the principle of love or justice as true when they are not objects or observable events?

The correspondence theory also depends on perception to justify claims. But we know the sceptics position on the problem of perception. It follows that this theory has not met the challenge of skepticism which is very germane in epistemic theorizing. Correspondence theory also assumes too much. It seems to assume that we know not only our correspondence of things, but also facts about the world – i.e. how the world is (Velasquez, p. 451). Is our experience of the world not also the facts? Is there a fact that is not experienced? This is where Berkeley's claim of "to be is to be perceived" becomes a critique of truth as correspondence between thought and fact. Since the notion of what is a fact has not been settled, it is difficult to understand the theory.

3.2   Coherence Theory of Truth

Coherence theory of truth is the view that truth is a property exhibited by a related group of consistent propositions (Honer, p. 61). The theory recognizes that there are different areas of knowledge and as such truth must be understood within each area of knowledge. For instance, critique of truth in mathematics should not be measured with truth in history or politics. In other words, there is coherence in mathematics just as there is in politics and the sciences. So, a particular proposition is true if it coheres with other propositions within the same system. The coherence theory assumed a world of forms like the Platonic world where ideas are connected to each other by necessary relations which reason can detect. His theory, viewed as an alternative to the correspondence theory, holds that a proposition is true if it is a member of a coherent set. It views truth as a relation between judgement and the system to which it belongs. Thus, it considers a proposition to be true if it is consistent with, or coheres with other groups of propositions. It is in this sense that Bonjour (1999:153) "claims propositions to be true if they stand in suitable strong relation of coherence to other beliefs in such a way that, a believers' total system of beliefs forms a perfect coherent system. This theory holds that the truth or falsehood of a proposition is dependent on whether or not it coheres with the system it belongs to. This theory of truth is presented and defended by idealists such as Francis H., Bradley, Brand Blanshard and Bernard Bosanquet. These idealists assume that beliefs are organized in a systematic arrangement which must be complete and comprehensive.
In science, pre-eminence is giving to theories that are coherent with accepted judgments. Brand Blanchard describes coherence as "agreement between judgments" (Velasquez, p. 450).

Just like correspondence theory, coherence hinged on the idea of consistency. While correspondence talks about consistency of thought with fact, coherence espouses consistency of thought with thoughts. However, the problem with consistency of thought with thoughts is the status of the starting or first thought. Since every system will start with a thought, how can we determine the status of the first thought? Definitely not through coherence.

Coherence will therefore need to rely on correspondence to determine the status of the first judgment in any system. One can also argue that coherence has not been able to meet the challenge of skepticism, because it relies on relative system. If every system has to determine its own truth, it follows that conflicting truths from different systems are irresolvable because there is no universal system that can measure them.

3.3   Pragmatic Theory of Truth

Due to the obvious weaknesses of both coherence and correspondence theories, pragmatic theorists veered from consistency to usefulness. It is believed that the truth of a belief depends on its outcome or implication. William James in his book *A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking* clearly distinguishes the pragmatic theory from other theories of truth. According to William James (1948:170) "The true is only the expedient in the long run and on the whole course". Chisholm defines the pragmatic theory of truth as the theory which accepts that a belief is true if and only if the belief has practical implications. (1987:97).

Pragmatism attempts to avoid the mistakes of past theories by focusing on the result of claims or beliefs rather than their logical structures. Pragmatists stance is that whatever works is what is true (Honer, 62). According to William James, "truth is made in the same way wealth, health and money is made". Human beings are in this sense the producers of truth. Truth is not something external to human beings, but something shaded by human thought. A claim is true because we find it good to believe.

One of the limitations of the pragmatic theory of truth is the tendency to approve accidental claims that work. It has been argued that there is no necessary connection between what is ultimately true, on the one hand and what just happens to work on the other hand (Honer, p. 83).

According to Velasquez, pragmatism project displays a relative conception of truth because what works today might not work tomorrow. And if workability is the criterion of truth, it follows that a claim might be true today but false tomorrow (Velasquez, p. 460).

3.4   Semantic Theory of Truth

This theory of truth, developed Alfred Tarski adopts a meta-language that claims and views truth as a property of sentences. Tarski's theory of truth demands that any satisfactory account of truth must meet the following conditions:
i.   The material adequacy condition
ii.   The formally correct condition.

The material adequacy condition is also known as "Convention T" and it holds that any viable theory of truth must entail, for every sentence "P" a sentence of the following form, known as form "T". "P" is true if and only if, P. For example, "Snow is white" is true if and only if snow is white. The second condition calls for a logically flawless process (which implies consistency) that sets out the theory of truth. (Jimoh 2017:133)

Tarski considers sentences as truth bearers and by sentence; he means classes of inscriptions with similar forms. Thus, the illustration, snow is white is true if and only if snow is white. "Snow is white" appears twice in the sentence above. The first is in quotation marks and the second without quotation marks. According to the semantic theory, the first "Snow is white" is the name of the sentence, while the second snow is white, is the sentence itself. This implies that a sentence is used to describe a state of affairs in the world, while it is also used as a name to say that it is true (Tarski, 1944:341-376).

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Write short notes on the classical theories of truth.

4.0   CONCLUSION

Judging from the strengths and weaknesses of these classical theories of truth, a balanced approach at analyzing them from a holistic perspective will not treat them as contraries but complementariness. As such, each theory represents a perspective of truth that when taken together, gives us a fuller perspective and understanding of truth.

5.0   SUMMARY

- There are four classical theories of truth- correspondence, coherence, pragmatic, and semantic.
- Coherence theory of truth thrives on the agreement between what is said or believed and the fact.
- Coherence theory of truth is the view that truth is property exhibited by a related group of consistent propositions.
- Pragmatic theory of truth avers truth is that which is useful and works.
- The Semantic theory of truth demands that any satisfactory account of truth must meet the material accuracy condition and the formally correct condition.
- Theories of truth are not necessarily contraries but complementaries.

6.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1.   What theory of truth do you think best represents the nature of truth?
2.   Can you say that Coherence theory is able to meet the objections against Correspondence?
3.   Semantic theory seems to portray an idea of coherence. Discuss.

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UNIT 3   POSTMODERNISM AND TRUTH

CONTENTS

1.0   Introduction
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        3.2   Richard Rorty's Postmodern Account of Truth
4.0   Conclusion
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1.0   INTRODUCTION

This unit discusses the ideologies that constitute the postmodern attitude towards truth, which is predominantly one of skepticism, subjectivism and relativism. In doing this, attention will be paid to the thoughts of Jean-Francois Lyotard and Richard Rorty on truth.

