



Tutorial Letter 101/3/2020

Introduction to Western Philosophy PLS1501

Semesters 1 and 2

**Department of Philosophy, Practical and
Systematic Theology**

This tutorial letter contains important information about your module. It includes information about your assignment and examination questions!

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1 INTRODUCTION

Dear Student Welcome to this introductory module in Western philosophy. This is a demanding module in terms of the kind of study required. In order to philosophise, one needs to make a very close study of the texts so as to assimilate a variety of aspects (for example, content, style, structure, etc.) before one presents one's own considered critical response which will reflect (to some extent) this assimilation, as well as further reflection upon themes raised. The reading-time mentioned in the Study Units at the end of this tutorial letter is a very rough guide. In all probability, you will find that you need to spend much longer than is suggested. On the other hand, by taking the time at this stage of your programme, there is no doubt, whatsoever that much of the anxiety and effort associated with examination preparation is reduced. We shall do our best to make your study of this module successful. You will be well on your way to success if you start studying early in the semester and resolve to do the assignments properly. Please note: self-test exercises should NOT be submitted. You will receive a number of tutorial letters during the year. A tutorial letter is our way of communicating with you about teaching, learning and assessment. Tutorial Letter 101 contains important information about the scheme of work, resources and assignments for this module. We urge you to read it carefully and to keep it at hand when working through the study material, preparing the assignment(s), preparing for the examination and addressing questions to your lecturers. Please read Tutorial Letter 301 in combination with Tutorial Letter 101 as it gives you an idea of generally important information when studying at a distance and within a particular College. In Tutorial Letter 101, you will find the assignments and assessment criteria as well as instructions on the preparation and submission of the assignments. This tutorial letter also provides all the information you need with regard to the prescribed study material and other resources and how to obtain it. Please study this information carefully and make sure that you obtain the prescribed material as soon as possible.

We have also included certain general and administrative information about this module. Please study this section of the tutorial letter carefully. Right from the start we would like to point out that you must read all the tutorial letters you receive during the semester immediately and carefully, as they always contain important and, sometimes, urgent information. We hope that you will enjoy this module and wish you all the best! The biggest reason for students doing badly in their assignments is that they somehow seem to think that critically discussing a topic in Philosophy provides them with carte blanche to say whatever they like about that topic.

At this stage of your study of Philosophy, your own opinions need to be tutored through the diverse positions taken on various topics that are outlined in the guide and in the philosophical literature that you encounter elsewhere! Therefore, we should like to draw your attention to Tutorial Letter WYSALLB/301/4/2020. This is perhaps the most important of all the tutorial letters that you will receive in the study of Philosophy. Should you wish to receive copies of your study guides, special tutorial letters, or any other form of study material dispatched by the Department through ordinary mail electronically, you may access this material through the myUNISA system.

Since the postal services are not as efficient as we should wish, you are strongly advised regularly to check on myUNISA for the latest study material dispatched by us to you, especially for the tutorial letter providing examination guidance. This tutorial letter sets out your programme. It is a valuable document containing important information. You should read through this document BEFORE DOING ANYTHING ELSE.

The Department of Despatch should supply you with the following tutorial matter for this unit of study:

- Tutorial Letters – READ 101 AND 301 FIRST
- Tutorial Letter 501

Note: Some of this tutorial matter may not necessarily be available when you register. Tutorial Matter that is not available when you register will be posted to you as soon as possible.

Once more, please note that you may access such tutorial matter through myUNISA much earlier than you might access it through postal means, because of our sadly less- than- efficient postal service.

INVENTORY LETTER: Upon registration, you will receive an inventory letter containing information about your tutorial matter. See also the booklet entitled Studies @ Unisa.

We wish you all the best with your studies in this module. Sincerely, Mr N Dladla
Department of Philosophy, Practical and Systematic Theology

2 PURPOSE AND OUTCOMES

2.1 Purpose

To help you to develop an awareness of philosophical issues in the academic environment To develop appropriate critical skills that will enable you to defend your views in a systematic and organised manner concerning specific philosophical problems A single module on Western philosophy will not instantly equip you to engage meaningfully in philosophical discourse. It will, nevertheless, expose you to the main areas of the field of philosophy. You will gain an understanding of your own epistemological, metaphysical, ethical, and political convictions and approaches as well as those of others within the context of Western philosophical thinking.

