

An Exposition of the Foundations of the Philosophy of Human Nature

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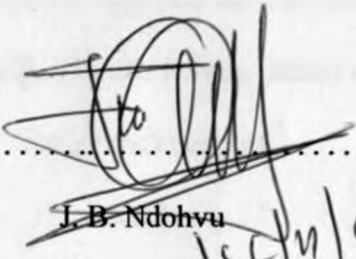
**A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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**Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies
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Declaration

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented in any other university


.....
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14/11/07

This thesis has been submitted for examination with our approval as university supervisors



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Dedication

To my mother Amina J. Reje, and her sons and daughters

Mohammed, Khadija, Dhuria, Salma, Hidaya and Malick,

For all their support

And

To the memory of br. Mohammed B. Ndohvu for his sacrifice

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Abstract

Our study is an exposition of the foundations of the philosophy of human nature. This task, of the exposition of the foundations of human nature philosophy, is undertaken because in our preliminary investigations, we discovered that the philosophies of the human nature generally fall into two basic camps, namely, “purism” and “realism.” “Purism” consists of the position that there is an unadulterated philosophy of human nature, knowable purely by reasoning, which then composes the substance of human nature. “Realism,” on the other hand, consists of the position that there are no pure concepts of human nature, which transcend social and existential circumstances, and, therefore, there are no concepts or philosophies of human nature which are “purist” in that sense.

These two camps, namely, “purism” and “realism, contradict each other and generated, and continue to generate, a lot of controversy in the philosophical discussion of human nature. Therefore, we felt that an exposition of the foundations of the philosophy of human nature would go a long way towards clarifying this confusion in human nature philosophy.

To tackle the problem in our research, we employ the eminent philosophical methods of thinking, like critical thinking, conceptual analysis, comparison, definition and historical exegesis, under the general method “deconstructionism.” Our “deconstructionism” of the philosophy of human nature reveals that neither “purism” is pure, nor is “realism” free from purist assumptions.

The study concludes that a metaphysical assumption, as well as socio-historical contexts, are basic foundations in the philosophies and conceptions of human nature.

The study recommends that humans, therefore, need to continuously and critically evaluate the conceptions of the human nature that they hold, in view of the fact that such conceptions are products of changing conceptual and existential circumstances as our study shows.

Operational definitions

Philosophy: The concept "philosophy" generally refers to the various views by which mankind make sense of reality. These are views like religion, myths and traditions. In the strict sense, however, "philosophy" is the systematic, rational search for the absolute, universal, objective and general knowledge. As such, "philosophy" is the product of analytical and critical reasoning that attempts to outline the ultimate nature, constitution and structure of reality. We should hasten to add that philosophy is studied under several branches. For instance, metaphysics is the branch of philosophy that studies the ultimate constitution of beings.

Human Nature: The concept "human nature" refers to those predications that are said to be peculiarly the essence of people, i.e., those predications which distinguish humans as a race from non-human races or beings. In this sense, "human nature" refers to the qualities which make people stand out as humans. The philosophy of human nature suggests, for instance, that rationality and language are such human traits.

Metaphysics: The concept "metaphysics" literally refers to the study of the realities beyond the experiential. As a branch of philosophy, however, it is the rational study of the ultimate nature of whatever exists in its most fundamental aspects, or what Aristotle called the "first philosophy." Whether first or last, they are the ultimate horizon of human thought, and as such, metaphysics studies the realities that are discoverable and ascertainable by thought.

Purism: "Purism" is the perspective in philosophy which insists on the purity of knowledge. It holds that philosophical theories must be universal and stand on their own independent of external and historical conditions. Such theories are concerned with the universally possible meanings of concepts. It holds that there are fixed, final, objective, always and everywhere relevant concepts of reality that produce irreducible essences, the character of the ultimate, immutable nature of beings. According to this perspective, then, traditionally, philosophy from Thales, Heraclitus, Plato, Descartes, Locke, Spinoza Leibniz, Kant, and Hegel to Schopenhauer, for instance, is "purist"--whether as metaphysics or any other branch of philosophy.

Realism: The concept "realism" refers to the perspective in philosophy that philosophy must formulate concepts independent of idealization and speculation. It contends that this should be the case because theories are always determined by cultural and historical factors. It contends that there are no fixed, eternal essences discoverable in reality. It holds that realistic theories may grasp the unique and repeatable meanings of events and, therefore, possess expressions which are general. It asserts, however, that a theory is realistic to the extent it admits that external conditions determine it. Such conditions may be social structures, people's needs, politics or climatic conditions, for example. Realist philosophers include historicists like Gottfried Herder, Richard Rorty and Jamie James, and Marxists--like Ludwig Feuerbach and Friederich Engels. Most significant for our study about them and their realism is the claim that all theories are determined by historical conditions and are, therefore, particular.

Postmodernism: "Postmodernism" literally refers to the philosophy "after" or beyond the "modern." "Modernism" is a term applied to a way of doing philosophy which began mainly with

Descartes in the seventeenth century."Modernism" is a reductionist approach to knowledge characterized by the search for the universal, absolute and the most general foundations of knowledge. As the term suggests, "postmodernism" is the philosophy after the modernist search. It is a school of theories that are a critique against modernism. They reject reductionism and are committed to attempts to characterize what philosophy beyond modernism should look like. A fundamental feature of "postmodernism" is the assumption that modernity is a historically created discourse, whose significance should be debated. Most fundamental is the view that there is no human knowledge or sense of reality which exists outside the sphere of human experience and the particularity of language. "Postmodernism" criticizes all thought traditions as particularistic, and therefore, in a sense, flawed or limited. It advocates for some kind of toleration of "objective pluralism" in positions and views. Examples of postmodernist philosophies are works like those of Jean Francois Lyotard--a reknown French philosopher, and Alasdair MacIntyre, a British philosopher. They hold that for the various reasons mentioned above, philosophies can no longer be seen as absolutist. Thus, Lyotard, for instance, admitting of the existence of a multiplicity of philosophies, contends that the criterion for judging between the different philosophies should be their performance.

Deconstructionism: "Deconstructionism" is a method of philosophizing where philosophy proceeds by a demonstration of the incompleteness or incoherence of a philosophical position. "Deconstructionism" takes the form of a conceptual critique and clarification. Some "deconstructionism," however, assumes the form of historical and contextual analysis where they critically work out the consequences of exposing the historical and contextual bases of the concepts, theories and principles.

Chapter one

Introduction

1.1 Background information

A principal issue in philosophy is the nature of reality. Philosophical deliberations over the nature of physical reality have not settled, even though the deliberations deal with tangible reality. Questions over the extent and limits of the expansive physical nature in the cosmos, for example, have remained unanswered, although there are numerous theories about it. Similarly, philosophical deliberations over the precise nature of spiritual reality have stayed unsettled. Views have remained various ranging from the belief that the spiritual reality exists, to the view that it doesn't. The question remains whether to suppose that reality in general is ultimately material or spiritual, and whether there is some reason to distinguish the spiritual dominion from the material realm, and view them as belonging to two different spheres of being. Likewise, philosophical reflections over the nature of humans taken to be possessed of both matter and spirit have remained unsolved. Thus, in the period prior to Plato (427-347 B.C.E.), some philosophers like Thales (625-546 B.C.E.) and Anaximenes (590-525 B.C.E.) took a materialistic stance, and held that the spiritual features in humans are distinguishable from other features only by virtue of the size and unpredictable behavior of physical particles that allegedly make up the soul; however, all reality is ultimately material. But this materialism gave way to dualism, with Plato as a leading dualist arguing for a sharp distinction between physical and spiritual realities, and crediting the latter with existence both prior to and following physical existence.

In the Mediaeval Age, philosophy tended to follow Plato, and was thus dualistic. Hence, for example, the Mediaeval Age philosophers St. Augustine (354-430) and St. Aquinas (1225-1274), established a dualism similar to that of Plato. But in their argument, they introduced the contention that if souls and bodies are separate in conception, then they must be distinct in reality.

From the debate about the nature of reality, there developed the philosophy that deals specifically with human nature--which is called the "philosophy of human nature." A principal issue in this philosophy is the exact nature of humankind. One of the oldest and most troubling questions in this philosophy concerns the nature of consciousness. For, by means of consciousness, it seems possible for humans to make some kind of connection with physical objects and realities. This raises the philosophical question of how this is precisely possible, because the two are of a different kind--that is, physical objects are physical, and spirits are non-physical. Hence, how can there be a connection? Thus, a British philosopher, Hobbes (1588-1629), for example, asked whether one of the two can be reduced to the other as to account for the apparent interaction between the souls and bodies.

Yet, another much written about issue in the philosophy of human nature is the exact nature of sub-consciousness, attempting to characterize it, and to articulate how it relates to conscious mental processes and to the physical bodies of mankind. A further issue is the problem of the exact nature of a person's personality. The issue here is what originates that deeply ingrained and relatively enduring character that distinguishes humans from non-humans, and distinguishes one human from another.

Today, the philosophy of human nature can be said to be investigating into wide-ranging issues and concepts about humans--like the soul, rationality, intelligence, consciousness and passions, asking what exactly constitute human nature. As a branch of philosophy, the philosophy of human nature is characterized by an a priori method in its deliberations. This is a "purist" approach, which means that it is not an empirical study, but an attempt to purely critically understand the key concepts involved in thinking about human nature. Both in its dominant past and principal present form, it has been largely an attempt to address human nature by means of answers that are not supposedly culture-bound, but objective, universal and general. A major reason for the study of the human nature has been either that the knowledge of human nature is valuable in itself, or it is paramount for knowing what kind of life is appropriate for humans; or, for the reason that human nature is possessed of qualities that are valuable in themselves, perhaps a quality like rationality, which is deemed to be the only window for humans to know what is truly real in the cosmos. The wide-ranging presupposition in the human nature philosophy has been that there are fixed traits of human nature. Thus, it has been concerned with knowing the sum of the elements that make up the human nature.

Recently, however, tracing its origins to elements in Aristotle (384-322 B.C.E.), there developed the "realist" perspective for the conceptualization of human nature. It owed its advance to St. Aquinas, Hegel (1770-1831) and Marx (1818-1883) in whose philosophy, as in Aristotle's, it was suggested that while only "purist" philosophies directed their thought to some eternal and transcendental natures, no philosophy is ever eternal and transcendent. All philosophy, they maintained, composes finite images limited by temporality and particularity of existence.

While the philosophy that fixes its gaze on answers claimed to be unadulterated by external factors, but focused on the objective and the universal essences is a "purist" philosophy, a "realist" philosophy is the view that philosophies are not culture transcendent, but are all determined and shaped by culture.

1.2 Statement of the problem

A "purist" philosophy of human nature is the attempt to formulate formal definitions that are not determined by culture and individual bias. In such an approach to the philosophy of human nature, however, fixed conceptions are favoured. Nonetheless, the inflexibility of such an approach is such that it does not allow for, or ignores the study of social contexts because of the latter's role in illuminating the internal dynamics of the constitution of reality. Because of that failure to take seriously the social constitution of reality, some conceptions of human nature are presented as late stages, i.e., as having been surpassed in the development of human nature philosophy, or merely dismissed as minor variants to dominating definitions.

On the other hand, there is the "realist" philosophy. It is the philosophy based on the view that all conceptions about the world arise from existential contexts, and so variations in human nature thoughts are normal. One serious problem with the "realism," however, is that in its insisting on the role of existential contexts in the determination of conceptions of human nature, it trashes a whole tradition of existing "purist" thoughts.

Clearly, from these two positions a philosophical problem arises for consideration, namely, the two positions germane in human nature thought conflict. "Purism" conflictingly insists that there are

universal human nature concepts; "realism" insists that all human nature concepts are relative to existential conditions. Consequently, the antagonisms leave pending the very question the two positions seek to answer in the first place--i.e., they leave pending the central but fascinating question, "What precisely is human nature?" The failure to answer that question itself raises a number of other burning issues for academic pursuit, which complicates the issue of human nature further. For instance, the following is a problem which needs an explanation: Are the two positions irreconcilable or reconcilable? One of the nagging questions is whether the "purist" and the "realist" positions are inappropriate for conceptualizing human nature, or whether they are appropriate but there has been a misrepresentation of the evidence by the two conceptions which they use in understanding human nature.

Moreover, deriving from the pending question, namely, "What precisely is human nature?"--the following specific academic questions arise: Are there "purist" conceptions of human nature? Are views about human nature influenced by social contexts? Can the "purist" and the "realist" positions manage to come up with generalized universal essences of human nature and solve the problem of human nature? Are existing "purist" views about human nature really "purist," or are they specific views? Our study specifically raises the central question: What, indeed, is human nature, if anything?

1.3 Objectives of the study

The general objective of our study is to examine the plausibility of the "realist" and the "purist" perspectives in determining the meaning of "human nature." At the end of the thesis, a researcher or

reader should be able to tell precisely what human nature is--i.e., whether human nature is "purist," or its conceptions are determined by social contexts or otherwise.

The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To examine the kinds of concepts of human nature that have proliferated in the evolution of philosophy
2. To scrutinize the foundation of these concepts
3. To examine the role the concepts play in casting images of human nature.

1.4 Justification and significance of the study

Marx stated that there is interplay between conceptions of reality and social existence.¹ If that is true, the question, "What is human nature?"--cannot be answered, in our view, without looking back at the conceptual issues and the historical circumstances that gave rise to the human nature concepts. Yet, though Marx's perspective remains in view, seldom, however, has philosophy applied that insight to its absolute conclusion in the consideration of the notions of human nature that have proliferated in philosophy.

For example, some philosophers have, indeed, deliberated upon this issue in their own way. For instance, there has been philosophies based on a "postmodernist" approach--which is an approach holding not only that human nature concepts are circumstantial in their foundations, but also that they do not correspond with any reality beyond themselves. But this perspective differs from both a Marxist and a "purist" approach, in that the "postmodernist" approach insists on the historical foundations of philosophy, while insisting--contrary to Marxist approaches, that no human nature

philosophy captures any objective essences of human nature. Contrariwise, Marxists insist that circumstances forge a notion of human nature unique to those circumstances.

When the issue is discussed from the "purist" perspective, there is the tendency of seeking to subsume the others. Thus, on the other hand, our investigations into the existing "purist" philosophies of human nature reveal that the "purist" philosophies have reflected the method of progressively making sweeping assumptions—like humans are free—hoping that models ensuing from them would single-handedly and faithfully mirror human nature in general. But that approach seems to have major weaknesses. One of them is that in view of historical evolution, the theoretical models and the historical development of the human nature concepts did not necessarily, at all times, perfectly mirror each other.

It is, indeed, clear that the aforementioned perspectives do not necessarily mean to exist side by side—pluralistically, in view of their differences. Thus, our study seeks to revisit the justification or non-justification of their uneasy existence by studying the "purist" and the "realist" perspectives afresh. Nor have the positions just been misunderstood. Confronted on equal terms, the perspectives pose fundamental questions for each other, and this has served to highlight their differences rather than their possible similarity. That means that studying the foundations of the philosophy of human nature, as our study does, for instance, is very significant. For example, the differences in social existence between philosophers of human nature—like between Marx and Plato, Descartes and Nietzsche, Senghor and Al-Kindi, and between Al-Farabi and Confucius, may need to be recognized if observers are to understand succinctly the basis in their contrasts or similarities, and the fundamental questions they pose for each other in their philosophies.

Turning to the significance of this study, no doubt the philosophy of human nature underpins all aspects of human life. For instance, who we perceive ourselves to be, determines how we relate to others and our consciousness of the environment. Thus, when, for example, a nation has as its rallying call "a working nation," or "a sharing nation," when some people are labeled as "aggressive," or when we hear that "inner peace" solves human aggressive problems, or that some behavior is "anti-social," what are the real underlying benchmarks? From what philosophy of human nature do these descriptions emanate? Suppose one society believed that aggressive behaviour is decent or excellent, and another doesn't, this means that failure to understand human nature philosophy adequately poses not merely an academic problem, but a social and an emotional problem as well.

It is paramount, then, to note that the philosophy of human nature--whether "purist," "realist" or otherwise, touches on the sensitive issues of what humans are, and what they ought to be. It touches on issues like how people should conduct themselves, their hopes and aspirations as humans. Thus, the modalities of symbolizing group belonging is an important issue in regional, ethnic and racial relations. This issue, important as it is, depends on a proper definition of what human nature is. Likewise, human beings have existed in different social institutions from time immemorial. Their means of determining their obligations must proceed from assumptions they make about human nature, such that people who see humans as essentially social and with mutual dependence as what defines their humanity, for example--are likely to focus on the social than the individual good in their ethics and distribution of good.

Besides, we are living in a world today which, though culturally divided, is faced with globalization. The study of the philosophy of human nature may help to understand why while Western philosophy built and insists on the legitimacy of its logical, perhaps abstract systems of thought—which emphasize on individuality—for example, African philosophy largely continues to espouse a communalistic philosophy of human nature.

Last but not least, Cassirer (1874-1945), a famous philosopher of culture, stated like Marx above, that, indeed, philosophy is not a universal language. For Cassirer, philosophy is an interested language, since in his opinion, it is always a reflection of the goals and aspirations of a people in a definite social setting uttered in the forms known best to the people.² If Cassirer is right, which are these specific settings, goals and aspirations in the specificities of philosophies of human nature? A social context study of the philosophy of human nature such as our study undertakes helps to illuminate them.

1.5 The scope and limitation of the study

Our study analyzes the concepts of human nature that have come up in the history of philosophy. It inquires widely into Western and non-Western philosophies--like Taoism, Vedas, Marxism, rationalism and African communalism. An obvious limitation of a study of this kind lies in granting that conceptions depend on their origins. If so, this then also applies to our conclusions in the study. But this is quite right for, if Cassirer, Marx and Hegel are right, no matter how transcendent our conceptions may be, they have a history, and must arise from particular social and even theoretical origins—which, as we assume, we must defend. In any case, as we will shortly maintain, our research works within the context of the theory of historicism. This theory holds that reality has a

contextual outlook. Our point now, however, is that we proceed, in our study, within the context of that hitherto not fully proven supposition that philosophy is a function of social conditions.

Contrariwise to this conceptualization, there exists the idea of the independence and the objectivity of thought traceable to "purist" philosophies. We also preliminarily grant this position. But this stance invokes the yet to be proved assumption that there is a "pure" or absolute philosophy of human nature that does not necessarily derive from any particular social contexts but, the rational mind, which is the position "purism" upholds.

In a nutshell, above are central but yet unproven theses that our study grants at the outset, but are part and parcel of our positive advance which locates the study as part of the debate between "purist" philosophies on the one hand, and "realist" philosophy on the other. Thus, tested in our study is the view that while a "purist" philosophy holds that there is an unadulterated philosophy independent of social contexts, a "realist" philosophy holds that an analysis of all philosophy reveals that philosophy is relational, contextual and historically contingent.

Moreover, our study will not answer all the questions asked about human nature; but it will offer principles about what human nature is, and how to treat human nature issues.

Besides the above, our study has another limitation: As we may already have made it clear, the study examines a complex, controversial issue, namely, the issue of human nature. In studying such an issue, there is always the obvious limitation to investigation, namely, that given the scope and the breadth involved, it is impossible to refer to all the texts that have proliferated in the history of

philosophy, for they are countless. But this should not scare the reader; the question of numbers is an extra-textual concern. Thus, some scholars or works—e.g., works from the African Diaspora, for example, which have dwelt with human nature will not feature. However, the concepts and the schools of thought dealt with by us, are presentations excellent enough for contrasting view points. As such, the issue of human nature is adequately discussed without losing the main foci.

1.6 Literature review

Several studies influenced and cemented our thinking on the fundamentality of studying further the philosophy of human nature. For example, Homer, an ancient Greek poet--while considering human nature, allegedly proved the existence of souls in the cosmos and in humans. For instance, he made a distinction between souls and minds, although his account contained no more philosophical force than accounts of belief. For him, souls are the mysterious, occult powers which are the sources of consciousness in beings—mankind included. A "mind," also referred to by the name *psyche*, is distinguished as the totality or ensemble of a being's physiological functions.³

In the period after Homer, we find the Sophists, for example. These fabulous wondering Greek teachers of the fifth century B.C.E. Athens claimed that knowledge is relative; it differs from place to place, from time to time, and from one individual to another. There are, they observed, no absolute moral principles or fixed principles of knowledge. In other words for the Sophists, it is in the nature of humans to be subjective.⁴

As a consequence, there was Socrates' reaction against the Sophists--despicable for their subjective account of human nature. It was partly that refutation based on the Sophists' subjectivism that

Socrates (467-399 B.C.E.) is well known for having decreed that nature intended humans to be rational and objective, not subjective. In his view, Socrates contended that this is precisely because humans possess reason. He also contended that that is so since humans have souls which, possess the reason that enable humans to weigh ideas intellectually. Socrates, thus, stated that people must know themselves, for, allegedly, self-knowledge is the basis of attaining to true human nature, hence emphasizing the importance of knowledge of the nature of the soul as the shaper of human nature.⁵ Since Socrates, the search for knowledge in philosophy has largely been the search for what is absolutely and universally true--through no other means but reasoning. We traced such a search for the universal, general, absolute and rational explanations purportedly about human nature among the following philosophers' discussion of the nature of the soul, for example.

1.6.1 Philosophy of human nature since Socrates

Socrates' pupil, Plato, advanced his master's philosophy of human nature. Thus, in Plato's views, humans are essentially rational beings. Plato's theory, however, was bound up with his attempt to formulate a universal ethical, social and political thesis applicable universally to all humans, and thus to bring reason to the centre of the philosophy of human nature. Consequently, he argued that a human individual is made up of two basic elements--a soul and a body. The soul has three powers, namely, the "appetitive," "spirited" and "rational" powers. The "appetitive" and "spirited" powers are capacities that evoke desires such as of food, drink, sex, honor and bravery; the "rational" power is the capacity that deals with rational knowledge and wisdom. Depending on which power dominates one's soul, there will, purportedly, be an individual, and correspondingly, a society of people governed by wisdom, desire or the spirit.⁶

Commenting on Plato's thesis, Hall, a contemporary historian and philosopher of biology, noted how with Plato's distinction and isolation of the alleged various elements of the soul, there was created a conceptual space that allowed the human soul to be philosophically discussed in the abstract, that is, in isolation from the body and, therefore, supposedly, more deeply. In Hall's judgment, that conceptual space was echoed in Ficino's, Cusanus' and Plotinus' study of *Eros*, for instance. That *Eros* or "Love," as Hall called it, is reason (or rationality) said to be possessed by the soul and described by Heraclitus as ". . . the natural light for knowledge." Thus, speaking figuratively, Plotinus referred to *Eros* resoundingly as ". . . the one who truly opens up the realm of nature to humanity."⁷

In medieval philosophy, the idea that the soul is central in the nature of human nature was dominant. The Medievalists--like St. Aquinas, insisted that the soul is rational, and further wished to prove that what philosophy asserted by rational means in no way contradicted religious faith. Hence, commenting on St. Aquinas, Russell explained how the reknown Mediaeval Age philosopher (St. Aquinas) portrayed the nature of people. St. Aquinas contended that in humans are souls united to bodies. Incredulously, souls are, for him, some sort of ghostly beings implanted in human bodies by God. The human intellect is said to be a part of each person's soul created every time afresh by God when each person is created. The same soul which endows mankind with rationality endows mankind with faith. Hence, St. Aquinas held, souls constitute the basis of human nature.⁸

In Descartes' philosophy, which is a major turning point in philosophy in the seventeenth century, souls are at the heart of the search for solutions to practical and epistemological problems afflicting

people, though his appeal was to the greater philosophical debate whose epicenter it was to transform souls into a basic field of epistemology.⁹ Thus, Descartes (1596-1650), a highly regarded beacon of French and Western philosophy after the Mediaeval Age, reiterated the conviction of the existence of souls thus: "a knower is a soul that is conscious." In his own words, the soul is the "thing which thinks."¹⁰ To allegedly prove his point, he attempted to distinguish the soul from bodies, and argued that souls are distinct from bodies precisely in conception. That is, while the essence of souls is consciousness, the essence of bodies is spatial location.¹¹

The fundamentality of the soul in human nature was also carved out and fortified in the epistemological importance that Locke (1632-1704) attached to what he called, the "idea." To this British philosopher of yore, the "idea," he argued, is a likeness in the souls to an object of anything understood. With this notion, he suggested that it is impossible to understand anything without meaning that the knower possesses an "idea" of some sort in his/her soul. Yet, the "soul" for Locke, however, was nothing but a totality of anyone's ideas conceived in the abstract. Hitherto, clearly, his view contradicted the above mentioned commonly-held view as by Homer, for example—that souls are occult, mysterious substances existent in themselves or in external reality, or people's bodies.¹²

Similarly, a famous British philosopher, Berkeley (1685-1753), treated the souls not only as the important thing in human nature, but also as the foundation of what is originally real in the external cosmos as well. For instance, he stated that what is not in some way present to or represented in a soul, is not known in any sense of the word "know." To be known, he alleged, any existent must be present as an idea in some soul; either a human soul or any finite or infinite soul. This claim is

summarized in his famous maxim, *esse est percipii*, that is, "to be is to be perceived." He meant by this that what people mean by anything existing at all, is in its being perceived, that is, in its being an "idea" in a soul. Therefore, for him, human souls necessarily exist as the metaphysical condition or principle for thinking of the possible existence of any reality--in the human sense. What is noteworthy is that the soul is postulated by Berkeley as a metaphysical principle. But then, beyond that, he shares another interesting idea of the soul with Plato: that there are superorganic, i.e., infinite souls. This is another curious idea given that souls are traditionally known to be substances in concrete external beings--and especially humans.¹³

Almost like Berkeley but not quite, a German philosopher, Leibniz (1646-1716), is on record for having stated that all reality is ultimately *monads*, his near equivalent probably for souls. But his *monad*-notion of souls, and by extension, his notion of human nature is puzzling. Leibniz used the wide application of the concept "physical reality" as "beings of spatial nature," to maintain that all reality is ultimately--or is in its original composition--made up of the *monads*. The *monads* are not souls in any ordinary sense. His view was that if every physical reality (a human body, for example), by its very nature must be divisible, it follows that in that division there reaches a point where it is indivisible. That indivisible end is the *monad*, his near-equivalent term for "souls." For him, then, *monads* are ultimately, what there are in reality, and what remains of a human body after decomposition.¹⁴

In contrast to the above different but idealistic positions of Leibniz and Berkeley, Hobbes, more or less like Locke (and whose views we have partly discussed), held that the purported soul is basically material, being built up from matter. Now, Hobbes' position is particularly remarkable,

challenging and surprising, because as epiphenomena of matter, souls are purportedly nothing but matter ultimately, and as Hobbes put it, ". . . they are matter in motion and in varied composition and organization, only different in their degree of organization and composition of its matter from what we call physical reality."¹⁵ Consequently, while we have learned from Berkeley and Leibniz that souls exist, and are the most important thing in human nature, in Hobbes' opinion, souls do not even exist as we know them; if anything, they are the totality of minute solid particles--just as their processes present in nature are. Such souls are neither eternal nor even mysterious.

The works of the two innovative German philosophers, Marx and Hegel, fundamentally influenced and reinforced our thinking as well about the primacy of studying the philosophy of human nature further, but for radically different yet attention-grabbing reasons. For, different from all the above views about human nature, they held that mankind is mankind because of their culture. Marx and Hegel embraced what we may call a "cultural" sense of human nature. For instance, they held a notion of the human as akin to what Hegel called a *Weltanschauung* (= worldview). That is, they held either that a human being is the worldview in an individual understood in itself in the abstract as composing a substantive entity called the "soul," or that in every individual, the worldview is an inescapable part of one's soul. Hegel expressed these two points as follows: ". . . the soul is a microcosm of the cosmos," and ". . . the world is *geist* i.e. spirit, and the spirit is the world." Similarly, in tandem with Hegel's philosophy, Marx emphasized on the point that an individual's worldview is an essential part of one's being, but it is determined by existential conditions.¹⁶ Thus, no wonder in an interpretation of Marx's philosophy of culture, Feuer, a famous interpreter (of Marx), depicted Marx's study of class-struggles as strife instigated by a reawakening of the consciousness of sections of society. Not only does Feuer explain class-struggles, but also the

whole realm of human consciousness, one's being and culture are depicted as emanating from existential conditions. Religion, for example, is described as the "opium of the masses." Since masses own nothing if any wealth, religion is depicted as the necessity for keeping the masses lulled and in check so that those with wealth can be left undisturbed.¹⁷

In short, Feuer's Marx sees the human soul, whether of the poor or wealthy, as constituted in its fundamentality primarily by the ownership of wealth and the social relations that govern them. Anyone's consciousness and culture, and therefore, who one is, or what his/her human nature is, he stated, reflects or is reflected by one's world in which they live, which is defined by the nature of ownership of wealth and social relations. This depiction, Feuer related, constitutes who humans are, as humans; or at least forms what humans are, as Marx seemed to suggest.

More recently, we find the works of reknown philosophers from Germany and France respectively, namely, Nietzsche (1844-1900) and Sartre (1905-1980). The two existentialist philosophers studied the nature of human nature, and one of the basic questions that they discussed is the place of values in human nature. As philosophers, they deal with the metaphysical problem of the basic nature of humans first, and then turn to the moral question of virtues. For instance, Nietzsche discussed human nature and suggested what moral pertinences about individuals may be considered most appropriate in the service of communal and individual good. Nietzsche, unlike most of the above philosophers, pegs his philosophy, it would seem, on actual observations of how people behave, and then makes general speculations regarding human nature based on the observations. As this approach differs from a pure speculative attempt in the knowledge of human nature--as by Homer and Plato, for example, one may ask: to what extent is this approach a successful one? There are

many reasons backing this question. One of them is that from Nietzsche's approach, in spite of it being based on observations, Nietzsche ultimately suggested a chilling image of what, in his opinion, "successful" people have been like. That is, he stated, it is in the nature of his model "successful" people to be greedy, brutal, and treacherous.¹⁸ Yet, while he emphasized the significance of perceiving humans as essentially successful and independent, and without primary obligation to others and society, there are socialist scholars, like Owen, who emphasized individuals as being socially embedded.¹⁹ Thus, compared to Owen, Nietzsche is but an evil counselor in the false name of "success."

As reiterated by Williams, a twentieth century British historian and commentator of culture, socialist thinkers—like Marx, tend to posit the social nature of mankind as what is valuable in human nature, that is, in their view, this is because they took it that it is in the nature of humans to be social in essence, and thus, the humans allegedly better attain and express their humanity as social beings.²⁰

It was for the purposes of constructing a supposedly true image of mankind that a notion of autonomous selves was championed by the philosophers such as Hobbes (where for example, for Hobbes, mankind is solitary in nature). It is worthwhile, though, to note that such a notion is domesticated in analytic philosophy, which is based on seeing every individual as essentially independent of others. Yet, the notion of "embedded" selves--what was championed by the socialists such as Owen--is domesticated in "holistic" schools of thought, which emphasize on existential conditions as being paramount in the formation and development of conceptions of human nature. That is, whereas the view of an autonomous self seems to be based on the alluring

tendency in philosophy to think atomistically about reality, and to analyze complex reality and human transactions in terms of their simple components, in the notion of "embedded" selves, the unity of human selfhood becomes impossible to imagine when a sharp separation is made between individual selves and the roles that the communities from which the selves emanate play. Herein, emphasis is placed not on general, universal and wished-for standards in evaluating human nature, but in contrast, there is the emphasis that individuals must, and do have, concrete ties with culture, without necessarily denying freedom or autonomy to the supposedly essentially individualistic selves.

In more contemporary literature on human nature, Lukes, Simmel, and McIntyre express this latter notion of the social embeddedness of human selves.²¹ McIntyre, a British American philosopher, expressed, for example, the specificities of human selves as the products of culture. For instance, he stated that individuals participate in culture and community, and are dependent on these for their sense of self-worth, freedom and identity as well as agency. For McIntyre, culture defines human nature, but does not humanize, i.e. make mankind mankind.²²

A notable but quite distinct contemporary work on human nature is that of Shutte, a South African philosopher.²³ He decries perceiving individuals as individualistic, but also decries communality as found in traditional African societies. However, he does believe that mankind is not mankind without culture. Yet, he contends this in seeking to fill, in his own words, a "... moral vacuum left after the collapse of apartheid in South Africa."²⁴ For him, the end of apartheid in South Africa left a community divided between an ethics of individualism as is dominant in Western societies, against a traditional communalism prevalent in indigenous Black Africa. While he insists on the

importance of existential conditions as a definitive factor in defining mankind, he argues neither for individualistic, nor communalistic individuality, but for perceiving human nature as composed of individuals who must see themselves as fields of related forces--mutually dependent on the world and each other--as the alleged imperatives for the fulfillment of a true human sense of humanity.²⁵

1.6.2 From a purist philosophy to a social context study of the philosophy of human nature

Hegel observed that philosophy is history put into thought.²⁶ This classic definition of philosophy is loose and flexible, while emphasizing a particular characteristic trait of philosophy, and the philosophy of human nature in particular, which is the awareness of certain fundamental explicit historical consciousness as the instigator of philosophical quests. In spite of this claim, Hegel was one of the tough-headed philosophers who maintained that all conceptions and historical developments can be accounted for in terms of one universal rational progression, namely, the rational development of the rational ideas of mankind. In this, Hegel retained the view that there are unadulterated explanations of reality. Hegel himself is heir to this way of thinking from a long tradition of philosophical thought as started by Plato and others, who held that there is one common rational answer to every problem of philosophy. However, it is interesting that despite the concept of a universal reason in Hegel's philosophy, there is a sense of historicity at the same time being echoed by him as well as a fundamental human trait determining the nature of the presence or absence of logic. Hegel, for example, argued citing culture that, in Africa, there cannot be history. This is because, for him, history is the evolution of events driven by human reason, and he did not imagine that African cultures embodied reason that would create any significant history. If that is so, this is a curious observation for academic pursuit because--if this is true, then Africans are said

to lack reason--a crucial element of human nature in his thinking, and the universalism in human nature is denounced.

