

STUDY SESSION 4

EPISTEMOLOGY AS A BRANCH OF PHILOSOPHY

4.1 Introduction

This study session looks at epistemology as a branch of philosophy. It essentially examines the nature of human knowledge; that is, what does it mean to say that someone knows something. In this session, you will learn about the extent to which humans can know; that is, how much do we or can we really know? You will be provided with a systematic overview of the problems that the question above raises thereby focusing in some depth on issues relating to the structure and various conception of knowledge. It fundamentally examines rationalism and empiricism as the two main epistemological positions that reacted to the challenge of scepticism on the possibility and plausibility of absolute certainty of knowledge. The systematic treatment and meticulous explanations of types of knowledge in this study session is aimed at ensuring you have a comprehensive general understanding of the subject matter of epistemology.

4.1.1 Learning Outcomes for Study Session 4

When you have studied this session, you should be able to:

1. Define knowledge;
2. Show the relationship between memory and knowledge;
3. Define and analyse skepticism;
4. List the types of knowledge; and

5. List the theories of truth.

4.2 Conceptions of Knowledge

Knowledge has been defined in various ways. One who claims to identify a particular person, place or thing may regard himself/herself as having knowledge of these things. This can be equated to be *knowledge by identification*. Is knowledge identification? One may claim to know the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Lagos because one could identify him. But there is more to knowing the Vice-Chancellor than merely identifying him.

Epistemology is a call to reflect on all the justifiable claims of common sense. Common sense makes uncritical claim to many things. However, it is historically and culturally limited, full of deception and uncertain. Even if we are impressed by the feeling of knowing so many things due to our familiarity with such objects, such claims when subjected to epistemic x-ray reveals at best that we do not know them.

However, it is common knowledge that the knower must be willing to know. If anything, admitting ignorance helps us to seek knowledge. Curiosity also fuels the attempt to discover knowledge. A. J. Ayer calls our attention to three important conditions for knowledge. According to him, what we know must be true, we must be sure of it, and we must also have the right to be sure. Roderich Chisholm further states that what we know must be reasonable and plausible.

4.2.1 In-Text Questions (ITQs)

What is the subject matter of Epistemology?

4.2.2 In-Text Answers (ITAs)

Knowledge

4.3 Knowledge as Acquaintance

Knowledge by acquaintance is explicated in knowing where, why and how. Some philosophers have considered that knowledge is acquaintance. The knower must be acquainted with the object of knowledge. For the rationalists, this acquaintance is not sensory but ratiocinative. The man who knows, according to Plato, is acquainted with the Real (in the world of ideas). His soul has perceived the real before its contact with the body.

Through the analogies of the 'line' and 'cave,' Plato brings to a climax his substantive theory of knowledge and his illustration of objective knowledge. In *The Republic*, we are made to understand that the process of reasoning about our sensation begins at the mental stage of belief. Plato conceives of belief as the intermediate level between knowledge and opinion. It is the contemplation of forms that brings the philosopher to the realm of understanding. Forms are the only objects of knowledge. Knowledge at this level is basically that of generalization and abstraction. For Plato, therefore, knowledge is a kind of intellectual perception and nothing in the perceptible world meets this condition.

Plato therefore views knowledge as acquaintance of the mind or reason with the original objects. The objects of knowledge are the *essences* provided by *Forms of things*. The true objects are in the world of Ideas. To attain genuine knowledge, according to Plato, we have to rise above the level of sense perception boarding the vehicle of dialectics (with the aid of reason) to the world of forms.

4.3.1 In-Text Questions (ITQs)

For the rationalists, acquaintance is not sensory but _____

4.3.2 In-Text Answers (ITAs)

Ratiocinative

4.4 Praxis: The Marxist Position

The Marxist claims that knowledge can be explicated in practice. Cognition is the act of passing from one set of knowledge to a deeper set of knowledge in the movement towards even fuller objective truth. Karl Marx held that human thought and activities are part of a larger material universe. Knowledge is the property of matter. Knowing is viewed as a function of an agent, while sense knowledge and rational knowledge are distinguished. Knowledge, including logical laws, is the immediate contact of the first signal system with the dialectic. Our ontology also defines our epistemology. The fact that we are social animals gives our knowledge a social character. Our attributions of knowledge are context and content sensitive as well as epoch related.