2.2 Outcomes

Once you have completed this module, you will have the theoretical competence necessary for undertaking more advanced philosophical studies. More specifically, you will achieve the following outcomes:

- Understand the basic theoretical frameworks and dimensions of philosophical thinking
- Develop skills to think in integrated and holistic patterns
- Develop a critical philosophical attitude which will give you the skill to assess various philosophical positions. The particular skills you will acquire in order to be able to undertake the philosophical tasks expected of you include:
 - Analysing the structure of arguments of increasing complexity
 - Constructing counter-arguments
 - Linking untutored convictions with specifically philosophical considerations

3 LECTURER(S) AND CONTACT DETAILS

3.1 Lecturer(s)

Mr. Ndumiso Dladla

My contact details are: **Office:** Room 09-106, Theo van Wijk Building,
Muckleneuk Campus, Preller Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, Pretoria,
SOUTH AFRICA
Postal Address: P O Box 392, UNISA, 0003, SOUTH AFRICA
Telephone: +27 12 429 6403
Fax: +27 86 276 4525
e-mail: dladln@unisa.ac.za

3.2 Department

Should you be unable to reach me, or if you desire to contact the Department, you are welcome to contact our secretary, at the following contact details:

Office: Room 09-53,
Theo van Wijk Building,
Muckleneuk Campus,
Preller Street,
Muckleneuk Ridge, Pretoria,
SOUTH AFRICA
Postal address: P O Box 392, UNISA,
0003, SOUTH AFRICA
Telephone: +27 12 429 6888
e-mail: sekhunp@unisa.ac.za /
philosophy@unisa.ac.za

3.3 University

Please be aware that you will find general Unisa contact details in the studies @ Unisa brochure, and that you should make use of your student number in all correspondence with the University. Contact addresses of the various administrative departments are included in Studies brochure @ Unisa, which you received with your study package. You may contact your lecturers by post, email, telephone or on myUnisa.

Physical/ Postal address: University of South Africa Preller Street Muckleneuk Pretoria City of Tshwane

Fax number: 012 429 4150 / + 27 12 429 4150

Email: study-info@unisa.ac.za Online address: <http://my.unisa.ac.za> Always use your student number when you contact the university

4 RESOURCES

4.1 Prescribed book(s)

There is no prescribed text for this module

4.2 Recommended book(s)

While there are no recommended books for this module and the examination and assignment questions will be answerable entirely with only the use of the tutorial letter 501 and textbook.

The enthusiastic student might find some use in sources outside of the prescribed, some interesting and useful ones include:

Bertrand Russell's "History of philosophy", 1946 Unwin Publishers (and various others)

Enoch Stumpf's "From Socrates to Sartre: A History of Philosophy", 1988, McGraw-Hill Book

Frederick Copleston's The History of Philosophy, Especially Volumes I and II Vol. 1: Greece and Rome From the Pre-Socratics to Plotinus Vol 2: Medieval Philosophy - From Augustine to Duns Scotus

There are also excellent online resources such as the Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy available at <https://plato.stanford.edu/>

4.3 Library services and resources

The Unisa Library offers a range of information services and resources:

- for detailed Library information go to <http://www.unisa.ac.za/sites/corporate/default/Library>
- for research support and services (e.g. personal librarians and literature search services) go to <http://www.unisa.ac.za/sites/corporate/default/Library/Library-services/Research-support>

The Library has created numerous Library guides:

<http://libguides.unisa.ac.za>

Recommended guides:

- Request and download recommended material: <http://libguides.unisa.ac.za/request/request>
- Postgraduate information services: <http://libguides.unisa.ac.za/request/postgrad>
- Finding and using library resources and tools: http://libguides.unisa.ac.za/Research_skills
- Frequently asked questions about the Library: <http://libguides.unisa.ac.za/ask>
- Services to students living with disabilities: <http://libguides.unisa.ac.za/disability>

5 STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

The *Study @ Unisa* brochure is available on myUnisa: www.unisa.ac.za/brochures/studies

This brochure has all the tips and information you need to succeed at distance learning and, specifically, at Unisa.