In other words, Hegel is paradoxical, in his curious belief that all humans are the same, while at the same time holding that non-Western peoples do not allegedly have rational thought. Yet, as early as the time of a brilliant student of Plato--Aristotle, when we see reason touted as a capstone of human nature and cultural development, we see too Aristotle asserting that any perceived element of human nature is possible or conceivable only through socialization.²⁷ From Aristotle, this useful idea of the role of culture is picked and developed by Marx. And although Aristotle and Marx were discoursing about the West, one sees how the philosophers are united in seeing humankind's "culturalness" as either equivalent to humanness, or in being an essential and ineliminable element in human nature. The point to note here is, therefore, that elements of the fundamentality of the social nature of mankind and mankind's logic arise concomitant with philosophies that see reason as above culture, and the point stands out forcefully and powerfully even from within that kind of Socratic philosophy. For instance, Marx in particular challenged his own view that reason transcends social contexts, when he argued that human culture and consciousness in general are the product of material and existential conditions. This means that human life, as his own logic, do not have an independent existence, but are, from the beginning to the end, social products. Thus, he implied that human ideas differ, in that, at least for him, they are nothing more than the expressions of the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas. It is this position which suggested to him that every culture has its own forms of consciousness, and are not necessarily irrational.²⁸

Marx's outline of argument which has proved to be fruitful and most important appears most clearly in his critique of Hegel. In that critique, he denies that rationality is the prime mover of history. The principal universal mover, according to him, is seen as economic change. This is the similar point he picked and developed when he stated that philosophy is a world outlook, an attempt to understand the world and humans' place in that world from some perspective; or that every such perspective is a class perspective.²⁹

Yet, there is no gainsaying in stating that Aristotle and Marx are more famous for their assertion that there are universal causes, principles or essences underlying nature, and human nature; and these causes are, for Marx for instance, the material causes; and for Hegel, for example, reason. Universalism has been the goal of philosophy from Socrates to the present day. Its goal has been to grasp the explanations that apply across all cultures and at all times. However, since this goal has often been incompatible with particularistic perspectives, which some of the philosophers envisaged, the suggested idea of human universality has often been seen as a basis for a possible dominating sense of understanding human nature, and a likely hindrance to possible differences between humans. Without doubt, one must transcend the particular and the variant in order to create or expose what is the universal. Universalism means being in touch with what is out there as it is, not necessarily reflecting one or another particular perspective. However, if it is true that every view is advanced from a given perspective as Marx stated, Marx did champion in a sense a protest against the universalistic claims of the traditionally envisaged, if possible, one universalistic essence; and brought to the fore—with the concerted effort of other philosophers like Aristotle, Hegel and others--the possible social angle to human nature philosophy.³⁰

Clearly, the above and many other positions are germane to the philosophy of human nature. Further, they appear as irreconcilable as they are mind-boggling. Certainly, they left us asking the many questions we raised in section 1.2, and cemented our determination to examine human nature philosophy further. However, since our work is entirely based on literature review, the above review should be adequate for now to account for our academic curiosity to the human nature philosophy.

1.7 Hypotheses

Following from the above literature reviewed, three different hypotheses can be drawn:

1. That concepts of human nature are instances of metaphysics
2. That philosophical concepts about human nature are influenced by social contexts
3. That none of the concepts of human nature that philosophers have propounded is the universal image of human nature.

1.8 Theoretical framework

This study applies the theory called "historicism"—also known as "historism"—in its discussion of human nature philosophy. As a theory, "historicism" in philosophy may be said to originate with Herder (1744-1803), a German philosopher and a historian of repute, who later found support and varied expression among philosophers such as Foucault (1926-84), Bronowski and Dilthey (1832-1911), among many others. "Historicism" is the position that there is a dialectical link between conceptions and social contexts as they develop in time—and it is this dialectical link that captures the essence of historical, intellectual and social progress. From Hume (1711-1776), a British empiricist philosopher, Herder seems to have picked the skeptical position that there does not exist

any universal human reason, or a universal march of history determined by such reason; nor does there exist any universal, culture-transcendent notions of reality. Herder held that the views which people accept as permanent, objective and self-evident are all products of cultural and historical practices. Reality is as it is because of historical developments. Even reason, or the rationality which generates it, is itself a product of culture and history.³¹

Herder's views found in his treatise, *Another Philosophy of History*, said to be the manifesto of "historicism," emphasizes on the "exceptional, unique and particular" nature of cultural and intellectual phenomena according to which, every historical epoch has its own distinctive stamp it imparts on civilization, making it possess a unique spirit or a mentality. Herder emphasized on the importance of climatic and geographic factors in the determination of history, for example. His philosophy led to such concepts as "national mentalities" and the "historicization" of the humanities--urging the study of the humanities from a historical perspective to allegedly understand how history bore heavily upon them. "Historicism" was thus both a view of reality and a research framework based on the study of historically determined trends of thought.

This essentially Herderian statement--that there is a link between conceptions and social contexts as they develop in time, is a key testimonial for our study. It is the driftnet in our study for capturing, on the one hand, the extent of the social-context determination of conceptions of human nature, and on the other, for separating those conceptions which are purportedly not social-context based from those which are, and thus to enable us to determine whether human nature is "purist" or its conceptions are determined by social contexts or not.

In the first place, several philosophers after Herder have shown what elements determine a social-context basis of concepts in their exposition of a concept of social contexts. These are philosophers like the aforementioned Hegel and Marx. Recently, Bronowski, the author of *Science and Human Values*, put this point of the socio-centric nature of reality succinctly as follows: that is, ". . . whatever be the case, in all human inquiries, there is no such thing as disinterestedness in philosophy."³² He states that all conceptions are value-laden. Thus, he wrote, ". . . reality is not an exhibit for man's inspection . . . there are no appearances to be photographed, no experiences to be copied, in which we do not take part. We remake nature."³³ That is, for him, humans remake nature using values.

Elsewhere in his discussion of science, Bronowski states the historical basis of knowledge: that the values of the theoretical sciences--being the sciences which humans so assume to be independent and objective knowledge, have grown out of the practice of the sciences specifically in the renaissance and the time of scientific revolution.³⁴ Then he describes the values and the contexts that gave rise to the sciences.

Likewise, Foucault, a contemporary French philosopher of fame, emphasized a similar point of the historical and cultural-centrism of human knowledge, when he rightly connected philosophy with social existence and suggested that although truth, a subject of philosophy is eternal, the theories of truth are not eternal, since, like those who articulate them, they are induced and shaped by specific historical contexts and circumstances.³⁵ By extension, although human nature may be fixed, interpretations or theories of human nature are not fixed or eternal. To the extent that they are generated by thinkers in specific historical contexts and existential conditions, then the conceptions

arise from those social contexts in which the people find themselves, which may well change with time. In a sense, then, Foucault notes that while philosophy may direct its thought to an essence of human nature or a reality eternal and transcendent, the philosophy of human nature is not eternal and transcendent. It paints an image of that essence limited by the temporality and particularity of existence.

Dilthey (1833-1911), a neo-Hegelian German philosopher, expounded on the socio-context element skillfully as follows: all philosophies are forms of "understanding." He does not use the concept "understanding" as in every day sense. For him, "understanding" involves the grasping of "meaning."³⁶ This "understanding" includes grasping the unity of the relationships which exist within and between the interactive processes of an individual's mind and a group of individuals which are expressed through gestures or utterances.³⁷ As he expressed this:

In understanding, we start from the system of the whole, which is given to us as a living reality, to make the particular intelligible to ourselves in terms of it. It is the fact that we live in the consciousness of the system of the whole, which enables us to understand a particular statement, a particular gesture or a particular action.³⁸

Dilthey's point in the above passage seems to be not only the view that human knowledge is socio-centric, but that it is socio-centric and historical since, in his view, knowledge is understood by others only because it is embedded in shared meanings created socially.

Similarly, Polanyi, the author of *Personal Knowledge*, emphasized a socio-centric element of knowledge in his theory of "personal" knowledge.³⁹ He asserted that all knowledge is "personal"--meaning that humans recognize this by "acknowledging [that] our personal knowing [is] our indwelling and an integral part of all knowledge." Not that what is worthy of the name

knowledge" is subjective, but that "objective" as knowledge may be, it is advanced from a personal point of view at a specific time, "sought with universal intent."⁴⁰

Here is a further illustration which may additionally help to understand the key concepts of a socio-centric theoretical framework. Kuhn, a contemporary philosopher of science insisted that science is a human enterprise, and is shaped by human values. But he suggested that these values change from time to time. He argued that the conclusions which practicing scientists accept today as permanent and self-evident, have grown out of concrete human practices. Indeed, there are no permanent trends of doing science. Any attempt to explore the foundations of science, for example, he states, reveals that in its development, science is connected to certain social contexts of discovery, proof, experimentation and research--which have developed over time. Prevailing trends in or the ways of doing science are, therefore, merely the accepted conventions. Since conventions change, so there are no permanent, general or universal ways of doing science.⁴¹

Let us proceed to describe the strength of our theory as follows: First we reiterate that "historicism" can be used to positively determine the precise location of our study in academic debate, and what it is likely to achieve. It locates this study, and by extension all the socio-context studies, in the debate between universalism on the one hand, and relativism on the other. If Kuhn can be used to picture the position and the likely achievements of a socio-centric study, we note that while "universalism" holds that there is an absolute, universal truth that transcends time and place, "relativism" is the view that all knowledge is contextual. If it is true that contextualization presupposes universal essences that can be contextualized, then there is an interesting implication for the Kuhnian and by extension, the socio-context theory which is worthy noting. That is, the

ways in which essences are interpreted in different social contexts may differ. No knowledge is possibly absolutist in any narrow subjectivist sense. For instance, it may hold a sense of universality but, (and this is very crucial), the universality is only a reality within a given social and historical context. This component may help us in dealing with our hypotheses one, two and three in section 1.7. That is, while universalism in the traditional sense contends that conceptions of human nature are independent and universal, this new sense of universalism insists that there cannot be any independent conceptions, because every concept we encounter is always woven from one perspective or another of a community of inquirers. Consequently, as Bronowski, Dilthey, Foucault and Kuhn suggest, it is likely that different social settings bring about different philosophies of human nature as Kuhn suggested.

Second, "historicism" reveals--all the way from Kuhn, Bronowski, Foucault and the other scholars discussed, that the notion "social context" connotes a wide variety but specific elements for consideration, thus deprecating oversimplification because it strikes at every possible but specific socio-historical root-causes of conceptions. It is important here, then, to give a clearer picture of the socio-context notion's constitutive axes.

The notion "social context" is used in opposition to "nature," that is, in the sense of what is "not natural." When so used, it denotes "culture" and "civilization," i.e., whatever is of human rather than (natural) cosmic endeavour; or more generally, it refers to whatever may be considered as of the origin by mankind.⁴² Beyond Bronowski, Foucault, Kuhn, Dilthey, Polanyi and Kuhn, the concept reflects several connotations. As suggested by Kroeber and Kluckhohn, the authors of *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*, the notion "social context" can be traced

back to Tylor, an ancient anthropologist who refers to it in his study of past societies as they purportedly evolved in their natural environments.⁴³ As Kroeber and Kluckhohn point out, Tylor refers to social contexts as "... that most central problem [or subject matter] of all social sciences."⁴⁴ Tylor goes ahead to describe "social context" as "... that extra-organic or superorganic context which all human societies share, even though there are qualitative differences of it among societies."⁴⁵

Hegel equates it to a *Weltanschauung* or "worldview."⁴⁶ Similarly, Kant refers to it as, "that which is dependent on the evocation or development of human intellectual and moral capacities." Kant meant by it "... cultural progress dependent on reason, ethics and values." Marx emphasized that "social context" denotes the social and material culture, but especially what he calls, "infrastructure" in the determination of human consciousness and social institutions--suggesting that material culture, like technology, property and industry, define a society's worldview and one's whole outlook toward nature and reality.⁴⁷

Implied in all of these meanings of "social context" is a sense of "social contexts" with its elements ranging from kinds and levels of ennoblement, civilization and education to religion, science, climate, technology, political and intellectual values. Thus, the social theorists Wolciechowski, Collins and Makowsky,⁴⁸ show how from the varied meanings of "social context," Foucault, Kuhn, Dilthey, Polanyi, Marx, Berger and Luckman evoke the position that truth is value or culture-based.⁴⁹ Accordingly, Dilthey states that values are embedded and expressed in the cultural element of language.⁵⁰ Polanyi holds the position that there is always a "human"--what he calls a "personal"

element in knowledge, and emphasizes on a person's active intellectual role, guided by his or her moral commitment in defining reality.⁵¹

Consequently, given the above notion of "social context," social context theorists such as Foucault, Dilthey, Kuhn and Bronowski, are probably right in suggesting that the way humans go about understanding the world is determined by culture and shaped by history. However, as the French philosopher Bourdieu suggested, it may be true that since social contexts vary considerably over time and across places, the popularity and persistence of some values depends more on their usefulness for social influence and control rather than on their validity.⁵² It may also be the case, as Collins and Makowsky suggest, that a particular culture may be criticized for its limitations and omissions; yet, it may persist because of prestige, tradition or unexamined congruence with other cultural values.⁵³

In our study, we analyze such social contexts as they would enable us to understand human nature and the course of human nature philosophy.

1.9 Methodology

Our study is library-based. We study and analyze primary sources but at the same time examine secondary ones--such as commentaries, histories, biographies and critiques for their insights.

Our study is a philosophical work, and as such it analyzes and interprets its sources of information--like the commentaries, histories, biographies and emergent concepts and positions. Specifically, we employ the method known as "deconstructionism."⁵⁴ This is an interpretive method which has

been used in philosophy and elsewhere to explore dialectical links between discourses, and between social contexts and discourses. It is most appropriate for our study because it can be used to locate the concepts of human nature in the relevant universe of discourses and concepts, and to test the assumptions that there are or there are no permanent, universal theories that explain human nature.

We may now elaborate on the components which "deconstructionism," as a research method uses as its constitutive poles of research: One, it discusses how concepts work to create ideas which are socially accepted as the essences of reality. Thus, an analysis of the central concepts and categories of human nature is one of the pertinent elements of the method. Accordingly, we analyze the human nature complex into its basic conceptual components and the ideas which link them.

At this point, then, "deconstructionism" bears a "hermeneutical" face. "Hermeneutics" is a critical study of the language used in understanding reality. A "hermeneutical" study is particularly useful in analyzing discourses which otherwise seem like they possess neutral concepts. This "hermeneutical" component in the method has been particularly popular in analyzing and exposing the conceptual foundations of philosophies in Eastern and African traditional forms of knowledge. In the analytical "hermeneutical" works, the way words are used is analyzed in terms of the cases the words refer to, and an attempt at formulating a general rule is made which covers those cases. Given its ability to expose the unique and the general, "hermeneutics" is as well applied in our study to expose the meaning of human nature in Western and non-Western human nature philosophy. "Deconstructionism" is not only to show which conceptual processes are at work, but also to show of the given concepts, which are central and which are not, and why, and how they are related and justified. In this case, "deconstructionism" entails criticism as one of its core tool.

A major component of the "deconstructionist" method as we have already mentioned is to examine the ways in which philosophical representations have intimate relationship with social and historical contexts. This component requires to be explained as follows: In this sense of the method, "deconstructionism" means and entails going behind the concepts to explore the social processes that have been at work in shaping and sharpening human nature philosophies. In other words in this thesis, we do a form of a historical analysis of the sources of the concepts, by revealing the historically contingent causes and developmental trends behind the human nature thought. Such a component in the method is especially effectively useful not only for challenging essentialism, but also for tracing the historical evolution of the human nature thought, and for historically distinguishing view points.

A positive comment can be made at this juncture about the method. It is this sort of dialectics envisaged in the method between philosophies and their environments which pushes a scholar to examine more closely the social contexts of philosophy and the nature of the dialectic and its implications. Suffice it to argue that the social context component provides a basis and a fairly safe method for investigating human nature from a social context point of view--having been so esteemed by many beacons of scholarship.

Moreover, a guiding attitude of "deconstructionism" lies in the question: Are theories and concepts a response to crises in techniques of inquiry, or are they a response to crises in the social world in the sense that situations in the world take precedence over and determine theory within the overall context of certain social structures? This is an open attitude immanent in the method. With this open attitude, "deconstructionism" does not only provide an excellent space for studying particular

viewpoints, but also provides an excellent opportunity for discussing contrasting viewpoints as well.

However, "deconstructionism" has one problem germane in it: it is accused of witch-hunting when one of the components is to target not the theory but social contexts.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, to some extent herein lies a great strength of "deconstructionism," for, the spirited thought behind this component is that it seeks to challenge observers to take seriously the sociological underpinnings of philosophy. For, if it is true as Bourdieu observed and as Wolciechowski noted--that all conceptions are socially determined, it is difficult to ignore social contexts. That is, what people think and know about reality cannot then perhaps be divorced from their place and time in definite social situations.

1.10 Notes

1. See Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1959), pp. 154-155.
2. E. Cassirer, *An Essay on Man: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Human Culture* (London: Yale University Press), pp. 68-71.
3. It is not known precisely when Homer was born and died. But he is known to have been active around 485 B.C.E. writing poetic masterpieces. On Homer's views on souls and human nature, see E. Zeller, *Outline of the History of Greek Philosophy* (New York: Meridian Books, 1955), pp. 25-37. It should be borne in mind that most philosophers in the past used the concept "soul" as the preferred term over "mind", and yet when the latter was used, it was frequently applied interchangeably with the term "soul." So as late as the seventeenth century, for example, Descartes (1596-1650) used the concepts "minds" and "spirits" synonymously with "souls." We shall in our work, then, continue to use the concepts synonymously unless we specify.
4. This account about the Sophists is from P. R. Helsel, "Early Greek Moralists," ed., V. Fern, *History of Philosophical Systems* (Iowa: Adams and Company, 1958), pp. 82-88, and E. Zeller, *Ibid.*, pp. 92-109.
The "Sophists" were wandering teachers who, in ancient Greece of the fifth century B.C.E., they specialized in teaching practical and rhetorical skills, and charged high fees.
5. Socrates' views are articulated from Plato's works such as *Protagoras*, *Symposium* and *Theaetetus*. Mark you that Socrates features in Plato's works as a major interlocutor of discussions therein. See especially over his rationality views Plato, "Republic," ed., L. R. Loomis, *Five Great Dialogues* (New York: Gramercy Books, 1969), pp. 307-331.
6. See Plato, *Ibid.* Note that from now onwards, the terms "spirited" and "appetitive" throughout our thesis will be used in Plato's sense indicated here unless we specify otherwise.
7. The comment is by T. S. Hall, *Ideas of Life and Matter: Studies in the History of General Physiology: 600-1900A.D.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), p. 19.

8. See B. Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1964), p. 449.
9. See, for instance, R. Descartes, "Meditations on First Philosophy," eds., R. Cummins and D. Owen, *Central Readings in the History of Modern Philosophy: Descartes to Kant* (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1992), p. 9. Descartes called "souls" the "things which think."
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 24-27.
12. See John Locke, "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding," eds., R. Cummins and D. Owen, *Central Readings in the History of Modern Philosophy: Descartes to Kant* (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1992), pp. 96ff.
13. George Berkeley, "Principles of Human Knowledge," eds., R. Cummins and D. Owen, *Central Readings in the History of Modern Philosophy: Descartes to Kant* (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1992), pp. 284-285.
14. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, "The Monadology," eds., R. Cummins and D. Owen, *Central Readings in the History of Modern Philosophy: Descartes to Kant* (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1992), pp. 83-89.
15. See on this issue, for instance, Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed., M. Oakeshot (New York: Macmillan, 1962).
16. See Marx's elaboration on this matter in K. Marx, *Op. cit.*, pp. 133ff.
17. The comments are by L. S. Feuer, ed., *Marx and Engels: Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy* (New York: Doubleday, 1959). This point on human consciousness is confirmed by Marx, *Ibid.*
18. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, trans., F. Golfing (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1959), sec.7., or see in eds., Irwin Edman and H. W. Schneider. *Landmarks in Philosophy* (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1941), pp. 817. Nietzsche's most important work on human nature is "Thus Spoke Zarathustra," by W. Kauffman, ed., *The Potable Nietzsche* (New York: 1952), pp. 122ff. For our reference of Sartre, see J. P. Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism*. trans., Mairet, P. (London: Methuen, 1948).

19. This classification of Owen is taken from R. Williams, *Culture and Society: 1780-1900* (London: Penguin Books, 1963), pp. 38-47.
20. See R. Williams, *Ibid.* By the term "social," Williams means egalitarianism.
21. We acknowledge the guidance given on the issue of the social embeddedness of human nature through the discussion by D. A. Masolo, "Western and African Communalism: A Comparison," Unpublished paper. Also see Alasdair McIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1984).
22. Alasdair McIntyre, *Ibid.*
23. See A. Shutte, *Ubuntu: An Ethic for a New South Africa* (Johannesburg: Cluster Publication, 2001).
24. *Ibid.*, p. 1.
25. *Ibid.*
26. See G. W. F. Hegel, "Philosophy of History," ed., Forrest E. Baird, *Philosophic Classics: From Plato to Nietzsche* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1997), pp. 955-985.
27. Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, eds., Irwin Edman and H. W. Schneider (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1941).
28. See Karl Marx, *Op. cit.*
29. K. Marx, *Ibid.* Cf. discussion on Hegel and Feuerbach by W. Matson, *A New History of Philosophy* (Fort Worth: Harcourt College Publishers, 2000), pp. 473-477.
30. G. W. F. Hegel, *Op. cit.*
31. The term "social context" is borrowed from A. L. Kroeber and L. Kluckholm (see note 43). It is appropriate because "historicism" is about "social contexts" changing in time. On Herder's "historicism," see J.G. Herder, *Another Philosophy of History* (Frankfurt: Mains, 1967), especially pp.40-60ff. However, also see for further exposition and derivation of the concept of "social context," M. Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), and J. Bronowski, *Science and Human Values* (New York: Messner, 1956). Dilthey's contribution on the social contexts notion is amply quoted from H. A. Hodges, *The Philosophy of Wilhelm Dilthey* (London: Routledge, 1994). There exists a close, though contrasting

view, of "historicism" worthy noting: this is the view that "history is made (not by the powerful general trends but) by a few great men." While "historicism" emphasizes on the general historical trends, this view emphasizes on the agency of individuals (whether rational or irrational, mad, eccentric, artists, politicians or philosophers) in the make up of history. Our opinion here is that either theory can be used as the driftnet to test whether theories are ultimately influenced by trends or individual agency.

32. See J. Bronowski, *Op. cit.*, pp. 32.

33. *Ibid.*

34. *Ibid.*, pp. 33ff.

35. See M. Foucault, *Op. cit.*

36. Quoted in H. A. Hodges, *Op. cit.*, p. 20.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

38. *Ibid.*

39. Our reference is M. Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958), pp. 44ff.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

41. See Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolution* (Chicago: University Press, 1970).

42. *Ibid.*, also see J. Bronowski, *Op. cit.*, and M. Foucault, *Op. cit.*

43. A. L. Kroeber and L. Kluckholm, *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts* (New York: Vintage Books, 1960).

44. *Ibid.*, pp. 11 and 31

45. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

46. See G.W. F. Hegel, *Op. cit.* Cf. A. L. Kroeber, *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

47. See Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment?", in ed., L. W. Beck, *Kant on History* (London: McMillan, 1963), pp. 3-10. Cf. A. L. Kroeber, *Ibid.*, p. 18. On Marx's notion of the social context, see Marx, *Op. cit.*

48. See R. Collins and M. Makowsky, *The Discovery of Society* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993).

49. See Thomas Kuhn, *Op. cit.*, M. Foucault, *Op. cit.*, M. Polanyi, *Op. cit.*, Karl Marx, *Op. cit.* W. Dilthey is quoted in H. A. Hodges, *Op. cit.*
50. W. Dilthey, as quoted in Hodges, *Ibid.*
51. K. Marx, *Op. cit.*, M. Polanyi, *Op. cit.*, pp. vii-viii.
52. P. Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, trans., Raymond G. and Adamson, M. (Cambridge, University Press, 1991).
53. R. Collins and M. Makowski, *Op. cit.*
54. The concept "deconstructionism" has its origins from contemporary philosophers like M. Foucault, W. Dilthey and J. Gottfried Herder. More recently, "deconstructionism" may be traced to Descartes. For, it is Descartes, a French philosopher, who first shook the world in the seventeenth century C.E. by claiming that knowledge lacked the strong foundations which it was claimed it had; and he sought, therefore, to replace and rebuild the foundations of knowledge based on that assumption. Thus, the concept to "deconstruct" was coined only later in the nineteenth century in apparent reference to this Cartesian approach which entailed to "de" (=bring down) what had been (from the word "construct") constructed. This was in order to create space for and build an allegedly new, stronger, and better construct. In subsequent years, the concept "decontructionism" was tied to the notion of "metanarratives" perceived as any grand view about reality erected on the assumption that it is an objective, universal and general thesis about some aspect of reality, implying that the "grand narratives" in the eyes of the "deconstructionist" philosophers were obstacles to viewing reality differently, and must thus be "deconstructed." "Deconstruction ism" thus developed as a reaction against perceived "grand narratives."
55. See P. Bourdieu, *Op. cit.*, A. J. Wolciechowski, *Op. cit.*

Chapter two

The roots of the debate on human nature in Western thought: the problem of the soul

2.1 The problem posed

The "problem of the soul" is the problem of determining whether the soul exists, and what its nature is. It comprises those problems that arise as part and parcel of the problem often referred to as the "mind-matter" (or mind-body) problem, also known as the "life-matter" problem.¹ They are the philosophical problem about the metaphysical, ultimate nature of inanimate and animate beings. Philosophers aimed at solving the problem of the soul by articulating the objective, universal and absolute explanations. Questions revolving around this problem include: Do souls exist? Does the world have souls? What is the nature of the human body? What is the nature of souls? What conditions of bodies permit the effective appearance of the souls? What is the precise relation of mind to matter?

Deliberations over the nature of the soul did not settle. Likewise, philosophical reflections over the precise nature of humans have remained inconclusive. The question remains whether to suppose that reality is ultimately material or spiritual and whether there is reason to distinguish the spiritual realm from the material dominion, and view them as belonging to two different spheres.

2.2 The roots of the problem of human nature before Descartes

In the period prior to Descartes, some philosophers like Lucretius (500-55 B.C.E.) and Democritus (460-360 RC.E.) took a materialistic stance, and held that the spiritual features of humans are distinguishable from other features only by virtue of the size and the unpredictable behavior of

certain physical particles which make up the soul. However, all souls are ultimately material. This materialism gave way to dualism with Plato as a leading dualist insistently arguing for a sharp distinction between bodily and spiritual realities, and crediting the latter with existence both prior to and following the life of a body.² Our investigation reveals that it is this dispute from a "purist" philosophical perspective, which became so much a part of Western culture, essentially about the ultimate nature of beings--which gave rise to further debate about human nature. However, specific historical processes--as well as universes of discourses brought the debate to fruition. It was discussed on several fronts, one of them being "hylozoism." Let us analyze and interpret that debate at length--being the basis of human nature thought in the West.

2.2.1 Hylozoism

"Hylozoism" was a concept in the metaphysical debate about the ultimate nature of beings, originating with Thales, Anaximander (610-545 B.C.E), Diogenes (413-327 B.C.E), Anaximenes and Heraclitus (530-470 B.C.E.) when they discussed the problem of the nature of beings from a materialistic point of view. It is the philosophers' position which came to be known later as "hylozoism" --from a combination of two Greek words--*hyle* and *Zoē*.³ And what was their position?

Tired of the common Greek belief that the cosmos is ruled by spiritual beings, they held that well-known physical elements were the basic substances compounding all reality. So to the question, "What forces rule the world?,"--contrary to the common Greek belief that the spirits were the essence of change, for what causes it, for Thales is water; for Anaximander it is a heterogeneous boundless substance he called *apeiron*, which holds all states and substances; and for Diogenes and

Anaximenes it is air, while for Heraclitus it is fire. However, these answers were intuitive rather than deductive in character. But they constituted the first stage to philosophical development. The postulations--fire, air, water and *apeiron*, were linked to another view held by the philosophers, that all changes and motions in the cosmos, and in mankind, are either transformations or conversions of the basic substances, or the result of the redistribution of those substances occurring without transformation. Because of their association of the transformations with the physical substances, the philosophers were known as "hylozoists." Thus, for example, Zeller, a reknown historian of ancient philosophy called the philosophers--"hylozoists" because they asserted that the world--though made up of matter, is in itself animated through the animating forces ingrained in their nature. That is, according to the philosophers, reality is made up of *hyle* (matter), which is *Zoē* (alive).⁴

Accordingly, other "hylozoists" are Pythagoras (585-507 B.C.E.), Empedocles (495-435 B.C.E.), and Epicurus (340-270 B.C.E.). Pythagoras, for instance, held that reality is ultimately of the basic nature, composition and transformation of shapes and numbers. Empedocles, Lucretius and Democritus speculated that reality is ultimately made up of varied combinations of solid indestructible elements they termed *a* ("not") *tomo* ("destructible"), i.e., *atomos*. According to Lucretius, for example, the human soul is made up of the *atomos*. *Atomos* were perceived to be identical solid substances vastly below the range of human perception, arranged differently in different realities. He held that through them, humans are animated--his version of ensoulment, by which he meant that each part of the world is alive.⁵

2.2.2 The cosmos as replete with souls

Perhaps the most ancient philosophical view known in the Western thought asserting the existence of the souls, in a sense different from that of the hylozoists, is that of Homer. However, Homer's views were actually cultural views, and nothing like of the deductive and analytic thinking of later philosophers--like Socrates and Plato.⁶ According to Hall, Homer pointed out that in the cosmos there are souls--some of which are encased in the bodies of people.⁷ Hall interpreted Homer to mean that if the world could be understood as containing the souls, then it and its happenings could be explained. Homer's views of the soul can best be understood by following Homer's heroes in his mythical epics in battle--his recital of the deeds of heroic men engaged in combat. According to his epics, when God put life into his people, *thymos* was the term he used to describe what happened. He gives a warning that *thymos* was in danger of being lost in combat. Thus, when Posidonius, the soldier, pulled his spear out of the fallen Sarpedon, the latter's *psyche* in turn was said to come out with it. It was Posidonius' own *psyche* consequently that Achilles addressed later in Hades.

If the above Hall's account is correct in his representation of the epic battles, *thymos* was the term Homer used as the near-equivalent to the modern-day concept of "souls," for, souls are seen today, as the basis of life. *Psyche* was the term he used to mean that humans possess "souls"--perceived as the totality of the physiological functions of the body.