Marxists also believe that knowledge is historically conditioned. It is both sensible and mental, but not as conceived by either the idealists or agnostics. According to Mach, the Marxists conception of appearance, in contradistinction to reality, is based on what they call practice. This practice is mostly based on theory. Lenin criticizes this view of Mach as coloured by Mach's idealist bias. According to Marxist-Leninists' view, there are no comprehensive concepts within which the theory of knowledge can operate other than concepts of being and thinking, matter and sensation, physical and mental.

Marxists hold that acquaintance with the object of knowledge is done through the human brain. Thought and consciousness are also product of the human brain. Matter is not a product of the mind. On the contrary, mind is the highest product of matter. Knowledge at the theoretical level is given content by practice and is epochal. It becomes more advanced through the dynamics of social interaction and the relevant advancement of that particular epoch.

4.4.1 In-Text Questions (ITQs)

In what way can the Marxist approach to knowledge be explicated?

4.4.2 In-Text Answers (ITAs)

In practice

4.5 Knowledge as Awareness

The second definition of knowledge to be considered is that knowledge is awareness. Philosophers who proposed this view believe that what we know is what we are aware of. The view that what is known is a product of awareness spans through the history of philosophy. Philosophers like St. Augustine made distinction between the immediate awareness and spiritual awareness. Awareness is, however, a product of the soul's perception. Our immediate awareness could be the product of sense-experience or internal mental experience. Knowledge is also the strongest degree of awareness that human beings possess.

Knowledge can be defined (with justification) in terms of states of conscious awareness in which objects are presented in someone's mind. Knowledge can be applied also to intelligently adjusted behaviour. That is, man who knows the danger of cigarette to healthy living will desist from smoking. Socrates and Plato will proffer that ignorance is the cause of

wrongdoing. Knowledge can be applied to a disposition or readiness to be conscious of certain things or to behave in certain ways.

4.5.1 In-Text Questions (ITQs)

What types of awareness did Augustine make a distinction between?

4.5.2 In-Text Answers (ITAs)

Immediate awareness and spiritual awareness

4.6 Knowledge as Involvement

Knowledge may be conceived as involvement. You can learn a language by speaking it. You drive a car by learning to do so. The act of being a mother is by being involved in raising children, etc. Knowledge that is culturally delineated is acquired in this way. The culture of a people is what makes it possible to distinguish one who knows from one who does not know. It helps us to identify the foreigner and the child¹. Often we acquire skills and competence through such involvement.

In Platonic terms, such involvement could be a discourse between a pupil and a teacher. It helps the soul to recollect or recover the things it has learnt in the world of Forms. For an empiricist, involvement may entail practical activities and the use of one's cognitive resources. Involvement produces competence and performance. Competence and performance produce diversity of things such as faith. Knowledge can therefore be a product of faith.

4.6.1 In-Text Questions (ITQs)

¹ J.F. Llyotard "A report on Knowledge". In Natoli and Hutcheon, ed., *A Postmodern Reader*. (Albany: State University of New York, 1993), p. 71-90

What, in the Platonic sense does involvement aim at?

4.6.2 In-Text Answers (ITAs)

It helps the soul to recollect or recover the things it has learnt in the world of Forms

4.7 Knowledge of the Heart

Knowledge may also be conceived as that which is perceived by the mind. The mind is like the secret seat of ideas, a theatre where ideas pass and re-pass, the place where ideas are conjoined into complexes. The mind relates ideas to one another. It modifies the output of sense perception. Knowledge is that which is perceived by the heart. The heart perception is the kind of knowledge that is virtue related. Philosophers like David Hume and Miguel de Unamuno argued that moral acts are the result of the heart's perception. Such acts are related to feelings.