A study skills book entitled **EFFECTIVE STUDY** is published by the Bureau for Counselling, Career and Academic Development (BCCAD). It is available in English and can be obtained from Unisa Press (see details below). The publication deals with a variety of topics which are applicable to specific periods during the semester or year. It also contains a screening questionnaire, which will indicate to students in which areas they may expect problems and on which areas they should focus.

To gain maximum advantage from the guidelines given in the publication, it is suggested that you work through the book at the beginning of your studies. After this initial overview, you can consult the sections selectively as your needs emerge. The publication can be used repeatedly by both beginner and experienced students, as it was not only written for students with study problems. Successful students can also use the guidelines to improve their academic performance.

Title: Van Schoor, WA, Mill, EM, & Potgieter, D. 2001. *Effective study*. Pretoria: Unisa Press.

How to obtain Effective Study?: You can order the booklet from Unisa Press. Only prepaid orders will be accepted. The order form appears in the booklet *Unisa: Studies @ Unisa* which you have received as part of your study package.

For telephone enquiries: (012) 429-3515

Fax: (012) 429-3449

E-mail: unisa-press@unisa.ac.za

6 STUDY PLAN

Please refer to the study programme for the semester for which you are registered, i.e. either for **Semester 1 OR Semester 2, 2020**.

It is important to work out a study programme that **suits your particular circumstances**. Remember to organise your study programme in such a way that you have **enough time to prepare for the examination**.

To adopt a **sensible and realistic study plan**, we provide you with an explicit indication of the **notional study hours** you need to spend on each topic of the study material. The notional study hours attached to this module are **120**. Please keep in mind that **notional study hours refer to the actual time you actively spend on the study material**.

You should spend at least **1½ hours per day** to cover all the prescribed material in this module:

1.5 hours X 80 days = 120 notional hours.

You can, of course, work out your own study programme.

FOR ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS, PLEASE REFER TO CHAPTER 7.

STUDY PROGRAMME FOR SEMESTER ONE AND TWO, 2020.

Please note: In this module, we will focus only on the ancient and medieval traditions of philosophy. In this module, we will focus only on the ancient and medieval traditions of philosophy.

Our study programme is structured as follows:

Part A: Introduction to Western Philosophy and the History of Western Philosophical Education in South Africa (Introduction + Study Unit 1),

Part B: Epistemology and Metaphysics (Study Units 2, and 3) of the tutorial letter 501

Part C: Ethics and Political Philosophy (Study Units 5, 6 and 9) of the tutorial letter 501

So, altogether we will be concentrating on six Study Units, with our attention firmly focused on four major themes in philosophy, namely, epistemology, metaphysics, ethics and political philosophy

PART A : Introduction to the History of Western Philosophical Education in South Africa

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

- Explain what the relevance of racism is to the study of Western philosophy in South Africa
- Explain why it is our history of a philosophy can be described as a “colonial practice”
- Explain what the relevance of the educational history of philosophy is to the study of the discipline
- Reading for this section is pp 1-22

STUDY UNIT 1. Conquest and the History of Western Philosophical Education in South Africa

Semester 1 Period of study – 30 January – 3 February 1 week: 10 notional hours

Semester 2 Period of study – 2 July - 6 July 1 weeks: 10 notional hours

PART B . EPISTEMOLOGY AND METAPHYSICS

Epistemology: The theories of knowledge proposed by Plato and Aristotle
The theories of knowledge proposed by Augustine and Aquinas

Metaphysics: Pre-Socratic cosmologies;
The metaphysics of Plato and Aristotle
Medieval philosophers’ proofs for the existence of God

These themes are studied in 3 study units (2-4) hereunder.