2.0   INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

- understand the post-modern approach to truth
- distinguish between the post-modern and traditional approaches to truth
- identify and discuss post-modern philosophy and philosophers on truth

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   Post-Modernism and Truth

Post modernism is one of the most significant cultural, philosophical, and artistic movements of our contemporary age. It is a broad movement that traces its origin to the mid late 20th Century across almost all fields of inquiry – philosophy, arts, architecture etc. marking a departure from modernism. Modernism is both a philosophical cum art movement that was birthed during the enlightenment of the late 19th and early 20th century, and could be said to be the maturity of the modern era of philosophy culminating in the enlightenment. As a movement, it reflected the desire for the creation of new forms of art, philosophy and social organization which was reflected in the emergence of the industrial revolution.

According to Jimoh (2017:191), philosophically, post modernism is eclectic and makes elusive criticism and analysis of Western Philosophy, heavily influenced by phenomenology, structuralism, and existentialism, as espoused by Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger and to some degree, Ludwig Wittgenstein. As a 20th century movement, it is characterized by an attitude of skepticism, subjectivism, relativism, a general suspicion of reason, and an acute sensitivity to the role of ideology in asserting and maintaining political and economic power (Duignan, 2020). Postmodernism as well is opposed to epistemic certainty and the stability of meaning (Aylesworth, 2015).

Post modernism criticized and denies the modernist position on the possibility of an objective knowledge or truth. It views knowledge or truth as a conceptual construct, made from the linguistic and other memory-making resources of specific culture. Such post-modernist philosophers who include Richard Rorty, Thomas Kuhn, Paul Feyerabend, Jacques Derrida, Michael Foucault, Jean Francois Lyotard, JeanBaudrillard are opposed to transcendental arguments and definite philosophical standpoints.

The postmodernism period witnessed the denial of the existence of truth. In spite of the development in science, scientific truth was not spared. Thomas Kuhn in his scientific theory avers that there is no more objective theory (truth) in science because over time scientific theories undergo changes and amendments. So, there is no genuine reason for arguing that a new theory that works is truer or better than old ones (Akande, 2020). Postmodernist berated the idea of truth from linguistic perspective. The idea of truth is relative to every conceptual scheme. For Foucault, truth is relative and can be understood through a social process called discourse. In the same vein, James Lyotard argues that universal truth is unattainable since there are different micro-narratives which are basis for difference and plurality.

1.1   Jean-Francois Lyotard on Truth:

Due to his uncompromising standpoint about modernist thoughts and often straw-man conception of "postmodernism", it has been too easy to dismiss the philosophy of Jean-François Lyotard as intellectually lightweight. This is should not have been the case, because his work on the concept of "differend" can make a serious contribution to the understanding of certain troubling contemporary social and political phenomena. In particular, a look back at Lyotard's work on the differend may help us to get our bearings in a socio-political climate that has been dubbed "post-truth" (McLennan, 2018: 1).

The idea of Lyotard's theory of truth can be situated in the idea of "differend." "Differend", from the French "différend", in general names a dispute or a lack of agreement (McLennan, 2018). The word also carries a special sense, or rather three special senses, in Lyotard's usage. According to Gérald Sfez's unpacking, a differend occurs when two or more parties "do not speak the same language at all and do not share even a minimum of common ground which a third party would be able to exploit in order to ensure that each party makes the effort to put herself in the place of the other" (Sfez, 2007: 12). Whenever there is a differend in Lyotard's sense, the parties do not share *une raison commune* ("a common reason or rationale"); it is as though there were no universal logic and no "language in general" that they could appeal to in order to resolve their conflict (Sfez 2007: 12). Rather, in a situation of differend the parties speak radically heterogeneous languages (Sfez 2007: 12). But this means that there are cases when "there will be no means of going to meet the other without bringing her to oneself" (Sfez 2007: 12). In such cases, any instance of translation from one idiom to the other would automatically beg the question; descriptively speaking it would amount to at least a partial failure, and normatively speaking it would constitute a betrayal. This is a derivation from Lyotard's conviction that:

As distinguished from a litigation, a differend would be a case of conflict, between (at least) two parties, that cannot be equitably resolved for lack of a rule of judgment applicable to both arguments. One side's legitimacy does not imply the other's lack of legitimacy (Lyotard, 1988: xi).

The differend is a pragmatic misfire, not a logical contradiction. Since the parties do not share the same idiom, both of them might conceivably be right, despite their being in conflict (Sfez 2007: 16). Lyotard claims that "applying a single rule of judgment to both in order to settle their differend as though it were merely a litigation would wrong (at least) one of them (and both of them if neither side admits this rule)" (Lyotard, 1988: xi). So the implication is that the idea of truth is not limited to either of the parties but to something that is beyond them. In other words, his account of truth has an underpinning in the pragmatic contexts of the parties that make some claim concerning the world.

1.2   Richard Rorty's Postmodern Account of Truth

American philosopher Richard Rorty (probably) the most influential advocate of post modernism and contextualism is noted for his critique of the modern notion of philosophy as a quasi- scientific enterprise aimed at certainty and objective truth.

In his famous publication *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature,* he attacks the traditional notion of epistemology and its attempt in setting forth the

criterion for knowing how things really are. Contrary to the traditional view which sees the mind as a mirror that reflects reality or the external world. According to Lawhead, (2002:578) Rorty opposes traditional philosophy with four theses:

i.   The mind does not mirror nature
ii.   That statements are simply tools for accomplishing certain tasks
iii.   An ideal is true if it works
iv.   There are no final laws either in philosophy or life.

Against Foundationalism that holds that all knowledge can be grounded or justified on basic beliefs that are self-justifying and self-evident, Rorty held that no statement is more basic than the other and that no other statement is ever justified "finally" but only relative to some circumscribed and contextually determined set of additional statement (Duignan, 2021).

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

What is the post-modern understanding of truth?

4.0   CONCLUSION

Attention has been given to the idea of truth from the traditional and postmodern angles. It is clear that the main discrepancy between the traditional and postmodern approaches is that context matters when assigning truth-values to propositions. What is true in one context may not be the case in another. For many postmodernists truth is manufactured either from a cultural or individual perspective.