The knowledge that is action related has been described as knowledge of the heart. John Locke also came close to this view in his ethics. He situates all morality as a product of sentiments or feelings. Knowledge by the heart influences our actions or reforms our behaviour. It may bring about counter claims which further produce inaction or negative action in that particular individual. But knowledge of the heart produces a feeling of persuasion that disabuses our mind from immoral acts, as murder, stealing, adultery, blackmailing, etc. that reason may find an excuse for. Knowledge of the heart also produces conviction, repentance and adjusted behaviour. Why so? The man that knows will desist from wrongdoing.

4.7.1 In-Text Questions (ITQs)

Which philosophers argued that moral acts are the result of the heart's perception?

4.7.2 In-Text Answers (ITAs)

David Hume and Miguel de Unamuno

4.8 Knowledge and Belief

Knowledge and belief are often misunderstood to mean the same thing. Knowledge can entail belief, but belief cannot entail knowledge. Knowledge is justified belief. To have knowledge of a thing is to be sure, have proof or evidence for it. By looking through my window and seeing people carrying umbrellas, I then proceed to believe that it is raining whereas it is not so. Hence, it is always better for us to investigate our claims to knowledge before we accept it as knowledge.

Belief may stem from ignorance. Hamlyn defines belief as a “a state of mind in which propositions are taken to be true”. Pierce defines belief “as the rule of action and so long as it lasts, it is a strong habit”. Thus, the common thing about belief is that propositions are accepted as true, or habits are perpetuated on the ground of lack of proof.

Plato made a critical discourse on the identification of knowledge with belief in the *Theaetetus*. He exposes the paradox involved when we talk about false belief. False belief is a belief in nothing. It is an error of missing the mark that we call false belief. The error may be as a result of perception. Is knowledge true belief? For Plato, true belief is not a sufficient condition of knowledge. For example, orators and lawyers do make their audience believe what they wish about an "eyewitness" account. Plato points out the difference between knowledge and belief by saying that for one to truly know one needs to be acquainted with the truth just like the eyewitness is acquainted with every phenomena. The best that the judge and the audience can claim is that they are persuaded from the evidences before them and that they truly believe. True belief is not the same as knowledge. Plato also demonstrates the

absurdity of proposing that true belief plus logos equals knowledge. In a satirical tone, he calls it an "extremely darkened counsel". According to Plato, knowledge is infallible, absolute, immutable and eternal. These qualities cannot be true of belief. Therefore, the difference between knowledge and belief is like that between sleep and death.

4.8.1 In-Text Questions (ITQs)

In what way can you distinguish knowledge from belief?

4.8.2 In-Text Answers (ITAs)

Knowledge can entail belief, but belief cannot entail knowledge. Knowledge is justified belief.

4.9 Memory and Knowledge

It is doubtful if knowledge is possible without memory. Memory is the storehouse of the mind. Memory is the recorder of all events and activities we encounter on a daily basis. Memory is what has been learnt and not forgotten. As the storehouse of ideas and recorder of events, memory helps us in the performance of the following:

- (i) Remembering of past events, i.e. retentive memory or current memory.
- (ii) It helps in the association of ideas.
- (iii) It helps in the development of new ideas, etc.

The importance of memory to human life cannot be exhausted. Without memory, man will simply become an imbecile. In fact, we cannot talk of human beings with reason or intelligence without recourse to memory. Our memory of an event when factual exposes the truth of our acquaintance with that particular event.

4.9.1 In-Text Questions (ITQs)

List one function performed by memory

4.9.2 In-Text Answers (ITAs)

Remembering past events, i.e. retentive memory or current memory

4.10 Scepticism

Sceptics deny the possibility and plausibility of absolute knowledge. They were philosophers who made theories of knowledge necessary. The first sceptic in ancient Greece were the Sophists, who challenged the claim to absolute, certain and indubitable knowledge. They held that knowledge is relative. This makes man the measure of what is and what is not. Gorgias, a sceptic, says knowledge cannot be communicated. If one succeeds in verbalizing one's knowledge in word, it cannot be comprehended because the vital element of knowledge: acquaintance is missing. What that individual expresses are words, but for words to be meaningful, the recipient will need personal acquaintance with the objects of knowledge.