If the above exposition by Homer is boggling, consider this: having examined the historical evolution of the term "souls," a famous historian of philosophy, Avey, described the "soul" as the "Antaeus of philosophy," since many times it surfaces in philosophy, it emerges with a new meaning. However, he added that the original force behind its changing meanings seems to lie in

the human instinctive desire to know the soul. That made the soul the object of knowledge *par excellence*. Thus, Anaxagoras (500-428 B.C.E.), Socrates, Plato and Aristotle appeared to reiterate Homer's views of the soul. However, Anaxagoras, for example, held that souls exist, but are not only in people, but are the basic, independent substances of all nature. As for Anaxagoras, however, the cosmos comprises an infinity of corpuscles he termed *spermata*. Besides the *spermata*, however, in Anaxagoras' cosmology there exist souls. In sharp contrast to the *spermata*, the souls are intelligent, infinite, spiritual, unmixed, all-controlling, comprehending and motile. His term for the souls was *nous*.⁸

Socrates, Plato and Aristotle are similarly famous and important sources of the information among the ancients on the possible existence of the souls. These philosophers who also happen to be some of the earliest pioneers in deductive-analytic philosophy, attempted to justify why humans must be seen as possessing the souls. But their notion of souls was different. Hence, for Socrates, for instance, souls exist as the metaphysical foundation of all human knowledge. Thus, according to him, what is to be supreme in knowledge is one's own understanding of his soul. Understanding one's soul enables one to live a better life since, allegedly, knowledge is virtue and virtue is knowledge. Living according to what is good accords a liberated life, since, then, one knows the basis of that life.⁹

Gradually, there grew the idea that the soul in humans was a chief component in mankind's thought--one defining mankind's being as mankind. Thus, Plato held that the existence of the souls can possibly be used to account for human knowledge. He held that the material bodies people have possess distinct substances he called souls, which enable humans to know. Souls are not physical,

and being so, they transcend the bounds of the physical. According to him, the soul is the only conscious, permanent, immortal reality. Thus, supporting Socrates, and even going beyond him in a sense, it is the part of the reality in mankind that is absolute and unchanging and, moreover, the principle of the life of mankind.¹⁰

Aristotle, however, because of his inclination to the scientific witticism of his time—although agreeing that the soul is the chief weapon in mankind's thought—disagreed with both Socrates and Plato, and asserted that the souls are the forms of bodies. If this postulation is accepted, he seemed to urge, it will support the common belief that souls cannot be separated from bodies. For one, he noted, the souls in themselves are imperceptible except as they are revealed in the activities of bodies. However, without the souls, matter ceases to exist as we know it, and there cannot be living, conscious matter. It is doubtful that Aristotle was ever committed to the doctrine of a substantive soul, such as had been proposed by Plato and Socrates, despite a contrary interpretation of him in *De Anima* by St. Aquinas, for whom the survival of a substantive soul was a theological necessity. It is clear that Aristotle envisaged that although the souls are objects, they are the "form" of bodies in the sense that they are the basis of the configuration of bodies. This latter interpretation gave the impression that without the souls, no living thing can exist as it does, though the soul cannot exist on its own. Such an Aristotle's view of the materialism of souls did not bear a high degree of similarity with the view of Leucippus, Democritus and Epicurus, who held that all souls are made up of tiny, physical particles they called "atoms" (= *atomos*), and that the spiritual feature of humans is distinguishable from physical realities only by virtue of the size and the unpredictable behaviour of the particles that make up the souls.¹¹

2.2.3 The nature of humans: from the metaphysics of the soul to human nature

The above philosophers posited that humans possess souls. However, they also differed over the basic metaphysical issue of the nature of the human souls, and what makes them distinctive. Remarkably, as we have maintained, Lucretius, Democritus and Epicurus held one view that became a radically important metaphysical basis for understanding the nature of the human soul throughout philosophy: that all souls are made up of particles they called "atoms." Consequently, all the human souls, later Hobbes held, were conceived by a significant section of philosophers as nothing but those "atoms" organized and moving with certain rapidity. But if that was so, how would a material nature of the soul explain morality, justice, truth, reason, one's character, or the feeling that people necessarily exist after death--all of which do not appear to be material? It is such considerations which led to a deeper study of the soul.

For instance, according to Avey, the Sophist--Protagoras (500-430 RC.E.), decreed one thing that became an important basis for understanding the nature of the human souls. He stated that "humans are the measure of all things."¹² In the opinion of Sophism, this is because humans are thinking beings, and as such, they are capable of moulding the universe to their needs and desires. Socrates accepted this contention but remarkably argued that it is in the nature of the soul to search for the universal standards held by the soul. He asserted that reason can be used as the method for the search of the standards in any area of human belief. Thus, for instance, in the study of the good life, which Socrates championed, the perceived rational nature of the human souls led to the formulation of ethics, and the speculation about the right and wrong behaviour. He supported universal laws by postulating, in his metaphysics, that the humans are made up of immutable, corporeal and rational principles innate in the human souls. As an incorporeal element, the soul does not remain earth-

ound; it is enabled to soar above the earthly bounds into the eternal, universal realm of the knowledge of universal principles.¹³

In the meantime, there steadily developed the view that mankind's greatest endowment is not just the soul but the rational soul. Thus, when both Socrates' student, Plato, and, Aristotle--who was Plato's student affirmed a dual nature of humans suggested by Socrates, with Aristotle holding that if there is anything which breathes life into human bodies it is the soul, it was held that inorganic bodies became alive only when they were permeated by *pneuma* ("breath-like soul"), which solely actualized life.¹⁴ Likewise, the spiritual nature of the human souls was supposed when Plato contended that souls are the sources of all our ideas, because only that which is spiritual can produce ideas; and the soul is spiritual. In addition, the souls were portrayed by Plato as the precedent reality to all reality; as the ground of all being. In other words, there was an eternal, absolute soul in Plato's theory. This was meant not just to mediate between what is eternal and what is temporal of all ideas. Thus, he stated, in the intelligible cosmos, our ideas have two different countenances, one reflected unto the eternal, another to the temporal things perceived. The absolute soul (which Plato called *Demiurge*), is the mirror of all our ideas. In the intelligible cosmos, he distinguished between three types of souls that he alleged beings possess: the "rational," "appetitive" and the "emotive." They were characterizations he also used to account for differences in the characteristics of people. Every single human soul has these three powers as he observed; although the rational soul is dominated by the "rational" consciousness; the "appetitive" is dominated by the appetitive consciousness; the "spirited" is dominated by appetites.¹⁵

from the above alleged metaphysics of the soul, it followed that in Aristotle's theory of nature, beings can be divided hierarchically according to the kinds of souls they possess--with those with rational souls occupying the higher echelons in his hierarchy of beings. In his graduated scale of being, there are beings with "vegetative" souls (=plants). These experience nutrition and production. Beings with "sensitive" souls (=animals), experience feeling and perception. Humans have "rational" souls. Reason sets humans apart from the generality of nature and elevates humans above all the rest. The "rational" soul holds the faculty of reason. Reason is that which can abstract "form" from things. It operates by judgment and through thought objectively independent of matter. Its potentialities are all within itself. It cannot change; it can only be absent or present. Therefore, it is one with what it thinks. He further held that because reason can abstract from things and events their "forms," that is why humans can acquiesce to what universal, rational standards are, for instance, regarding right and wrong.¹⁶

Al-Kindi (800-870), an Eastern Mediaeval Age philosopher, accepted Aristotle's idea of nature--that humans are human because they possess the souls which are rational, which distinguished humans from non-humans, and one human from another. However, Al-Kindi suggested that Aristotle had not explored the nature of the human souls at depth. Thus, for example, he speculatively distinguished between three aspects of the "intellective" soul, which, in his opinion, would account better for the different intelligences of the human soul. He named them as the "potential" intellect (a receptivity to the effect of an active intellect), "activated" intellect (as intellect having been brought from potentiality to actuality), and "manifest" or "demonstrative" intellect (the actual intellect considered as functioning).¹⁷

2. 4 Souls as radically different from matter

Thus far, we should maintain that the problem of the human nature as we now understand it was formulated and discussed as a metaphysical problem especially rooted in the problem of the nature of being. We say so for two further reasons: first, the concepts used in its discussion were unknown prior to metaphysics. Second, the debate about human nature was a debate about the possible human nature and its implications, and not about what the souls or the human nature ordinarily people took them to be. Thus, as the issue of the nature of the human souls emerged from the discussion led by Plato and Aristotle, the human soul was perceived, in significant senses, as an independent substance, very different from matter on the one hand (as Plato and Anaxagoras stated), or, indeed, indistinct from matter (as for Lucretius or Democritus). Applying to all, either it was able to exist of its own accord, or it was a spiritual substance that is basic and precedent containing all the thoughts about the world.

Despite the aforementioned positions, the philosophers had more differing interpretations of the origin of the soul, which complicated further the problem of the soul and of human nature in philosophy. Plato's position on the nature of the souls, for instance, was "exaggerated realism," from his suggestion that the souls we normally claim to perceive in people are mere reflections of their ideals; that is, it is their ideals that exist—in reality. The relationship between the perceivable aspects of the soul and the souls that underlie them, was, allegedly, one of resemblance where individual soul-resemblances can be recognized only because they have, or resemble, their own ideals. On the other hand, Aristotle's position was labeled "realism." For, he held that souls exist as the "forms" for defining the being of every entity and the being of human beings.¹⁸ But the issue

that should be raised by us here is: surely, there cannot be two basic forms of souls, i.e., where both are different and basic. That would be incredulous, and logically impossible.

However, when the Scholastics--Abelard (1079-1142), Roscellin (1050-1120), St. Aquinas and Barrengerius (1000-1088) took up the problem of human nature, they challenged the position that there are real substantive, antecedent souls, which are more basic and radically different from matter. The Scholastics challenge is well re-presented by Estrin and Weigl. The two philosophers, showed how the Scholastics denied that any particular soul could be reduced to mere instances of the universal or *Arche* types. While the Scholastics maintained that the alleged souls were nothing but impressions of similarity--not ideals, but of individual perceivable humans, they further held the view that absolute, eternal souls do not exist; all that exists are the souls of the perceivable particulars. In their view, too, the souls are not entities, though; they are composite photographs or identities of many similar percepts of activated or potential bodily reactions as exhibited in people.¹⁹

There is no need to overstate the importance of the above debates in their attempt to digest human nature, but one point must be mentioned: that the debates that characterized the Classical eras were appendixes to metaphysics, and a part of metaphysics; and we see no other overriding motive specific to the age.

Since the above debates, though, spearheaded by Plato, Democritus, Lucretius, Aristotle and the Scholastics, only a fuzzy notion of human nature emerged, whose relationship with matter stayed rather unclear. However, posited generally was the idea that souls existed, and are basic, sometimes

more basic than the bodies that we see, with a value transcending the physical realm. In particular, the human soul was perceived as endowed, not merely with existence, but it was perceived to be the underlying substance supporting the being and the essence of all the experiences of mankind.

2.5 Necessary existence as immortality

The above metaphysics regarding the existence of the souls raised the question whether souls exist necessarily, or they exist because of the presence of certain organizations of matter. This touched on the question of the immortality of the soul. It was a metaphysical problem which further complicated the problem of human nature. Indeed, there can be no doubt that the question of the necessary existence of the souls was pertinent for the philosophers, for if the soul existed by its own fiat, it existed necessarily; if, however, it existed from matter, then it didn't exist necessarily, and these complications were reflected in their discussions. For instance, when Aristotle postulated that humans are made up of matter, whose essence is its "forms," souls were perceived as forms of the bodies, and as arising in the bodies only on occasion of the bodily existences. At death, as the body decomposes, as Aristotle surprisingly argued, it being substantially different from the body, the soul does not suffer decomposition.²⁰

It is clear that Aristotle's view on this account can be seen as a representation of materialism, yet fixed as he was to materialism was unfortunate since the problem of all materialism is to explain the conditions necessary for the appearance of the souls in matter. On the contrary for Plato, however, the soul does not, and cannot, ever suffer decomposition, and even thinking that it can suffer is a contradiction in terms, because as he notes in his idealistic terms, "... its existence and nature is deducible rationally from reason as a ceaseless reality."²¹ The soul for him, then, was the

eternal metaphysical reality. It is not an entity but a principle, or a thought. As such a vessel, it transcended the bounds and the effects of the matter such as death and cessation.

2.2.6 The conditions of matter that permit the appearance of the soul

Three concepts were central in the ancient metaphysics for discussing the alleged conditions necessary for a material substance to permit the appearance of a soul. The identification and justification of these concepts, and what they stood for, was one of the main metaphysical issues in Classical philosophy, because it had been assumed by some of the philosophers, like Aristotle, that matter could be ensouled. What were these concepts?

These concepts were *Zoē*, *psyche* and soul. As we have stated, *Zoē* is Greek for "life," i.e., the actions distinctive of living beings *qua* living beings. Similarly, *psyche* is Greek meaning "an occult force producing a bodily ensemble of actions."²² Hall wrote of *psyche*:

[It is] ability to set things in motion and to keep them moving...sometimes made responsible for such activities as walking and breathing...the detailed movements that underlie all bodily processes such as assimilation of food or flow of bodily fluids...*Psyche* too was used to suggest various models and degrees of perception, ego awareness, emotion and reason.²³

If Hall is correct, *psyche* and *Zoē* were ordinary Greek terms imported into philosophical debate--meaning-- "being lively" --and the concept "soul"--the activator of *psyche* or *Zoē*. The concept "soul," nonetheless, had several denotations of meaning, thus, ambiguating it. For example, Plato viewed the soul as a distinctively non-material entity unbounded to objects, but inducing in them a characteristic ensemble of behaviour and qualities. However, for the materialists--like Lucretius, the soul is itself material, made up of tiny "atoms," and it disperses with the cessation of a body.²⁴

On the other, Aristotle—a materialist, equated the soul with “forms” of matter. Thus, he construed the souls as bounded to, and immanent in, special arrangements of matter that permit matter to behave in a “lively” fashion, like in eating and moving about—such behaviour of matter being a manifestation of the soul's presence.

In other words, even, on this question about the conditions of matter that may permit the appearance of mind, there were divergent and serious differences in the metaphysics to be settled.

2.7 The human soul and human personality

Philosophy discussed a lot about the origins of human personality, that is, the source of those enduring patterns characterizing humans, human thought, feeling and the behaviours that even separate humans from non-humans, and one human from another. The question still remains whether human personality is ultimately bodily, or there is something deeper, more spiritual that determines the human character. One notices that the question about human character is not wholly recent. In all probability, the issue appeared as an element of concern in the ancient metaphysics. It is easy, though, to fail to see this continuity and to notice the changes in the topics of discussion as merely a succession of entirely different phases; yet, the identity of the metaphysical intention runs through them all. Indeed, since Plato postulated that the source of the distinctiveness of human nature is souls, this view ever captured the intellectual imagination of philosophers, but, as already stated, not quite all the philosophers agreed with Plato regarding the details. Indeed, Plato stated that human characters arise from the three elements that determine the human personality, namely, the appetitive, the spirited and the rational powers—with the “appetitive” powers concerned with desires such as the desire for food, drink and sex; the “spirited” part concerned with desires like

me and honour; the "rational" part concerned with knowledge and wisdom. The way these three elements combine in humans, he speculated, is correlative with one's character. When the rational part prevails, one is a wise individual. When the appetitive or the spirited parts prevail, however, one is an individual who, in character, is appetitive and spirited, respectively.²⁵

Plato's thesis on the origin of the human personality traits received attention from eminent philosophers. One remarkable reaction to it was that by Galen, an eclectic, early Mediaeval philosopher and zoologist who--as legend has it, studied in almost all the good schools. As Cassirer and Hall observed, Galen (130-200) doubted Plato's notion of the soul and conceived the soul as having three capacities in the fashion of Plato. But because his interests lay in the science of his time, unlike Plato, Galen's soul derived from the brain, the heart and the liver, as the three basic composers of the soul. But his exposition of the soul did not lessen the ambiguity of the nature of mankind either. That is because, contrary to the common philosophical belief that the soul is a spiritual being upon which the brain, the heart and the liver depend, in Galen the brain, the heart and the liver are seen as the sources of the soul and ultimately the character of people. For example, the brain is perceived as concerned with sensibility and motion; the heart with pulse; and the liver with nutrition. The power of the soul that resides in the brain is rational, sensory and motile. The power in the liver is nutritive. The heart is the source of the human's spirited nature.²⁶

Thus, contrary to what Plato had asserted, Galen decreed that the power of the soul followed from bodily temperament, and hence, human personalities differ innately from one to another. Galen set forth a speculative basis for the scientific study of the soul, because of his association of the human

personality with the physical features of the human body, such as the heart. Galen today is studied as one of the primordial fathers of the science of psychology and of human personality traits.

2.8 The moral part of human nature

We may now speculate: philosophy is adaptive thoughts--for adapting speculatively to the experiences of mankind--evolving, as mankind's horizons of knowledge evolve--searching for the guiding principles--the basics in life. For example, according to the pioneers of philosophy, morality is a basic element of human nature--a basis for being human. But what is it? In the Classical times, it was perceived, in itself, as an extension of the rational nature of humans. This is because a lot of the metaphysicians of yonder admitted of no other characteristic as more basic among the distinctively human characteristics other than rationality. Having stated that reason was the essential capacity that distinguished humans from non-humans, it followed, for Plato, for instance, a pioneer of the Classical thought, that morality is an ordinate, indeed, a co-ordinate, of reason. Since it is in the basic nature of humans to reason, Plato noted, it is through reasoning that humans attain to the rational moral rules. For him, reasoning enables humans to formulate the moral rules for the perfectly good life *summum bonum*. He thus held that humans are moral by nature. The source of a moral perfection is, allegedly pure reasoning. Since the functioning of our bodies introduces new distractive elements, he believed, that fuse with our moral senses, hence corrupting them, so, in applying pure reasoning to formulate moral rules, however, we purify our moral standards.

As a consequence, his theory of morality boiled down to his metaphysics: i.e., if one were to begin from Plato's speculation of the rational nature of the human soul, then one would know which kind

of morality would guarantee the good life. In good measure, the relative combination of the three powers (appetitive, spirited and rational), which Plato thought constituted the soul, results, he held, in one of the elements dominating. If the rational powers dominate, it results in a society of individuals who are wise. However, when the appetitive and the spirited powers dominate a given society, it results in a society that is ruled by the spirited and the emotive desires. Societies should strive as much as possible to be governed by the rational elements because, such a society is a just society, but devoid of reason, it ebbs back to incivility.²⁷

Aristotle, too, illustrated the primacy of the rational moral nature of humanity, though in a rather different way. But beginning first, like Plato, by arguing that what distinguishes humans from non-humans is that in humans, souls are distinguished by rationality, while in the others they are not, he explained the origin of the moral nature of mankind as follows: because of rationality, mankind is able to appreciate moral values for human happiness' sake. To be happy is to realize one's rationality, and because humans seek to be happy, they organize themselves in a rational way as to be happy. But only such a character that is rational guarantees the true moral nature of humankind. Aristotle, thus, outlined some of the rules to be observed: first, he stated that observation revealed that happiness is maximized only by living--not a solitary life--but in society, because, in his opinion, humans are social beings in essence. Second, it also revealed to him that a virtuous or good life is the moral source of happiness; yet, virtue is not the opposite of vice. Thus, in his concept of the "golden mean," he reiterated that virtue is the middle ground between opposites. For example, while the opposite of extravagance is meanness, neither meanness nor extravagance is virtuous. Virtue is generosity; its middle point.²⁸

2.9 Aesthetic appreciation

The pioneers of philosophy also maintained the commonly held view that unlike other beings on earth, humans appreciate art, beauty and music, by nature. The ancient philosophers' views of the aesthetic appreciation may be re-presented here through Plato. Their guiding philosophy on the matter was that aesthetic appreciation was said to be one of the distinctive characteristics of human nature, but it went hand in hand with reason. Thus, Plato treated the artistic appreciation not only as a characteristic of humanity, but the extension of the rational nature of the human nature as follows: For instance, he believed that the absolute goal of humankind's aesthetic appreciation should be to pierce the surface of things and penetrate to the level of the underlying reality of art, beauty and music.. For him, art., for example should reflect the real world as it is. Whereas of any work of art, it may be said, takes a life of its own, independent of the author and the reality it reflects, Plato dismissed this thought with a forward-looking, ambitious belief in eternal reality. But this was because in Plato's view, artistic illustrations without their inner meanings knowable by logic, are images which glamorize fleeting things of this world, and serve, in his view, human emotions. He observed that these merely hold people back from what he perceived as a true human calling, which is to soar above their level of the images to the timeless and changeless reality beyond.²⁹

In line with this debate about the basic nature of aesthetics, future metaphysics of art would reveal a deeper dialectic between religious, social, cultural and philosophical perspectives. Indeed, as the wise reflections matured--from Protagoras, Plato and others' philosophies, the artistic reflections concretized into what Estrin called the "gnomic verses." That is, aesthetic discussion and appreciation in philosophy predominantly captured and recited philosophical maxims and precepts.

through art, "gnomic verses" based on moral maxims, like "know thyself," and "nothing in excess" were propagated.³⁰

3 Human nature in mediaeval thought: the debate and responses

We maintain that the problem of human nature continued to be discussed as a metaphysical problem in the Mediaeval Age, concerned as it was with digesting the possible, universal nature of human nature and its implications. This issue of the possible nature of human nature called for the search of the absolute identities of being human. And behind this search lay a central question, which we take the liberty to ask at this juncture, in view of the religious interests then: How could the philosophies be said to be absolutist, and at the same time allow their backgrounds cleavage over them as well? The answer is--"by a manifold of creativity." Thus, for instance, some concepts of the soul in Mediaeval religious thought were clearly contradicted by the concepts of the soul by the ancient philosophers in important respects. But this only led to the piercing debate in the Mediaeval Age over the precise nature of the souls.

One of the trajectories of the debate during this time was to show that the Christian belief in souls is supported by natural theology. Therefore, in place of *psyche*, for example, some Mediaeval philosophical thought had "soul" and "person." Whereas, as noted above, the concept *psyche* connotes a physiological origin and nature of the soul, the concept "soul," for the Mediaevalists, was often used to account for the existence of the soul as a mystical, sacred, unknowable entity entirely the creation and the secret of God. Although the soul was perceived as being intelligent and rational, and the source of all the appetitive and the spirited characteristics of humanity, this common Mediaeval concept of the soul differed from the fresh medieval metaphysical concepts

and thoughts about the soul, in content and lines of defence. The notion "person" (=mask, face or countenance), was also borrowed from the ancient Greek culture in the theatre world, and used in the metaphysical debate by Greek thinkers like Cicero (106-43 B.C.E.), and later, by Medieval Greek sages like Epictetus (50-130).

Historically, as Coppleston reports in his *History of Philosophy*, the use of the word "person" marked the line demarcation between philosophical (or is it pagan?) and Christian cultures. Both in the Greek and Latin cultures and discourses, the word *persona* and its Greek equivalent--*prosopon* meant disguising or a mask. Hence Seneca's: ". . . no one can carry the disguise for too long." But the conceptual differences and the controversy which the two concepts ("soul" and "person") generated, is telling, and can be characterized by a discussion on two poles: one, between Boethius, St. Anselm (1033-1109), Roscellin and Abelard; and on the other pole between Boethius (480-524) and St. Aquinas.³¹

When Boethius, a Mediaeval philosopher of no mean achievements, raised the metaphysical question about the basis in the belief in souls, this was the question about whether that which is not given directly or indirectly by the senses exists. It compounded the so-called "problem of the universals," which is central in the history of Mediaeval philosophy. St. Anselm, an Italian priest and philosopher, headed the school of thought which held that universal notions like "souls" have a reality beyond their concept, both in logic and in being. For, he supposed that humans get their ideas from a transcendent soul, which is God, which inspires their knowledge.

Contrariwise, Roscellin, a Mediaeval philosopher, held that there can be no transubstantiation of any universal concepts as was the case with the Eucharist—since the bread and the wine remain visibly unchanged. In the case of the concept "Church," for example, there is no "Church" universal apart from the visible, separate and individual churches. Equally, there is no universal transcendent "soul" apart from the individual people's behaviour. He dismissed all concepts for which visible evidence is lacking as *flatus voci* (mere words).

Abelard on the other hand produced a compromise in his doctrine labeled "conceptualism." He was a Mediaeval philosopher whose compromise was that a universal has no objective existence as such; it exists only as a concept. Any universal is derived from observations. Therefore, the concept "souls" is derived from the observation of particular things--and from taking note of similarities or identities in their qualities, emerges the concept "soul." That is, from observations, a real identity, the concept "soul," is made. Only in this sense do concepts, like "souls" have objective referents.

An analogous point was later made by St. Aquinas, a reknown follower of Aristotle--when he argued that the subject matter of philosophy is, without restriction, being, which exists in all particular beings universally, existing in the particularized forms, and differentiated from one particular to another by matter and form.

On the other axis of the philosophical debate about the souls and human nature during the Mediaeval times, Boethius, a little known philosopher, sought to distinguish between rational beings and non-rational beings by using the concept "person." He posited that only rational beings are "persons"--while defining the concept "person" as "... an individual substance of a rational

nature." He meant by "individual substance"—a substance that is complete, subsists by itself and is separated from others. The expression, "of a rational nature" --designated rationality as the capacity for abstract, independent thought that characterizes such substances. Thus, only such substances with rational souls are allegedly persons, and thus some persons are human.

However, Boethius' conception of the human "person" raised some conceptual and theological problems. For example, according to his definition, is God a person or not? Therefore, St. Aquinas sought to address this matter as follows: According to him, Boethius' concept placed mankind at a level "equal to" God; since to St. Aquinas, God is "person"—the source of all rationality. Thus, he re-defined "person" as ". . . a distinct subsistent in a rational nature," so that for him the concept "person" may not only include mankind. but to know, according to the time-honoured expression, that mankind subsists in a higher being that can reason, namely, God. A clever extension it may have been, but his and Boethius' definition both, nonetheless, did not tell the category of reasoning that is required for human and divine personhood to exist; and furthermore, certainly divine reason is not the same as human reason.

Yet, in St. Aquinas and Boethius, we see the culmination of a metaphysics which entrenched the view that there are certain characteristics that are possibly of the basic human nature, and in their view, these characteristics are rationality, individuality and distinctness. Yet, though it would appear that the definitions are heavily one-sided in the sense of the logical problems just cited above, their theories tended to further cut the concept of the human person completely away from the community, from which both the experiential and even the rational individuality of the persons are derived--as St. Aquinas himself later on realized and defended the social roots of mankind.

2.4. The problem of human nature as an epistemological problem: background and orientations

A number of changes took place from the fifteenth century onwards, that seem to have heralded the advance of, and demand for, a fresh study of all knowledge by philosophers. A historian, Fiero, aptly states the changes that took place at the time as follows: That from roughly the fifteenth century onwards, there was a surging advance in science. Certainly, this experience cannot just be dismissed as inconsequential. With science's insistence on concrete observational proofs, it led to the questioning of many metaphysical doctrines, for which there were no such proofs. Furthermore, the existing metaphysical theories of knowledge had allegedly failed to provide agreeable answers to epistemological, social and cultural problems. Hence, the evolving sciences had begun to supply alternative routes to explanation, even over the bigger cosmological issues--like the existence of the souls. With its ability to provide empirical proofs, wherever applicable, science increasingly challenged the old sources of wisdom. By extension, for the philosophers of the time, this meant that the existing metaphysical theories of knowledge required probing, and to be accounted for first in terms of their own underlying theories of knowledge, i.e., in terms of their validity, grounds and justification as means of knowledge. It meant that the existing metaphysical theories were not first and foremost to be seen as the foundational sources of knowledge that had apparently promised to fix the perplexing problems confronting people--since their efficacy had to be ascertained first. Metaphysics had raised numerous philosophical problems as we have seen, and this meant for the philosophers that while it was important to study both the social and the natural realities that metaphysics studied, most important of all, the very nature of the humans as the sources of the metaphysics, must be studied if only the metaphysics was to be properly appreciated instead of concentrating on the metaphysical theories without the proper knowledge of its source.³²

In other words, the philosophers set out the general concerns of the new metaphysics as the search for the foundation of the certainty of knowledge. The new metaphysics modified the concerns of philosophy, but not its form, structure or kinds of defence. Locke, for instance stated this epistemological concern in the seventeenth century as his primary objective when, he asserted in the opening pages of his *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, that his purpose was "... to inquire into the origin, certainty and extent of all human knowledge, together with the grounds and degrees of belief, opinion or assent."³³ The grounds of that study remained, as it turned out, to be the human nature. And the philosophers divided into two groups in this epistemological endeavour: namely, rationalism and empiricism. These two groups exacted and furthered the view of the pioneering philosophers--like Thales, Anaximander, Anaximenes, Diogenes and Heraclitus, and of most of the forerunners of philosophy that, whether it is who I am, or what really exists, it depends on rational thinking; that is, they promoted the view that the true nature of reality, and of the human knowledge, would only be knowable by reasoning.

2.4.1 The rationalistic sense of human nature

Descartes (1596-1650) defended the view that the foundation of certainty in knowledge is in the absolute knowledge of the human soul. He asserted, above all else, that it is the human soul that has the ability to exercise rational thought. With this proclamation, was reverberated the echo that reason is the distinguishing mark of humans. To affirm this, he menacingly re-established the dualism conceived earlier by Plato--that the human individual is made up of the soul and the body as distinct substances, and further conceded in the fashion of St. Aquinas, that since the two substances could be conceived independently, therefore, they must be distinct by default.³⁴

Descartes--in the seventeenth century, certainly made an impressive case for the metaphysical study of human nature. For, he argued that the soul being the thing that thinks holds the key to all rational knowledge about the world. It is this kind of conception of the soul and the need to prove the rational ideas that the mind might have, which appeared to make philosophy as epistemology the foundational field of inquiry, which, more than ever before, seemed prior to all the inquiry in human knowledge, and the seeming basis to the solution of all human philosophical and practical problems.

However, Descartes did not deaden the overriding issues regarding human knowledge, like whether the human souls were indeed substances of their own, although he had indicated that the soul is a substance and a source of all ideas. Hence, following Descartes attempt, successive rationalists did not refute the fundamentality of the soul as an inimitable part of the human nature. But, following their own theoretical reflections and modifications, the soul was, however, reconstituted by the different theorists giving it new senses of individuality. For example, Spinoza (1632-1677) taught that the soul can only be a supra-natural attribute, but not an independent substance, whether in nature or in human bodies. He justified this as follows: If all reality is alike in its ultimate nature and composition, this implied that there can only be one source of everything--and all else is this one element's attributes or manifestations or its mode. Thus, according to Spinoza, both human bodies and the souls are nothing but elements of the one underlying substance he called nature or God.³⁵ In other words, Spinoza alleged that human souls ultimately do not exist as independent substances as Descartes thought.

On the other hand, probably much impressed by the notion that reality is ultimately souls was Leibniz. For him, the souls are so core that even bodies are, indeed, originally souls. His conception originated from his thinking, that all reality is composed ultimately or originally of souls, to lead to his, we dare say, very logical position that in so far as philosophy asserts that the essential attribute of bodies is matter, and that all matter divides, the splitting up of matter reaches a point where it no longer is possible, conceptually speaking, to divide any further. That indivisible end which may be conceived as the beginning or end of all matter, itself unlike matter, --may be called "souls." Hence, purportedly, the real and the primary nature of all reality is being souls--from which material, even human bodies are allegedly built.³⁶ So we are allegedly souls.

2.4.2 The empiricist sense of human nature

Our investigation reveals that empiricism emerged with a materialistic sense of mankind, because it even conceived of the soul as nothing more than sensations.³⁷ Our comment here is that empiricism was some sort of a logical result upon reflection of the position of rationalism. While rationalism held that the souls exist, not only as independent substances of their own, but even as the metaphysical basis of all knowledge, empiricism similarly held that the souls exist, but in a different sense. To the empiricists, the rationalists did not have any other evidence that the souls existed except by logic; so in the empiricists' sense, the rationalists were thinking of "imaginary" or potential souls. This was because empiricism was the school of thought that all reality must be provable, at least in principle, by sensory observation. Thus, "potentialities" aside, they contended that what we call the soul was, accordingly, nothing more than a summary term for a collection of sensations which, conceived in the abstract, are seen by logic as composing unities called the "souls."

Accordingly, Hume, an empiricist, captured the pertinence of the soul as he perceived it in his philosophy as follows:

There are some philosophers who imagine we are every moment intimately conscious of what we call our *self*. .and are certain of its perfect identity and simplicity.... For my part, when I enter most intimately into what I call myself, I always stumble on some particular perception or other, of hot or cold, light or shade, love or hatred, pain or pleasure... When my perceptions are removed for a time, as by sound sleep, so long I am insensible of myself, and may truly be said not to exist.³⁸

The "soul," and all consciousness, according to Hume, are ultimately nothing but bundles or a collection of fleeting perceptions, which succeed each other with great rapidity, and are in a constant state of flux and transformation--which make our ever changing thoughts. There is no sublimity, nor simplicity, or even mystery, about the soul and consciousness, he claims, beyond being originally sensations.

2.5 The metaphysics of the soul since Descartes

There is no doubt that Descartes effectively rekindled the problem of the metaphysics of the human nature in the seventeenth century, when he, re-asserted after Plato, that there is a radical difference between souls and bodies, and that the human soul is the substance that thinks, or enables us to think; bodies are in themselves made up of matter only; only ensouled bodies think.³⁹ As we have already pointed out above, his proclamations raised additional metaphysical questions rather than give answers, regarding what precisely human nature is.

The two famous historians we have already cited above, Lam and Cross, correctly give part of the contextual backgrounds that might have led Descartes to conceptualize human nature in this particular way: For instance, they argue that Descartes had lived in Europe through a period called the Thirty Years War.⁴⁰ It was a period of political turmoil and civil strife, for much of Europe.

Existing regimes of knowledge had failed to provide any concrete answers to the social, epistemological, cultural and political problems of the time confronting people. Therefore, in his self-imposed agenda, he made it his objective to discover that regime of knowledge which would assist to bring a solution to the turmoil. For him, this could only be through the sober but rational deliberation of issues.

Second, the historians reveal Descartes' life as coinciding with a time of the effervescence of science. This was significant, for, coupled with the strong and the persistent presence of outmoded traditions and religious beliefs--the vestiges of the past, it led him to spin his philosophy as his way of telling those disillusioned with science to take comfort in it, in that, it purportedly taught the truth about reality, and was not necessarily incompatible with philosophy.