5.0   SUMMARY

•   The Post-modern understanding of truth takes a skeptical stance towards the possibility of objective and certain truth.
•   Post-modernism advocates for truth as subjective and relative.
•   The idea of Lyotard's theory of truth can be situated in the idea of "differend" which in general names a dispute or a lack of agreement among parties that do not share a common rationale
•   Richard Rorty's Postmodern account of truth considers truth primarily in relative terms and only to be understood within the context that it occurs.

6.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1.   Do you think Postmodernism position is consistent given their claim that no standpoint is true?

2.   Distinguish between the traditional and post-modern account of truth.
3.   Discuss two post-modernist philosophers on their conception of truth.

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UNIT 4   THE PROBLEM OF TRUTH

CONTENTS

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      3.2   Two Senses of justification
      3.3   Fallibilism
            3.3.1 Factors of Fallibilism
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1.0   INTRODUCTION

This unit brings to focus the problem of truth which can be analyzed vis-à-vis the idea of justification and its necessity in epistemic discourse. The question what is truth is problematic because of the need to justify it as a condition of knowledge. The concept of justification and truth are integral part of understanding knowledge.

2.0   INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

*   understands the problematic nature of justifying truth
*   understands the relationship between truth and justification.
*   discuss the two fundamental ways of justifying truth and knowledge
*   understands the difference between skeptical claim to truth as against fallibilist claim to truth.

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   Understanding the Concept of Justification

Any discussion on the nature of knowledge must adopt a theory of truth and a theory of justification. Truth is sometimes substituted for knowledge. Where a claim to truth is made by an epistemic agent, it is normally counted that the agent knows. In an examination where multiple choice questions are asked, a student that get majority of the questions correct is commonly tagged knowledgeable. However, problem may come when the student is asked to justify how he/she arrived at the true

claims. It is for this reason the problem of justifying truth is seen as the bane of epistemology.

The term justification in epistemology as a condition for knowledge was first used by Edmund Gettier when he appropriated the thoughts of Socrates, Ayer and Chisholm. Socrates asserts that "an account of truth is necessary for knowledge, A.J. Ayer underscores the interpretation of "the right to be sure" while Chisholm placed premium on "evidence". However, there is no consensus on what should constitute justification. There is a new debate that bothers on whether the term justification should be substituted with reasonableness or virtue or whether propositions should be assessed on truth or nearness to the truth (Pinto, 2001:25). However, justification is about the bases or underlying reason(s) for knowledge claim. In the modern period of philosophy, the existing schools of epistemology developed foundationalism as a theory of justification. Foundationalism is supported by both empiricists and rationalist's schools of thought. The essence of demanding for justification in epistemology is to provide explanation or evidence why a true claim should be accepted. It is assumed that justification will hold firm a true claim and prevent it from unnecessary biases and from being a flimsy claim.

3.2   Two Senses of Justification

There are two ways of offering support for truth claims, the first is to offer external support and the second is to offer internal support. This is referred to as externalism and internalism of justification. There are various theories of justification which can either be externalist or internalist depending on the schools of thought a philosopher belongs to. This mode of justification came to light in the aftermath of Gettier's analysis of justified true belief (JTB). Gettier's analysis put the naturalism of JTB account into doubt. However, some philosophers argued that Gettier's critique of JTB only affects the external mode of justification and that a construction of internal mode of justification can escape this blow.

It is pertinent to mention that externalism and internalism mode applies to different areas of philosophy but when mentioned in epistemology, it is called epistemic externalism and internalism. Internalists aver that justification is achieved by factors that are internal to an epistemic agent. But for externalists it is determined by factors or traits external to an epistemic agent. Internalism takes the challenge of skepticism as important, it is for this reason, it sees the essence of justification as being internally aware of reasons that support a claim. Externalism on the other hand is at home with external factors of justification as long as this factors produce truth.

There are two senses in which we can speak of justification (1) the justification of the person who is the epistemic agent and (2) the justification of a belief. In the first sense the issue is what does it take for a person to be justified in believing a proposition and the second sense concerns the property of a belief either in-itself or in the relation of a belief with other beliefs. So, justification involves a believer's internal or direct awareness of his/her evidence and the property of his/her belief. The conclusion we want to draw here is that the behaviors of epistemic agents in gathering or releasing information which serve either as premises has impact on the justification of an epistemic agent in-spite of the truth of his/her belief. A belief may be justified by logical entailment but not the believer. In justifying the agent that the basis of the conclusion is appropriately or correctly arrived at we want to see the efforts he/she put. We want to be sure that the premises are not product of hearsay, rumor, plagiarism or unreflective assumptions.

For a person to be justified in believing a proposition it is not enough for the belief to be true the person must also have a link with the belief; this link is not just introspective but also behaviouristic. This is so because it is the "external behavioural actions which are the output of the processed inputs of epistemic belief" (Ojong, 2010:33-34). We must act in accordance with what we belief. In considering behavior of the agent one cannot but considered the responsibility towards ones belief and the evidence, which of course is a moral consideration.

3.3   Fallibilism

It is the view that no knowledge or truth can be justified or defined conclusively. Fallibilism recognizes human inadequacies in the area of cognition and perception of reality.Fallibilism have the same starting point like the sceptists but they are nevertheless different. While sceptism denies the possibility of knowledge based on human frailties, it still affirms that we sometimes possess the ability to reason infallibily. (Hetherington, IEP) In this wise, fallibilismis not the belief that all human beings are fallible all the time, its main thesis is that there is always a possibility of error in every claim which is contrary to the claim that all claims are actually false. Fallibilism does not recognize the absolute blanket doubt the sophists placed on all claims to knowledge but it advocate rational doubt on particular or specific claim to knowledge.

3.3.1 Factors of Fallibility

Fallibilists identify different sources of human fallible knowledge. Stephen Hetherington listed some as follows:

The first is misusing of evidence: An example of misusing evidence can be seen in Gettiers counterexamples, where the fact of Jones driving a Ford car is used as a foundation to establishthat Jones owns a Ford car. Smith had thought that being in possession of a car most of the time is an evidence for ownership; which is not always correct.

The second source of fallibility is unreliable human senses. Many of us are aware of the problem of perception. We sometimes think that seeing is knowing and that our senses are windows to assess, reality the way it is. A critically analysis has shown that human senses are at times deceptive through long sightedness, short sightedness, hallucination, illusion etc.

Thirdly unreliable memory can be a bane to accurate knowledge. Information are not preserved exactly the way they entered human memory. Human being only most of the time remember in parts rather than holistically. There are also claims of false memory, where the event recalled never actually happened.