Academic sceptics such as Arcesilaus (315-240B.C), Carneades (213-128B.C), Cicero, Sextus, Empiricus and Diogenes Laertius, rejected Plato's metaphysical and mystical doctrines. Their main focus was on the Socratic dictum: "All that I know is that I know nothing". Arcesilaus and Carneades reacted to the Stoics' and Epicureans' claims that some perception could not possibly be false. Carneades argued that there are no distinguishing features between illusory perception and veridical ones. Therefore, he recommends that we should suspend judgment.

The **Pyrrohian School** is another brand of scepticism. Their views have been attributed to Pyrrho of Elis (360-270B.C). Pyrrohism was developed by Aenesidemus, Pyrrho's successor,

their major achievement is in developing ways of carrying on sceptical argumentation in order to produce epochs (i.e. suspension of judgment) about matters that deal with 'what is non-evident.' Pyrrho doubts the powers of the human mind to penetrate the inner nature of things.

Nevertheless, scepticism can serve as a tool to overhaul our stockpile of ignorance. Rene Descartes used scepticism in this manner. It can help us to discover the extent of the freedom of our will and the activities of our minds in our knowledge claims. Hume's exposition gives a lucid account of such importance. It helps to sift objects of belief from that of knowledge. Scepticism has always led to advancement of knowledge. It reveals the dynamics of knowledge.

4.10.1 **In-Text Questions (ITQs)**

Who were the first group of sceptics in ancient Greece?

4.10.2 **In-Text Answers (ITAs)**

The Sophists

4.11 Error and Knowledge

Error could be defined as "incorrect judgement", "a mistaken judgement", or simply put, "a judgement that affirms what is not the case". Error is something we commit either accidentally or with preconceived thought. The basic question defining the domain of epistemology is the concept of knowledge. Error as conceived by epistemologists is a scandal to knowledge; an obstruction to the process of objective knowledge. The phenomenon of error is therefore of paramount concern to the two main schools of thought in epistemology: rationalism and empiricism. Empiricism sees error as a phenomenon ingrained in human

reason while rationalism dismisses error as an attribute of the senses. Human mind is prone to error simply because man by nature is imperfect. Man is a limited being and finite in all capacity. Rene Descartes, for example, says error is a scandal to knowledge. His rules for the directions of the mind were geared towards eliminating error from human knowledge. The way out of error, for Rene Descartes, is that we should keep to the four rules. Thus:

- (i) "Avoid carefully precipitancy and prejudice and apply my judgement to nothing but that which showed itself so clearly and distinctly to my mind that I should not have occasion to doubt it;
- (ii) Divide each difficulty into as many parts as possible;
- (iii) Conduct my mind in an orderly fashion, starting with what was simplest and easiest to know, and rising little by little to the knowledge of the most complex, even supposing an order where there is no natural precedence among the objects of knowledge; and
- (iv) Make so complete an enumeration of the links in an argument, and pass them all so thoroughly under review, that I could be sure I had missed nothing".²

What are the sources and effects of error? Error stems from wrong judgment, prejudice, pride, self-will, fatigue, haste, confused reasoning, wishful-thinking, reliance on hunch, inattention or carelessness. Error can also occur in our mind in both cases of reasoning and recollection. It can occur in the process of recollecting the past or as a result of mistaken memory belief. Error is an impediment to societal development. It obstructs intellectual development; leads to loss of lives and properties, and impedes cohesiveness of thought.

4.11.1 In-Text Questions (ITQs)

² Cited in Karo Ogbinaka, *A Window into Philosophy*, (Lagos: Obaroh & Ogbinaka Publishers Ltd.), p. 27

What is error?

4.11.2 In-Text Answers (ITAs)

Error could be defined as "incorrect judgement", "a mistaken judgement", or simply put, "a judgement that affirms what is not the case".