Further, an elaboration of the official Christian doctrine, which emphasized the sanctity of the soul, only made the reliance on the Christian sense of the soul less likely given the disputes raised by philosophical and scientific knowledge. This irreconcilability with the Christian sense of an eternal soul was, allegedly, to culminate in the philosophy of Descartes that endeavored to vehemently denounce the religious sense of the soul, God and other religious concepts.⁴¹

Yet, still, our investigation reveals that while the above, as Lam and Cross contended, may be said to have exercised influence on Descartes' metaphysics, his metaphysics can still be considered on its own terms thus: After he conjectured that all cosmic endeavours shrink ultimately to two irreducible and essentially different modes of being, namely, to either souls (or minds) or matter, he referred to the souls as the incorporeal substances that underlie and uphold the various conscious

capacities of conscious beings. The rational thinking mind, he stated, tells us that the essence of matter is space. That is why he stated that in order to resolve any problems confronting humanity in the experiential world and the practical spheres, people must exercise their rational souls, and think. People should not give up, because *ratio est capabilis*, i.e., only minds (which they possess) think; the latter, matter, in itself does not think; it occupies space and behaves according to the cosmic laws of science. Thus, the problems in the physical world cannot solve themselves; matter is entirely devoid of the capacity of thought.⁴²

In the furtherance of his metaphysics, Descartes made it clear that he genuinely believed that the souls interact with matter, and matter with the souls. Therefore, citing examples from common experience, he stated that constantly, the human souls act upon bodies initiating movements of the limbs, regulating thinking, inhibiting thoughts and modulating voice.⁴³ Indeed, for him, humans think or theorize because they believe that ideas influence life. However, he wrongly pointed to the existence of a region purportedly in the brains of people, a region he called the "pineal gland" --as an example of the point of interaction of the souls with matter. He then suggested how it can be so that through this region, bodily events can affect the human souls.⁴⁴

We can now comment here that in spite of the Descartes' attempt to bring his sense of knowledge at the centre of solving epistemological problems—including practical ones, his theory appeared insignificant. For, he and the other philosophers before him—spent much effort learning by logic what mankind can learn, and has learnt for certain by wide acquaintance. For example, by the time Descartes was philosophizing about human nature, Archimedes, a Greek philosopher, had already

discovered the "Archimedes principle" by taking his routine bath. Similarly, Pythagoras had already discovered his "Musical Laws" by a chance stop at a blacksmith's shop.

Metaphysically speaking, Descartes' philosophy was controversial in at least two basic ways: First, in its purported division of reality into two allegedly independent substances; and second, in insisting that though minds and bodies are radically different, they interact. This is because, with that distinction, he aggravated the soul-body problem, and by extension, the problem of human nature and the nature of reality--in theoretical terms. For, philosophers were concerned whether in view of their opposed natures, the souls do interact with the physical bodies constituted as they are of material nature. Consequently, several philosophers like Malebranche, Spinoza and Leibniz gave up the idea of interaction altogether.

2.5.1 Controversy and the proposals

Malebranche, Spinoza and Leibniz faulted Descartes' theory of metaphysics for being too simplistic, and too obvious, to be taken seriously as a philosophical theory, relying as it were on the common sense evidence that reality exists as minds and matter, and that physical events cause mental effects and vice versa--to conclude that souls influence material existents. There was an outpouring of criticism as a consequence, ranging from the views that mind and matter are identical ultimately (=that either they are spiritual or physical), to the views which hold that they are different substances, and then making an attempt to account as to how they appear as it is to interact. However, only a bird's-eye view of these positions is possible here to illustrate why Descartes theory was rejected.

For instance, while attacking the metaphysical basis of the interactionist theory, Malebranche (1638-1715), one of the critics of Descartes, contended that there is, indeed, an apparent interaction between the souls and matter, but he conceded that it is not a genuine interaction. For him, the apparent interaction between the two can be attributed to, even explained in terms of, what has been termed as "occasionalism." This is the view that on occurrence of bodily stimuli, God always created the appropriate idea as a response in the souls that is its constant mental conjunct.⁴⁵ If "occasionalism" is true, then, according to Malebranche, it certainly nullifies Descartes position of interaction.

Another critic of Descartes' was Leibniz. He echoed closely the above Malebranche's position with his theory of "pre-established harmony." His, also, was the view that there is no real interaction between the soul and the body; only a pre-set relationship between the souls and bodies existed. According to him, bodily events have been preordained by God in such a way as to correspond at every point with the appropriate mental effects. In the fashion of two clocks synchronized, they always tick at the same time, giving an impression of interaction; but there is none.⁴⁶

However, in accordance with Spinoza, the mind-body issue should be addressed within the framework of the "double aspect theory." He dismissed Descartes', Leibniz's and Malebranche's theories. Spinoza's theory espoused the view that ultimately matter and mind are not separate substances; but they eject from a "substance." For him, while it does not make sense to ignore the incontrovertible existence of some distinction and connection between souls and matter, however, his theory was that they are both manifestations of one, independent, neutral substance with the two—soul and matter—as its qualities. That is, for him, it is possible that there is a single, ultimate

substance—God or nature--which has two known basic aspects or attributes, namely, souls and matter.⁴⁷

Our own example from an aspect of nature will suffice to explain his position: Take an example of the experience of sound: sound may be experienced internally--mentally, but the same sound will have a physical expression, such as sound waves. Mental and physical events, it is implied by our example, are but two manifestations of the same phenomenon. Along these same lines, in the cosmos as a whole, reality is either immaterial or material. But these two modes of existence are two expressions of one and the same substance, an independent substance he called "nature" or "God"--though we may experience this one neutral substance now as matter, now as the soul or both. Humans are a composition of both the soul and matter.

One statement needs to be made here: The above discussion merely characterizes part of the details of the metaphysical debate on the nature of humans that ensued after Descartes. The details notwithstanding, still the question remained whether the souls interact with the bodies, and precisely how? What the true nature of human nature is, namely, whether minds and bodies could be reduced, for example, to one or more basic elements was one of the trajectories the debate took into the nineteenth century.

2.6 The rational nature of human nature: a turning point in philosophy

We have now reached the threshold of this chapter, and must indicate one thing: that with the dawn of the seventeenth century, it became apparent that the metaphysical essence of human nature was taken to be rationality. Mankind's greatest asset was said to be reason because, allegedly, no other

attribute of mankind would further mankind's knowledge, way of life and survival. The history of the philosophical investigations and their recommendations since Thales, gave that position a sense of legitimacy, and revealed how the rationality element was isolated from the rest of the traits of the human nature, and awarded the prime status; in Plato, Heraclitus, Aristotle, Socrates, St. Aquinas, Descartes and others existed the same return to rationality. Notice how that history developed, too, its perceived perceptions of irrationality: for example, like in some of the philosophers' views--that the reliance on God's guidance and one's intuition, is not necessarily reasonable, or rational. But there is a noteworthy component in that matter: the metaphysical interpretation of the nature of the perceived rationality left one to wonder what its precise nature is, for, there was not any one agreed-upon or general meaning of the precise nature of the human rationality. For example, Heraclitus upheld the expanded position that the whole universe as a totality was ruled by a rational capacity--a universal logic he called *logos*. For him, by conforming to *logos*, the world can be known rationally--and the human souls experience knowledge and the freedom that comes with the knowledge of the universal truth.⁴⁸

Yet, Heraclitus' definition did not coincide with Plato's and Socrates.' For Plato and Socrates, rationality was the human condition, or a state in humans, attained through intellectual labour at the expense of emotions and the sensualism of the senses. As an example, well-known for their ethical philosophy and urging a rational disposition towards good morality, they suggested that rationality is the inherent quality of human nature from where the objectively morally right is deducible from rules known as true by solely the pure act of reasoning. Hence, reasoning, they alleged, would enable humans to know the path of morality that made them truly human--through self-knowledge. Self-knowledge was itself awareness of the human nature. They asserted that such knowledge

enables one to live a better life, since such knowledge is virtue, and virtue is knowledge. Living according to what is virtuous is living a good, moral but rational life, for, one knows the basis of that life.⁴⁹

Since rationality is very important, Aristotle called the mind ". . . the eye of the soul and of the cosmos." However, for him, unlike for Socrates, rationality was the test of the status of human thought according to which the rational is goal-directed, purposeful, and operating according to the rules of reasoning observable in nature. Remarkably, he contended that the rational must proceed from observations. In two of his many books on reason, he developed rules of reasoning to distinguish correct from incorrect reasoning. In his *Posterior Analytics* and *Anterior Analytics*, for example, he pointed out the fallacies commonly committed in reasoning, which today are faithfully echoed in the discipline "logic." All reasoning, he stated in these two eminent works, is by classification, and the classifications include substance, quantity, quality, relation and place. Every human being uses one or another of these classifications he called "categories." "Categories" are joined into sentences (e.g., Man is a rational animal). Some denote qualities that tell us little of what the subject really is (e.g., Man is hairy); others denote important but not definitive qualities (e.g., Man runs); still others give us the essential properties (e.g., Man is rational). The subject of the proposition has its own distinctive definition, its species, or that which differentiates it from all other subjects. It may also be identified with its genus, which includes it with all other subjects. Proper definition, for instance, must precede reasoning if reasoning is to be truthful and accurate. It must proceed by correct inferences. Correct inference proceeds syllogistically, i.e., from major premises to minor premises and to a conclusion.⁵⁰

With the Sophists, though, a different sense of rationality emerged--an aspect which, however, ambiguated the meaning of rationality, and in this way made it difficult to know the absolute nature of the human rationality, and by extension the human nature. For, the Sophists--the wondering teachers of ancient Greece who taught rhetoric in the fifth century B.C.E. Athens, allegedly aiming at giving practical mileage to the citizens of Athens, by teaching them how to solve practical problems in life, vehemently argued that people are by nature rational, but instead of conceiving rationality as universal and having universal canons as Aristotle touted, the sophists contended that every individual possesses a different sense of rationality, and is entitled to express their own rationality based on the reasoning as they perceived it right--as to attain practical benefit. Thus, unlike Aristotle and Socrates, the sophists posited that rationality is the rationality to exercise truth according to a varied human understanding of truth, their needs and purposes. With them, the halo of a universal rationality seemed to have been replaced.⁵¹

Still, Plotinus (207-270), on the other hand, asserted that humans are rational when they live according to what is good according to God. Here, then, we see a different sense of rationality. For him, the rational is personified in the commandments of God. Thus, living according to the commandments of the deity is allegedly the essence of the rational.⁵² A reason for such a claim is articulated, but, for that reason, we need to turn to St. Aquinas. For, in similar vein, St. Aquinas defended rationality as the essence of the human persons. He proceeded from his belief that there is no contradiction between God's law and the law knowable by reason, to the argument that since the Ten Commandments are not an arbitrary set of rules, living according to the Commandments enables humans to live the God-like life. As for the humans who are of the image of God, to live

according to the commandments is purportedly to live according to their own true nature of rationality. Therefore, God's law is in fact the law of human nature, and of all nature.⁵³

The differences in the meaning of rationality were many. But if the above do illustrate it, let us wrap up this matter with a general observation. One issue we ought to take note of as a matter of critical observation in that philosophy of human nature is this: there is a menacing sense in the philosophies in which the meaning of rationality shifts to be a quality of the cosmos, the deity and of humans. Why does this sense of shift happen? Why are the cosmos, God and the humans simultaneously posed as rational? It seems that the answer lies in the philosophies, religion and the sciences that had taken it to discuss the ancient Greek beliefs that it is of the essence of humanity to be rational, since if humans are rational, only a rational world or God can be understood. Inversely, if the world is governed by intelligent rules, or that God operates rationally, then those rules or God's logic must be discoverable by rational beings. This reason then ties very well with, and may well have been instigated by, the developments in religion and the proliferation of the sciences--to investigate into the rational laws of nature, religion, society and human nature.

So, from our above examination, we drew one tentative conclusion: that the above debate, "purist" and metaphysical in its orientation, was the foundation of the philosophy of human nature, but it was rooted in diverse cultural needs and desires.

2.7 A critique

The above named philosophies have robust and diverse views about human nature. They posited a sense of the soul that is abstract but basic; "basic" because, since humans are conscious, the

principal source or substance of consciousness is assumed to be the soul; it is "abstract," for instance in the sense of the empiricists, since the soul is not seen as an independent substance but purely the totality of one's perceptions conceived theoretically as composing a unity. It was also basic because it was perceived as mankind's greatest asset.

Yet, though the philosophies conceived of humans as made up of souls as well as bodies, they consistently favoured the soul over the body in the sense that the soul was seen as the source of all the definitive characteristics of humanness (qualities like rationality)--instead of seeing both bodies and souls as complimentary in the make-up of human nature because, for instance, physical incapacity results eventually in death, not a brilliance of the soul. .

Furthermore, the concept "soul," was interpreted in terms of ideas considered by their investors to be the peculiarities of human nature--ideas such as *psyche* or *Zoë*. Yet, these and "soul" were nothing but an outpouring of alternative concepts defying a unity of meaning. The difficulty of reducing them to a single meaning is implied in the failure of the soul to reduce to any of the particular substances variously referred to by the concepts. For instance, the soul could not reduce to "hylozoism," or the materialism of the atomists. However, if it was spiritual, it is not clear from the philosophies whether the "spiritual" is synonymous to the "non-material." Further more, the "spiritual" is not necessarily synonymous to the "non-material. One would probably think that they may have a lot in common, though they are not necessarily similar.

Clearly, the debate about the nature of the soul was inconclusive. What began as powerful and promising metaphysical debates about the essences of the soul turned out to be debates riddled with

serious conceptual problems, i.e., found there are grave inconsistencies and ambiguities of terms, unfinished meanings, and unanswered questions. The unstated premise that the absolute knowledge of the soul was possible remained unfulfilled and potentially misleading. We may further illustrate this point using the following major philosophies in the philosophy of human nature. A birds-eye view of this vast panorama reveals the following: Descartes philosophy about the soul, for example, dwelt only with the proof of one's own soul, conceiving it as the thinking thing. Further, he suggested of the proof of other's souls as merely by analogy, and even then, that an individual would allegedly prove the existence of his or her soul only when conscious. This line of thinking, that a soul's existence is provable from acts of consciousness, was followed by Locke and Hume, important Western philosophers. But the problem is that it contradicted another strong view--the view that souls exist as substantial entities independent of anybody's conception or perception of them. Such a view was held by Spinoza, for example, who contended that any particular soul is a particular mode of the thinking attribute of an eternally existent reality underlying all reality, which he called nature or God.

On the other hand, Aristotle, conceivably one of the most influential philosophers, conceived of souls as the "principle" of being which is present in every being. For instance, in living beings like plants, souls enable nutrition; in animals--in addition to nutrition, they enable passions and motion; in humans, in addition to the foregoing, souls enable intellection. Such an idea of the soul as a basis of life is present in Aristotle's followers like Galen and Al-kindī, yet in Galen, for instance, the soul is conceived to be the effect of the heart, the liver and the kidney; while this conception contrasts sharply with Plato's notion in whose notion no other element is the basic characteristic of the human soul except intellection.

From the foregoing emerges a sensitive criticism: These were not just conceptual disagreements; or pass-time reflections over the soul; they constituted a crisis in philosophy regarding the metaphysical meaning and the nature of the soul, and by extension, the meaning and nature of human nature. From the point of view of an outsider looking inside into the sources of these debates, we see several factors that urged the debate on, one of them being the failures of the prevailing metaphysical concepts to provide answers.

There are further remarkable aspects about this metaphysics of the philosophy of human nature: that is, the discussions about the soul—whether by Aristotle or Plotinus, Galen, the atomists, Anaxagoras, St. Aquinas, Descartes, the empiricists, Spinoza, Socrates, Heraclitus, Leibniz, Malebranche, Abelard, Barrengerius, Homer, Al-kindī, Roscellin and all the other philosophers we have mentioned, pushed forward, in a discursive manner, some characteristically Greek beliefs. For example, there developed the not-so uncharacteristic Greek concept that an ideal human being is one who is rational, thus making the perceived individual coveted for its ability to make sound, rational and universal judgments--allegedly in detachment from external influences from the society and the biasing influence of the passions. Yet, such an individual remains an ideal, but at most, a caricature of a Western picture of mankind which saw every other different picture as a make-up.

We can anticipate a counter argument here: how about the producer of philosophic knowledge? Isn't this the product of neutral individuals? Our point holds regardless of whatever scientific knowledge is in question. As Harding, a feminist philosopher points out supporting this position,

This is true even though the way scientific method is operationalized usually succeeds in removing all personal or individual fingerprints from the results of research...the thought of an age is of an age, and the delusion that one's thought can escape historical

locatedness is just one of the thoughts that is typical of dominant groups in these and other ages. The scientific world view is in fact a view of (dominant groups in) modern, Western societies. . . .⁵⁴

But also most important, we need, then, to note, besides the conceptual debates, the historical backgrounds that gave rise to the notions, since the notions were not just general notions. For instance, for the pioneer ancient Greek philosophers like Thales, it is when the philosophers were disillusioned by spiritual explanations offered, when they denounced the existence of the Greek senses of souls. This denunciation evoked a rebuttal with some ancient philosophers--like Lucretius--radically and exceedingly conceding that although all of nature is imbued, if not made up, of souls, the souls are material in essence. More recently, it is when existing theories of knowledge then in vogue failed to provide answers to theoretical, social and cultural problems, when Descartes and other philosophers found it necessary to re-call the rational powers of humans in an attempt to deal with the problems; and this necessitated emphasis of the rational element of souls, thereby bringing rational consciousness to the centre of things towards the solution of the human problems.

We may say these conceptual and social backgrounds gave rise to the notions about human nature. Hence, any supposition that there is a neutral substance called "soul" --or even human nature at this juncture, distinct from and neutrally sitting in judgment-- seems a huge misconception.

2.8 Summary and conclusion

In this chapter, we have discussed the origin of the philosophical debate over human nature. We have observed that it originated from the metaphysical discussion about the nature of reality in general--in menacing questions like: What is the nature of reality? What is the nature of human

nature? What is the ultimate or real composition of the human soul? We have observed that the debate over human nature is inconclusive. Furthermore, the metaphysical concepts of the human nature were instigated by, besides the conceptual debates, by certain historical forces, needs and cultural influences. For example, we observed how certain ideas of the debate over human nature (like rationality) became "epistemologically" paramount when philosophers decided that it was important to have philosophical knowledge of the human person as a prerequisite to the understanding of humankind and for solving mankind's problems. In this case, the failure of the past philosophies to answer decisively to humankind's epistemological and cultural problems, for instance, implored the philosophers to inquire into the validity of all knowledge, and to proceed to investigate into the kinds of consciousness and processes of knowledge which humankind might use with profit.

In the following two chapters, we examine the major trends of thought and notions emergent about human nature from the Western philosophy.

2.9 Notes

1. See Thomas. S. Hall, *Ideas of Life and Matter: Studies in the History of General Physiology: 600-1900 A.D.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), pp. 2-4. It should be noted that the concepts "spirits" and "souls" are often used synonymously in ancient philosophy, and we shall henceforth employ them similarly unless specified.
2. See Gordon H. Clark, "The Beginnings of Greek Philosophy," ed., V. Ferm, *History of Philosophical Systems* (Iowa: Littlefield, Adams and Company, 1958), pp. 70-81.

It should be observed that "dualism" is the philosophical concept that there are two kinds of irreducible realities in nature which allegedly also account for all the events, transformations and the qualitative differences of reality.

3. A quick reference on "hylozoism" is G. F. Parker, *A Short Account of Greek Philosophy* (New York: Perennial Library, 1967), pp. 17-31.
4. See Edward Zeller, *Outline of the History of Greek Philosophy* (New York: Meridian Books, 1955), chapter 1. Cf. Muhammad B. As-Sadri, *Our Philosophy*. trans., S. C. Inati (London: Ansariyya Publications, 1989), p. 79.
5. The "hylozoist" views of these philosophers are quoted from G. F. Parker, *Op. cit.*, pp. 53-72, Also, see Zeller, *Ibid.* Similarly, As-Sadri, *Ibid.*, uses the term "hylozoists" to describe them.
6. Homer was a reknown Greek poet. It is not known precisely when Homer was born and died. But he is known to have been active around 485 B.C.E. writing poetic masterpieces.
7. See T. S. Hall, *Op. cit.*, pp. 13-15; also see Zeller, *Op. cit.*, pp. 25-37. Zeller's views of Homer's sense of soul seem to imply that there is a distinction between the soul and "psyche."
8. The views of these ancient Greek philosophers were cited from T. S. Hall, *Ibid.*, pp. 51-53, and B. Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 44-48. Also see Edward Zeller, *Op. cit.*, pp. 76-79.

9. Socrates is an interlocutor in Plato's books. The moral views of Socrates are available in Plato's works notable among them the *Republic* and *Protagoras*. See particularly the discussion on virtue, in Plato, "Protagoras," eds., Irwin Edman and H. W. Schneider. *Landmarks in Philosophy* (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1941), pp. 6-61.

10. Quoted from Plato, "Republic," ed., Louis P. Loomis. *Plato: Five Great Dialogues* (New York: Gramercy Books, 1942), pp. 323-327.

11. Aristotle's views of the nature of the soul and physical realities are explicated in his *Physics*, and *Nichomachean Ethics*. See for his "kinds of souls", Aristotle, "Nichomachean Ethics," eds., Irwin Edman and H. W. Schneider. *Landmarks in Philosophy* (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1941), pp. 142-145.

The concept "form" means "that aspect under which a thing is conceptualized and classified." While, for Aristotle, the "form" is in matter; for Plato exists in and as a thought.

12. For the Sophists' views, we acknowledge the thesis of Jack Estrin, *World History Made Simple* (New York: Double day and Company, 1968), p.55. Also see for a similar thesis "The Sophist: Protagoras," in *History of Philosophy: Eastern and Western* (George Allen and Unwin, 1953), pp. 42-45. A handy work on the same is that of Edward Zeller, *Op. cit.*, pp. 76-80, 92-98.

Thomas Hobbes explains the "atomic" characteristic of reality in his *Leviathan* where he attempts to give a clear and purely physical explanation of all mental phenomena, like thoughts, imagination, appetite, hunger, thirst and desire.

13. These views are cited from Plato, "Protagoras," eds., Irwin Edman and H. W. Schneider *Landmarks in Philosophy* (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1941), pp. 6-61.

14. See Plato, *Ibid.*; also Plato, "Republic," ed., Louis P. Loomis. *Plato: Five Great Dialogues* (New York: Gramercy Books), Aristotle, "Nichomachean Ethics," eds., Irwin Edman and H. W. Schneider, *Landmarks in Philosophy* (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1941), pp. 143-144.

15. Plato, *Ibid.*, Aristotle, *Ibid.*

16. See Aristotle, *Ibid.*

Note that the concepts "reason" and "rationality" in philosophical debate are not necessarily always used synonymously, and it is not our intention to debate their use here. Thus, in this thesis, the words simply mean the human capacity to abstract and reflect, and to weigh ideas intellectually in the mind. Also "Forms" refers to the material essences of bodies.

17. The thesis was cited from H. Michael, *The Western Intellectual Tradition: From Antiquity to the Thirteenth Century* (London: Macmillan, 1992), pp. 122-124.

18. This metaphysical thesis of reality and the classifications therein used are well explored by Gustave Weigl and Arthur, G. Maden, *Knowledge: Its Values and Limits* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1965), pp. 2-12, and H. Pienne, *A History of Europe: from the Thirteenth Century to the Renaissance and the Reformation* (New York: Double day Anchor Books, 1956).

19. See G. Weigl and A. G. Maden, *Ibid.*, and J. Estrin, *Ibid.*, pp. 115-116.

20. See Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, *Op. cit.*, p. 143. The materialistic view of the soul by Aristotle is reiterated of him by many philosophers e.g., T. S. Hall, *Op. cit.*, pp. 108-119.

21. See Plato, *Republic*, *Op. cit.*

22. See T. S. Hall, *Op. cit.*, pp. 13-15, 24.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

24. See Aristotle's "Nichomachean Ethics" in Note 11. See also G. F. Parker, *Op. cit.*, pp. 64-65.

25. Plato, *Op. cit.*

26. Galen's views on the physiology of the soul are reiterated in T. S. hall, *Op.cit.*, pp.140ff.

27. See Plato, *Op. cit.*, Also see J. Estrin, *Op. cit.*, pp. 55-58.

28. See Aristotle, *Op. cit.*, pp. 146-147. Cf. J. Estrin, *Ibid.*, p. 58.

29. These Plato's ideas about knowledge including knowledge of art and beauty are from his Republic. However, his aesthetics is exemplified in his discussion of love in Plato, "Symposium," eds., Irwin Edman and H. W. Schneider. *Landmarks in Philosophy* (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1941).

30. Reference is J. Estrin, *Op. cit.*, pp. 55-58.

31. See Fredrick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy: Mediaeval Philosophy* (New York: Doubleday, 1962), pp. 157-176. Also see G. Weigl and A. G. Maden, *Op. cit.*, pp.2-12, J. Estrin, *Op. cit.*, pp. 1 15ff, and P. Iroegbu, "The Human Person in the Western and African Traditions: A Comparative Analysis," ed., W. Sweet, *Philosophy, Culture and Tradition*, A journal of the World Union of Catholic Philosophical Societies, Vol., 1.,2002, pp. 67-75.

The reader should note that the Mediaeval period (and thought) stretches roughly from C.E. 1 to the thirteenth century C.E. One tradition of thought about this period is that there was no significant philosophical activity, especially when compared to the periods before and after the Mediaeval Age C.E. However, this view may not necessarily be true. Thus, another tradition and interpretation of the Mediaeval Age holds that there was significant philosophical activity during this time of which the works discussed here on human nature are a witness to that activity.

32. See Gloria K. Fiero, *The Humanistic Tradition* (Madison: Brown and Benchmark, 1995), pp. 2-20. Therein Fiero explicates the major social and economic effects which took place around and after the fifteenth century, especially the evolution of science, deaths due to the "black death" (=plague), the Three Hundred Years' War, and vexations due to the decline of the Church. Also see for the analysis of these social and cultural effects, Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press), chapter 1.

The reader must bear in mind that the concept "epistemology" which literally means theory of knowledge, actually means a philosophical study of the concept knowledge concerned with questions such as: What does the concept "knowledge" mean? What are the sources of "knowledge?" What "knowledge" is certain? In ancient philosophy, though, the study of knowledge was done only when it was necessary to ascertain claims of metaphysics. Thus, it is roughly from the fifteenth century onwards when philosophers actually undertook to study knowledge as a problem of its own. That deliberate change came to be known as the "epistemological turn." Thus, the term "epistemology" came to describe the philosophers' deliberate attempts, their style and objectives to discuss knowledge in order to ascertain the nature of its foundations.

33. See John Locke, "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding," eds., R. Cummins and D. Owen. *Central Readings in the History of Modern Philosophy: Descartes to Kant*. (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1992), p. 94.
34. See Rene Descartes, "Meditations on First Philosophy," eds., R. Cummins and D. Owen *Central Readings in the History of Modern Philosophy: Descartes to Kant* (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1992), pp. 4ff.
35. Benedict Spinoza, *Ethics*. trans., J. Gutman (New York: Hafner Publishing Company, 1949), pp. 80-82.
36. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, "The Monadology," eds., R. Cummins and D. Owen *Central Readings in the History of Modern Philosophy: Descartes to Kant*, (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1992), pp. 83-89.
37. Although the soul was seen as the inimitable part of humankind, empiricism held that the soul is a non-existent --- but a term compounded from and meant to refer to our observations of overt behaviours of beings.
38. See David Hume, *A Treatise on Human Nature*, ed., C. Selby Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), p. 251.
39. Rene Descartes, *Op. cit.*, pp. 4-13.
40. See R. C. Lam and N. M. Cross, *The Humanities in Western Culture: A Search for Human Values* (Madison: Brown and Benchmark, 1993), pp. 333-336. Also see G. Fiero, *Ibid.*, p. 7.
41. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-13
42. Rene Descartes, *Op. cit.*, p. 9.
43. *Ibid.*
44. *Ibid*
45. Malebranche's views are cited from Wallace Matson, *A New History of Philosophy: From Descartes to Searle* (New York: Harcourt Publishers, 2000), *Op. cit.*, pp. 331-332.
46. G. W. Leibniz, *Op. cit.*, pp. 86-89.
47. B. Spinoza, *Op. cit.*, p. 47.

48. The position that nature and humankind are rational has been held by many philosophers since Thales, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Heraclitus and others B.C.E. For instance for Heraclitus' views see Edward Zeller, *Op. cit.*, pp. 60-64.

The reader should note that the concept "rationality" represents different views in philosophy: e.g., a) it means a form, status, quality or content of thought which follows or is based on rules of reasoning of the human mind; b) a test of the status of human thought where the "rational" is that which is based on evidence from observations, pure reasoning or general human understanding; or c) a test of the status of human thought where the "rational", is only deducible from rules known as true by the pure act of reasoning. It is still a problem of debate in philosophy.

49. See Plato, "Republic," ed., Louis P. Loomis. *Plato: Five Great Dialogues* (New York: Gramercy Books). As we mentioned above Socrates is used in Plato's works as an interlocutor.

50. This view by Aristotle, that the soul is "the eye of all reality", is articulated well in J. Estrin, *Ibid.*, p.58. But most important, see Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, *Ibid.*, p. 143.

51. Sophistry is well expounded in Edward Zeller, *Op. cit.* as in many other works.

52. For Plotinus' views, see Eugene Kullman, "Alexandrian Philosophy," ed., Vergilius Ferm, *History of Philosophical Systems* (Iowa: Littlefield, Adams and Company, 1958). pp. 135-142.

53. For this evocation, see Thomas Aquinas, "Summa Contra Gentiles," eds., Irwin Edman and H. W. Schneider. *Landmarks in Philosophy* (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1941), pp. 243ff.

54. S. Harding, "Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What is Wrong Objectivity?" ed., L. Alcoff and E. Potter. *Feminist Epistemologies* (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 63.

Chapter three

Trends of thought about Human nature in Rationalism, Empiricism and Marxism

In the preceding chapter, we saw how Descartes, Aristotle, Thales and many other philosophers, for example, seriously philosophized about the ultimate nature of reality, but we saw too, about the philosophers, a host of cultural influences behind them, coming to the fore, informing, governing and focusing their philosophies. Rorty, an American philosopher, expanded this "realistic" view of human thought in his *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, arguing that the foci of some of the philosophers, were, indeed, determined by what he called the "warfare between science and religion." He noted how some of the philosophers--like Descartes and Locke--did not think of themselves as merely offering philosophical systems for the sake of curiosity, but as seriously contributing to the efflorescence of research in the evolving sciences, to liberate the intellectual activities from the grip of false beliefs. Indeed, the pioneers in philosophy--like Protagoras and Socrates, had no wish to distinguish what they were doing from the problems confronting society. Thus, Rorty notes that it was not until after Kant (1724-1804) that the philosophy/culture distinction began to take hold. Furthermore, it was not until the power of superstitious beliefs over science and religion was broken that the energies of the philosophers were directed toward demarcating their activities from those of the sciences and religion.¹

This point--of the service of philosophy to culture and society, has been reiterated by many philosophers and historians of repute, whose contributions we shall shortly look at. It was reiterated by James, for example, a British historian and philosopher of art. He stated, albeit exaggeratedly,

that all of art and music was a serious business before it was divested from culture and society, to be seen as purely something to be enjoyed for the pleasure of it, other than for the service to society. Music was used for cultural purposes, like for evoking courage in soldiers for defending nations, and inculcating moral virtues to members of society. Moreover, such divestment was linked to the whole of the alleged metaphysics of the universe. Accordingly, James noted how music and the whole of arts were perceived as such knowledge of the effects of appearances, as we acquire by true ratiocination from the knowledge we have first of their primary causes of generation.²

Thus, perhaps it is not an overstatement if we contend that a socio-context element in the philosophies mentioned above loomed large, and as we have stated in the previous chapter, this element cannot be dismissed as inconsequential; it exercised significant influence--and it sure did this, well past the seventeenth century.

As we look ahead after the Classical period, several intellectual trends came to dominate the philosophy of human nature--especially from the sixteenth century to the twentieth century C. E. These trends of thought include rationalism, empiricism, Marxism, existentialism and the linguistic view. On close inspection, though the historical-forces issue raised by James above genuinely exercised influence in the progression of the divestments, they were, in the final analysis, indeed, nothing but the culmination and the consequence of the old philosophical--and especially, Plato's transcendentalism. For, it seemed quite obvious to the philosophers then that philosophy had to be done the philosophy way, such that the philosophers were concerned with the clarity of the concepts in the human nature thought, their resoluteness and criticism. Fresh ideas were generated,

emphasized and expounded during this time. These were ideas like the need to control the passions, liberty, the view that there was one God and one religion, the authenticity of being, and the need for state ethics.³

Let us mention, at the outset that those ideas developed into trends of thought, although they were hotly debated matters--and remained eclectic, for the various reasons that we shall shortly see. Let us begin by examining the influence which the human nature thought exercised on empiricism and rationalism, and vice versa, the influence that empiricism and rationalism had on the human nature thought.