Fourthly fallacious reasoning - people at times argued in a way that betrayed their emotions or by ignoring the facts on the ground. Various fallacies both formal and informal are attempts to address this.

The fifth impediment to infallible knowledge or truth is what Hetherington called intelligence limitations. In this case, the dexterity of the human brain to explore the world or to infer unknown from the known, notwithstanding, it still has its own limitations. Intelligent people also make errors that are unexpected. People do argue that it is easier for others to see your mistakes than you do.

The sixth problem is representational limitations. This was first expressed by Gorgias in his argument that"nothing exists, if anything exists, it cannot be known, if it is known it cannot be communicated to others". The impossibility of communicating what is known is mostly a problem of language. Language is the use of words and symbols to represent reality. However, what is communicated at times is not what one intended or captured. So, the inadequacy of descriptive resources like language may hinder knowledge transmission especially propositional knowledge which is in the purview of epistemology.

The last which he called situational limitations concerns the psychological status of epistemic agents, at the time investigation and dissemination of information is done. For him, "it is not uncommon for people to make mistakes of fact because they have biases or prejudices that impede their ability to perceive or represent or reflect accurately upon those facts" Francis Bacon earlier pointed out in his *Novum Organum*, that these

biases are idols of the mind that can impede development of scientific knowledge.

Sources of fallibilism:-
1.   Rene Descartes's demon argument
2.   David Hume on causality

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

What is Justification?

4.0   CONCLUSION

In this unit we discussed basically the problems of truth and justification. In doing this firstly we come to apprehend that the problem of true knowledge have been a lingering and reoccurring topic in epistemological discuss and quest which gave birth to the discuss of justification of truth. This understanding led us into the historical process of justification as from Socrates to Gettiers. We also discussed the prominence of external and internal supports of truth claims in the process of justification which are also called "epistemic Internalism and Externalism." This launched us in good standing towards discussing the two senses of justification – justification through the epistemic agent and the justification of a belief. In further elaboration we arrived at understanding the value of introspective and behavioural connections towards proving the validity of a claim or truth as this is paramount in the justification process, we affirmed that none is greater than the other as both are of equal importance. Finally, we discussed in this unit the problem of justification as a process which is inconclusive, resting on the inadequacy of the human intellect and reasoning. The genesis of this theory is called Fallibilism. In conclusion, we outlined explanatorily the factors or sources of human fallibility as detailed by Stephen Hetherington.

5.0   SUMMARY

- The concept justification is a requisite condition for knowledge validity. However, since truth is the goal of knowledge to justify truth is an integral goal of epistemology.
- Justification as a valid claim is supported in two ways –external and internal, preferably called epistemic externalism and internalism of justification. Epistemologically, externalism centers on traits and factors external to an epistemic agent which produces truth, while internalism contends with mental access to reasons that supports a claim.

- Resting on the foregoing, justification is also furthered in two senses –1. Justification of the believer and 2. Justification of the belief.

The first sense questions a person's justifiability in believing a proposition, that is, the believer's internal direct awareness of evidence. The second sense hits on the property of belief in itself or in relation to other belief.

- Justification is both introspective and behaviouristic, none greater than the other and both necessary for the justifiability of a claim or truth.
- Relating to justification of truth or knowledge, fallibilism recognizes human inadequacy, thereby defining the process of justification as inconclusive.
- Fallibilism is distinct from skepticism and sophistry, since it advocates for rational doubt on particular or specific claims to knowledge.
- Fallibilism thrives on the inadequacy of human intellects. Stephen Hetherington identified seven of these sources.
    i.   The mis-use of evidence.
    ii.   The unreliability of human senses.
    iii.   The unreliability of memory to accurate knowledge
    iv.   Human fallacious reasoning
    v.   Intelligence limitations
    vi.   Representational limitations
    vii.   Situational limitations

6.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1.   An epistemic agent cannot be separated from his/her belief or claims. Discuss?
2.   What is the relationship between truth and justification?
3.   In what way do you think fallibilism is better than skepticism?

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MODULE 4   PROBLEM OF OTHER MIND

Unit 1   Nature of mind
Unit 2   Functions of the mind
Unit 3   Solipsism
Unit 4   Testimony

UNIT 1   NATURE OF MIND

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2.0   Summary
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4.0   References/Further Reading

1.0   INTRODUCTION

The problem of other minds is an offshore of Descartes meditation. Descartes arrived at his indubitable knowledge that "I think, therefore I am". One can therefore unmistakably attribute modern day solipsism to a Cartesian origin. Philosophers pointed out that thinking can only establish the existence of oneself rather than the existence of other human beings. However, Descartes opines that an observation of other human beings who behave the same way as one can lead us into concluding that they also possess Minds. Since one knows that those behaviours are the result of a motivating mind. In other words, one has to appeal to analogical argument in inferring that others are minded. Though, Wittgenstein argues that privacy of experience is unthinkable since experience and language are public in nature. A solipsist requires a language to think and affirm his solipsistic thoughts. Language is an irreducibly public form of life that is encountered in specifically social contexts.

2.0   INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

•   understand the nature of the mind
•   grapple with the challenges of defining the mind, its functions, and processes

- Be Acquainted with theories of mind and their epistemic implications.

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

The problem of other minds is an offshoot of Descartes meditation. Descartes arrived at his indubitable claim that "I think, therefore I am" which put the knowledge of the self as the foundation of all knowledge. One can therefore unmistakably attribute modern day solipsism to Cartesian origin. This rationalist philosopher pointed out that thinking can only establish the existence of oneself rather than the existence of other human beings. However, Descartes opines that an observation of other human beings who behave the same way as oneself can lead us into concluding that they also possess Minds. Since one knows that those behaviours are the result of a motivating mind. In other words, one has to appeal to analogical argument in informing that others are minded. Though, Wittgenstein argues that privacy of experience is unthinkable since experience and language are public in nature. A solipsist requires a language to think and affirm his solipsistic thoughts. For him, language is an irreducibly public form of life that is encountered in specifically social contexts.

In the Christo-Jewish tradition the mind is described as the breath of god that makes the human body come alive. Since the mind is a part of god its existence is guaranteed independent of the death of the body'' (Graham, 1993:15). The mind in Descartes idea is a thinking non-extended thing that though, is in a body but can survive the demise of the body.