4.12 Types of Knowledge

There are different types of knowledge as well as different use of the word “knowledge” in philosophy. Let us proceed to examine the types of knowledge.

***A priori* knowledge:** *A priori* knowledge is the kind of knowledge whose validity is independent of experience. Immanuel Kant coined this terminology. Kant explained that we possess “a priori” intuition of space and time. *A priori* knowledge is intuitively evident. This type of knowledge begins with our understanding of the contents of notions or what is often the same. *A priori* knowledge is based on our understanding of concepts, universals or meanings. It is knowledge of essence and necessity. *A priori* knowledge is innate in nature. It is "knowledge acquired before any investigation of facts. When *a priori* knowledge is expressed in a proposition, it is called a necessary proposition, e.g. “All husbands are married men”. Thus, the understanding of the word “husband” implicitly entails ‘being married’. *A priori* propositions are necessarily true.

***A posteriori* knowledge:** *A posteriori* knowledge is knowledge whose validity derives from matters of fact and experience. *A posteriori* knowledge is empirical in nature and therefore not necessarily certain. Accordingly, we have synthetic propositions and synthetic *a priori* - propositions according to Kant.

A proposition is said to be analytic if the meaning of the predicate term is contained in the meaning of the subject, e.g., “A spinster is an unmarried lady”. A proposition is synthetic if the meaning of the predicate term is not contained in the subject term, e.g., “Mrs. Kehinde is a lecturer”.

Necessary versus Contingent Proposition: A proposition is said to be necessary if it is true under all possible circumstances or conditions. A proposition is contingent if it is true in some but not all possible circumstances. Most contingent propositions are *a posteriori*.

Religious Knowledge: Religious knowledge is either a product of feeling, emotion, reason, or faith. Religious knowledge could be the experience of an individual or of a community of people on religious ideas. Most religious knowledge are said to be the product of revelation. The revelation could be of private individual, or prophets, it could be God's revelation of Himself through the Holy Spirit or nature. In the cases of religious knowledge through revealed authority, it is usually a product of faith. Philosophers have sought to explicate grounds for religious knowledge through rational arguments, faith or even arguments deriving from emotion or nature. Philosophers are in three groups, the agnostics, the theists and atheists on the basis of their position on religious knowledge.

4.12.1 In-Text Questions (ITQs)

List two types of knowledge

4.12.2 In-Text Answers (ITAs)

A priori and *A posteriori*

4.13 Sources of Knowledge

Two main epistemological positions reacted to the Sophists' challenge. They are rationalism and empiricism. They have both engendered a lot of controversies since ancient Greek times. Knowledge, according to the proponents of these two theories, is attainable. It is by its very nature, objective and true. Nevertheless, they also expressed their differences of opinion as to the faculties responsible for the attainment of knowledge. We shall, as examples, examine two proponents of these schools. They are Baruch Spinoza (a rationalist) and John Locke (an empiricist).

Rationalism: The term 'rationalism' is from the Latin word *ratio*, which means reason. Rationalism is the view that reason, expressing itself through mathematical method, can lead to the attainment of true and certain knowledge. The rationalists mistrust the senses and adhere firmly to reason. The father of this school of thought in modern times is Rene Descartes. Nevertheless, Plato anticipated rationalism.

Baruch Spinoza(1632-1677) was a rationalist. In part two of his book: *Ethics*, Spinoza identifies three levels of the mind's operation based on innate ideas of the mind, thus: confused ideas, adequate ideas and intuitive ideas. According to him, these three operations lead us to knowledge of the human mind. An idea is conceived by him as the conception of mind by reason of its being a thinking thing.

Confused ideas are a product of the perception of the human mind in the common order of nature. Whenever the idea in the mind is determined externally to contemplate things in isolation, the mind has confused ideas. An example is the duration of our body. The mind's existence is determined by certain causes which are also determined by other causes ad infinitum. Inadequate knowledge stems from the fact that things are outside us and are individual. For we have no adequate knowledge concerning their duration. Spinoza distinguished reason from imagination. Reason involves adequate ideas and scientific

knowledge. The knowledge of reason is clearly and distinctly perceived by all. The human mind is the seat of adequate and inadequate ideas. Nevertheless, adequate ideas have reference to God and they are true.