STUDY UNIT 2. The Pre-Socratic, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle

Semester 1 Period of study: 6 February– 17 February 2 weeks: national 20 hours

Semester 2 Period of study – 9 July – 20 July 2 weeks: 20 notional hours

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

- **give an account of the problem of the arche as found in pre-Socratic cosmologist metaphysicians**
- **give an account of the problem of knowledge as understood by Plato**
- **evaluate the respective merits of various kinds of classical Greek epistemological and metaphysical approaches** Reading for this units Tutorial letter 501, Part A, Study Unit 2 (pp 24-59)

Self-test 1 (maximum length: 1000 words)

- How do early Milesian philosophers explain the fact of change? Which of them, if any, do you agree with? Give reasons.
- Pre-Socratic thinkers were especially preoccupied with the search for the single substance (the one) underlying the apparent diversity (the Many) in nature. Explain how their dialogical interaction advanced the philosophical quest.
- Do you agree with Plato that universals must be known prior to our being able to know the individual things to which we apply them as descriptive terms?
- Explain the progress of thought from imagining to intelligence as Plato depicts it in his simile of the divided line.
- Do you agree with Plato that universals must be known prior to our being able to know the individual things to which we apply them as descriptive terms?
- Do a beautiful sunset, a beautiful horse, a beautiful song, and a beautiful painting have something in common? If so, is it something physical?
- What do you consider the most powerful objection against Plato's theory of Forms? Why?
- Compare and contrast the epistemologies/metaphysics of Plato and Aristotle
- Evaluate the respective merits of these two influential ancient Greek epistemological and metaphysical approaches
- Give an account of Aristotle's concepts of substance and cause, providing examples of your own as instances of the application of the four causes doctrine
- Assess the merit of Aristotle's concept of cause Reading for this unit Tutorial Letter 501, Part A, Study Unit 2 (pp. 30-52) Self-test 2 (maximum length: 1000 words)
- How does Aristotle explain the transition from plain fact to reasoned fact?
- What does Aristotle understand by cause? Choose an example and show how it exemplifies Aristotle's doctrine of the four causes.
- Do you agree with Aristotle that scientific laws embody logically necessary truth? How to organise your reading Begin by reading Part A, Study Unit 2 of the tutorial letter 501. Pause at the various "Points to ponder" and do some philosophising! Do the self-assessment questions at the end of Part A, Study Unit 2. Answer all the relevant questions you find (that is, "Points to ponder") in the tutorial letter 501.

How to organise your reading

Begin by reading Part B, Study Unit 2 of the tutorial letter 501.

Pause at the various “Points to ponder” and do some philosophising!

Do the self-assessment questions at the end of Part A, Study Unit 2. Answer all the relevant questions you find (that is, “Points to ponder”) in the tutorial letter 501

STUDY UNIT 3. Medieval Philosophy: Augustine, Anselm and Aquinas

Semester 1 Period of study – 20 February – 2 March 2 weeks: notional 20 hours

Semester 2 Period of study – 23 July – 03 August 2 weeks: 20 notional hours

At the end of this section you should be able to:

- indicate how the various aspects of Augustine’s theory of knowledge are linked
- explain and critically evaluate Augustine’s synthesis of Platonic and Biblical doctrine
- explain and critically evaluate Anselm’s ontological argument for the existence of God
- explain and critically evaluate Aquinas’s five proofs for the existence of God

Reading for this units Tutorial letter 501, Part B, Study Unit 3 (pp. 60-77)

Self-test 3 (maximum length: 1000 words)

- Explain how Augustine’s view of the role of God represents his attempt to explain not only the possibility of knowledge but also the nature of the world
- Explain and evaluate Gaunilo’s objections to Anselm’s proof for the existence of God. Do you consider Aquinas’s metaphysical views to be an improvement of Aristotle’s? Give reasons.

PART B. INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Introduction and orientation

We shall be studying the following themes:

- Ethical theory: The ancient Greeks: the notion of the highest Good
- Political philosophy: The ancient Greeks: justice and the state

These themes are studied in study units 4-6

STUDY UNIT 4. Greeks II Plato and Aristotle's Ethical Theories

Semester 1 Period of study – 5 March – 16 March 2 weeks: notional 20 hours

Semester 2 Period of study – 06 August – 17 August 2 weeks: notional 20 hours

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

- explain in broad outline the nature and scope of ethical theory
- explain the significance of Socrates's argument: "Virtue is knowledge"
- evaluate the respective theories of Plato and Aristotle regarding the notion of the "Highest Good"

Reading for this unit

Tutorial letter 501. Part C: Study Unit 5.(pp.78-89)

Self-test 6:

Self-assessment questions in tutorial letter 501 How to organise your reading:

- I. Begin by reading Part 6 of the prescribed text.
- II. Now read the "Introduction" to Ethics in the tutorial letter 501.
- III. Read through the relevant sections on Socrates, Plato and Aristotle in the tutorial letter 501.
- IV. Read the relevant chapter on Aristotle in your prescribed text.
- V. Return to the tutorial letter 501, and answer all the questions you find in the self-assessment questions Study Unit 5.