It was Rene Descartes a French philosopher and the father of modern rationalism, that brought to fore, the role of the mind and the inadequacies of the senses in the attempt to arrive at indubitable knowledge in his famous "Meditations". Descartes believes that "whatever is as clear and distinct as the mind's consciousness of itself must be true".

The suggestion on the role of the mind, from Socrates woke Theaetetus up to the realization that, the attempt to reason or reflect on object of perception can produce either true judgment or false judgment. So, he defined knowledge again as "True judgment" (187b). For him, if a man judges correctly a state of affairs either of the past, the present or the future then he knows. For John Locke, the minds is tabula rasa meaning a blank slate in which sense perception ingrains its experiences

For Descartes the essential property of a mind is thinking and in thinking, the mind wills, remembers, doubts, memorise. It is a reflective aspect of the human person. The mind is a non-extended substance whose activities consist in thinking (Popkin, p. 151). It is the store house and factory of

ideas. Notwithstanding, this idealist notion of the mind, materialists have argued that the mind is nothing but brain processes. Hobbes says that the mind is like various combinations of matter in motion" (Popkin, 126). Minds in this sense are responsible for behaviors. The above definition becomes more evidence when we see that intelligent acts that are attributed to the human mind are being replicated in machines and human mental activities are being artificially duplicated in computer programmes.

What cannot be denied is that the mind is private whether in humans or in machines. It is the individual who is in the best position to reveal its content.

3.1   Theories of Mind

The mind though is said to be in the body by Descartes and other rationalists, but it is expected to control the body. It is argued that the mind is like a pilot in a ship on this basis its nature consists in reasoning. In other words, it gives directions to human actions and virtue. While the rationalists subscribed to the idealist conception of the mind, there are other philosophers, like Hobbes that subscribed to the materialist nature of the mind.

For instance, Descartes is of the opinion that the mind is a substance whose preoccupation is thinking; a spiritual non-extended entity. The human mind is supervened on emotion, which is why traditional epistemology sees justification of knowledge in terms of providing reason. The human intellect is fingered to be the source of reliable and indubitable knowledge of both the inner and outer worlds, whereas for Thomas Hobbes, the mind is nothing more than physico-chemical processes in the human body. This reductionist position of Hobbes and other materialists place premium on the physical senses and perceptual experience as the source of knowledge. The implication of this position is that human consciousness is not a product of the mind but a brain process. The human brain which is physical becomes the center of knowledge acquisition and dissemination.

The claim that consciousness is nothing but processes in the brain is known as identity theory of mind. According to J.J.C Smart, just as H2O is identical with water, consciousness is identical with neuro-physical processes in the brain. Mental activities in this wise can be explained by physical laws (Smart, 1963)

Behaviorism is another theory of mind that reduces the mind or mental activities to behaviour. In other words, all feelings and intellectual states are behaviours that others can see (Velasquez, 2005:112) for instance, the

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claim that "Ojo knows what school is'' is equivalent to saying ''when Ojo sees a school, we will behave in a specific manner.'' Knowledge or to know in this regard is a pattern of behaviour rather than a mental activity. Knowledge by this explanation is a performative act, it is not a state of mind but a pattern of behaviour.

Functionalism is also a theory of mind that is not reductive but asserts that to have a mind is to perform some functions or vice versa. D.M Armstrong avers that functionalism is a way of seeing ''mental activities and mental states in terms of inputs and outputs'' (Armstrong , 1968)

Functionalists see the computer as a model of the function the mind performs. The mind is like a software in a computer that enable the computer take-in simple information and produce a complex or intelligent actions or functions.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

What is the nature of the mind?

4.0   CONCLUSION

The nature of the mind and how it interacts with the body is yet an unresolved issue that was brought to the fore by Rene Descartes. Since then, other problems such as the problem of other minds, the functions of the mind, and how the mind is able to make correct judgments has sprung up. What the mind is and its functions though is a metaphysical issue but it has epistemic importance since some epistemologists hold it as the seat of knowledge and ideas. Howbeit, despite the differing opinions on the matter, one thing that we have now come to largely believe is the fact that the minds exists and it has a bearing on what we can know or actually know.

5.0   SUMMARY

- The act of thinking establishes the existence of the mind.
- The mind relates with the body through a means that philosophers are yet to agree on.
- The mind is the seat of willing, thinking, memorizing, and making judgments.
- The contents and processes of the mind are privy to the owner.
- There is a possibility of mirroring the processes of the mind in machines.

6.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1.   How does the mind relate with the body?
2.   What are the functions of the mind?
3.   How do we come to know that other minds exist apart from our own?
4.   Can minds be reproduced in machines?

7.0   REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 2   FUNCTIONS OF THE MIND

CONTENTS

1.0   Introduction
2.0   Intended Learning Outcomes
3.0   Main Content
      3.1   Reflection
      3.2   Abstraction
      3.3   Memory Knowledge
4.0   Conclusion
5.0   Summary
6.0   Tutor-Marked Assignment
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1.0   INTRODUCTION

Nothing exists without a reason. So, the mind has a reason and purpose for its existence in being. Understanding its functions gives much insight into the nature of the mind and why it operates the way that it does. The human mind has been given much epistemological functions from the Pre-Socratic period till date. In this wise there is a need to understand its functions. This unit thus considers the functions of the mind in terms of reflection, abstraction, and memory knowledge.

2.0   INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

* understand the functions of the mind
* differentiate between reflection, abstraction, and memory knowledge.

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   Reflection

In his seminal book, *How we think*, published in 1910, Dewey defines reflection as: "Active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusion to which it tends."

For Dewey, reflection is a specific mode of thought, to be distinguished from others such as belief, invention, and stream of consciousness. Reflection is at its essence a thought process—a cognitive process. It is a specific thought process influenced by the wider context of affective

dimensions, attitudes, and environment. Reflection is, at its essence, a mental process that manipulates meaning applied to complex ideas. It is a habit of the mind.