Adequate and instinctive knowledge, according to Spinoza, are necessarily true because they proceed from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to adequate knowledge of the essence of things. According to him, true idea involves certainty. He asks, "... What then can be clearer or more certain than a true idea to be standards of truth?" Reason, according to Spinoza, perceives reality. It perceives necessity, which he calls the eternal nature of God.

Intuitive knowledge, according to him proceeds from an adequate idea of formal essence of certain attributes of God to adequate knowledge of the essence of things. This level is the highest form of knowledge. The intuitive level is the level at which the unity between the individual and the universal is perceived at a glance.

Spinoza, in his essay: "Treatise on the Correction of the Understanding," identifies four levels of knowledge, thus: perception by hearsay, vague experience, the level of concluding the essence of a thing from another, and perceiving a thing through its essence alone. Spinoza argues that the true method of knowing consists in seeking the objective essence or idea of things in their proper order. A true idea, according to him is distinct from the ideal about which one possesses this idea. A true idea must also be intelligible in itself and certain. The objective essence is innate "for in order to know that I know, I must necessarily first know".

Intuitive knowledge is innate and derives from God. God is the foundation of Spinoza's epistemology. And the knowledge of God is the highest possible knowledge that gives blessedness. Spinoza, however, drifts from viewing knowledge objectively as a rational exercise. He employs the use of reason into mystical conceptions and coloured it with his

pantheistic view. This view made his epistemology, like his ethics, deterministic. A true idea, he affirms, is an absolute necessity. Truth for him involves the eternal and infinite essence of God. Spinoza also assimilates all truth into necessary truth. He would not have done this if he had considered knowledge purely as an objective entity.

Empiricism: John Locke is the father of classical empiricism. Locke's main concern was to "inquire into the original certainty, and extent of human knowledge, together with the grounds and degrees of belief and opinion and assent". He declares that all our knowledge comes from experience. According to him, our knowledge ultimately derives from observation. Therefore, experience is the source of all human ideas. John Locke defines experience in two ways;

- (i) Sensation, that is, the use of our senses in coming in contact with the sensible; and
- (ii) Reflection, which is the operation of our mind within us.

According to John Locke, ideas are furnished through experiences; cognition has to do with conversing with those objects of our sensation. He is of the view that ideas must always be related to or stimulated by perception. For Locke, knowledge derives from experience and a child comes to know by degrees. If a child were kept in a place where he never saw any other colour except black and white until he were a man, that child would have no idea of scarlet or green than he that has never tasted an oyster or pineapple.

Thought is always related to perception. Locke believes that reason or thinking faculty is developed by the impact of the senses. Ideas have their origin in sensation. There was no idea in the mind prior to the senses. In the process of reflection, the mind converts the impression to objects of its contemplation. The mind does this by its own operations.

In book four of the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, John Locke conceives of knowledge as the act of being conversant with ideas. The senses offer to the mind and reason objects of contemplation. He affirms that sensation is made possible through the mind's experience or reflection. John Locke anticipated the view of the complementarist. For John Locke our knowledge derives from the agreement or disagreement of two ideas. Locke's empirical stand becomes more questionable in his exposition of the degrees of knowledge. He recognizes the following degrees of knowledge; (a) intuitive, (b) demonstrative, and (c) sensitive.

Intuitive knowledge is perceived directly by the mind without the intervention of any other idea. It is the clearest kind of knowledge that the human frailty is capable of. The difference between intuitive and demonstrative knowledge is that the mind does not perceive the agreement and disagreement immediately.

Demonstrative knowledge may derive from memory, conviction with proofs. The proofs are not easy to come by and are not without preceding doubt, which are not so clear. In establishing the proof, each step must be intuitive.