STUDY UNIT 5. Medieval Ethics: Augustine and Aquinas

Semester 1 Period of study –2 April – 13 April 2 weeks: 20 notional hours

Semester 2 Period of study –20 August – 31 August 2 weeks: 20 notional hours

At the end of this unit you should be able to

- describe how Saint Augustine depicts God as humanity's chief good
- give an account of Thomas Aquinas's ethical theory as "natural law"

Reading for this unit Tutorial letter 501: Part B Study Unit 6,(pp.90-97)

Self-test 7: Self-assessment questions in tutorial letter 501 How to organise your reading Read your tutorial letter 501, Part C: Study Unit 5.

STUDY UNIT 6. The Greeks III: Political Philosophy

Semester 1 Period of study – 16 April – 27 April 2 weeks: 20 notional hours

Semester 2 Period of study – 3 September – 14 September 2 weeks: 20 notional hours

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

- explain the nature and scope of political philosophy
- explain the Greek notion of “the political”
- compare and contrast Plato and Aristotle’s theory of the state
- compare and contrast Plato and Aristotle’s theory of justice

Reading for this unit Tutorial letter 501, Part B, Study Unit 9(pp.98-108)

Self-test 6: Self-assessment questions in tutorial letter 501

How to organise your reading: I. Read through Study Unit 6 of the tutorial letter 501.

Do the self-assessment questions at the end of Study Unit 6 of the tutorial letter 501.

7 ASSESSMENT

7.1 Assessment criteria

You are required to do 2 different assignments in the course of the semester. The 1st assignment is a shorter form of assignment asking for brief discussion of particular concepts or their definition. The assignment total is out of 60 total marks consisting of 3 short such questions assessed on the following criteria as in the following table.

Assignment 1

Criteria	Weight
Grammatically correct and precise language (no circumlocution, spelling errors, contradictions, poor use of punctuation)	30 %
Comprehensiveness of the definition /discussion . Independent synthesis (said in own words rather than simply parroting the study guide)	50 %
Referencing (in text /reference list at end of question)	20 %

Assignment 2

Criteria	Weight
Grammatically correct and precise language (no circumlocution, spelling errors, contradictions, poor use of punctuation)	25 %
Correct understanding of the concept being discussed, good and clear argumentation .	30 %
Critical insight (signs of independent understanding and reckoning with the idea by own example and contextualisation)	25%
References and bibliography/reference list (crediting of sources used both in the attribution of borrowed and quoted ideas in text as well as a comprehensive sources list at the end of the text giving full bibliographic details to the texts consulted)	20%

7.2 Assessment plan

Weight carried by assignments towards final mark of module: The final module mark is comprised of the following components: **Year mark (assignments) 20%**

Examination 80%

Final Mark 100%

Assignment 1 has a weight of **50 %** of the **year mark**

Assignment 2 has a weight of **50 %** of your **year mark**.

As a result **each assignment** is worth **10% of the Final Mark** which consists of both the year mark and examination.

7.3 Assignment numbers

7.3.1 General assignment numbers

There are **2 Assignments given each semester** numbered **Assignment 1** and **Assignment 2** . Each Assignment has its own **unique number** to be entered in by hand if you're submitting by post and which will be indicated on myUNISA if you submit electronically. It is essential that you should make your submissions under the correct assignment number and use the appropriate unique number to identify it.

7.3.2 Unique assignment numbers

Semester 1 Assignment 1 : **634547**

Semester 1 Assignment 2 : **761005**

Semester 2 Assignment 1 : **892258**

Semester 2 Assignment 2 : **797426**

7.4 Assignment due dates

Semester 1: Assignment 1: **2020/03/13**
Assignment 2: **2020/04/17**

Semester 2: Assignment 1: **2020/08/31**
Assignment 2: **2020/09/29**

7.5 Submission of assignments

The assignments must be submitted on or before the due date. No extensions will be made. The reason for this is that the submission of the assignment is what establishes that the student is actively registered. Failure to submit the first assignment will lead to a denial of admission into the exam.