3.2   Abstraction

As the name suggests abstracting consists in taking away something from an object. Thus, the root verb suggesting additionally a sense of grasping or of choosing or taking for oneself something of what lies ready to hand. The lexical meanings open a variety of conceptions which can be summarized. The term "abstraction" is of Latin derivative "abstractus" which means "to draw from" This means that abstraction is a process of drawing out or extracting something from another. Cleary in line with Aristotle sees abstraction as a process of subtraction where the individual substance remains and we merely subtract everything that does not pertain to the respect stated. According to Omoregbe (2007:141) abstraction is "the process by which universal ideas are formed from particular images formed in the mind from sensation" In the same vein, Hornby (1974:5) describes abstraction as "a visionary idea, the idea of a quality apart from its material accompaniment". In view of these definitions, abstraction involves the extraction of qualities or properties from particular concrete objects and treated as independently existing realities with universal applicability. This means that in the process of abstraction, a quality is extracted and taken as a generic term housing a class of objects as if it has an independent existence different from the objects represented. For instance, when we use the generic term "man" we have merely extracted the essence of all men and made it stand as a standard against which any particular man is to be considered man. It is therefore treated as an independent existing general idea that represents the totality of men. In respect to knowledge, abstraction is like a double-edged sword with positive and negative tendencies. In its positive sense, it helps us to cope with the myriad things that we experience in daily life. For instance, if we have to create a name for every particular object we ever encountered and a separate word for every single event we experience, then we would clearly be in trouble. In no time we would run out of words with which we fix each single item in our minds for recollection. To avoid this problem, the mind resorts to abstraction. With it, all objects or events with similar qualities are grouped into a singular package with a label. According to Jaegwon, (1998, p.1) abstraction helps us to organize the multiple sensory information into manageable structures. In his words, "we do this by sorting them into groups … describing them in terms of their properties and features, as "large" or "small", "tall" or "short", "red" or "yellow" or "swift". Once this is done, individual objects would no longer be necessary rather the whole package becomes the centre of our concern. In its negative sense, abstraction, by ignoring the particular objects of knowledge, creates an epistemic gap between the knower and

the real objects of knowledge, the genuinely perceivable 60 objects of our knowledge. Hence, abstraction takes us far away from the real things and goes after their essence. If we are not sure of physical objects, then can we be certain of abstract entities? Abstraction is a conceptual process where general rules and concepts are derived from the usage and classification of specific examples. It literally signifies first principles. For Locke, it is a distinctive mental process in which new ideas or conceptions are formed by considering several objects or ideas and omitting the features that differentiate them. Locke opines that we form general ideas by leaving out details and qualities distinctive features through abstraction.

3.3 Memory Knowledge

The term "memory" according to Audi (1998) is "the retention of or the capacity to retain, past experience or previously acquired information." Schnick and Vaughn (1999, p.204) quoting Cicero define memory as "the receptacle and sheath of all knowledge" Memory, according to Ozumba (2001, p.84) is "the mind's store of remembered events, impressions, knowledge and ideas … that part of mind where ideas, impressions, knowledge are stored". One important point to note in these definitions is that memory is the mechanism of the mind to bring to the present past events or ideas. It is the mental record of what we need to know about the past. It is in view of this that memory is seen as the act of remembering, that is, recollecting that which is in the past when the need arises. It therefore means that, memory is an important element in the process of knowing. If we cannot remember what we have learnt, the scope of knowledge and its durability will be seriously limited. In respect to knowledge, there are two major questions about memory: (1) what is the content of memory? (2) What does it mean to know on the basis of memory? In response to the first question there seems to be agreement that memory contains an image (mental representation) of a past object or event. However, the problem here is on the role of memory image in the knowledge of the past. The question is if there is a one-to-one correspondence between the object and event we experienced in the past and the image of same stored in memory. Does the content of our mind (memory image) have the same veracity as the object existing outside the mind? The problem this question generates is that there is no way we can jump out of our memory to cross check if the content of our mind is the same as the object of perception. An extension of this problem is the challenge of forgetfulness, misrepresentation, and time-lag occasioned by the gap between when we experienced the object and when we are re-calling it. It is argued that this gap reduces the liveliness and veracity of the memory image. In view of this, the authenticity of memory as a source of information is seriously dented. The second question focuses on the justification of memory knowledge. From the definition of memory

presented earlier, you will notice that memory is only required whenever the real objects are no longer directly available. So, when asked what makes you think you know, you surely will refer back to your memory by sayings "I remember it!" In this case your internal memory image becomes both the reference point and the point of justification. Here memory becomes the judge in its own case. Also, if remembering that P, is knowing that p if and only if one believes that p because it seems to one that one remembers p, then the status of memory as a source of knowledge becomes problematic. This is because the justification of such knowledge becomes an endless chain of self-reference justification.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

Outline the functions of the mind.

4.0   CONCLUSION

What we glean from the discourse on the functions of the mind is that the mind is a vast faculty that is capable of various activities and processes vital to the life of the human person. Hence, despite its enigmatic nature, at least there is less doubt about its usefulness.

5.0   SUMMARY

- The mind is capable of various functions such as reflection, abstraction, and memory knowledge.
- Reflection refers to the ability of the mind to consider its beliefs or bank of knowledge in the light of its justification and other inferences from it.
- Abstraction refers to the ability of the mind to draw essences or generic qualities from their particular instantiations.
- Memory knowledge refers to the ability of the mind to retain past experience or knowledge as images or impressions.

6.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1.   Write short notes on the functions of the mind.
2.   What is the importance of Memory to Knowledge acquisition?

7.0   REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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UNIT 3   SOLIPSISM

CONTENTS

1.0   INTRODUCTION

This unit discusses one of the offspring of the problem of the other minds-solipsism. Since thinking establishes the existence of one's mind and the activities of one's mind represent a subjective and relative experience, there is always the problem of knowing if other minds exist apart from one's own. An extreme position that believes that only one's mind exists is known as solipsism, and this forms the crux of the discourse in this unit.

2.0   INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

- understand the origin and challenge of solipsism.
- identify expressions of this school of thought in experience.

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   Solipsism

Etymologically, "solipsism" is made up of two Latin two words "*solus*" alone and *ipse* "self". Thus, it is a philosophical position that only one's mind exists. Our focus here is its influence on epistemology. In epistemology therefore it is the position that in principle that only the directly accessible mental content can be known. The material world is unknowable or at least the extent to which they exist independent of one's mind.

This is why Solipsism is sometimes expressed as the view that "only my mind exists," or "My mental states are the only mental states."

Solipsism is therefore best regarded as the doctrine that, in principle, "existence" means for me my existence and that of my mental states. Existence here is everything that I experience—physical objects, other people, events and processes—anything that would commonly be regarded as a constituent of the space and time in which I coexist with others and is necessarily construed by me as part of the content of my consciousness (https://iep.utm.edu.com/solipsism)

For the solipsist, it is not merely the case that he believes that his thoughts, experiences, and emotions are the only thoughts, experiences, and emotions. The solipsist cannot attach any meaning to the supposition that there could be thoughts, experiences, and emotions other than his own. In fact, a true solipsist can only understands the word "pain," for example, to mean "my pain." He can only conceive this word as it exclusively applies to his egocentric self.