Sensitive Knowledge, according to John Locke is evident and certain, to the knower in sense experience. Locke is of the view that sensitive knowledge is so obvious that it does not need proof. The proof that accompanies sense perception is sensation, which is enough evidence. From John Locke's perspective, reason signifies various things. Reason helps the enlargement of our knowledge. It regulates our assent. It assists all other faculties in the cognitive process. It also has to do with knowledge and opinion. This faculty contains two of the intellectual faculties, i.e., sagacity and elation. He noted that there are four degrees in reason.

Finally, let us look at Locke's tabula rasa. In the *Essay*, he declares that all our knowledge derives from experience. The mind at birth is a "white paper void of all characters, without any ideas". The white paper recalls impressions from both sense perception and reflection. By this presentation, John Locke reduces to absurdity the view that the soul knows ideas independently of the body. If the mind at birth is actually void of all characters and without ideas, the capacity to comprehend may be denied. For Locke, we derive meaning by an elaboration of sense data.

4.13.1 In-Text Questions (ITQs)

List 2 Sources of Knowledge

4.13.2 In-Text Answers (ITAs)

Empiricism (Sense perception) and Rationalism (reason)

4.14 Theories of Truth

Truth conveys some sense of objectivity, it also signals the attainment of a standard. In some sense, truth could be co-terminus with fact, but this does not mean that truth is the same thing as fact. Fact deals with what is evidential. This is why we have to investigate a thing to know the facts involved before we can accept it as true. In investigating, we acquire knowledge about the object of investigation. It is in this sense that knowledge and truth are interrelated. There are theories of truth.

Coherence Theory of Truth: Coherence theory takes truth to consist in relations of coherence among a set of beliefs. This deals with the coherence of the judgment of propositions, beliefs, or arguments. Something is coherently true if it is rational, justified, and is characterized by internal relation in such a way that the part gets its meaning from the

whole. This method of reasoning is common among rationalists and idealists such as Leibniz, Spinoza, Hegel and Bradley.

Correspondence Theory of Truth: This is truth at the level of evidence or fact. It could be at the level of identity, resemblance, or correlation. The important thing here is that what is said or described must be seen to have direct relationship with real life situation. Propositions of the correspondence nature must state or describe real life situations. Correspondence theories take the truth of a proposition, not in its relations to other propositions, but in its relations to the world, its correspondence to the facts. Both Russell and Wittgenstein offered definitions of truth as correspondence of a proposition to a fact.

Pragmatic Theory of Truth: Truth is defined as success in practice. The philosophical name for this is pragmatism. It is a theory of truth that is prominent among American philosophers. The theory states that something is true if it has positive, practical relevance to human life. Anything that cannot be proved to have relevance to life cannot be said to be true, and should be discarded. Peirce, James and Dewey offered characteristically pragmatic account of truth, which combined coherence and correspondence elements. According to the maxim of pragmatism, the meaning of the concept is to be given by a reference to the practical or experimental consequences of its application.

Redundancy Theory of Truth: This theory of truth states that asserting that a statement is true is completely equivalent to asserting the statement itself. Suppose first that it is explicitly given, then it is evident that the proposition, "it is true that Unilag is in Lagos" means no more than that "Unilag is in Lagos"; and also the proposition, "It is false that Unilag is in Lagos" means no more than that Unilag is not in Lagos. The theory is commonly attributed to Frank P. Ramsey, who argued that the use of words like facts and truth was nothing but a roundabout way of asserting a proposition, and that treating these words as separate problems

in isolation from judgement was merely a "linguistic muddle". So the prefix, "It is true" is redundant, it is inactive because to say that it is true that p, is equivalent to saying that p.

Performative Theory of Truth: P. F. Strawson is the main proponent of this theory. The theory states that truth is the expression of action. For example, the expression "it is raining" is performative because it expresses an action, i.e. "raining". Strawson invented the performative theory of truth to supplement Ramsey's *Redundancy Theory of Truth*. Both theories of truth, i.e. redundancy and performative theories of truth are meant to correct wrong expressions in the stating of a truth. Truth, Ramsey and Strawson believe, should be expressed in simple or atomic language instead of metalinguistic expressions, which lead to error. For example, instead of describing the properties of an action, it is better to describe the action itself.