3.1 Rationalist and empiricist representation of human nature

Rationalism and empiricism reflected a remarkable period in philosophy, both in their philosophic creativity and in their promotion of the Classical philosophies of thinkers like Plato, Socrates and Aristotle. These three thinkers had applied analytical techniques and methods, which started from the metaphysical assumption that the human mind is rational. Rationalism and empiricism were major cognitive, reasoning, thinking frameworks or theories about knowledge. Rationalism insisted on pure reasoning as the avenue to knowledge. Empiricism insisted on sensory observation followed by reasoning as the genuine source of all knowledge. Their focus of understanding was, however, the individual human being--as an individual.⁴

What distinguished them as belonging to the same school of thought was, first, that they acknowledged reason to be the core source of human knowledge. Second, they were the first systematic, deliberate attempts at defending reason philosophically and methodically as the

harbinger of knowledge. We dare say that many earlier philosophers had largely used reason for philosophizing, without methodically inquiring about its eligibility. Rationalism and empiricism did. Beyond this, there were differences about what constituted genuine knowledge, however, and what the conditions of that knowledge are. For instance, as it insisted on sensory observation, empiricism incorporated a materialistic conception. This is because---and it made a lot of sense---that sense experience applies suitably to the discovery of what is material. Rationalism on the other hand involved the idealistic element that genuine knowledge transcends appearances. It is for that reason it insisted that reason is prior to, or a precondition and determinant of all true knowledge. In essence, both rationalism and empiricism were methodological, seeking to establish how it is that a sense of reality can be materialistic or idealistic, and how a notion about mankind, therefore, reflected these elements. The two schools outlined the main characteristics of the human nature primarily as rationality. Though in received thinking, rationalism and empiricism were sober, independent systems of thought, proposed as standing above the perennial distortions from human cultures and whims, further reflection reveals a different picture about them as the following accounts reveal.

3.1.1 Social context

We must reiterate that because philosophy is a human discourse, it is always related to the peculiar historical situations in which the humans find themselves. It reflects the goals and aspirations of its formulators finding themselves within definite social settings. As Fiero, the author of *The Humanistic Tradition* states, rationalism and empiricism were propelled by what may be called a sense of "humanism," that is, the exaltation of human beings as solely capable of tackling the problems that confront them, by reasoning. As already pointed out, the focus of rationalism and

empiricism was to understand the individual human being. Thus, Fiero argued, confronted by absolutism in Europe in the eras of the absolute monarchies of King James (1566-1625) and Cardinal Richelieu (1585-1642), exhausted by wars and civil and social calamities that accompany wars, old beliefs put to test by science, the rationalism and the empiricism called for sobriety in solving problems. They held that an appeal neither to the ancient traditions, nor God, nor to age-old finger-pointing ethics, would resolve their current problems. It was to the individual man/woman that they appealed to.⁵ At the centre of humanism, therefore, was the promise that no amount of aggression, or hate, would solve mankind's problems; but independent reasoning would deliver human beings from all kinds of problems, of which the rationalists' and the empiricists' own reasoning they thought would help.

3.1.2 The human soul as rational

The rationalists and the empiricists wallowed in the assertion that human beings are essentially rational, and rejected as "not-knowledge" any insights which emerged spontaneously, or by any other means, until and unless they were founded on rational basis. But it was quite clear that human knowledge and the soul in their metaphysics belonged, for discussion purposes, to the domain of alleged meanings, and not necessarily to the realm of experiences as known. Because they so belonged, it appeared to them that there was no other cardinal method or procedure of knowledge, by which the human mind would know, nor how the reality would be probed and understood except through reasoning--underpinned by a varying metaphysics of knowledge: the rationalists held that knowledge proceeds through pure reasoning; empiricists contended that true knowledge must begin from empirical observation. Thus, there was nurtured the trend of thought that humans are rational by nature. Descartes, a rationalist, for instance, did not believe that the senses and any knowledge

derived by and from them can be reliable, for the reason that the senses can mislead into making erroneous judgements about the world. Thus, assuming, as he did, that only pure reasoning guaranteed true knowledge, he devised four rules that, in his opinion, would lead the mind to good reasoning, and in making rational choice. These rules were: one, never accept any thing as true except that which is clear and distinct to the mind; two, divide complex problems into simpler ones; three, begin from the simple to the complex, and four, make constant checks and reviews of the progress made.⁶ Along these lines, he wrestled with the problem of human nature from the rationalistic position and produced a novel answer after the fashion of Plato.

Recall that Plato himself had argued, speculatively, that humans are made up of two elements, i.e., the soul and the body, and that while the soul is made up of the rational, appetitive and spirited elements, the rational part can soar above the material confinements and attain absolute knowledge. Similarly, Descartes took it that souls and material things are two different kinds of reality--non-physical and physical, respectively. He pointed out that since souls are able to think independently, they can act apart from, and independent of, the physical laws of nature. Bodies, being material, are subject to the laws of physics. The nature of mind is thinking, and this nature gives it freedom to reflect and know. His famous supposition on this began from the principle--*cogito ergo sum*, "I think, therefore, I exist." That is, as long as one is thinking, then this must be his/her proof that he/she clearly possesses the thinking substance, the soul. It follows that humans are thinking beings because they possess the soul, and are, in this fashion, different from the beings/bodies that science is able to study and know--through the grasp of the objective mechanical laws. Humans are quite different from the beings that science studies because, by being conscious and able to reason,

humans are not governed in the same way as objects by the fixed physical laws; only bodies operate according to the fixed laws of physics; people are conscious and self-conscious.

Since from the rationalism and empiricism the distinctiveness of the human nature stems from rationality, Kant's, Spinoza's and Locke's remarks on this matter may be reiterated here, in brief, that more or less represents the seventeenth century thought on knowledge, on the nature of mankind, the value of rationality, as well as the human soul--all founded on the belief that mankind are rational. But even on this matter--that is, rationality--the philosophers disagreed on what the proper use of reason should be.

Thus, when it came to the rational nature of human nature, Kant's position was the more remarkable, to begin with, considering that Descartes--also a rationalist, had already philosophized about that rational nature of humankind, and thus, Kant was aware of Descartes' philosophy. However, Kant's own thinking and metaphysics were oriented away from Descartes. He wanted to "investigate into the knowing process first," before coming up with his alleged rules for directing the mind toward true knowledge contrary to, in his view, what Descartes had done.

Kant's metaphysics emphasized the rational nature of human souls as follows: as thinking beings, humans are "subjects," that is, creative knowers. He fully explored this proposition in his Copernican Revolution.⁷ Just as the Astronomer Copernicus (1473-1543) had shown that the earth revolves around the sun--rather than the sun around the earth, so he sought to prove that knowledge was not something that was caused in humans only by what is outside--but some factors humans initiate in the souls created knowledge too.

He stated that human knowledge originated from sensory observation, but that knowledge was the product of the thinking categories innate in the human soul. For instance, space and time are purportedly subjective categories of the human soul, which enable people to understand things as ever occurring in time and space. Therefore, true knowledge is knowledge of all those realities capable of being in space and time, and subject to a total of twelve categories of the understanding.

Similarly, Spinoza proceeding from the assumption that fame, honour and wealth are some of the common impulses of the human soul, held, however, that the proper passion of the soul that guarantees extreme and unending happiness, according to him, is the possession of true knowledge. But such knowledge proceeds from a metaphysical rational scheme of the nature of mankind, which presents the full, underlying objective facts about nature, which is knowledge for its own sake. He differed with many philosophers over the value of the soul in delivering knowledge of other areas of reality like ethics, the nature of the soul and God's existence. For example, he claimed that the soul is an offshoot, or product of nature, and not an independent substance separate from nature.⁸

On the other hand, unlike both Descartes and Spinoza, Locke, an empiricist thinker, had a different view about the human soul and its rational powers in this circumlocution on the controversy regarding the absolute human nature and the nature of human rationality. This is because philosopher Locke was sceptical of the claim by the rationalists that humans do, or can possess, knowledge by pure reasoning, though insisting on the rational nature of humankind. He insisted, for instance, that people have rational knowledge of the existence of the external reality, but that even such knowledge is merely knowledge of the appearances of things, not the absolute knowledge. In

other words, he stated that the human rational knowledge is limited to appearances. Of knowledge of the soul itself, for example, Locke stated more resolutely that, ". . . Tis past controversy that we have in us something that thinks; our very doubts about what it is confirms the certainty of its being, though we must content ourselves in the ignorance of what kind of being it is."⁹

That is to say that for Locke, the nearest kind of rational knowledge humans have in the soul is knowledge that depends on observation. Thus, genuine rationality is probable and inductive. That rationality proceeds by abstraction and consolidation forming identities. And based on that, how does the knowledge of the soul, for example, appear to humans from observation? He stated that the soul is nothing but the totality of human conceptions arising out of sensory experience. Thus, as we may express this: in so far as I am conscious, now having these present experiences and being the same person to whom such and such happened yesterday, or the day before, those experiences are my existence, or my soul. Consequently for Locke, although the soul is not identical to perceptions, it is inseparable from them; thus, our knowledge is one of appearances, not of how things are in themselves. Perceptions come and pass; we hear, see, smell, taste, feel, meditate or will anything; we know we do so, because humans are conscious. Yet, over and above these perceptions and experiences, we are aware of an abiding "I" that persists through time, an "I" which has such and such experiences, and yesterday had others. This, for Locke, is allegedly what the soul is.¹⁰

3.1.3 The appetitive and spirited nature of human nature and its philosophical representation

We maintain that rationalism and empiricism developed systematic views about the aggressive and the non-rational nature of mankind to contrast that from the perceived human rational nature, and in

a way to nurture the rational, and nurture and encourage a sense of independence from the irrational. Let us investigate into these views--in terms of the perceived nature of the presence of the passions, its implications and treatment.

The dominant conception regarding the appetitive and spirited nature of human nature in Western philosophy can be traced back to Plato. It was one of the mainstream metaphysical problems regarding human nature during Plato's time. The position, then, was that the human passions are the crudest stipulation from which humans must be saved. Plato argued that a human being has many emotions and desires. These arise from the soul's non-rational, sensitive or emotional capacities. As it bears these capacities, the soul evokes all expressive reactions of a person vis a vis that person's internal or external stimuli. These reactions include sex, love, hunger and thirst, and originate from the "spirited" and the "appetitive" capacities of the souls. In this case, he insisted, humans are metaphysically not different from animals--animals too possess the appetites and the emotions by fiat. At this point, he envisioned that the humans, however, are humans because they are rational by nature. When he said this, he meant that people are more truly human when they display their rationality, and abandon their emotive reality. As a consequence, he affirmed the need to constrain the passions because, in his opinion, they are dangerous to the exercise of rationality, and beneath the dignity of mankind.¹¹

This platonic view that a human being is essentially rational remained one of the basic and pivotal positions in, and for discussing, the philosophy of the human nature among the empiricists and the rationalists. It was adopted by many philosophers. However, different perspectives of the supposed nature of the human non-rational nature emerged, founded on metaphysical debates discussed on

two poles: one, what are the basic passions of a human being? Two, what, accordingly, are the best forms of societies and governments that ensue--or should be weaved from that nature? The views of Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau are instructive here.

Machiavelli (1467-1527), for instance, reiterated of the appetitive and spirited view about people when, after explaining the nature of mankind as most debased, he retorted of the human nature in his *Prince* as follows:

For men it may generally be affirmed that they are thankless, fickle, studious to avoid danger, greedy of gain, devoted to you while you are able to confer benefits upon them, and ready as I have said before, while danger is distant to shed their blood, and sacrifice their property, their lives and their children for you; but in the hour of need they turn against you...Love is held by the tie of obligation, which because men are a sorry breed, is broken on every whisper of private interest.¹²

Bull maintains that a socio-genetic element in Machiavelli's thought may be apparent here. According to Bull, Machiavelli had experienced political troubles in his own country, Italy. Further, he had traveled far and wide observing the political raids of the sixteenth century Italian rulers, the *Medici*--observing their politics in action. It was an experience which he, in turn, generously invokes in his philosophy. His thought, fashioned almost like a manual, culminated into an advice to the *Medici* on how to gain political power and maintain political stability. This advice, in his most prized work, the *Prince*, defended the rulership of kings and monarchs. He argued from his view that human nature is essentially evil, to the need for a strong governmental authority to control human behaviour by treachery and ruthlessness. This was based on his thinking that humans are governed by the impulses--and it connects to his view that humans (read the citizens) must not be left free to wander over the states with these impulses. Allegedly, from his observation of people, he purportedly realized that humans have a certain principal impulsive character: that the nature of people is to be fickle, false, treacherous, greedy and dishonest. Thus, the only way to

contain them is supposedly to treat them back as such. Hence, he construed that a ruler must trust no one. He must imitate the lion in his fierceness, but he must also act like a fox to outsmart his enemies. Over and above that, he must be ruthless; whenever necessary, sacrifice morality, since, allegedly, "... moral virtue does not apply in the field of rulership."¹³

Machiavelli's portraiture of the character of humans reflected Hobbes' own. If the life of Hobbes can be used to reflect the socio-cultural experiences that Europe was going through during Hobbes' lifetime, here is how Paterson, a historian, and the author of *Western Philosophy since 1600*, described Hobbes' life. Patterson depicted Hobbes' life as a disturbed one. His long, ninety-one years life coincided with terror raids and the frustration of the British people from civil war. But it was also the era of strong and brave rulers--like King James and Lord Cromwell.¹⁴

Paterson's views agree with those of Baird. Baird, the author of *Philosophic Classics: From Plato to Nietzsche*, described Hobbes as born prematurely, when his mother heard of the Spanish Armada. Such childhood experiences can have lasting impact on a person's life and one's ideas. According to Baird, Hobbes himself often quipped: he was born a twin with fear. That is, he saw, according to Baird, so much to fear: he witnessed, in his long life, the civil war and the barbaric execution of King Charles the first, for instance--considerations which led the aforementioned Rorty to suggest that philosophy was done in the service of cultural problems. Hobbes contended that outside of states (an experience or condition he called *Warre*), humans are naturally beastly; their life is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short. In that state of nature, people engaged in perpetual aggression against others. They allegedly possessed no ethics, no standards of right and wrong, justice or injustice, nor a sense of private property. However, they have a rational side—a

malignant yearning for peace--and this is the side which drove humans to place a voluntary curb on their otherwise reckless impulses. To achieve that curb, they transferred "sovereignty," that is, they assigned to a ruler the power to enforce peace, wage war and to protect their property. Hence, Hobbes in his *Leviathan*, adopted the position that such a ruler, the *leviathan*, must logically be a monarch, who has absolute power because, purportedly, only an absolute ruler can have sufficient authority and resoluteness proportionate to curb the insurrection of the human impulses.¹⁵

Let us further demonstrate the alleged necessity over the need to curb the human passions in the metaphysics of human nature using Locke. For Locke, on the other hand, humans are innately good. This alleged inborn capacity to be and love goodness is justified in them by their inherent pursuit of pleasure for themselves. They judge acts that do not promote happiness--wrong, and those that advance happiness--right. Indeed, Locke contended, that happiness ought to be the principle for determining right and wrong. For Locke, the greatest source of human happiness is property. Thus, he asserted, ". . . the greatest end, therefore, of men putting themselves under government is the preservation of property."¹⁶

Locke's social background, however, is relatively a settled one, compared to that of his peers--like Hobbes. He received his education at Oxford University, and throughout his life, he was deeply interested in the affairs of government and the European politics of the time.¹⁷ Since his consideration of humans told him that the humans are driven by happiness, by analogy, when it came to the political and social organization, he held that governments must exist, and have authority, because people need them for the happiness of all. He advocated some kind of

democratic governments, based on a governmental control of subjects through education, training, discipline and punishment.

But though there is a close connection between his philosophy and his life, we should not lose sight here: Locke's positions were clearly based on philosophical speculation. For, one, he was contributing to the philosophical debates of the time--partly about what the original nature of mankind was; two, Locke explicitly denies that his philosophy as such was influenced by any external factors; three, he was arguing against the views of the philosophers, some of whom were his contemporaries, like Spinoza--some of whom, according to Locke, did not understand well the impulsive nature of humans. Thus, for example, his philosophy of punishment, following from his speculative belief that the goal of human life is happiness, led him to postulate that humans must be punished for violating rights to life, liberty and property, for, these, as he held, were indispensable to the pursuit of human happiness. But the idea of possible anarchy lingered in his mind: And, he noted, all must realize that the search for happiness can degenerate into chaos. Thus, he advocated for the giving up of one's rights, and a belief in reward and punishment in an after-life, as a form of social control. Further, piety--he insisted, should be encouraged by the widest kind of toleration. If a government violates its trust, the people have a natural right to reject it and place a new one. He wrote of such governments:

. . . . to use such means for the preserving of man's own property as he thinks good and nature allows him; and to punish the breach of the laws of nature in others; so as may most conduce to the preservation of himself and the rest of mankind so that the end and measure of this power, when in every other man's hands, in the state of nature, being the preservation of all his society; that is, all mankind in general; it can have no other end or measure, when in the hands of the magistrate, but to preserve the members of the society, in their lives, liberty and possessions.¹⁸

The best form of government for Locke is a system of checks and balances, one in which the legislative, executive and judicial powers are separated, and act as buffers to any assertion of absolutism.¹⁹

Underpinning all these debates, as we have stated, was the attempt to understand the alleged original plight of mankind--and this is a metaphysical stance. Yet, neither Locke's nor Hobbes' position, nor even that of any other succeeding philosophers, however, settled the contentious issue of the ultimate metaphysical nature of mankind. Accordingly, Rousseau, one of the most famous social and political French philosophers of all times, quipped that, it is possible that originally, humans were neither evil nor good--only driven by their in-born appetites--neither good or bad in themselves. Rousseau's views about the human nature thus seemed a middle ground between Locke's and Hobbes'. As different as his philosophy of human nature was, so was the social and political philosophy as well which he ensued.²⁰

Rousseau suggested--in his *Social Contract*, that humans in an original state were alone, idle, and always near danger, ". . . like danger from attacks by animals--driven by their appetites." Since the humans were ingenuous, they perfectly adapted to their environment compared to the animals. However, the faculty that distinguished them from the animals in adaptation, (i.e., reason), was also the source of all of the humans' misfortunes, for, to acclimatize to the environment, they were forced to form governments that control them. He stated that as the natural humans were only motivated by passions and pathos, while in this state, the only goods that were their sources of happiness were nourishment, females and repose; the only evils the individuals feared were pain and hunger. In this "primitive" state, as he called it, the "natural" people had brief, purely sexual

encounters with females--and returned to their solitary, fearful ways. However, he stated, echoing Hobbes--that when they realized that they were often the victims of aggressive abuse as its perpetrators, that they were being stolen from as often as they were taking what they liked from others, they thought it "rational" to willingly accept the authority of a ruler capable of keeping order and to punish the transgressors. This was the origin of their present form of life, for, the humans gave up their freedom not to pursue their appetites as they liked.

But if Rousseau (1712-1778) can be used as a mirror of the social conditions in the France of his time, suffice it to say that his life was something of an enigma itself. Having apprenticed in Sweden to various trades without doing well in any one of them, that is when he finally settled in France as a philosopher in Paris.²¹ So, perhaps, his philosophy--that there was the imaginable original state when humans were driven by their appetites, is understandable from that vantage point of view of his kind of life-experiences of possibly being denied likable opportunity. It was his statement though that humans had regressed to the dreadful original state of nature.

3.1.4 The essence of human nature as liberty

Here is another trend of thought that later on developed into a full-fledged way of thinking about the human nature--i.e., of liberty as a distinguishing mark in mankind. But here as in the foregoing, no precise or agreed upon position on liberty emerged. As we have noted, the rationalists and the empiricists were concerned to debate and develop human nature thought. Most importantly, especially since Ancient metaphysics as by Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, Boethius, Aquinas and Al-Kindi had distinguished between bodies and the souls and their responsibilities, there ensued from this metaphysical distinction the concern about to what extent the metaphysics can be used to

support or refute human freedom. In other words, once the Classical philosophers had indicated that the souls may be different from matter, they gave the discussion about freedom a sense of urgency and legitimacy, in determining the extent of the freedom of the soul from the infirmities in material existence.

Because the discussion of freedom involved knowing what the true human nature is, let us delve deeply into this matter. However, it is worthwhile to note that the philosophies differed in their speculations--and hence left the issue of human nature pending. To some of the philosophers, it was argued that a distinguishing feature of mankind is freedom, in virtue of mankind's rational nature. Some of the philosophers were, however, "absolutists" in the sense that they believed that freedom is an absolute quality in humans, and thus humans should be totally subdued for the sake of the state; yet, others were "libertarians," who suggested that since freedom is a basic element in mankind, humans must be governed in such a way as to enjoy that freedom. Between the two groups, there were some who were eclectic, pragmatic or simply evasive on liberty.

Further more, the matter (i.e., freedom) was clearly discussed with different interests. For instance there was the metaphysical, the political and other bearings as the following discussion shows--such that it makes it more clear that the foundations of the philosophies of the human nature of freedom were not just metaphysics, though. The rationalist--Spinoza, for example, was, in our view, an evasive and an eclectic. He discussed the concept of liberty from political and metaphysical sides, and alleged that only the wise are free, because only they--as he alleged, reason. Nevertheless, even for them, their wisdom, he said, was constrained by the forces of nature.

It is fair to say that often Spinoza's philosophy aimed primarily at challenging and rejecting the local traditions of thought, and specifically the traditional moral and religious mores. Thus, whatever the magnitude of his views, however, they must be measured against the cultural influences and the politics which came to bear upon Spinoza. According to Gutman's life-story of Spinoza, Spinoza--who is said to be the utter rationalist of all times--was the son of a refugee Jewish family living in Amsterdam, Holland, in the seventeenth century, escaping from the Jewish Holocaust. His story tells us how among most European countries, Holland was the most peaceful and accommodative at the time. Having learned in the foreign land and acquired a new language--Latin, he began to notice disparities between his Jewish and the new cultures, and began questioning. As Gutman said, it was from this new-found education and freedom in Holland, and the disturbing cultural disparities he learned, from which Spinoza found a concept of tranquil unity of all being in the world.²²

In other words, there is a parallelism it appears, for instance, between his life-experiences and his philosophy of cosmic and human nature. For instance, it is universally accepted he postulated in his metaphysics that all that exists ultimately is of God or nature. Thus, humans necessarily act in accordance with the laws of nature, and thanks to this, humans are, allegedly, not entirely free even in their thoughts and the passions. He called this "human bondage." "Human bondage," he stated paradoxically, also consists of the inability to control the passions.

In Spinoza's metaphysics of being, since "humans are modes of nature," a human idea, for example, is a mode of the mental attribute of nature; a human body is a mode of the physical attribute of nature. Hence, he proclaimed, "... freedom is not freedom from necessity, but the consciousness of

essence," that is, the consciousness of the pervasiveness of God and of the consequent unity of everything existing, does give one a new sense of freedom, when one realizes that one is inseparably part of nature, and his thoughts, as his body, are equally subject to the vagaries of that nature. Thus, based on that metaphysics, when it comes to civil and cultural liberty, Spinoza upheld that only people who live in states are free people. Correlative with this view, he speculated that this is so in so far as the laws of the states are founded on "reason," and therefore, allegedly on natural processes, because "nature is rational and the rational is the natural." Consequently, people are purportedly find greater freedom in such states.²³

Spinoza's views on freedom can be differentiated from those of Bacon. Bacon (1561-1626) is a good example of a philosopher who remained outrightly practical—and superficial, on the issue of liberty. He addressed it at the level of how unfree people can become, governed as they are often by traditions. He was opposed to any, in his own words, "fruitless metaphysical speculation" — whether about human passions, freedom or reality as a whole. But this is because he sought to devote his philosophy to a new "logic" (or way of reasoning, metaphysics and knowledge), arguing that people, especially the rationalist philosophers, would be more productive in thought only if they would overcome the traditional way of rationalist thinking and proceed empirically from an observation of the world instead.²⁴

Bacon's social origins of his views are, in the main, politics, science and philosophy. He was primarily a politician, and enjoyed quite a lucrative, flamboyant but sometimes disturbing political career. On one occasion, he was arrested and charged for receiving bribes.

the root of his "new logic," however, was his philosophy that "knowledge is power," but the Baconian "power" of knowledge comes through its usefulness in solving people's problems. Thus, in his considered opinion, good knowledge must be relevant, lending assistance in giving useful benefits. However, for him, the human mind is hardly free to pursue this utilitarian regard. He held that the mind can be like a dull and uneven mirror which by its own nature distorts the rays of light it is supposed to neatly reflect. Otherwise undistorted, the mirror works perfectly well. To enable it to work properly, the mirror of nature must first of all be cleared of all such distortions—like prejudices and false notions --such as deposited by bad habits. This is to create room for the correct picture of reality to be flashed out. Of the sources of distortions and the imprisonment of the soul embraced by humans, and in particular the philosophers of his time, he reckons, is the "idol of the theatre" (the tendency to trust authority and tradition instead of independent reflection), the "idol of the market place" (the tendency to use language confusedly), the "idol of the cave" (limited experience), and the "idol of the tribe" (the mistakes of humanity as a race such as the reliance on brute experience). It was his stern view that it is observation that enables the possession of genuine knowledge and the expansion of the horizons of mankind's knowledge as well. It appears that Bacon's views of his "new logic" were to be applied more for the purposes of advancing science and its methods.

Yet, Bacon's views above contrast from those of Locke and Rousseau. Rousseau, for example, was a "libertarian" in the way he conceived of human liberty. He contended that humans are born free but it is the common experiences of life that militate against their freedom. His metaphysics of freedom, in a sense, connected to his theory of the passions, which saw mankind as in the alleged original state, governed by certain basic impulses like sex and aggression. These are curtailed in

modern life. Thus, in order to regain that freedom, humans have got to get back to the state of nature, but they entered into a social contract and got a new sense of freedom; but by doing the latter, they lost their natural freedom, but gained what he called "civil liberty." As he suggested, culture and civilization "corrupted" the humans, such that the apparently free mankind of today owes their true foundation to the civil liberty. The civil liberty is not complete liberty, but freedom limited by the "general will" in a civil (read contractual) society, where each of the members of society must place in common his/her personal will and all his/her power under the supreme direction of the general will, and as one body, they must all regard each member as an indivisible part of the whole to become a cooperate state. The "general will," he alleged, is neither a majority will nor the will of all; it is the common will of a "body politic." That is, that "will" which expresses their common interests. He stated that there is a big difference between the will of all and the general will. The latter considers only the common interests, while the former takes private interest into account, and is no more than a sum of particular wills. But then take away these same wills, the pluses and the minuses that cancel one another, and the general will remains as the sum of the differences. Accordingly, he compared the "general will" to a body, city, and republic, state and sovereign, and observed that,

.. it is composed of as many members as there are votes in the assembly, which from this act receives its unity, its common self: its life, and its will. This public person, who is thus formed by the union of all other persons, took formerly the name of *city*, and now taken that of *republic* or *body politic*. It is called by its members *state* when it is passive, *sovereign* when in activity.²⁵

For Rousseau then, within the context of the "general will" as explained above, there can be no absolute freedom as such.

One must note, however, that the Rousseau's theory of human nature pointed in two directions from his Europe as he observed it. His theory pointed to: one, the unrepeatable hypothetical distant but negatively glorious past as he viewed it, and two, to the nature of the actual societies possible, and how they inevitably have to shape their lives. Therefore, in a radical departure from the above named philosophers--like Locke, he held that people must enjoy the liberty within the existing states, because this is what liberty they do possess. For real liberty, humans have to go back to the state of nature.²⁶

It is also apparent that Rousseau's philosophy was not inherently opposed to the traditional cultural practices; and it may not be an overstatement that Rousseau exhibited more of a philosophical distinctiveness in his philosophy of the human nature than he was influenced by his undergoings in his cultural experiences. Yet, if one were to look at Rousseau's life characterized by relative poverty and frustration, and looking back at anarchical Europe, his philosophy of the subservience to the general will might perhaps be quite understandable. No wonder in his *Confessions*, he showed that humans allegedly regain their absolute freedom when they throw over all the trappings of civilized behaviour and live by the codes of bare emotions. He glorifies unrestrained romantic love, overthrows all theories of education, to romanticize how it can be when the free people are allowed to develop naturally through their own intelligent activity, rather than formal education. Humans were, according to his romanticism, purportedly absolutely free when they lived according to the bare dictates of the state of nature, for, then, humanity is allegedly neither good nor bad.²⁷

Like Rousseau, Hobbes saw freedom ideally as the absolute absence of all sorts of constraints, both in the exercise of rationality and in the civil affairs, but, contrariwise, unlike Rousseau, he was an

"absolutist." Although he did not agree with Rousseau's seemingly convincing views, certainly as we begin to apply his theory and the alleged laws of nature to our empirical experience, that experience is enriched. Thus, he wrote, in his outline of philosophy, ". . . a freeman is he that in those things that by his strength and wit he is able to do...is not limited to do what he has a will to do."²⁸ Therefore, he contended, that kind of liberty of the nature of total uncensored freedom is impossible, since people do live in society, and their freedom must be restricted by the state.

The instigation of Hobbes' philosophy as a whole, however, may be seen as twofold: First, to put moral and political philosophy on, as he thought, a sound philosophical basis; second, to allegedly contribute to the foundations for the establishment of civic peace. Hence, he beseeched people not to be disillusioned by unfreedom as experienced under the absolute monarchs. But correlating with this position is his general metaphysics. For instance, his notion that people are free when they have total uncensored freedom was echoed in his metaphysical theory that all events are like "atoms" in eternal motion, governed by fixed rules of operation. Analogously, the rules of the monarchs, he thought, are natural laws that must govern society for the survival of society, since all events are determined by some such natural laws of operation. The principal origin of our ideas, for instance, he said, is impressions on senses (which are themselves motions) occasioning motions in the mind, such that the mental events like willing, desiring, thinking, wishing and doubting are all motions. Thinking is also a motion organized in a specific way; a motion in peculiar proportions and acceleration. While this "atomic motion" takes place, one is under the illusion that one is perceiving freely. Yet, neither absolute physical, nor mental liberty is possible.²⁹

Hobbes theory above, on the one hand, did not compare well with that of Locke. Yet, in spite of its disagreeing with Locke and the rest, its examination broadens and deepens our understanding of a possible alternative human sense of freedom. Whereas Hobbes was an "absolutist," Locke was a "libertarian." Now Locke can be said to be the pioneer of the "libertarian" philosophy *per se*. Having speculated on the basic impulses of mankind that humans choose happiness, and thus they must freely enjoy life, Locke defended human freedom philosophically as follows:

[Humans have] ... a power to begin or forbear, continue or end several actions of our minds and motions of our bodies barely by a thought or preference of the mind ordering, or as it were commanding the doing or not doing such and such a particular action. This power which the mind has is the will. The actual exercise of that power by directing any particular action, or its forbearance is that which we call *volition* or *willing*.³⁰

That is, Locke maintained that at the basic level, humans are of the following nature, "... as far as man has power to think or not to think, to move or not to move, according to the preference or direction of his own mind, so far is man free. Wherever any performance or forbearance is not in a man's power. .. there he is not free."³¹

As we mentioned above, freedom was, among the rationalists and the empiricists, not just one of the attributes of human nature; it was often perceived to be of an essence of every individual. However, the dispute over the nature of that freedom continued to deepen at the metaphysical level. So how shall we know who is right? For, Kant refused to extend to all spheres of the human endeavours the same liberty he extended to the moral sphere. With Kant, people possess the faculty of "will," --which for him is the metaphysical faculty of freedom. But that faculty by Kant underpinned freedom of a difference.³²

Locke is reputed to have been a keen observer of society, and quite a keen contemplator by all means. A teacher by disposition and a man of natural intelligence, he led a rather quiet, highly routine but robust intellectual life, and remained unmarried throughout his life. According to Locke, his life thus speaks volumes of his reflections on the happenings of the European societies of his time. Like Locke, he began from the dim philosophy of human nature, and explained from his meditation how the human knowledge of reality is governed by innate mental mechanisms. Thus, when it came to the human experience of freedom, his logic led him to express the possibility of freedom only in the Socratic moral sphere, not in the bodily nor cosmic sphere where the terrestrial laws of physics apply. In the physical cosmos as it were, he stated, humans, like the rest of the cosmos, are governed by the physical laws. However, he believed that since humans possess the faculty of the "will," through the aid of human practical reason, human beings are capable of exercising the will arriving at freely willed universal and rational moral rules and principles.