7.6 The assignments

Semester 1:

Assignment 1

Due Date : 2020/03/13

Total 60 marks

Question : For a value of 20 marks each please discuss briefly what your understanding of the following contains:

1. "Western Philosophy" (you may refer to etymology, periods, movements, figures , branches and problems) **[20 marks]**
2. "Political Philosophy" (you may refer to relevant sub-branches, problems/concerns and figures in the course of answering this question) **[20 marks]**
3. "Aesthetics" (you may refer to relevant sub-branches, problems/concerns and figures in the course of answering this question) **[20 marks]**

Semester 1

Assignment 2:

Due Date :2020/04/17

Total marks: 100

Question : Critically Discuss St Thomas Aquinas' Five Proofs for the existence of God **[100marks]** (Hint : A Critical Discussion in addition to consisting of a recapitulation of the arguments of Aquinas must also include your own independent assessment of his reasoning and whether you think it is sound)

Semester 2:

Assignment 1

Due Date : 2020/08/31

Total 60 marks

Question : For a value of 20 marks each please discuss briefly what your understanding of the following contains:

1. "Western Philosophy" (you may refer to etymology, periods, movements, figures , branches and problems) **[20 marks]**
2. "Metaphysics" (you may refer to relevant sub-branches, problems/concerns and figures in the course of answering this question) **[20 marks]**
3. "Logic" (you may refer to relevant sub-branches, problems/concerns and figures in the course of answering this question) **[20 marks]**

Semester 2:

Assignment 2

Due Date: 2020/09/29

Question: Discuss Plato's Allegory of the Cave with special focus on its epistemological and ethical implications. (In your answer you must demonstrate both knowledge of the allegory itself as well as interpret its epistemological and ethical "messages") **[100 marks]**

7.7 The examination

Examination periods:

This module is completed in a single semester period. If you are registered for the **first semester**, you will write the examination in **May/June 2020** and the **supplementary examination** will be written in **October/November 2020**.

If you are registered for the **second semester** you will write the examination in **October/November 2020** and the supplementary examination will be written in **May/June 2020**.

During the semester, the **Examination Section** will provide you with information regarding the examination in general, examination **venues**, examination **dates and times**.

Format of the examination:

Your examination will be **two hours in duration**. It will consist of 3 sections.

The first (**SECTION 1**) is of **mandatory short questions** in the **form of your first assignment** of which you'll be required to **answer any 4 out of a possible 8** questions. Each question in section 1 will be worth 10 percent with the section total adding up to **40% in total**.

Sections 2 and 3 will consist of **essay type** questions drawn from any of the 3 sections of the study guide (**PART A, B AND C**). They will concern the history of Western philosophy in South Africa, Ancient or Mediaeval Western Philosophy. The examination questions will be founded in the content of the module, however, they will require your own critical reflection.

Comments on writing the examination:

During the examination, it is imperative that you take time to read through the entire examination paper before deciding which questions to answer. (It may help to jot down a few of the main points you think should appear in each answer.) You should also keep some time in reserve to read through your answers upon completion of writing the examination and prior to submitting the examination requires exposition of parts of the relevant study material.

This exposition should be followed by a critical discussion of certain aspects or implications of the topics considered. Where possible, illustrate the point you are trying to make by means of examples or solid reasoning.

Since examples occurring in tutorial letters and articles are helpful aids in coming to grips with and subsequently remembering key concepts, your use of them demonstrates your grasp of the point at issue. Make absolutely sure that you are answering the question and are not merely summarising a part of the study material!

For some idea of the questions you may be asked, a good idea is to re-frame chapter or section headings from your tutorial letter 501 and even paragraph headings from your prescribed text in the form of questions. The range of questions will more or less cover all the study material for the paper. **You must obtain 50% in order to pass the examinations**

8 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The Studies @ Unisa brochure contains an A-Z guide of the most relevant study information. Please refer to this document for questions you may have.

9 IN CLOSING

It is our hope that you'll apply yourself patiently to your study and that you'll make enough time to go beyond the study material by finding other sources of knowledge. That you will contact us if you require any assistance with this module and that this module is only the beginning or an important part of your own philosophical quest.