4.14.1 In-Text Questions (ITQs)

List the classical theories of truth

4.14.2 In-Text Answers (ITAs)

Correspondence theory, Coherence theory and Pragmatic theory of truth

4.15 Importance of Epistemology

Epistemology helps to rid our mind of confusion or delusion about the thing we claim to know by revealing to us the dangers in accepting without question the verdict of common sense. Epistemology offers us a rational basis for change and permanence in our conception of reality, either on the abstract level, individual or in the conception of social relation.

Epistemology helps us to develop a critical attitude to our claims to knowledge. It helps to awaken our consciousness to the relation between what we know and our actual behaviour. In

essence, the epistemic exposure helps to improve our social relation. The man who knows the good ought to lead the good life.

It helps to reveal the subjective side of our cognitive activity thereby increasing our appreciation of other views or many views of a particular issue. Epistemological ponderings help us to confront issues of the most fundamental type. The theory of knowledge is a reflection of man's creative competence. Epistemology is related in a special way to all the various branches of philosophy such as Ethics, Metaphysics, Aesthetics, and philosophy of all other disciplines.

As a science of knowing, it probes into what constitutes human life and human consciousness and what constitutes philosophy, it evaluates the ultimate value of metaphysics, ethics, aesthetics and other allied disciplines that touch on human existence. Epistemology queries how such values are derived, the rules, the techniques of critical thinking, the right or correct reasoning underlying their epistemic claims.

Epistemology provides the foundation for a general evaluation of human behaviour. It also queries the general nature of human knowledge as decided by the various social sciences and science. Epistemology makes explicit the fact that man's social relations are permeated with man's ideas about reality. That is, a man cannot relate above his level of cognition. Epistemology inspires confidence because it exposes the common-sense perspective. It invites everyone to journey beyond absurdities in order to discover the truth and the real. Epistemology refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the inconceivable.

Epistemology, above all, prepares our mind to discover what we do not know, recovers what we can know and questions that for which we have no clear perspective. It helps us to situate others and ourselves in the proper context towards unveiling our being, environment and that

which is beyond. It reveals to us that interaction with nature transforms not only nature but also itself. It reveals the relationship between man's epochs and its knowledge. Epistemology helps us to discover what is not knowledge. Knowledge is not a hunch or lucky guess.

Respect for truth as a regulative idea in our intellectual endeavours is absolutely necessary for the development of clear and critical thinking. Epistemology therefore helps us to develop a critical attitude to our claims to knowledge. It helps to awaken our consciousness to the relation between what we know and our actual behaviour. In essence, epistemic exposure helps to improve our social relation.

4.15.1 In-Text Questions (ITQs)

Give at least 3 importance of epistemology

4.15.2 In-Text Answers (ITAs)

1. Epistemology makes explicit the fact that man's social relations are permeated with man's ideas about reality. 2. Epistemology inspires confidence because it exposes the common-sense perspective. 3. Epistemology refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the inconceivable.

4.16 Summary of Study Session 4

In this study session, you have learnt what epistemology is, understanding it as the study of our method of acquiring knowledge. It answers the question, "How do we know?" It encompasses the nature of concepts, the constructing of concepts, the validity of the senses, logical reasoning, as well as thoughts, ideas, memories, emotions, and all things mental. We have seen how epistemology is concerned with how our minds are related to reality, and

whether these relationships are valid or invalid. Epistemology is the explanation of how we think. It is required in order to be able to determine the true from the false, by determining a proper method of evaluation. It is needed in order to use and obtain knowledge of the world around us. Without epistemology, we could not think. More specifically, we would have no reason to believe our thinking was productive or correct, as opposed to random images flashing before our mind. With an incorrect epistemology, we would not be able to distinguish truth from error.

4.16.1 References / Suggestions for Further Reading

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