11.5 The role of education in the cultivation of rational nature

So far we should hold that the single-most overriding tendency of thought in human nature philosophy was that there are alleged metaphysical essences of the human nature, and at least two elements were designed as composing it, for example, namely--rationality and freedom. And to this extent, because the rationalists and the empiricists perceived human nature as the ground in which opposing forces of the rational and irrational nature are in constant conflict, they developed a way of understanding human nature in which the rational must compete and override the irrational to ameliorate humans and, therefore, be rational. The ensuing characterizations were also reflected in the philosophers' views of education which, are the basis of educational theory today. However, one characteristic of these theories of education is remarkable: The theories did not produce any

final type of education as to mirror the absolute human nature. This is evident in any one of the rationalist and the empiricist philosophers' theories in their consideration of education. One of the best examples is Montaigne's theory—a philosopher we have not mentioned so far. For the education of the human mind, Montaigne (1533-1592)—a French philosopher and political essayist, underscored, in his philosophy, certain human actions as irrational, though innate, and stipulated the educational remedy required. For example, he emphasized that contradiction and irrationality are natural human traits; hence the ability of a learner to carry out some self-examination is the essence of proper education. For him, education ought to enable people to live a life of reason and harmony, and that since both behaviour and belief vary from culture to culture, skepticism and open-mindedness are requisite avenues to an educated individual. He thus defended a kind of learning that poses questions rather than provides answers. In his apparently noble notion of education, rationality features prominently, and he stated that the capacity to be rational depends upon the control and the sublimation of the passions. In other words, for him, learning involved the control of the sentiments that threaten to erupt to the fore to distort knowledge. The model learner, he quipped, is a well-ordered individual that provides the principles of objective knowledge. In the education of children, in particular, he criticized teachers who "pour information into their ears" as though they were pouring water into a funnel, and then demand that students repeat that information instead of encouraging them to exercise original thought.³³

Locke bore an example of the eclecticism of the theory of education among the philosophers, in their presuppositions of human nature. Locke, as we have been discussing, favoured a good learning environment, coupled with reward and punishment for the cultivation of the good education. What kind of human was envisaged by his kind of education philosophy? He wrote that

the mind of a newly born human being is a spotless tablet; no one is born bad or evil, or with any ideas—it is a tablet on which will be written all the experiences an individual undergoes in the course of life. Shaping, children, therefore, into good citizens—who are honest and responsible members of society, requires positive reinforcing experiences, beginning very early in life. Beyond the family, formal education and punishment are the best way of providing good experiences that will help form real and independent personalities.³⁴

Rousseau, on the other hand, believing that mankind are neither this nor that at the very beginning, dismissed all theory of formal learning, punishment and reward, because he believed that these were instruments used to teach learners what they ought to think rather than teach them to think independently. But that is because of the way he understood human nature. He thought that humans are supposed to be entirely free from influence. His alternative theory of education rested on "intelligent activity." He sought to overthrow all theories of education to let his pupils develop naturally through intelligent activity. That is, pupils would, and should, develop their minds freely by independent study, observation and reflection; activities advocated by him as worthy of the dignity of human education.³⁵

Instead, Kant suggested that because humans are free in the moral sphere, capable to choose who they can be, the cultivation of a good moral character is the basis of education. He thus suggested, first, the need to develop the appropriate moral basis thus: a good action is one that is performed from a sense of duty. That sense of duty is expressed in his Categorical Imperative, namely, "Act only on the basis of that maxim that you will at the same time will it that it should become a universal law." He stated that people are independent moral agents with the freedom to choose right

or wrong as a practical necessity. Practical reason, however, tells us to do only that which is dutiful, because what is dutiful is done from a good will and is universalizable. God is relevant in moral matters, according to Kant, only for those who require a belief in divinity so that doing virtue can be allegedly crowned with more happiness in the hope for immortality, and the pursuit of moral perfection to continue in rewards in the hereafter.³⁶

3.1.6 The religious nature of human nature in the empiricist and rationalist inquiry

Finally, here is another trend of thought about the human nature that the rationalists and the empiricists developed and nurtured: that humans are religious--but the matters of religion must be justified by logic, because nature allegedly gave mankind logic as the tool to distinguish the truth from the illusory. It is because mankind were perceived to be essentially rational beings that the rationalists and the empiricists sought to reject or justify rationally the religious beliefs and practices that mankind possessed. Those philosophers who were proponents of religion attempted to abide by the rational requirements of the metaphysics, terming their support sometimes as "natural theology." However, their debate ended up with many varied inconclusive approaches--and indeed, further debates--the issues debated from many angles, one of them being the origin and justification of the notion "God" that people entertain in their minds. The rationalists and the empiricists did not only differ, but their differences were the measure of the latitudes of their own attitudes on the religious beliefs of mankind, and here we will only explore a few of such attitudes and varied positions to serve as an example. Remarkably, in the evolution of their thoughts, there is a branching off mounted on several axes--like theism, atheism and agnosticism. In other words, some rationalistic philosophers were theists holding the view that God or gods exist; some were not theists (but atheists, for example). There were empiricist philosophers who were theists; others

were not. The bottom line in all the philosophers' philosophies was that if, by extension, you proceeded in reasoning the way they did, then, allegedly you would arrive at the same conclusions as theirs. The underlying view of the human nature was--any how--that it is the rational capacity of mankind that abides by or refutes a belief in one God, and by extension, any religious belief. St. Anselm, for example, who proceeded rationalistically from an idea of God, allegedly proved God's existence in thought and reality. From the thought that "God is that than which nothing greater can be conceived," he contended that it follows logically that "... that than which nothing greater can be conceived" can not not-exist; therefore, only one God exists. Similarly, Descartes, on the other hand, who was a rationalist, was an atheist even though he seemingly intended to prove God's existence. He posited a different approach: that in human reasoning, God is the principal source of all knowledge, in the sense that in the absence of an absolute standard, God is always the necessary concept as the guarantor of all ideas that are true. Using that line of reasoning, he granted that God exists, at least in thought, but also argued that such a God is provable rationally only in the sense of the idea that people must have in their minds. This idea is not, he said, derived from observation, for, there is nothing as remotely close to the idea so absolute that humans attribute to God. So the origin of that idea is God, the absolutely perfect being; and what is absolutely perfect can not not-exist; so God exists.³⁷

A similar view of the possibly logical existence of one God was expressed and expounded by Spinoza, another of the rationalist thinkers. However, his argument differed fundamentally from that of Descartes. Spinoza was a "pantheist" --i.e., a holder of the theory that there is no God separate from nature; and that God and nature are one and the same thing. Mounting his pantheistic position, he proceeded by asserting that God exists because, in human rational and objective

brought, the concept "God" must present itself as a necessary concept in the ladder of human knowledge. That is, God logically exists as the concept referring to the unity of all that exists.³⁸

On a rather different note, St. Aquinas, an empiricist thinker, contended that God exists, but to prove this, one must proceed from observation. His argument called upon observers to survey the various features of the world--according to his guidance. For instance, he contended that every event in the universe has a cause. This series of events and causes, however, he noted, would not have initially begun if there wasn't a first cause. That first cause is God.

Probably it is Kant's position that captured better the controversy that ensued over the origin of the religious nature of mankind. In contemplation of the fate of the arguments by the above philosophers, for example, Kant's argument led to his own litany of mandatory silence. He denounced the above arguments claiming that their religious nature of mankind is based on doubtful foundations; humans cannot and would never authoritatively prove God's existence, or non-existence; not by logic, nor by empirical means. This is the truthful nature of human nature because, according to Kant, God is beyond all the knowing powers of mankind.

Kant was agnostic (=skeptical). He exposed his agnostic conception of religion stating that the concept "God" has no empirical referent, nor does logic reveal that it originally was an idea in the human souls. Hence, he asserted, whence one can not speak; therefore, one should maintain silence. With that position, Kant was not only an agnostic, but espousing a principle in a class of its own regarding the human and religious nature.

3.2 A critique

We maintain that several views about human nature--like mankind is rational, mankind is free or mankind must constrain their emotions--developed in the background of the major philosophical trends of thought of rationalism and empiricism, as well as in the background of certain cultural influences. In addition, there was no agreement about the precise nature of the proposed characterizations of the alleged essences of human nature. The disagreements did not necessarily show that rationality was not a basic principle.

However, many specific objections can be raised against the views of the eminent empiricist and rationalistic philosophers regarding their views on human nature. For example, both the rationalists and empiricists advise that the human mind is rational, or that it is in the true nature of humans to be rational. But if so, why should Machiavelli and Rousseau advocate that when it comes to the political or ethical and educational arena, humans have to be treated irrationally by fellow humans like brutes? It isn't clear.

Further, it is curious that Rousseau strangely argues that each individual must surrender to the general will in his rather individualistic philosophy. The difficulty with this depiction of human nature is that in the organic state, individuality is submerged. In any case, the individual has to identify with the general will, allegedly not only to discover his will, but also to find his/her freedom. This raises the issue of liberty and the tyranny of the majority.

Plato made one interesting suggestion regarding the alleged human rational nature. He suggested that rational existence is the primary mode in human existence. But this differed from Aristotle's

uncited view that apart from being rational, human existence is also primarily social by design. Thus, Aristotle's position may be used as a refutation—and to see the rational suggestion as an effort in futility to forge philosophically ahead on an image of mankind rather than mankind's metaphysical reality. In other words if Aristotle's position is granted, social elements are consistent with or even determine the experiential and even the rational individuality of every person.

Furthermore, even if the rationalists and the empiricists proceeded correctly from the assumption that there is a fixed essence of human nature—made up of liberty, religion, the appetitive and the rational elements and rationality—and that this essence determined humanness, they favoured this essentialist but narrow way of seeing the nature of human nature, for they ignored, for the most part, the body and the environment which as Aristotle said, humanize—rather than seeing culture and the environment as complementing, even constituting, every individual's character and human nature. This is the point that motivated Marx's view that the rationalists' and the empiricists' supposed human individuals are an abstraction. Marx urged, instead, that while freedom, rationality and the passions are of the essence of human nature as outlined by the rationalists and the empiricists, human nature is as well the product of the cultural matrices of existence.³⁹

While through and through it has been granted by the rationalists and the empiricists that rationality is of the essence of being human, this suggestion is misleading, contentious, or even completely wrong. Profoundly, the presupposed rationality-centredness of mankind's nature (today called "logocentrism") clearly reflects the Greek tradition of thinking we discussed in chapter two. It was the Greeks who are in record for having first suggested, several centuries before Common Era, that there is one ultimate explanation to every problem. However, this need not necessarily be true,

since any such suggestion must be sensitive to differences in culture from the traditions of others. Not every people think like the Greeks, or desire to do that. For, as we may say, "logocentric" Greek thinking demands rationality, where sympathy and understanding may need to prevail; it demands reason as an imperative where spontaneity may need to reign. For these reasons, logocentrism is not necessarily palatable, logical or even a general metaphysics.

Similarly, the ideas of freedom (and unfreedom), and the ideas of the treatment of the passions, or the ideas of the original state of nature as depicted by the rationalists and the empiricists remain, by the extension of our argument, particular; they remain nothing but alleged possibilities, and as such, give room for other possibilities in human nature thought. Marx's claims reflect a case in point against the two schools. Marx is cited here below, however, as one of the profoundest instances of the outright and methodical defence of the theory that human nature is intertwined with existential conditions.

3.3 Marx and the social context view of human nature

Back in the fourth and thirteenth centuries, Aristotle and St. Aquinas, respectively, asserted that mankind are social by nature. This was reiterated later on by Marx, when he held that human nature is closely intertwined with the existential conditions of life in which an individual lives, in a way then refuting the independence from culture of the human souls and human nature as suggested by the rationalists and the empiricists. This matter--of the social determination of conceptions, has been broadly defended by some contemporary philosophers--like the aforementioned James and Rorty.

Marxism is a philosophical theory, as well as a social and political thesis. It is an ethical as well as an economic observation. It is a major thinking theory conceived in part out of a preconceived utopian dream in which all people will allegedly eventually be equal in social and economic stature and live in the midst of abundance, and purportedly satisfied within the political dispensation they live. It is a totally unique theory of the knowledge of reality--including human nature--that emphasized on the social and material aspects of humans.

3.3.1 The social context of Marxist philosophy

Marx, the founder of Marxism, was born in Trier in Germany of a middle-class family. He studied law, philosophy and religion at university. He got highly attracted to the works of a fellow German philosopher, Hegel. At the age of twenty five, he went to Paris where he met radical philosophers like Engels (1820-1895). Marx was forced to flee Paris by the authorities because of his philosophical inclinations to Engel's views. He went first to Belgium, France and finally to England, where he lived till his death. In his philosophy, Marx pitched his view that economic conditions are the *de facto* determinants of life. Thus, on the one hand he shared these views with Engels; on the other, Marx ridiculed Hegel's philosophy that "... it was the principles that made history and not history that made the principles."

Marxism can be seen as originating against the background of rationalism and empiricism. For one, Marxism was against seeing human nature as the effect of some unchanging principle--as rationality is to rationalism and empiricism on human nature--and instead, urged, that human nature was constantly determined in human interactions. However, Marxism contended that there is ultimately a fixed human nature tenable only when the masses of people in the world have taken

control of the means of production.⁴⁰ Let us interrogate Marx's concept of the human person below.

Marxism originated as a philosophical statement about capitalist and industrial societies and a proposed blueprint for their replacement. Today, in the broadest sense, a theory is Marxist to the extent that it critically conceives of the individual and society in their totality, in terms of their material conditions, social classes and history, combining determinacy with agency, thought with situation, as they are complexly based on bourgeoisie interests.

A root source of a Marxist condemnation of adversarial, competing philosophies is squalid existential conditions and economic misery. For example, when factory conditions at the dawn of industrialization reduced workers to mechanical units engaged in specialized tasks that do not call for creativity on their part. In that case, fatigue, low wages and impoverished conditions at the work place produced alienation and dissatisfaction. From impoverished conditions at the work place such workers returned to an even worse condition at home--to poverty and slums. The basic thesis of the Marxist philosophy was that such conditions of life of people do not reflect the proper metaphysical basis of the human personality, unless the economic conditions in which they live change.

Another root source of Marxism is allegedly the unprogressive values championed by states, as instruments of oppression. Indeed, according to Marx, the economic conditions in which people live are the direct result of policies which point in the direction of excessive love for private property. In this case humans see their own fate in that of others. Given the material conditions in

which people live, people are divided into social units and sub-units of the rich and the poor, oppressors and the oppressed. This is not Marx's image of an ideal human nature. These conditions do not reflect the real metaphysical basis of human persons.

To overcome such shortcomings that come with such sad state, a humanitarian revolution took place in the minds of socialist reformers like Saint-Simon, Fourier, Feuerbach and Marx. The philosophers helped to transform the problem of poor working conditions, poverty and excessive materialism into a moral and political issue. Some of the reformers believed in changing whole economic and political arrangements through class-wars, to change the conditions of the masses of people. Some suggested ways that would improve the conditions of workers within the existing governmental structures; for example, through social security. Thus, Saint-Simon (1760-1825), for instance, hoped to bring change by the art of persuasion for governments to adopt Christian socialism based on the principle of self-sacrifice. Fourier (1772-1837) proposed workers' and other forms of voluntary socialist societies, which he called the "phalanxes" where, all will work for all. On the other hand, Owen (1771-1858) wished to convince factory owners by his own examples to build modern socialist communities with their capital.⁴¹

3.3.2 From Hegel to Feuerbach and Marx

The above Marxist evaluation of the plight of humankind in industrial society is based on Marx's perceived proper metaphysical basis for a "realistic" human personality. Itself it can be located as originating in the wider philosophical debate between Feuerbach (1804-1872) and Hegel. Feuerbach and Hegel had argued that change is the real absolute state of all of nature. And in his

Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844, Marx observed similarly with some degree of clarity.⁴²

Here is how Hegel had conceptualized development. That is, change first takes place primarily in human consciousness--such that for every concept ("thesis"), there necessarily follows its opposite ("anti-thesis"). Out of the dynamic interaction between the two extremes will emerge a "synthesis" that, in turn, will become a new and presumably higher "thesis." For example, if absolute being is a thesis, absolute unbeing is its anti-thesis. The "synthesis" is absolute becoming. That is, for Hegel, in the mankind's consciousness, the universe is eternally recreated, and this is reflected as the constant change in external reality too.

Feuerbach spoke disparagingly of Hegel's thesis of development. He proclaimed that the evolution of human cultures, however, is not found in the philosophical abstract movement of mankind's ideas, but originates from concrete human experiences, that is, from people's concrete feelings, wants, needs and the problems they face in life. Thus, the uncovering of history and development may be identical with the rational evolution of the unfolding Hegelian ideas, but the foundation--or basic source, of that unfolding is the common experiences of humanity.⁴³

Marx agreed with Feuerbach, and developed a theory of human nature based on concrete lived experiences. Where Hegel saw development as essentially the dialectic of ideas, Marx perceived development as the conflict caused by existential and essentially economic causes.⁴⁴ There was, then, according to Marx, a basic minimum which every change retained: there is no fixed or unchanging part of reality. In nature, as in the human being, there is no fixed essence which defines

one's identity and personality. Indeed, Marx's theory was illustrative of the view that personalities change, and what changes them is social and economic arrangements.

3.3 Marx's concept of human consciousness

Marx's concept of change was illustrated in his theory of consciousness which is "realistic" as it is idealistic. It is "realistic" because one's consciousness is seen as emerging from social and economic contexts; it is idealistic since it ultimately aims at an individual in a utopia. But, it is a theory based on conflicts between "classes" in which the individual is dissolved, i.e., theoretically, the individual merely becomes a "massified" individual. Indeed, the concept "class" takes over the place of the individual in Marxism---and becomes Marx's new basis of conceptualizing individuals. "Class" is a theoretical concept which does not refer to any particular individual, but to the abstract quality of the masses of people. No single individual is "class," but every body shares in the qualities of "class" in so far as the individual is a member of the class. In a sense, then, class replaces the individual in Marx's philosophy. But in so doing, Marxism sought to prove its own premises of the social foundations of reality, because, while it sought to replace the individual from the centre of things, it replaced the individual with class.

Thus, in his theory of human consciousness, Marx proceeds by contending that one's consciousness of what they are is determined by "class"--and the "class"-consciousness is determined by the ownership and distribution of wealth in a given social and economic arrangement. Thus, for example, he contends that industrialization generated a character in people they never had before, in proportion to private-property accumulation, competition and the demands of entrepreneurship. As Marx stated, this demand creates a false disposition toward wealth formed upon a principle

allegedly quite unfavourable to the individuals in society and their general happiness, producing a unified consciousness and feelings specific for the members of society belonging to a class, for example. Hence, Marx held that the way people live, their means of production, determines all, if not most of their beliefs, relations, institutions, character and consciousness.⁴⁵

Drawing an example from the Mediaeval feudal societies, Marx noted that the feudal societies were characterized largely by two groups of people: one, property owners (the landowners), and two, the landless (or serfs). He held that every group in the feudal system had its dominant ideas that are different modes of rationalizing their experiences within the existing economic and social orders they found themselves in. Moral and religious ideas, no less than political ones, originated and evolved in accordance with the economic interests of the persons who held the means of production in control. Even one's private beliefs were allegedly of economic origin and material generation--rather than primarily purely rational considerations, and often were unquestioningly and unwillingly adapted. Thus, in the feudal societies, the landowners considered themselves as the natural heirs to land and the legitimate exercisers of authority; while the serfs considered themselves as workers.

For a quick climax of our sketch of Marx's concept of consciousness, we must move to his notion of oppression and alienation: Marx contended that masses of people are oppressed and are unfree in that kind of situation where landowners possess the means of production as their private property. Deceptively in this context, always serving their narrow interests first, the owners of production (whom Marx calls the *gesselshaft*=bourgeois class) determine the distribution of wealth, and consequently, lifestyles. Marx's position, quite unequivocally, was that the masses of people left to

the dictates of the owners of production are alienated from self-fulfillment--as they do not adequately profit from the product of their own labour that then stands as a hostile force against them. Their consciousness is sham. Their religion is phoney; religion is, as he put it, the "opium of the masses." The masses do not live their full life as humans. For him, that situation, however, can be remedied only when the working class owns the means of production. Only then, he alleged, would there be no room for class-struggles and oppression.⁴⁶

3.3.4 Dialectics

Under "dialectics," let us now show how Marx thinks consciousness evolves, and what its ultimate end shall be. But here again the theoretical concept of "class" is paramount. Marx first observed a dialectical relationship between the owners of production and the masses. The owners of the means of production, who are as a result wealthy, live in constant wish to dominate the masses. Since the masses own nothing or little wealth, they stand as a constant threat to the rich and the wealthy as well. This conflict, which Marx sees as the source of social change, he calls it the "dialectic." The "dialectic" between the classes, however, ends, Marx notes, when the differences in wealth are resolved. The differences are resolved progressively when, for instance, with the development of trade, an increasingly affluent class with a different consciousness from that of the masses arises as a "synthesis" in the class-struggles over power, wealth and the control of the means of production. This new "synthesis" naturally leads to the evolution of its own opposition class, composed of the workers who, being the majority, will eventually take over political power and the means of production. Once under the dictatorship of the masses, the entire social apparatus will be collectivized. With only one class remaining, the tumultuous class-struggles cease completely, and the true human nature condition allegedly achieved by mankind.⁴⁷

A difficulty arises, however, when one considers whether Marx's prediction of the end of the "dialectic" would materialize. Up to now, for example, few can see any real progress of the working classes, nor the overcoming of the degeneration of their social and economic conditions, so long as they remain workers. In other words, the oppressed still exist as a class. Although such an argument can be, and has been, peddled, democracy has seemed to prove Marx right in that, in a democracy, it is the masses who decide the ruler. However, this does not and has not negated a pivotal truth of Marxism as a theory: that a social gamut in human experience is a condition, an expression or manifestation of how economic conditions galvanize human societies and their human nature.

33.5 The individual in Marx's thought

The crux of Marx's philosophy of human nature lies in his metaphysics, which provides the basis of his perceived sense of a "realistic" human personality. In itself, it is the special mode of subsistence which entails the adamant rejection of the notion of "state of nature" as championed by such philosophers preceding him, like Hobbes and Rousseau. Marx dismissed as an abstraction the concept of "humans in a state of nature," for, according to Marx, there were no such individuals, even though he ends up with an abstract and absolute concept of humans himself. His starting point was, however, a remarkably observational one, which defined Marx's idyllic individual in theoretical terms as follows: imagine, if you can, a serene world at the beginning of time; all over are families—originally subsistence families *sui generis*, engaged in their daily chores; no solitary individuals, no "government" in sight. Marx held that people were originally found in that life-form, living in society, engaged in producing their means of subsistence by which they conduct their lives. Thus, he noted:

As individuals express their life, so they are what they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with what they produce and how they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production.⁴⁸

It is important to appreciate that Marx did not propound that governments or states are important in the way they were perceived to ensue from the "original" state, such as was widely held by Locke, Hobbes and Rousseau. Equally, it is important to appreciate that for Marx, the idea of an individual in the "state of nature" as propounded by Hobbes and Rousseau is but an imagination, and an excuse used to justify governments, and the existence and development of classes among people by its authors. Individuals are portrayed by Marx as engaged, from the moment of their first appearance in history, in some activity, every one performing their social, economic and cultural activity--what he refers to as the *Verkehr* ("intercourse with reality") that grounded them in their lives. Now, this concept of *Verkehr* is important, to understand the deep and insightful metaphysics of Marx regarding human nature. It represents the view that humans are, *sui generis*, related to reality in intercourses terms. For therein, for Marx, in the activities and in intercourse with other humans, is rooted the mankind's constitution. For Marx, deep underground, it is this *Verkehr*, he states, that determines human nature. Change this and human nature changes. For Marx, then, ideally having work, engaging in some productive activity, and to work and own what one produces, are an inalienable essence for every human being, and indeed, the basis for being human. But the idea of "classes" where allegedly others work and don't own anything, and where others don't work but own everything, is alien to mankind and, purportedly, a deviation from human nature. This view resonates repeatedly in Marx's works. Hence, the view that history is made by mankind in the dialectical struggle for the control of resources.⁴⁹

For Marx, the most ancient or primitive *Verkehr* act visible is the production of the means to satisfy basic needs such as eating and drinking, habitation and clothing. In its earliest form, *Verkehr* is found with families; only later with complex social development does the state emerge. Whether family or the state, however, in all, *Verkehr* determine the kind and quality of life an individual can enjoy. Moreover, such *Verkehr* give rise to, and indeed, determine human language, logic, culture and consciousness itself. In this case, he concludes, ". . . life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life."

Marx's comments on the perceived metaphysics as they affect or shape human life are reminiscent of Hegel's own in a significant sense, i.e., in terms of the significance they place on state values, ideals and knowledge.⁵⁰ For example, in viewing the state as *Verkehr*, Marx viewed *Verkehr* as Hegel did. For Hegel, the state is the most perfect source of human civilization. The state for Hegel means the "state" in the common political sense as an entity of governance. However, it also has a far deeper, more embracing abstract philosophical meaning. The "state" in the wider, less concrete sense is the sum of all the ethical values, political and social arrangements, shared experiences and responses, the consciousness of feeling together through history reinforced by religious and cultural homogeneity. This "ethical" state is the one which Marx, like Hegel, accords supreme value and importance in the determination of human nature and culture at the political level. Hegel goes further to suggest that the "state" is the uniquely human institution intended for the self-perfection of humans. Thus, Marx states that it is in this alone that the individual can achieve a sense of freedom and self-fulfillment through participation in its transcendent life. So the kind of state in which mankind lives determines what that mankind is.⁵¹

agreement with Hegel, Marx's sense of a perfect state is one where at the concrete level it does not deny the freedom of the individual. Moreover, assuming that the individuals are originally neither good nor bad, Marx held that the institutions and the practices of which the individuals are part, constitute the individuals as we know them. All their rights and obligations derive from these institutions. Marx's most important position on this matter is that the humanness of humans is as social beings, to work and to possess what they produce. His upshot is that this is impossible in states which are not righteous in their ownership and distribution of the wealth.⁵²

3.4 Marx and the education of the mind

It is remarkable to note that Marx's concept of education mirrors his metaphysics of human nature: that the foundations of human nature are sapped when the masses do not own what they produce, are poor and, therefore, unfree and alienated from themselves. Marx held that in order to achieve full humanness and to witness the full capacity of humanity, the relations of the working proletariat to the owners of production in society must be changed and re-generated, by engaging an ideology that reconstructs the working class as a class aware of its own history of oppression, exploitation and dehumanization. Entranced by "class," Marx contends that the masses must organize and act to bring about a revolution in the ownership of the means of production. To this end, a revolution is necessary, because the privileged are never all too willing to give up on their privileges. He posited that bourgeoisie peddle an ideology coupled with religious values that obscure the workers' sound vision and the true consciousness of their condition. He thus recommends an education bent on teaching ideological transformation through a vanguard of teachers and intellectuals who will help the proletariat see the way forward---of which Marx, we suppose, was his own good example of these intellectuals.

11.7 Marx and the sociology of knowledge

Marx did not sufficiently live long to see through his dream of seeing the masses of poor people freed from oppression and poverty. However, he did find following as well as critics from many, including many much older philosophers. Some of these followers retained the "class" thinking as the tool to social evolution; some didn't, but maintained other Marxist elements, underpinned by the presupposition of an alleged appropriate metaphysics of a "realistic" human personality. A majority maintained the view that society shapes human nature. Thus, Williams, a historian and critic of culture, observes, for example, that Marx's thought exercised a lot of influence in both Burke and Owen.

Burke (1729-1797) was a British statesman and a supreme conservative. He held the idea that governments are unavoidable, since in his opinion, they are for human perfection. He accepted, without reservation, that increase in wealth is the means for human and cultural growth. That is, for humans to become truly human, they need, in his view, governments---since central for the multiplication of wealth, for him, is the government.⁵³

Thus, as the social burdens of existence swelled during Burke's lifetime, the confirmation of Burke's position became desperate. For one, Burke did not think that the individual is oppressed by the wealthy in industrial society. He observed, instead, that their problem was that they had different values---albeit implicitly ignoring Marx's assumption that it is these same societies that led to value differentiation. Burke stated that in any society there are people with good and bad values, and this is the nature of people. For him, good values include the rights of others to be restrained from corrupting the best values of society. The best values, in his opinion, are those

virtues that promote prosperity. Society, he alleged, must then shape up the renegade individual corrupting or preventing the good. His argument was that people left to themselves are wicked and dangerous to "civilization" ---which he conceived as the accumulation of property and the growth of wealth.

Hence, he stressed the right of the state to restrain renegade people as follows:

Government is a contrivance of human wisdom to provide for human wants...Among these wants is to be reckoned the want, out of civil society, of a sufficient restraint upon their passions. Society requires not only that passions of individuals should be subjected, but that even in the mass and body, as well as in the individuals, the inclinations of men should frequently be thwarted, their will controlled, and their passions brought into subjection. This can only be done by a power out of themselves; and not, in the exercise of its function, subject to that will and to those passions which in its office to bridle and subdue. In this sense the restraints of men, as well as their liberties, are to be reckoned among their rights.⁵⁴

His renegade views can be contrasted to those of Owen (1771-1858) of Lanark---a British poet, socialist reformer and an influential Marxist. Owen was a contemporary of Burke. He believed that human nature is shaped by society.⁵⁵ However, in a rather twisting of Marx, he was of the view that the root of human suffering was not wealth as such, but the values that go with the production and the utilization of that wealth. So contrariwise to Marx, instead of tackling the root causes of human suffering as Marx suggested, he favoured a new moral order, being a sympathizer of Christian values. His idea of the new moral order was morality to be created through the adoption of Christian socialism and active government participation, through a national system of education for the protection and improvement of the life of squalor. His view emerged significantly with the idea of "positive culture," which gained popularity with the progress of the eighteenth century. It talked of human happiness through prosperity and governmental care. He also talked of creating and enhancing human happiness through the creation of co-operatives.

Parallel with Marx was a strain of thought led by Engels (1820-1895) and Lenin (1870-1924). The two urged, like Marx, that the human institutions, beliefs and sense of reality intertwined with economic conditions. These were the basic principles of class-struggles and the chief determinants of human nature. Engels and Lenin stressed the materialistic determination of the nature of human life, turning their attention to attacking the materialistic bases of capitalism in artificially shaping society. Yet, a younger breed of Marxist thinkers claimed that socialist thinking can be achieved through political non-violent means. Each of their theories, though Marxist in insisting on the material basis of life, proceeded with different sub-assumptions and claimed to extend Marxism beyond its traditional conceptual borders.⁵⁶

Gramsci, an Italian political leader, for example, while accepting the role of wealth-distribution in shaping society, argued, contrary to Marx, that the goal of revolutionary politics is not really the economic destruction of the capitalist class, but politically to overthrow the hegemonic class by gaining control of the state. Lukacs, a Hungarian Marxist philosopher, disclosed---through his philosophy, what in his opinion the primary concern of Marxist philosophy is. For him, that is not so much the weary issues of economic exploitation, political domination and violent revolution, but the reification of the false ideologies upheld by people. He stressed that it is people's attachment to the false ideologies used to shroud their own social striving and privileges, which alienate them from a true productive and befitting culture and whom they should be. Habermas, a German socialist philosopher, exposed the presence of the historical and ideological interests behind every establishment by which governments and businesses try to rationalize their decisions, and he sought government intervention in solving the legitimation crises that they have become for modern capitalism. Similar views were held by Mills, Stark, Berger and Luckman. Mills stressed and

ward of the social bases of ideas as follows: There is no such thing as absolute truth, but only historically rooted truths. Individuals who think and come up with ideas do not confront the universe in the abstract; rather, they occupy particular positions that shape their outlooks; they come from specific social groups. Understanding this should be every one's goal. For, often, the dominant ideas of any social group may come from a few elite thinkers. Thus, Stark observed that we see the broad and deep acres of history through a mental grid, through a system of values which is established in our minds before we look out onto it. However, Berger and Luckman have a similar point with the phrase "social construction of reality."

These and many such thinkers are today the cornerstone of the sociology of knowledge, of which Berger and Luckman are some of its prominent representatives. But while most of the advocates of the sociology of knowledge go beyond Marx in their insistence that there is a distinction between the social element of knowledge (= sociology of knowledge) and the essence of human nature (= the metaphysics of the human persons), they all agree with Marx that life and human consciousness are, at least in part, social products. Further, they concur that human nature is not, *ex nihilo*, a mechanical duplication of social and cultural reality. No more than Marx, they are emphatic to retain the agency of thought in the creation of the type of state and individuality, and the view that ideas influence, and can, and do change individuality, social, economic and political realities. They are emphatic in their assertion that ideas, values and consciousness define human nature. Even though instead of speaking of the "sociology of knowledge," Gertz talks of the "anthropology of knowledge," he means something similar to the above thinkers, since for Gertz the anthropology of knowledge is the concern about the conscious shaping of culture within specific cultural contexts, and the constant creation and recreation of culture by individual actors in a dialectical relationship

between culture and economic relations. It means, as Marx suggested, that culture-specific knowledge provides a fundamentally pluralistic framework for the analysis of various cultural aspects including human nature, religion and science, and the analysis of various empirically different cultures on equal terms, an analysis which is not necessarily reductive, but calls for an awareness of specificities.⁵⁷

3.4 A critique

As we examine, now, Marx's philosophy of human nature, we confirm the estimate of its value and its deficiency. We learn its value from its tenets as well as from the margins of its errors. For example, Marx's self-proclaimed realism repudiates Locke's, Rousseau's and Hobbes' theories as abstract and idealistic. Yet, to repudiate them, Marx uses idealism. For, Marx's concept of a "classless society" is idealistic, utopian---absolute. He even suggests that his classless society is the end of the thinking process, and the end-state of mankind, which are themselves idealistic and utopian.

Furthermore, Marx's vision of transformation of humans is as realistic as it is idealistic. For instance, he does concede that the increase in individuals' wealth does not necessarily lead to better individuals. The dilemma he sees in society is, for him, the choice between a moral (and allegedly happy) religion-less world, on the one hand, and an alleged capitalist/serfdom anarchy on the other. He thus talked of creating human happiness as a deep, lasting and fulfilling experience. But it is work and active workers who will create Marx's idea of a new society. But he probably wrongly demonstrated the means as the relinquishing by others of the possession of the means of production; yet, for philosophers like Locke, happiness, instead, purportedly derives from the

possession of the means of production. But, much more, Marx's theory does not resolve a basic question it originally intends to. For instance, it is hard to imagine that the inherent tensions between individuals naturally with different interests will be eliminated even if the revolution he envisaged will at some future date be possible. Moreover, it is unrealistic that humans are valued only as workers.