The foundation of solipsism lie at the heart of the view that the individual gets his own psychological concepts (thinking, willing, perceiving, and so forth.) from "his own case," that is by abstraction from "inner experience."

3.2   Justification of Other Minds

It seems natural and in tunes with common sense to be sure that one has a mind. This assurance of one's own mind is a direct and immediate in one's consciousness. But the same cannot be said of other peoples mind. Philosophers over the century have been dealing with the problems of others minds. Other peoples mind is treated like every other objects external to the individual and as such there is a need to provide justification that such other minds exist apart from one's own.

One argument that is put forward to justify the existence of other minds is that ''minds are just what people say or do'' if behavior is subtracted from minds, there is nothing left to indicate its presence (Graham,p.40) in this wise behaviorist like Gilbert Ryle we can know if something or someone is minded, if we observe the behaviors. To them pain, pleasure and mental entities but you would not know when someone has them unless you observed their outward behaviour. So, it is appearance and direct observation of things that justify their existence.

The problem with the above argument is that not all behaviours reveal the mind. Human beings can fall off a cliff just as a stone and wood can. Such a behavior does not reveal a mental attribute because it can be explained purely through the law of physics. Also, when we think that our outward behaviour is always connected to the mind inside, then we have not taken into consideration the sceptist dichotomy between appearance and reality,

behaviour is what appears but reality in the mind may not be connected. Since human being can pretend or act out a behavior that is opposite to what is in the mind.

Another argument to justify the belief in other mind is put forward by Bertrand Russell in his work ''Human knowledge''. Its scope and limits according to him, I know that I think and experience; that I am minded. I observed that I am similar to others in bodily shapes and exhibit similar sort of behavior under similar situation to mine. So, I am entitled to infer that other are minded like me. (See Graham, 1993:46). This analogical argument is similar to the one put forward by J.S Mill on utility.

For Mill, his feelings are as a result of his body and if other people have bodies like his, then it is safe to conclude that they also have feelings. He is also aware that his feelings are responsible for his outward behaviors, so he can conclude by seeing other peoples' behaviors that they have feelings (Graham,1993:47).

The argument from analogy is though commonsensical but it is simplistic. Philosophers have leveled two major criticisms against it. The first criticism is that it commits **parochialism**. Aside that there are people who are like us in the universe, we cannot close our eye to those who are dissimilar to us, yet engage in behaviours like ours. Yet we do no ascribed mind to them? For instance people who are schizophrenic, animals and insects who are in many ways not like us in terms of behaviour and bodily form, will be said not to have minds by these obvious dissimilarities.

The second critique says that the argument from analogy is resting on **feeble base.** Its premise move from individual personal attributes to generalized about others. In other words, the argument is resting on only one case vis-à-vis, me (Graham,1993: 48) it is like observation of a single swan beings white in England, to the conclusion that others swans are white too. Paul church land questioned the robustness of such argument that denies uniqueness of individual beings (p.48).

The third argument to justify the belief in other minds is not a product of an inference. It is called **warrant by telepathy**. I can know that another person is minded just by exercising telepathic power. This special power bridged the gap between myself and others. However this explanation is not free from problem. Even if it is granted that I have such power how can I know that what I have experienced is the mind of another? Though I can be sure that I am minded but I don't know the shape, color, texture, or nature of my mind. So, if I encounter other minds, how can I be sure they are minds?

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

What is solipsism?

4.0 CONCLUSION

While it apparently seems that solipsism is an attractive position in response to problem of other minds, the conclusions and effects of this school of thought if considered in a thorough going sense are ridiculous. A better perspective will be one that embraces ideas that denote the possibility of inferring the existence of other minds.

5.0 SUMMARY

Solipsism has is origin in the problem of other minds and denotes the idea that only one's mind exists and only the contents of one's mind can be known.

6.0 TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Outline examples of solipsistic tendencies and attitudes in experience
2. How can one show that other minds exist?
3. Telepathy is a foundationalist attempt to justify the existence of other minds. Discuss

7.0 REFERENCE/FURTHER READING

Graham, G. (1993). *Philosophy of Mind: An Introduction.* New York: Blackwell Publishers

UNIT 4   TESTIMONY

CONTENTS

1.0   INTRODUCTION

This unit focuses on the transmission of information often claimed as knowledge through testimony- by word of mouth, through writing, or through arts. It also considers the inevitability, importance, challenges, as well as the conditions necessary for a testimony to count as knowledge; through the optics of different scholars and cultures.

2.0   INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

- understand the nature of knowledge transfer through testimony
- understand the inevitability, importance, challenges, as well as the conditions necessary for a testimony to count as valid
- consider the philosophical and cultural framing of testimony from different philosophers and cultures.

3.0   MAIN CONTENT

3.1   Testimonial knowledge

- Oral testimony is the transmission of information through spoken words or verbal means
- Written testimony – are gotten from books, internet, on walls (graffiti), stones and animal skin.
- Dramatized testimony – are gotten from symbols and symbolic representations like acting etc.

The conception of testimony presupposes a testifier. It brings up the idea of a fact or claim that confirms something that is known. It is an important source of knowledge. One can even argue that the whole of propositional knowledge rests on the concept of testimony. In other words, since

propositional knowledge is a report of a claim either verbally or by a testifier. It is on the basis of this that testimony harbors some moral considerations including the problem of knowing or ascertaining, the intention, mind or goal of a testifier. It is for this reason Sean Moran identifies trust worthiness, competence and sincerity as factors that one must consider in evaluation testimony knowledge (Moran, 2013:323)

Much of societal structures are predicated on testimony from parents, teachers, neighbours, strangers, newspapers, internet, friends, etc. No wonder Moran (2013:323) asserts that "we cannot make much epistemic progress without the testimony of others".

Even David Hume confirms the importance of this aspect of epistemology when he said "there is no species of reasoning more common, more useful even necessary to human life than that which is derived from the testimony of men and the reports of eye witnesses and spectators" (1902:672).

The controversy on testimony knowledge can be divided into three (1) competency of the testifier (2) virtue or character of the testifier (3) the mode of transmission.