In Marx's theory, the individual (i.e., the real individual as to be found at the end of the dialectic), in Marx's view, is supposed to be a free individual, where one's freedom would be determined---not by the individual---but by specific class-contexts and social institutions. But upon further reflection, in essence, Marx implies that absolute freedom is impossible, because, first, in class-society people are oppressed by the classes in which they belong. Yet, he fails to see that freedom is impossible in his envisaged classless society where the ideology of the masses prevails. The dangers to society resulting from possible uniformity of ideology and personality (= a subsumation to the will of the majority, or public opinion), do not seem to bother Marx.

However, there is another serious critique against Marx: He characterizes human nature as purely existential on the one hand, and utopic on the other, which dismisses religion merely as a cultural puppet. Yet, as embodied, humans are inextricably religious by nature, though Marx's theory, for important strategic reasons, concentrates attention on the artificiality aspect of it.

Engels criticized Marx and stated that:

According to the materialistic concept, the determining force in history is in the final instance, the product and reproduction of immediate life. This, again, is twofold character: on the one side, the production of the means of existence, of food, clothing and shelter and the tools necessary for that production; on the other side, the production of human beings themselves, the propagation of the species. The social organization

under which the people of a particular historical epoch live is determined by both kinds of product.⁵⁸

Engels' critique of Marx is powerful; it is the view that Marx failed to take into serious consideration a reproductive aspect of mankind in his theory. And to the degree that Marx fails to carry through on the aspect, some thinkers---like Engels---perceive themselves as trying to complete Marxism by providing an account of the reproduction of people as well as pertinent in the evolution of societies.

A similar concern was expressed by As-Sadri who observed that it is wrong to assume that human minds exist as if they are not part of the wider nature. Quoting Stalin (1879-1953), he states that,

[Human nature is not] an accidental accumulation of things or events, of which some are separate, isolated, or independent from some others. Rather...nature [is] one firm whole in which things and events are linked together organically and dependent on one another. Some of these things and events serve as mutual conditions for some others.⁵⁹

Further, As-Sadri quotes Darwin (1809-82) reiterating Stalin's point of an organic link to reality: ". . . all the production of nature, including people, that surround us now are nothing but products of a long process of [biological] development."⁶⁰

While the above thinkers talk of linkages, Sartre contended that under Marxism, the utopic individual in Marx's proletariat society is subsumed under the universal masses. He thus sees Marx as guilty of "bad faith," for he is: "... bringing concepts into play at the same time so as to preserve benefit of a teleological interpretation while concealing the abundant high-handed use, which they make of the explanation by finality."⁶¹

But there is another, more interesting observation: Marx's theory of culture was as essentialist and egocentric as that of the rationalists and the empiricists discussed earlier. For instance, Marx's theory was based on such pedestals of thought as a finalistic orientation. A critical examination of Marx reveals an envisaged final notion of an individual. Though a sense of the Hobbesian individual in a state of nature is rejected, it is the class that determines the new individual, or the class is the individual. The class is incarnated with all the attributes of a person. For instance, the class suffers when wealth is in the hands of another class. Marx's theory, then, entails merely substituting one finalistic basis of explanation for the class, where the class becomes the new finalistic basis of explanation.

Lastly, but not the least, Marx's classes themselves remain, moreover, a conglomeration of individuals brought together loosely by an ideology of interests. What happens after the interests become no longer attractive? What happens after the revolution? There is nothing like the community as found in traditional African communalism where a sense of communing entails relating to one another at the deeper human and social level as our investigation on human nature philosophy about traditional Africa shall shortly disclose.

3.5 Summary and conclusion

In this chapter, we have examined rationalism, empiricism and Marxism and their treatment of human nature. We have observed they suggest that humans are rational, social etc., in their metaphysics. However, we also observed that the philosophies do not agree on what the precise nature of mankind is even in the very aspects they suggested to be the essence of mankind. Rationalism and empiricism suggest, for instance, that there is a universal rationality. Marxism

~~ask~~ whether mankind are essentially rational in that sense. We have further, however, observed ~~that~~ their philosophies of human nature arise from specific existential circumstances. For instance, rationalism was emphasized as a rallying call for sober solutions of problems after years of social and political turmoil. However, we must note that the philosophies-- rationalism, empiricism and Marxism--championed some of the overarching views about the humans--views which we uphold even today.

We now turn to the contribution of the philosophies of freedom and language to the philosophy of human nature. What were the major trends of thought about human nature which emerged from them? Let us examine these philosophies.

3.6. Notes

1. See Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 131-133.
2. Jamie James, *The Music of the Spheres: Music, Science and the Natural Order of the Universe* (London: Abacus, 1990), pp. 3-19.
3. See for an outline of rationalism and empiricism, I. Edman and H. W. Schneider, eds., *Landmarks in Philosophy* (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock., 1941). Also see for the themes outlined, W. M. Urban, *beyond Realism and Idealism* (London: G. Allen and Unwin, 1949).
4. *Ibid.* See also for the materialistic and idealistic interpretation of "rationalism" and "empiricism", Muhammad B. As-Sadri, *Our Philosophy*, trans., S. C. Inati (London: Ansariyya Publications, 1989), pp. 31-59.
5. A reader should note that "rationalism" is the view that pure reasoning is allegedly the source of true knowledge. On the other hand "empiricism" is the position that sense experience is the only source of true knowledge. "Rationalism" and "empiricism" differ on the original source but agree on the importance of reasoning thereafter in knowledge.
6. G. K. Fiero, *The Humanistic Tradition* (Madison: Brown and Benchmark, 1995), pp. 2-20.
7. For the account here and the arguments below, see "Rene Descartes, "Meditations on First Philosophy," eds., R. Cummins and D. Owen, *Central Readings in the History of Modern Philosophy: Descartes to Kant* (Belmont, Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1992), pp. 4ff.
8. See Immanuel Kant, "Critique of Pure Reason," eds., R. Cummins and D. Owen, *Central Readings in the History of Modern Philosophy: Descartes to Kant* (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1992), p. 455. Also see in the same work, the Kant's table of "categories."
9. Benedict Spinoza, "On the Improvement of the Intellect," In *Ethics*. trans., J. Gutman (New York: Hafner Publishing Company, 1949), pp. 3-6.

9. John Locke, "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding," eds., R. Cummins and D. Owen, *Central Readings in the History of Modern Philosophy: Descartes to Kant* (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1992), bk. 4, iii.
 10. The language is Locke's. See Locke, *Ibid*, sec., 1, xxvii and the following sentences. Herein he adds, "Every one is to himself that which he calls self."
 11. See Plato, *Republic*, ed., Louis P. Loomis, *Plato: Five Great Dialogues* (New York: Gramercy Books), pp. 307-339.
 12. Nichollasso Machiavelli, *Prince*, trans., George Bull (Penguin Classics, 1961), pp. 52-53.
 13. See the *Prince's* introduction by Bull, pp. ix-xxi. Also see, pp. 55ff.
 14. C. H. Patterson, *Western Philosophy Since 1600* (Lincoln: Cliff Notes, 1971), p. 17. Also see Forrest E. Baird, *Philosophic Classics: From Plato to Nietzsche* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1997), pp. 471-472.
 15. Thomas Hobbes, "Leviathan," eds., J. Somerville and R. E. Santoni, *Social and Political Philosophy: Readings from Plato to Gandhi* (New York: Doubleday, 1963), pp. 141-145.
- The reader must bear in mind that the term "state of nature" refers to a hypothetical existence of human societies; it did not necessarily exist in reality, but "state of nature" is used as a possible model for explaining and defending human behaviours, especially social and political organization.
- A view ensued that the difference between a "state of nature" and a "state" is anarchy and peace.
16. See J. Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed., P. Laslett (Cambridge: University Press, 1967), chap. ii-v.
 17. Many historians depict Locke's life as relatively settled. E.g., C. H. Patterson, *Op. cit.*, pp. 33.
 18. J. Locke, *Op. cit.*, sec.6.
 19. *Ibid.*, chap. ii-v.
 20. See Daniel Kollak, ed., *The Mayfield Anthology of Western Philosophy* (London: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1998), pp. 616-617.

21. See J. J. Rousseau, *The Social Contract*. Trans. G. D. H. Cole (London: Dent and Sons, 1973). Cf. George Sabine and Thomas L. Thorson, *A History of Political Theory* (New Delhi: Oxford and IBH Publishing Company, 1973), pp. 529-547.
- From now henceforth, the words "liberty" and "autonomy" will be used synonymously with "freedom" in this thesis.
22. See the "Introduction" by Gutman, in Benedict Spinoza, *Ethics*, trans., James Gutman (New York: Pantheon Publishing Company, 1949), pp. ix-xxxiv.
23. Benedict Spinoza, *Op. cit.*, pp. 41-275.
24. See for example for these and the following Bacon's views, C. H. Patterson, *Op. cit.*, pp. 17-21.
25. Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Men*, trans., J. H. Mason (London: Quartet Books, 1979), pp. 214-215.
26. *Ibid.*
27. See for this additional comment on J. J. Rousseau, John Plamenatz, *Op. cit.*, pp. 364ff. See also Allan Bloom, "Jean Jacques Rousseau," eds., Levi Strauss and J. Cropsey, *History of Political Philosophy* (Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1969), pp. 514-535.
28. See Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, eds., Irwin Edman and H. W. Schneider (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1941), p. 385.
29. See Thomas Hobbes, "Elements of Philosophy," eds., Irwin Edman and H. W. Schneider. *Landmarks in Philosophy* (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1941), pp. 331-332.
30. See John Locke, "An Essay Concerning Human Understanding," *Op. Cit.*, p. 144.
31. *Ibid.*
32. For the historical background about Kant, see Willibald Klinker, *Kant for Everyman* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), pp. 1-53. For Kant's philosophy, see especially Immanuel Kant, *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals* eds., Irwin Edman and H. W. Schneider (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1941), pp. 580ff.
33. For the comment on Montaigne's theory of education, see John Plamenatz's, *Op. cit.*, pp. 70-71.

34. See especially his notion of *tabula rasa* in John Locke, *An Essay*, *Op. cit.*, chapter 1.

35. See J. J. Rousseau, *Emile*, *Op. cit.*

36. Richard Rorty as in Note 1. Also see Immanuel Kant, *Op. cit.*, pp. 586-589.

37. See R. Descartes, *Op. cit.*, pp. 12-19.

38. For the arguments on God's existence, our reference is John Hick, *Philosophy of Religion* (New Delhi: Prentice Hall of India, 1994), chapter 1.

39. The idea of a "socio-genesis" of knowledge runs through Marx's philosophy. It is underpinned by economic considerations seen as the grounds that primarily determine a society's kind of life.

40. See Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1959).

A compact formulation of Marxism is given by Marx in his letter to P. V. Annenkov, December 28, 1846. He asks: "What is society, whatever its form may be? Thus he states, it is the product of men's reciprocal action. Are men free to choose this or that form of society? By no means. Assume a particular state of development in the productive forces of man and you will get a particular form of commerce and consumption. Assume particular stages of development in production, commerce and consumption and you will have a corresponding social structure, a corresponding organization of the family, of orders or of classes, in a word, a corresponding civil society. Presuppose a particular civil society and you will get particular political conditions which are only the official expression of civil society."

Also see for more details, Joseph Cropsey, "Karl Marx," eds., Levi Strauss and J. Cropsey, *History of Political Philosophy* (Chicago: Rand McNally and Company, 1969), pp. 699-700. Marx's theory of economic dependence takes more than an economic theory. Indeed Marx asserts that all morality, philosophy, religion and politics are the result of the conditioning of people by their economic environment, which is a man-made environment. For background information on Marx, see Daniel Kollak, *Op. cit.*, pp. 360-361.

41. There is good account of these philosophies in F. E. Baird, ed., *Philosophy Classics: From Plato to Nietzsche* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1997), and R. Williams, *Culture and Society: 1780-1900* (London: Penguin Books, 1963), pp. 23-48.
42. Marx's comments are crucial for understanding Feuerbach and Hegel. See Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, *Op. cit.*, pp. 133-157. In that work, Marx critiques the Hegelian dialectic and philosophy as whole. Also see G. W. F. Hegel, *An Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, eds., Irwin Edman and H. W. Schneider. *Landmarks in Philosophy* (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1941), p. 652. See Friedrich B. Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of German Classical Philosophy*, ed., C. P. Dutt (New York: International Publishers, n.d.), chap. iv.
43. Marx, *ibid.*, F. B. Engels, *ibid*
44. Cf. F. B. Engels, *ibid* Also see Forrest E. Baird, *Op. cit.*, pp. 1070-1073. In particular see Karl Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach*, trans., J. Arthur (London: Lawrence and Winslet, 1970), pp. 45-52.
45. See S. Marck, "Dialectical Materialism," in *History of Philosophical Systems*, ed. V. Fern (Iowa: Littlefields, 1958), pp. 306-328. Also see Karl Marx, *The German Ideology*, ed., R. Pascal (New York: International Publishers, 1939), part 1. Marx contends that consciousnesses are products of "reification", where "reification" means --a false objectification of the values people cling to.
46. See Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, *Ibid*
47. *Ibid*
48. Karl Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach*, *Op. cit.*, p. 72.
49. See, for instance, Karl Marx, *The German Ideology*, *Op. cit.*, part 1.
50. *Ibid*.
51. *Ibid*. Marx's view invites the modern-day idea that the role of a state is mainly of a facilitator.
52. *Ibid*
53. R. Williams, *.Op. cit.*, p. 28.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 28.
55. *Ibid*.

56. This thesis on the "sociology of knowledge" is simulated from articles by R. Collins and M. Makowsky,

7. *Discovery of Society* (New York: MacGrawHill Inc., 1993).

57. *Ibid.*

58. Quoted by M. B. As-Sadri, *Op. cit.*, p. 203.

59. *Ibid.*

60. *Ibid.*

61. As cited by A. Harrison-Barbett, *Mastering Philosophy* (London: Macmillan, 1992), pp. 222.

Chapter four

The contribution of the philosophy of freedom and language to human nature thought

As the centuries progressed, the problem of the precise nature of human nature continued to press. Indeed, so deep was the concern with the human nature that it is impossible to find a systematic text since Plato which does not address or make assumptions about the nature of mankind.

To a large extent, the growth of the concern with the human nature reflected---as it did in the past, the social dynamism of the West and its attendant problems. In the nineteenth and towards the twentieth century, it reflected the growth of science, technology and industrialization, co-relational with old but waning religious and customary beliefs. These new, unique factors, together with others, converged, from the nineteenth century onwards to impress upon the philosophies of the time on the centrality of understanding human nature.

The indulgencies of the new philosophies of human nature—as those of their predecessors, attempted to deal with the metaphysical complexities of the human nature at large, with new insights and new styles, but founded on the wisdom of the past. The philosophies evolved both as new ideas and as variations of themes and issues already raised and addressed by their predecessors.

In many ways the philosophies of liberty and the logical analysis of knowledge were groundbreaking works, predominant from the nineteenth century onwards on the philosophies of human

ature. But their validity depended on the assumptions they made. What then were these philosophies of human nature about? Here below are some of their key testimonials.

4.1 Humans as free beings

As we have already seen above, there were philosophies which view human nature as essentially defined by freedom, by default. What is more remarkable is when the freedom becomes a basis for organizing society. Armed with the notion of freedom, the idea that there were fixed, absolute, constituents of human nature seemed to have reached its climax in Western philosophy. When Aristotle and Marx, for example, suggested that humans are *animal socialis* (i.e., social beings), when the rationalists and the empiricists observed that humans are rational by nature, when the libertarians contended that humans are free in nature, the sum total of the elements of the fixed nature of human nature seemed to have been determined.

This notion that humans are of the essence of freedom developed into a major trend of thought about human nature in the nineteenth century. However, it traces back to the ancient idealistic Greek philosophy--as we said, whose chief pioneer is Plato. Plato's philosophy may thus be used to sum up the foundations of the Western philosophy on liberty for the nineteenth century. In Plato's philosophy, a separation was made between the soul and the body. The soul was perceived as free from the constrictions and infirmities of matter, and can possess the universal, eternal, unchanging ideas of reality. Deciding that freedom was the essential attribute in human nature had important consequences reflected in the eccentricism of Descartes, Locke, Hobbes and other philosophers, which endeared them to the knowledge that in order for humankind to be free, they have first to be free in their thought, or to extricate themselves from what they perceived as the drudgery of bodily

and cultural constraints. Like Plato, for example, Descartes distinguished between the spiritual minds on the one hand, which are free and rational by nature, from the corporeal bodies, on the other, which are governed by fixed physical laws of nature. For Spinoza, freedom is only freedom from necessity. So what became the nature of mankind that was unique in the nineteenth century? Liberty was to be developed, and defended with full force as a philosophy of its own, legitimating its own view of human nature, and as the underpinning basis for explaining human nature. Schools of thought like existentialism emerged, which aimed at creating a happy society based on the philosophy of the notion of the absolute freedom in mankind--rejecting the metaphysical assumptions of the earlier philosophies of liberty--the latter philosophies, based on unyielding liberty.¹

However, the philosophy of human nature based on unyielding freedom was, and is problematic. For instance, with this theory, the claim that the free can be unreasonable holds. That is, the free can be unyielding and uncompromising, and these are the hallmarks of unreasonableness. Furthermore, one might ask: How can one be free when, born into and living in society, they are bound by society? However, let us see the social contexts from which this latter-day "libertarian" thought about mankind emerged.

4.1.1 The social context of the libertarian philosophy

The humanitarian crisis resulting from the poverty of culture that was addressed by Marx as a moral question, was also an issue highlighted and addressed by the "libertarian" philosophy, where freedom became the central concept instigating a reaction against the purported moral evils of capitalism, and the intellectual and economic domination of the nineteenth century. History reveals

the "libertarianism" began as a diagnosis of the dis-ease of humankind in industrial society.² There is no indication that this philosophy was against the accumulation of wealth, or against the prevailing governments. Indeed, as it gained momentum as the rising doctrine that the nineteenth century produced, the quiet, sometimes turbulent tide of material prosperity was flowing strongly. However, it posed as a moral, religious, political as well as a philosophical view, diagnosing the source of the problems of the masses of poor people in an industrialized world.

In its most influential, radical and presumably dangerous form--"existentialism," the "libertarian" philosophy emerged particularly as an irreligious device to enlighten and counsel people, and as a theory intended for the amelioration of the injustices confronting people, the result of the moral decay industrialization, technology and social classification had brought. In the face of the material distresses and the misery that had befallen the working poor because of industrialization, "existentialism" stood fast first for some sort of consolation based on the understanding of the source of the problems of people. Existentialism did not hold that the problems which the masses faced were to be solved by turning to God, or through employers developing a better attitude to their workers; it was not merely a comforting tactic. It had a more serious recommendation to make for the salvation of the masses of mankind: It insisted that all humans are free, by metaphysical design, to choose their lives and to be who they want to be. They should not evade responsibility by blaming heredity, upbringing, industrialization, other people, or God, for their station. It led to the view that the utmost struggle in mankind is the struggle for or against one's will. From Marx, the existentialist philosophy probably learnt that humans have the capacity for self-evaluation and self-determination. But it was not a class-philosophy as Marxism was; its focus was the individual existing man or woman. It flourished against the prevailing background of the class-based

philosophy of Marxism. But unlike in Marx, existentialism contended that humans should not be, and need not be governed or defined by the social arrangements and material conditions of existence, people have all the power and the necessary instrument in their nature to develop and be whatever they want to be by *fait accompli*. And that instrument/power is freedom.

According to Skirbekk and Gilje, freedom became the basic principle for understanding human nature in the "libertarian" philosophy. It came against the background of Marx, refuting Marx's view that a human being has no independence, no nature of one's own apart from the identity given to it by the group to which the individual belongs. It sought to reinstate hope in the agency of the individual. But in itself, this was in no way remarkable. What was remarkable was that the "libertarian" view did not become socially crucial until later when industrialization and technology became congruent with the materialistic view of culture and values. When the cosmos was conceived in the fashion of a huge mechanical system in which humans exist as cogs in it, industrialization, which modern science made possible with its strict rules of operation, made the majority of workers' job-satisfaction impossible. The workers considered on the model of the natural world--like bundles of identical human individuals connected by corporate goals, operated as a social working machine. Industrialization with its factories and the need for large numbers of workers doing identical jobs, intensified this degrading materialistic and mechanistic picture of humans, and made the feeling of hopelessness and unfreedom a reality. The large numbers of people regimented into identical lifestyles with very little care for job-satisfaction, seemed to suggest that the machines and industry had taken the centre-stage in human life. Instead of being an appendage to life, it seemed life was an appendage to industry. Existentialism so strongly protested against this social malady and the consciousness of unfreedom it generated. However, the

"Utilitarian" thought also began as a response to some liberal and social thought of such philosophers as John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), who argued that liberty is a condition of the rationality of humankind, for, it meant that it cannot be divorced from such allegedly good values as individuality, private property and free debate.³

4.1.2 The meaning of existentialism

"Existentialism" is any school of thought which observes that one's being as a subjective individual (i.e. one's existence) is more important than what one has in common with others objectively (called one's essence). Kierkegaard (1813-1844), Nietzsche and Heidegger (1889-1970) held this view, which underpinned their philosophical thoughts. Our examination of existentialism led us to the conclusion that existentialism is a philosophy which also holds that there are other ways through which the world "speaks" to mankind (other than just through logic and rationality). That is, for it, the world speaks through the basic ways in which humans exist, one of which is that freedom constitutes a basic mode of human existence. It is only surprising that existentialism relies on logic itself to make its point--that the particular human mode of existence precedes logic. The existentialists supported this metaphysical existentialist view with the theories which purport that the human experience of freedom is the fundamental essence about the kind of beings humans are. It translated into the view that humans as humans, deep inside their subjectivities, experience freedom irrespective of the common problems, experiences and whatever they share in public (called their essence in that philosophy). It held that freedom is not just one fact among others that make up a human being, but freedom makes humans "human." In a sense, existentialism was not just a statement against the problems of society, only bound up with practical concerns. That is why we say that it was also a statement in the essentialism and idealism of the possible metaphysics of

the human person, asserting speculatively that rationality makes humankind free; freedom makes one rational, because freedom is choice.

Driven to this conclusion by its own premises, existentialism turned out to be a dangerous theory which carried loathsome selfishness to its highest pitch. It asserted, not only that freedom is a reality that humans are constantly aware of even if only dimly at times, but that it offered to humanity the ultimate court of appeal, to be set over the processes of practical and all judgement as the mitigating and rallying process for defining humanity. In other words, freedom was set over and above all other moral and metaphysical qualities like compromise, consideracy and commonsense. In existentialism, freedom was the hallmark of choice, decision and life. Thus, the existentialists such as Kierkegaard, Sartre and Heidegger called on people to recognize their "naturally" -given freedom, and, therefore, be whom they are supposed to be, i.e., free.

But another more serious issue for reflection arose as it did for Kierkegaard: This conceivably ceaseless sense of uncensored freedom is freedom for what meaningful purpose? At this point existentialism drifted to despair. Hence, for instance, granted that free is the way mankind was made, and it has no choice over it, and must, moreover, observe the dynamism of freedom, to these apparently negative modes of being, Kierkegaard only saw salvation against its purposelessness outside the traditional philosophical matrix: God. Of primary concern for Kierkegaard, for example, was one's relationship with God to direct mankind to the correct path. It seemed to him that unguided by God, this freedom is freedom to vanity.⁴

Before we proceed with our discussion of existentialism in section 4.1.3, the following observation is in order to put existentialism into perspective about its philosophy of freedom and human nature. For, we need to note that the concept of freedom advanced by existentialism differed fundamentally from the earlier concepts by many other philosophers like Spinoza and Rousseau. These two philosophers, for instance, did not believe, as the existentialists did, that humans can be absolutely free. They noted that humans are forever in bondage, either for the reason of living in society and being governed by its rules; or, for the reason of being constrained by the forces of nature, humans cannot be free. There is, then, a fundamental disagreement regarding the nature of mankind among the philosophers in this regard. This contestation, thus, throws into doubt the precise nature of the human liberty, and by extension, human nature as such.

4.1.3 The existentialist nature of humans and the role of religion in that nature

There was a theoretical reason as to why Kierkegaard, a Danish philosopher, emphasized on God as the solution to human choice in the alleged kind of life of mankind. Kierkegaard emphasized that mankind are free in essence; they cannot help but be free. According to him, governed only by free choice, humankind cannot know, and do not have any absolutely correct standard for choosing the correct life. Here is our example of this: for instance, rather than being bogged down by industry and technology, the individual can choose a different life. We should note that while Kierkegaard's existentialism developed as an idea from industrial life problems, the philosophical idea of freedom lagged it on to maturity and gave it a philosophical base. Interpreted for industry, this meant that industries have the latitude to choose their destiny, to make up their own mind as to be what they want to be as individual industries. The growth of the new industrial societies can be confusing even to the best minds. Kierkegaard held that it is clear that humans are alone and forlorn in the

world. They exist in a world that is indifferent to human wishes. Each individual is, therefore, forced to make their own choice, and in that regard has open and infinite possibilities of what they can be. It is what mankind has to be which is the challenge and a Herculean task. In that case, only by turning to what God wants can people be purportedly guided appropriately. Under the circumstances, he stated, religion is of necessity to humanity.⁵

4.1.4 Anguish: the absurdity of authentic existence

Regarding the importance of choice in the knowledge and exercise of human nature, Sartre, an atheistic existentialist thinker, concurred with Kierkegaard--though in the former, religion does not necessarily mean religion in the same sense, but belief of the necessary absurdity of the human experience of freedom.⁶ Let us examine this issue below.

The existentialists' views are best understood from their rejection of the traditional Marxist philosophical account of human nature, which argued that in the case of human beings, what the "nature" of a particular person is, is the form into which that particular person has been socially cast. Ejecting from this, the existentialists argued against another traditional account--as by Rousseau--that, on the contrary, human beings do not have a fixed nature given by some designer or by some crude nature that determines what they will be--the way a rock, a tree or a dog may be said to operate. If they have any fixed nature, that fixed nature is freedom. Nor are humans designed with a definite or a specific or default purpose, which it is in their nature to fulfill as is the case with any human or natural artifact. Instead, humans possess freedom by fiat, and thus humans necessarily have to choose for themselves what they want to be, what values to embrace, what lifestyles to adopt, and what goals to pursue. If, say, someone adhered to a religious doctrine, if one

close to enforce, say, the Ten Commandments, for example, one can offer no absolute proof that one's choice is the better. Sartre suggested that people are radically free to break away from any doctrine, at any moment, and adopt another if they so wish, and that is perfectly human nature. In so far as by default Sartre sees humans as without help, by themselves in the world, humans are, in his words, "condemned to be free," and by this he means, with no God and no absolute standards to watch over them, they have only themselves to rely on and draw from their experiences. Everything else is indifferent to their wishes.

Here are some of the metaphysical elements in the assumed basic forms of human existence: freedom, endless choice, and anguish. However, these Sartrean concepts begot and reared, at the end, a sense of desperation and the purposeless of life we have been talking about. For, accordingly, an individual or group of people may choose to join a movement or industrial action and fight for some social goals, but that offers no absolute proof that the particular individual's choices are the best or better than another's. "Freedom" is the principally human power to force the world to be any way their mind may invent. It means that humans are forever wondering what the correct or right way is. However, because humans have to choose with no absolute guidance, their natural situation is one of ultimate despair, and a sense of the meaninglessness of life.

Because of that sense of freedom, it is, therefore, according to these teachings, in the nature of humans to suffer anguish, forever, since the freedom makes the individuals to realize the shallowness of whatever they pursue, and in any case they are forced to observe freedom without any ultimate profit and competence; for, in all they pursue, the freedom provides the unceasing drive for self-transcendence, eternally.. As Danto put it, within this never ending self-transcending

freedom, resides the life of trifling vanity. That is, without understatement, at any point in a society's or individual's life, even though an individual or the society has a character or roles which are the summation of the choices individuals make, this is constantly being added to and subtracted from, and the past should and does not necessarily determine the future. Nothing determines it save the individuals. Not even an external rational or ethical criterion does. It led to the view that humans are the master of their destiny. If the society cannot be initially defined or define itself, it is because the humans will not be anything until later when they will be what they make of themselves.⁷

The genuine march towards authentic existence--allegedly inescapable--is ideally not to be absorbed into the larger will of the masses or the strong. As Sartre maintained, it is the individual that is the supreme source of one's identity. Therefore, it is the personal subjective decision-making aspect of freedom that is the most important. Because of the transcending vanity of the self-determination and self-transcendence in this regard, the most important human activity for authentic existence, in Kierkegaard's opinion, is decision-making; while the pinnacle is authenticity; it is through the choices we make that define and recreate us.

Sartre arrived at a similar unpalatable point over the vanity of human nature, but this is primarily because of the premises chosen. In Sartre, too, the philosophy which preaches and cultivates a feeling of despair towards life instead of optimism prevails. He argued that an individual first exists, encounters oneself, surges up in the world and then defines oneself. Thus, one need not live a subdued life or in servitude, for, whom humans are, is something evolutionary. In the context of his concept of "engagement," he explained this as follows: Humans possess the power of being able

engage and disengage from any particular form of identity, and this is precisely the source of the experience of human freedom in defining and becoming whatever they want to be. He points out that there is no fixed human nature. About God determining life, he argued that life has passed beyond the stage where one can argue that whatever is happening is the effect of God. There is no God who legislates; humans act freely; every thing depends upon their own actions. People should not blame God, natural laws or ethics. Freedom is, as far as human nature is concerned, allegedly the central basis in the philosophy and the exercise of human nature. However, it is dreadful and burdensome.

Apparently adrift to anguish, Sartre calls for common sense to prevail as follows: As he states, since there is no absolute standard, "freedom" does not mean doing anything that one pleases. It entails responsibility in choosing the correct ideals, even though this is a responsibility in anguish, abandonment and despair, because there is no absolute direction, and no guidance. Yet, the human sense of existence means that that responsibility does not mean hiding in falsehoods, pretences or errors. As he reiterated this point:

Since we have defined the situation of man as one of free choice, without excuse and without help, any man who takes refuge behind the excuse of his passions or by inventing some deterministic doctrine is a self-deceiver. One may object: But why? I reply that it is not for me to judge him morally, but I define his self-deception as an error. Here one cannot avoid pronouncing a judgement of truth. The self-deception is evidently a falsehood, because it is a dissimulation of man's complete liberty or commitment.⁸

Sartre eventually saw the need for a sense of reasonableness in the face of that alleged vanity. What he calls "sincerity"--following the above quotation is, in our view, a philosophical call to, and for commonsense and reasonableness to prevail, premises--which, in our view, he should have begun with in the first place. In other words for, Sartre, "sincerity" is the only measure of the level of cultural and personal development. In his opinion, a sincere person is one who is responsible to the

world--passionately, unconditionally, absolutely and without reservations. For, a sincere person, Sartre also reminds us, is committed to the world at large. By this he means, when "sincere" humans choose what they want to be, they do not only see themselves choosing for themselves, but for all humanity as a whole, since everything they select to be and do has consequences for humanity. If one tries to excuse oneself, or to apportion blame, this is self-deception, or what he calls "bad faith," (=an act done insincerely). "Bad faith" can, to be sure, be chosen; but, he maintains, an individual who chooses in bad faith cannot escape from the sense of responsibility to the world.⁹

His above ideas on human nature connect to those of Heidegger, an existentialist metaphysician from Freiburg, Germany. Heidegger reiterated--among other existentialist metaphysical elements in mankind's alleged mode of existence--the vain nature of human existence--maintaining that far from people starting out as isolated individuals, who then face the problem of making solidarity with other people, people's existence from the beginning is a shared and social one, yet the problem of people is that of becoming individuals, or rather, finding an authentic mode of personal existence. Hence, humans whether in groups or singly, have to make choices. Choice is what determines humans. There is, however, no absolutely perfect life, something ultimate, because to have an ultimate is to clog human autonomy for self-determination, and to deny human nature.¹⁰

Let us, then, look at another concept of that alleged existentialist metaphysics--the "will"--in another existentialist philosophy of human nature by Schopenhauer and Nietzsche.

4.1.5 The will to futility or to power? Schopenhauer and Nietzsche

The "will" was advanced as the metaphysical as well as a social concept to explain the purported basic human experience of life, sometimes as the appendage to rationality. It remained, however, a major factor in creating confusion in the theory of human nature. It led to two things: one, a sense of futility in life; two, a proposal for the absolute use of freedom which mankind is said to possess. The critical philosophical questions that evoked the concept of the will include: Is reality rational through and through? Is the human experience of freedom founded on rationality? Is there God? If not, is there another primary force behind all reality? Thus, Schopenhauer (1788-1860) and Nietzsche defined the "will" as the irrational force that drives the whole of life, and the whole of the cosmos. In this case the "will" was, in some sense, perceived to be the force existent on its own, precedent to and automatically in operation in reality.¹¹

Similar to Schopenhauer, Locke defined the "will" as:

...the power to begin or forbear, continue or end several actions of our minds and motions of our bodies barely by a thought or preference of the mind ordering, or as it were commanding the doing or not doing such and such a particular action. This power which the mind has ... is the will. The actual exercise of that power is *volition* or *willing*.¹²

Unlike Locke, however, in Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, the will is every thing, driving the whole of life. The confusion that this concept brought in the philosophy of human nature, and the debate that raged on as a result, can be characterized by the discussion of the role of the will by Schopenhauer and Nietzsche as follows:

4.1.5.1 The will as a metaphysical and social theory

In Schopenhauer's theory of the will, the "will" leads to a sense of the futility of life. For, all reality, including human nature and every state and everything else in the cosmos, are alleged to be the expressions of the metaphysical principle he called the "will." The "will," Schopenhauer stated, can be understood as that which is the same in all events and individuals in nature. As he suggested, all the objects and events of different kind in reality are will objectified. Even human values like ethics, social and political philosophy, are will objectified. Every event in nature happens according to the will. The intelligible world as a whole is the expression of the all-enveloping will. Cosmological transformations, its conversions and various states and events are all products of the "will." Schopenhauer's theory is clearly a philosophy of predetermination--and to possibly understand its historical context, we need to look at the world as explained in our section 4.1.1. But let us touch on that a little.