If a competent or an expert in a field makes a claim there is tendency to accept or believe such a person than if such is made by incompetent person. This consideration is what the fallacy of appeal to authority attempt address. The view that knowledge is possessed by experts or authorities in different field is referred to as Authoritarianism. To acquire knowledge and increase our understanding of issues, many of us rely and trust in the competence of scholars, teachers, books written by organizations etc. This mode of acquiring knowledge has become an integral part of the school system and social education.

People do not normally doubt the opinion of experts unlike that of common people. However, the synergy and agreement between the opinions of the masses (known as majority opinion) are at times seen as credible source of information. The system of democracy common to contemporary societies is predicated on the belief that a majority opinion must be truer or better than individuals. (Honer *et al*: 80). In this wise, the argument is that what is true for the majority is also true for any individual.

At the basis of justification of testimony knowledge is the character or virtue of the epistemic agent. In Yoruba epistemology for instance, testimony is placed in the realm of second hand information; below perceptual and individual observational experience which is seen as first-hand information. Though testimony is an acceptable source of

knowledge in this culture, the acceptability is nevertheless dependent on the character of the agent. Competence without character is frown at in Yoruba philosophical world view. A competent person with bad or doubtful character can only possess *ogbon-Arekereke* (dubious knowledge) (Akande, 2017:262)

Testimony is an extremely pervasive source of knowledge that has traditionally been neglected by epistemologists. Here, I use "testimony" broadly, to include all cases in which a person asserts something, and another person hears, reads, or otherwise witnesses the assertion. In this sense, my beliefs that China is in Asia, that the Earth orbits the sun, and that Nigeria's birthday is on October1, are all based on testimony. Testimony also plays a crucial role in science, where scientists' testimony as to their observations is relied upon by other scientists who are constructing theories. Yet, little has been written about the epistemology of testimony. One reason for this neglect may lie in the traditional views, developed by such thinkers as Locke and Hume, about the probative value of testimony. Locke has particularly disparaging words to say about the practice of relying on testimony. He thinks both that other people are a highly unreliable source of information and that, even when they speak truthfully, one cannot gain true knowledge merely by taking someone else's word.

David Hume (is a bit more conciliatory: he regards testimony as simply one form of inductive evidence among others. In his essay "On Miracles" (mainly a criticism of the belief in miracles), he lays down the basic principles of inductive evidence, including testimonial evidence: the probability one should assign to a given kind of event happening in given circumstances is proportional to the frequency with which events of that kind have, in one's past experience, happened in such circumstances. The reason that we are often justified in believing the testimony of others is simply that in the past, when we have been able to check, we have usually found the statements made by others to be true. He goes on to use these principles to argue that a belief in miracles cannot be justified on the basis of testimony, because it is always more likely that the testator is lying or mistaken than it is that a miracle has happened, since one has more past experience of people lying or being mistaken than one has of laws of nature being violated.

Here as elsewhere, Thomas Reid (1983) rejected the conventional wisdom of his time. Reid noticed that, if one had to rely solely upon induction as Hume proposed, one would have little ground for believing the majority of the things that we in fact believe on the testimony of others. The situation would be particularly difficult for children who, before accepting anything told them by an adult, would first have to acquire extensive experience and construct an inductive argument for the

reliability of adults. Many children would probably be run over by cars or poison themselves before they succeeded in collecting all the necessary evidence. Fortunately, Reid observed, human beings have two innate tendencies which enable us much more easily to gain knowledge through testimony: the first is our instinctive tendency to tell the truth (as we see it); the second is the tendency simply to believe what others say. We have the latter tendency even before we have had a chance to test the reliability of others, and Reid thinks it is a good thing that we have it. This is not to deny that we may, after acquiring experience, have reason either to increase or to decrease our degree of trust in the testimony of others in certain circumstances (if you know someone has lied to you many times in the past, your innate tendency to trust his word will be defeated).

C.A.J. Coady (1973) similarly criticizes what he calls "the reductionist thesis," which holds that we rely on testimony because we have observed a correlation between what people say and what is true. One way of interpreting this idea is that people in general (or my community in general) have observed such a correlation. But this would lead to a circular argument, because in order to know that people have generally observed such a correlation, I would have to accept the testimony of others that they have observed such a correlation. Another interpretation is that each person individually has observed such a correlation. But Coady finds this suggestion "obviously false," in that most of us have never in fact checked on the veracity of the vast majority of reports that we have received from others. It seems that we simply lack a sufficient inductive basis for generalizing as to the reliability of other people.

 Coady goes on to argue, furthermore, that it is not even coherent to suppose, as a proponent of the reductionist thesis does, that there could be a society in which people were generally not reliable in their testimony. In order for people to have a meaningful language or to count as making statements, there must be some sort of correlation between their utterances and features of reality. If some society regularly used the word "gnos" when in the absence of trees, it would not be correct to interpret "gnos" as meaning "tree." Finally, Coady criticizes one argument that Hume seems to make for the reductionist thesis: namely, the argument that since inductive evidence can undermine the credibility of testimony, therefore the credibility of testimony depends upon positive inductive evidence in favor of its reliability. Coady finds this argument invalid, comparing it to the argument that since testimony can undermine a belief based on observation, therefore the credibility of observation in general depends upon testimony.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

What is testimony?

4.0   CONCLUSION

It is self-evident that we cannot do without the aid of testimony in our quest for knowledge. This is confirmed via experience as much of what we hold as knowledge was handed down to us by testimonial knowledge. However, considering the discrepancies that can occur in the generation and transmission of testimony, and since we cannot live long enough to test and verify every testimony, there is always need for standards against which testimony should be measured, validated, and justified before being accepted as knowledge. This will shift the burden of proof to the testifiers to give evidence for the validity of their claims and will also confer responsibility on those who receive these testimonies to verify the claims of the testifiers against the generally acceptable standards.

5.0   SUMMARY

- Testimony refers to the transmission of information often claimed as knowledge by word of mouth, through writing, or through arts.
- Testimony forms the basis of propositional knowledge and constitutes a testifier, a claim, and those to whom the claim is made.
- Controversies among philosophers regarding the inevitability, importance, challenges, as well as the conditions necessary for a testimony to count as knowledge can be divided into (1) competence of the testifier (2) virtue or character of the testifier (3) the mode of transmission.

6.0   TUTOR-MARKED ASSIGNMENT

1. Discuss the necessary conditions against which the validity of a testimony can be measured.
2. Discuss the opinions of two philosophers on the subject of testimonial knowledge.

7.0   REFERENCES/FURTHER READING

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