The implication, of the industrialized world, in Schopenhauer's theory, for understanding human nature, was that the will determines every thing about human nature as a whole. The will's actions arise from want and deficiency. Since the basis of the will is deficiency, and deficiency leads to pain, he reached the conclusion that reality is fundamentally evil, painful and unfair, so far as the underpinning nature of reality is "will." Hence the end of the human experience of the existence of the will is ultimately pain in anguish. For Schopenhauer, then, the world has never been good, will never be good--so long as it is ruled by the will.

Yet, while in Schopenhauer the "will" is cast in deterministic and negative terms, in Nietzsche the will connotes choice set forth in Nietzsche's theory which knows no better than cunning, greed and

selfishness To illustrate this, let us see how Nietzsche, a philosopher from Saxon, distinguished between two kinds of the manifestation of the "will" in morality, namely, "master morality" and "slave" morality." Master morality is said to be "the morality of aristocrats and nobles," while slave morality is "the morality of the herd" (masses). The aristocrats see the slaves as useful; but for the herd, blinded by resentment, the nobles are evil. The term "good" also comes to have a double meaning in the morality. "Good" means strength, authenticity, self-affirmation and spontaneity. However, in the morality of the herd, nonetheless, it is identified with meekness, sympathy and humility. As Nietzsche stated, the herd morality is epitomized in Judeo-Christian religions as they emphasize Mosaic values as preparedness for life in the hereafter. The two sets of the opposing values ("master morality" and "slave morality"), however, have been engaged in fearful struggle, he states, for thousands of years, and in deed, do coexist within the same individuals and many a society. In other words for Nietzsche, humans will always have some sort of the will, because, for him, this is the way basically human existence is metaphysically fashioned.¹³

The allegedly successful humans, however, according to Nietzsche, are or will be those who possess the strongest of the will. But no decent theory is given over how one can observe the "will" with profit and competence. In his own words, but according to his sense of morality, people who possess the morality of the master, i.e., that of success, are those people who dare to be their best without flinching. Nietzsche's theory, then, seeks to relinquish in mankind all the ordinary moral constraints for any alleged success in human dealings contending that humans must unwaveringly pursue their desires, whatever may, because this is in answer to their will any way. But, as he notes, such sense of morality does not come from God. God is dead; God remains dead. He reiterated this view arguing that human existence passed beyond the stage where it is no longer possible to regard

the universe as the effect of God. Humans have taken the place of God. The challenge is how now to live best in the reportedly Godless world. His advice? First is to realize the way human existence is basically fashioned--for instance that there is no static human nature. People must be spontaneous in their lives--following their will. He holds that all humans are endowed with the "will" to be whatever they want to be. He rejects philosophical systems that pretend to know of a fixed or default essence of human nature. He captures this partly in his view that since the will is the true reality of the world, atrophy is a perversion of reality. Humans should live their lives to the full and get the best they can from it.

The fullest expression of the scope of the possibilities of the human will is his concept of the "superman" (or *Ueberschensch*, or *Uberschensch*), found in his *Zarathustra*. In the first part of his famous work, the *Zarathustra*, the "superman" is configured as an abstract human, and the ideal of the new, and in his opinion, "progressive" morality and religion as follows: The superman is enthralled by power and success. Gripped by the obsessive mania of achievement, the "superman" is cast as virile, a warrior or warrior-like, possessed with vigour, hard work and zest; is aggressive, bold, adventurous, a schemer, confident, courageous, meticulous; follows one's dreams; is brave, a person who is in control, is on top of things, prosperous, authoritative, creative and smart. However, Nietzsche does not intend to cast these qualities necessarily in the positive. The coming together of all these dynamic qualities, coupled with fulfillment and satisfaction is for him the final good in human nature. Yet, the opposite of those qualities does not make one a "superman"; they reflect, he claimed, the slave mentality. These are qualities like humility, meekness, guileless, pity, resentment, frivolity, dependence, envy, passivity, conformity, self-pity, generosity and other-worldliness.¹⁴

Having stated the above, one tentative conclusion can be drawn, though: that our above examination reveals existentialism that it is, indeed, intended to be a metaphysical statement--partly, about the alleged metaphysical, basic or initial being of mankind, and it evolved from, and was shaped by, the specific historical contexts as outlined in section 4.1.1.

4.2 A critique

We should observe that the "libertarian" philosophy is a philosophy which preached hopelessness in life by cultivating and defending a feeling of anguish, chaos and disorder instead of optimism and cheerfulness in human nature. It is, it would appear, a clear case of the philosophic elaboration of the ancient, sadistic Greek myth of Sisyphus. In the myth of Sisyphus, Sisyphus was an errant Greek god who was condemned to punishment by other gods, forever to push a heavier than thou boulder up the steep of a mountain, and only to push it back atop once it rolls down the steep gradient, which it has to do by the law of the gods once it reaches the peak of the mountain. Sisyphus' action is eternally repetitious, of no other known purpose--a condemnation. Thus, similarly, the "libertarian" philosophy knows no better of the purpose of life--of how mankind can observe their freedom--granted that they have it--with profit and competence. It knows only vanity. But then, this philosophy of pessimism can be accepted as true only if the premises on which it is based are true.

Yet, the concepts of Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Sartre, Heidegger and Nietzsche, namely, freedom and the will, postulate that humans are directed primarily by the two not necessarily rational powers-- freedom and the will. If this is granted, then both the human experience of morality and reasoning are subjective, because the forces which direct them are subjective.

Furthermore, if freedom and the will are the fundamental basis of all values in human life, it implies that people ought not to be criticized for the moral choices they make; for they are authentic choices made in accordance with the will. Yet, freewill can be expressed in a variety of ways. The idea that the most important thing in life is self-realization, is one of them. It can take the form of feeling an obligation to develop one's talents. Alternatively, it can take the more romantic form of following one's dream. There is also the aspect of power, that is, the power to control over one's environment and the power of self-control. Such senses of self-determination give humanity an almost God-like status in the world. This renders the point of discussing morality ethically pointless in human nature.

Hitherto, perhaps a more serious criticism can be raised: the "will" is advanced as the metaphysical theory enveloping and determining every thing else in the cosmos. In other words, it is a deterministic theory. In such a deterministic context, freedom, which apparently the "will" seeks to account for, is essentially impossible when the "will" is perceived to determine every thing. This implies that it is in the nature of humans and the world at large to be determined, not to be free.

Let us end our discussion of existentialism and the liberty theory of human nature with the following comment: Perhaps no school of thought understood human freedom better than existentialism. However, having scorned its vanity, having traded forlornness and anguish for hope, as outsiders/observers, we rest our conscience until we find new values to replace the old existentialist values. If the philosophy of liberty did not, and cannot, define the correct nature of human nature, what is human nature? Let us now turn to the linguistic view and its conceptions of the human nature, which incarnated, among others characteristics, three basic natures as the

metaphysical nature of mankind, namely, language, thinking, and sociality, as it posed, as well, one of the sharpest affronts to the major and competing theories of human nature.

4.3 The linguistic view of human nature

The linguistic view further illustrates how metaphysics led to the development of unique conceptions of human nature, through an interrogation of the metaphysics of languages. The metaphysics of the languages, however, is important because it shows how philosophy refocused its theoretical attention to the hitherto perceived rational nature of mankind--an element which had always, any way, been considered an essence of mankind. But, most important, it brought a different angle and a trend of thought, as to what makes humans rational. It was the view that humans are rational not really because they possessed the soul, but because, for example, following now a major linguistic contention,--because they are composed of a grammatical template in the mind. But first, what were the metaphysics' historical sources?

History reveals that advances in scientific research, discoveries and technology forced a radical reappraisal of knowledge in the twentieth century. Science and technology did not only throw into doubt non-empirical beliefs, but it expanded human imaginations to hitherto unknown horizons. Thus, for example, according to Kollak, there was growth in the aeronautics, space-exploration and nuclear technology. Coincidentally in philosophy in the twentieth century, there were many leading philosophers who were academicians. Partly because of this, there was an exponential growth of concern with analysis in the realms of knowledge. Within philosophy, this analytical trend of thought was fine-tuned by a breakthrough in logic, which affected the rest of philosophy. For, following Aristotle's logic, Frege (1848-1925), a twentieth century logician and philosopher of

mathematics, conjectured that rules of logic underlie mathematics and all science, and tie mathematics and the sciences together. Together with Whitehead (1861-1947), Frege came up with *Principia Mathematica*--to show that the whole of mathematics is derived from knowable principles of logic.¹⁵

Frege's and Whitehead's developments in logic affected the whole of science to the extent that scholarly movements developed concerned purely with the close analysis of the propositions of the sciences. Their aim was to unveil the logical rules that underlie science, both in their internal and external composition, and with a view to bringing every rule of logic that is hidden behind them to the surface. Thus, as influential intellectual movements of the twentieth century, they emphasized the study of the logic of all language. It was probably a Cambridge philosopher, Wittgenstein (1889-1951), who when in the early 1920s conjectured that it was impossible to deal with reality beyond the bounds of language, formally initiated the emphasis on the logical analysis of language in philosophy *per se*.

From that time, there grew the contention in the philosophical circles that any philosophical understanding should be tied to the insights about the logical nature of language in general. Human language was seen as the key toward understanding metaphysics, epistemology, science and all human sense of reality. And in several disciplines of study, scholarship pointed towards knowledge as founded on the understanding of the nature of language. Hitherto, there was another influential view which drew from analytic philosophy: that philosophies like Marxism, rationalism and empiricism in their philosophies used language in philosophizing without first examining the very nature of the languages they used. With this view, then, one understands the flourishing of the

analytic tradition in the twentieth century. For, the analytic philosophy taught not only that the correct use of language is synonymous to knowledge and thinking, but that the study of language was necessary prior to all knowledge and thinking. Accordingly, major advances were made in the philosophy of languages that brought in several angles.

Indeed, with the analytical developments, we see the horizons of thinking about language and about thinking itself expanded. There were two major groups involved in the analysis: the "Vienna circle" and "linguistic philosophy." The "Vienna circle" comprised of mathematicians, scientists and philosophers. They tried to establish the logical foundations of science. They held that all the meaningful words have referents perceivable by the senses. The "linguistic philosophy," on the other hand, pursued the analysis of statements using ordinary language. "Linguistic philosophy" led to the view that the "Vienna circle" was wrong in applying the straight jacket of the scientific standard of analysis to all forms of human utterances. Emphatically, they held, umpteen, different sorts of discourses go to make up human life, and each is governed by its own logic. This school developed into the "ordinary language philosophy," of which Ryle (1900-1976) is probably the best example among its proponents.¹⁶

The analytic school conceded too much though. One of the issues it conceded was to imagine that language was not just a quality of thought, but an absolute necessity for thinking and knowledge. Incidentally, this indulgence was happening at a time when already several centuries ago, philosophers in the West and elsewhere, had already explored the possibility that language alone may be inadequate to express, one's experiences. Thus, just as we might know today, for example, that sometimes we need to borrow words from a different language to communicate--or simply to

actions to do so, thus, a question was raised: Is thinking equivalent to the use of language? Or, is all thinking "verbal"? This is a real, not a rhetorical issue. For, upon it, several trends of thought regarding human nature developed, some of which we shall consider here. For example, for behaviourist philosophers (=philosophers who hold that knowledge is nothing but identical to observable behaviours or inclinations to behave in certain ways), of which Ryle was one of them, they did not only suggest that language is indispensable to thinking, but that thinking and knowledge are equivalent to the subliminal movements of the parts of the body associated with language--like the vocal cords' movements.

Behaviourism, we should note, is, however, the epitome of an absurdity in philosophy that thinking is verbal thinking. But indeed, not all thinking is verbal; otherwise we would not sometimes need to get away from language in order to think. For instance, as we have said, this is what we do when we use analogies, pictorial representations and other non-verbal forms of representation--like visual imagery. But, let us now turn to Ryle and his ordinary philosophy about humans. What did he think to be the metaphysical mode of existence of humans? There is one of his elements we wish to emphasize, which was underpinned by that philosophy: he contended that humans do not possess souls.

4.3.1 The Ordinary Language Philosophy of minds

In the attempt to assert a unique conception of human nature, came the denial of the existence of the soul. And for that denial, Ryle is pertinent. But first, a little background. One notices his peculiarly professional beginnings compared to earlier philosophers, like Kant. Ryle was--in the nineties--a professor of metaphysics at Oxford University. From philosophy, he seems to have

learned how to analyze languages philosophically. But from science—which he was really interested in—he accepted that all truths must be empirically provable. And his loyalty seemed to be largely to science, especially in the face of the age-old and not necessarily true philosophical and religious values and concepts in his time. Beyond that, he had a philosophical obligation to the discipline he learned: his aim seemed to be to prove philosophically that only statements that are scientific are true, and to show what, in his view, the correct nature of the use of language is. With many examples ready and abundant from the philosophy he was too familiar with, he was ready to tell his "ordinary language philosophy." He held that primarily all philosophical problems are conceptual confusions, which arise when one form of an utterance appropriate to one mode of discourse is mistakenly used in the wrong context. The task of philosophy is, hence, that of unpacking such confusions, clearing the mind of all the causes of distortion and false beliefs, while employing, as the distinguishing criterion, the ordinary meaning of language. The apparently perplexing philosophical problems, he held, will be dissolved when the confusion in language is purged. Although there is no evidence that such confusion has been purged today, his purge would be done through an appeal to ordinary language because, according to him, ordinary language reflects the reality.

This brings us to his idea of the rejection of the soul. He accused Descartes of being guilty of a colossal error he termed the "category mistake," which is perceived as the result of a misuse of the coordinate of thought--language. Descartes had suggested in his concept of "soul" that the soul is the "thinking thing." But this (soul), according to Ryle, was not purportedly equivalent to the "soul" as understood in ordinary language. This, confusion of one with the other "soul," Ryle held, is the categorical mistake, i.e., a mistake of using the word "soul"—a word of an ordinary language-- to

to a philosophical category (thinking thing). Accordingly as Miller and Lennenberg point out,

Ryle stated that:

In ordinary life... we seldom use the noun *mind* or the adjective *mental* at all. What we do is to talk about people, of people calculating, conjuring, hoping, resolving, tasting, bluffing, fretting, and so on. Nor in ordinary life do we talk of matter or things being *material*. What we do is to talk of steel, granite and water; of wood, moss, and grain; of flesh, bone and sinew. The umbrella titles *mind* and *matter* obliterate the differences they ought to interest us.¹⁷

In other words, for Ryle, mind and matter in philosophy are philosophical categories, and of interest only to philosophy. Our observation is that in turn, Ryle creates confusion himself, though, in his own use of word "soul" by seeming to imply that humans do not possess souls or minds. He does this by observing that they possess what in ordinary language allegedly comes close to the behaviours. In his own understanding, as the concept is used in ordinary discourse, "soul" means the behaviours and behavioural tendencies, dispositions, capacities or propensities of humans. To describe these all too well-known human tendencies, the ordinary person allegedly applies the words and concepts like soul and matter, but the words purportedly refer to those dispositions, not, as he cynically stated, any "ghost" hidden in bodies.

Thus, Cole quotes Ryle as stating:

A careful analysis of the ways of common talk about the mind would dissipate the confusions, dissolve the problem, and thus render otiose both idealism and its opposite, materialism, in short all the rival metaphysical views that had been the chief product of the field.¹⁸

4.3.2 The grammatical template of a mind

The quandary about the precise nature of the human rationality and human nature continued, in the twentieth century, to lead to the view that language and thinking are inseparable. As that matter emerged from Saussure (1857-1913), a linguist and a philosopher, for him the chief question is not

"what do our words refer to?" but "what precisely is the foundation of language?" Now, the debate revolving around Saussure is important because it brought language to the centre of thinking about thinking. In his philosophy, Saussure portrayed language as a matrix of discreet mechanisms that operate in a very specialized manner in the formation of human thought and intelligence. Language, according to him, is a mechanism of marvellous intricacy that enters into the human consciousness in profundity, to determine the intelligence of the humans. He pursues the line that language is a highly abstract phenomenon whose realization is permitted by mental rules of grammar. These rules of grammar consist of fitting together different concepts, terms and ideas to form combinations that make one's thoughts and perceptions sensible. Although, as he implores, the precise relation between the grammar and the mind is not absolutely known, there is, he insists, certainly a relation between the grammar and the mind. The rules of grammar are perceived as both conventions and biologically innate elements. Thus, as such they are beyond the control of the speakers of the languages who passively assimilate them. As a biological equipment, "grammar" is in essence a theory of innate mechanisms that provides a framework within which the growth of any language proceeds.¹⁹

Chomsky (b.1928), an American linguist, shared the innatist assumption about language. However, to him, the way the language faculty grows, and the form in which it is attenuated as an aspect of the mental system, can be summed up as follows:

We may suppose that there is a fixed genetically determined initial state of mind, common to all aspects with at most minor variation apart from pathology. The mind passes through a sequence of states under the boundary conditions set by experience achieving finally a steady state, at relatively fixed age, a state that changes only in marginal ways. The basic property of this initial state is that given experience, it develops to the steady state...the grammar of a language that has grown in the mind is a partial characterization of the steady state attained.²⁰

Thus Miller and Lenneberg note how according to Chomsky, the language faculty is a unique system of grammatical rules in the innate nature of the human mind with an initial state attributed to genetic endowment, and the final state graphed out by the effect of experience, which is a particular linguistic environment. This is one of the views which led to the claim that animals do not possess language, because grammar is essentially the mental template that charts the transformation from an initial state to the acquired grammar of a specified natural language. The template is, itself, modular, in that it consists of a range of computational processes in the form of transformational rules. These are the rules that are responsible for the translation of thought into linguistic expressions, and permit the construction of the syntax of a language.

The Chomskyan linguistic model is, in effect, a representational, computational system reminiscent of Fordor's Representational Theory of Mind. Fordor, an influential contemporary American philosopher of psychology held that:

Each cognitive mechanism has a number of input systems e.g. visual, audio, and by claim the language faculty, whose task is to map any incoming information from its physical form into representation in the language of thought in which form it can then interact with information either stored in memory or retrieved from other input systems.²¹

Fordor's point in the above passage is that any natural language in its initial stages is essentially representational. Its acquisition is only made possible through some abstract computational processes. The linguistic computations are such that they are part of the initial language and not the language subsequently learnt. This means that a child, for example, gains linguistic competence by extrapolating from some internalized compilations that permit the construction of the representational systems.

What are the implications of this Fordorian/Chomskyan claim on human nature? It became a major trend of thought and supported the position that the transformational rules are, therefore, part of the cognitive structures, which in interaction with other mental systems innately contribute to the formation of one's thinking, consciousness and knowledge. Since mental structures are richly abstract, it follows that the representations between them have to be accounted for in terms of the formal, syntactic properties of the language faculty. However, Chomsky critically sums this up by observing that the linguistic model of the language-friendly mind is in essence the outcome of a rationalistic conception of the mind that focuses on overt formal natural syntactical elements of language. These overt aspects reflect the covert operations of the mind.

4.3.3 Language as a social system

A further investigation of the philosophy of languages, however, led, theory-wise backwards to an ancient view held by the philosophers like Aristotle and St Aquinas about the effect of culture on all reality. That is, in a dramatic twist against the above innatist view, Saussure, for instance, while dealing with the conventional elements of language treated language as a set of customs that are beyond the control of the speakers who passively assimilate them. When language is seen as a cultural or social system, at least one serious implication arises: that there is no single proper objective or standard language (e.g. as we think of a universal logic).

The view that language is a social system can be traced back to elements of thinking in Saussure. Saussure suggested that of all the human institutions, language is the least amenable to initiative. The linguist can describe, but does not condemn the actual signs available in a language system. For him, language is, to be sure, not only an indispensable but also a part of the human genetic

individual. Reminiscent of Saussure, Wittgenstein (1889-1951) agreed to this claim. His admission, however, is first contained in his earlier work in which he explained the basis of language as some specific logical rules underlying language. As explained in terms of that logic, language externally refers to specific realities in nature. However, this is because the logic that underlies language allegedly underlies empirical reality as well in a one to one fashion. Therefore, essentially, it is the logical form of language that enables people to talk about the world.²²

Yet, in his later work, often called the "latter" Wittgenstein, he repudiated his apparently deterministic picture-theory of language, where all language is allegedly governed by the same logical rules. In this latter work, Wittgenstein became some sort of a "realist; for he sees language as the product of forms of life, which specify the logical rules underlying every language, and are different in every specific context. This means that the logical rules of language differ from one context to another. Why did this conceptual change take place? The answer seems to be in common sense observation and the observation of the people's cultures based on the roles language play in the societies, coupled with the persistence of ethics, religion, politics, art and beauty as perennial philosophical problems to be explained without leaving doubts to the common person's deep sense of reality. His problem seemed to be this: How can one account for language philosophically without doing injustice to commonsense knowledge of it, for instance of ethics, religion and politics?

Here, then, one sees how the pending issues exercised influence on the linguistic philosophy. But there was another congruent, more powerful driving force: the proliferation of the social sciences in the twentieth century required the justification of what they tell. Curiously, how was one to

understand the various languages of the social sciences? Accordingly, Wittgenstein introduced a radical element suggested by Herder a long time ago, as we mentioned in chapter one, which seemed to have changed Wittgenstein's perception of language and its underlying logical rules. He argued that the meaning a word, is its use in language in different contexts, for, we know, from Saussure he had learned that language is a convention. Similarly, he insisted in his philosophy that language is a social institution given that the meaning, even of a single word, depends on the meaning given to it in some human social context. In fact, he believed that words derive their meanings ultimately from whole forms of life. Thus, there is for example, a whole world of scientific activity, where scientific terms derived their meanings from the ways they are used within that world, and these may well shift over time. This means that the "language" in the mind is congruent with the forms of life to which people belong. Hence, from the "latter" Wittgensteinian account, there developed the view that the function of philosophy is to help understand the logic of the social sciences; compared to that of the natural sciences which is to account for the logic in the natural sphere.

In other words, it was suggested by Wittgenstein that humans have a certain basic mode of existence that affects language. And what is that mode of existence? Language and ways of life are connected. There are, therefore, according to him, no absolute meanings of words; only conventions. At no other time did he doubt that this is the real issue. There henceforth developed the general philosophical account that language is made up of a complex of discreet aspects of culture rooted in society.

Accordingly, Bourdieu for instance, studies the political elements of language from that philosophical basis of the rather free spirit of the languages. Bourdieu argues that in the nature of humankind, language is, for instance, inseparable from the distribution of power in society, and power relations are unequal in every society. In Bourdieu's own terms, the use of a language depends on the social position of the speaker, for example. In this sense, language provides "power" to the speaker in the sense that the power of a language comes to language from "outside." This "outside" is the cultural values of the communicative context within which communication is situated. Speaking the "official language," for him, is, tacitly, to accept the formal language of a dominating political unit. Moreover, the formation of a single linguistic community is, allegedly, the product of a political domination. Since the distribution of power in societies is unequal among social classes, the analysis of language should not be separate from an awareness of the social classes and the relative social positions of the participants in any communicative situation.²³

4.4 A critique

The preceding sections reveal the attempt to inquire into the basic nature of human nature. The philosophical study of the nature of language reveals startling expositions on human thinking. The case of Fordor and Chomsky—their philosophies have disposed or can dispose us into believing that all human knowledge occurs through the powers of abstraction of the mental linguistic templates. Further more, they have posited that knowledge is almost synonymous with the use of language. Philosophers from Chomsky to Frege and Whitehead have continued to reassert this belief in various ways. Ludicrously, in the behaviourism of Ryle, philosophy went even further overboard to assert not only that words are indispensable to thought, but also that thinking is nothing more than the behaviours we overtly exhibit. Yet, if all thinking were verbal or identical

with the exhibited behaviour, people would not be said to think internally, and many original thinkers would be locked out by this conception too. For, there is a lot of evidence which points to the opposite fact--that thought sometimes comes as flashes of unthought insights, which shows that in order to be creative, one has, in some instances, to regress from the use of language, to embellish in the non-verbal, pre-logical forms of knowing. No one can legitimately dismiss this nature in human nature at all.²⁴

As mystics assert, correctly to some extent, language, which the philosophers increasingly use to articulate their purported insights, is always an abstract approximate map of reality. Therefore, being so, mystics argue, for example, that any verbal analysis of human knowledge is, and will always necessarily be, an inaccurate knowledge. They contend that philosophers should know that the method which they use of knowledge based on the analysis of concepts and their logicity, is only a superficial device that can never explain the complete realm of nature, let alone the human nature. For a deeper picture of reality, the mystics urge, there must be a steady resolve to look away from these devices, and look inwards. This "looking inwards," for example, is, according to them, the pre-logical, pre-theoretical finding out of what reality is deeply--in our hearts, feelings, passions and conscience--for, knowledge is purportedly not about what is "objective," or about what is knowable from the abstract reasoning of the philosopher.

The mystics are not alone in such a demand. The communalists on the other hand are philosophers who insist that the real nature of humans is to be found deep in the communalistic ideal. According to the communalists, communalism is, at the very paltry level, the mirror and the practice in which humans can see their nature more deeply. It is, thus, to the mystics' and the communalists' attempts

unravel human nature in their own way that we now turn to in the next chapter for a further discussion of the philosophy of human nature.

4.5 Summary and conclusion

In this chapter, we have examined several trends of thought in the Western philosophy of human nature through existentialism and the linguistic school. We have observed that an examination of these schools of thought reveals that qualities like freedom, anguish, despair, and forlornness are the perceived qualities of every human being. These attributes are championed as the absolute fixed qualities that make up human nature. Humans may try to live on an artificial image of mankind, but these describe the metaphysics and end of all humans. However, we observed that there is no agreement regarding even their precise nature in the destiny of mankind. We also observed that the idea of the perfect human being and the perceived perfect humans' characteristics arose from metaphysical debates, but also from responses to certain cultural experiences of society in the West. These experiences include problems like social malaise. Thus, combining creativity with philosophy, philosophers formulated the conceptions as some sort of images of generalized mankind in their philosophies of human nature to remind of whatever they perceived as essential and useful of human nature.

We further observed how, on the basis of the idea of the perceived perfect or absolute human nature, some philosophers philosophized about what the perfect societies such people may be envisioned to live in--an issue which has no perfect answer to date in the Western philosophies of human nature. One important point needs to be noted for the sake of clarity: that the ideas of the human nature provided the supporting conceptual framework from within which many of the

raging issues of human nature were discussed. The same ideas in turn influenced and shaped the philosophical perspectives over the perceived proper cultural practices and attributes reminiscent of the said perfect individuals and societies in a mutually supportive fashion.

This then sums up the result of our inquiry in this chapter: that the specific conceptions of human nature--that may be said to be Western, began from, or with, as this chapter handles, the specific historically rooted philosophical traditions, which, in turn arose from specific cultural experiences in the Western contexts. Thus, to this extent, the schools of Western philosophies of human nature are culture specific, and whether the concepts that they ensued are applicable universally is a different matter which the following chapter also discusses.

4.6 Notes

1. Indeed the origin of "freedom" as a notion is clear from many of the readings of Plato and Descartes. The reader should note that the words "liberty" and "freedom" are used throughout the chapter interchangeably unless otherwise stated.
2. For this account on "libertarianism," see for instance, "Enlightenment: Reason and Progress," in G. Skirbekk and N. Gilje, *History of Western Thought* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 247-261. The reader should note the concept "liberty" is henceforth, used in the most extreme sense
3. See Jean Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans., Hazel E. Barnes (London: Methuen, 1957). Also see Gunnar Skirbekk and Nils Gilje, *Ibid.*
4. See for instance on this critical account about Kierkegaard's existentialism, "Knowledge: Existence and Irony," in Gunnar Skirbekk and Nils Gilje, *Ibid.*, pp. 337-345.
5. *Ibid.*
6. See J. P. Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism*, trans., P. Mairet (London: Methuen, 1968).
7. A.C. Danto, *Sartre* (London: Fontana, 1975), pp. 47-83, 139-145.
8. Jean Paul Sartre, *Op. cit.*, pp. 50-51.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*
11. See Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*, eds., Irwin Edman and H. W. Schneider, *Landmarks in Philosophy* (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1941), bk. 2.
12. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, *Op. cit.*, bk. 2, xxi, 5.
13. Friedrich Nietzsche, "On the Genealogy of Morals," ed., Forrest E. Baird, *Philosophy Classics: From Plato to Nietzsche* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1997), pp. 1126-1129. Also in the same book by Baird, see Nietzsche's "Twilight of the Idols," pp. 1141-1143.
14. See Friedrich Nietzsche, "The Birth of Tragedy," Forrest E. Baird, *Op. cit.*

- "The Birth of Tragedy" is the work where Nietzsche lays the theoretical groundwork for the "superman" notion. Also see for the idea of the "superman" Friedrich Nietzsche, "Thus Spoke Zarathustra," ed., W. Kaufman, *The Portable Nietzsche* (New York:, 1952), pp. 122ff.
- During Nazi Germany, the concept of "superman" was used as a rallying call that there are allegedly super-races among people, who were the stronger, conquering and kingdom-makers. The weak deserved to perish.
15. See chapter on Frege, by David Kollak, ed., *The Mayfield Anthology of Western Philosophy* (London: Mayfield Publishing Company, 1998), pp. 990-998. The reader should be aware that the authorship of *Principia* remains a contested issue over the role of Whitehead in it.
 16. *Ibid.* Cf. A. Harrison-Barbett, *Mastering Philosophy* (London: Macmillan, 1992), pp. 100-102.
 17. Quoted in D. J. Cole, ed., *Philosophy, Mind and Cognitive Inquiry: Resources for Understanding Mental Processes* (Dordrecht, Cluwer Academic Publishers, 1990); p. 49.
 18. *Ibid.*, p. 78.
 19. See Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (London: Fontana, 1974).
 20. Quoted in G.A. Miller and E. Lennenberg, *Psychology and Biology of Language and Thought* (New York: Academic Press, 1978), pp. 200-201.
 21. See R. M. Kempson, *Mental Representations: The Interface Between Language and Reality* (Cambridge: university Press, 1988), p. 5.
 22. L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*, ed., David Kollak, *Op. cit.*, pp. 1092-1100.
 23. See Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, trans., G. Raymond and M. Adamson (Cambridge: university Press, 1991).
 24. For details of the alleged irrelevance of language to absolute knowledge, see the following chapter five

Chapter five

Human nature in non-Western thought contexts

An interrogation of non-Western philosophy reflects the theme that has emerged from our previous discussion in chapter two, three and four, namely, that philosophies of human nature are the result of philosophies evolving in tandem with historical backgrounds. Postmodernists--like Lyotard, McIntyre and Mudimbe--put this matter as follows: all thought traditions are particularistic. They thus contended that every tradition of thought must be evaluated in terms of its own standards in view of the contexts which brought them forth.¹

Now, our investigation in the current chapter reveals, further, that the non-Western philosophies divulge radically different concepts of human nature. No one, for example, dramatically captures, to begin with, the perceived essence of an alleged African concept of human nature better than Senghor, when he stated--in the now well-known burlesque of his that, an African is emotional by nature. At this point, if what some of the postmodernists--like Lyotard, argued is correct, that in view of such burlesques what is probably required is to critically appreciate the various traditions from within the contexts they arose, then it is paramount to note that in some cases of the non-Western philosophy of human nature, it would appear, indeed, that the concepts of human nature emerged intuitively rather than analytically. But it was not easy to pose superficial answers than it was to arrive at answers based upon convincing reasons.

This chapter shows precisely what claims and customs coalesced, when and how they coalesced, to the perceived non-Western notions of human nature, and to what extent the claims succeeded or failed in the articulation of what human nature is.

The philosophies were certainly not "purist" philosophies, because they did not claim that they discover by logic the elements that inspired them; nor are they, we would dare say, "realist" philosophies, because "realism" is a term specifically applied to refer to Western philosophies, although the non-Western philosophies may bear elements of the "realism" and "purism." Nor are they "postmodernist" philosophies because they do not seem to claim that their philosophies do not have relevance beyond the concepts they are used to express them.

We must note, too, at the outset that the non-Western philosophy is a very broad and quite different area of concepts covering, only as examples, African, Hindu, Zoroastrian, Buddhist and Chinese thought, which have dominated debate about human nature. In that regard, only a bird's-eye-view of this vast non-Western panorama is possible, wrapping up two broad areas of thought--"mysticism" and "African communalism." "Mysticism" traverses Hindu, Zoroastrian, Buddhist, and Chinese thought. It comprises views about the non-rational sphere of the mind as the source of all true knowledge. Hindu thought is perhaps one of the oldest recorded philosophical thought dating about 2500 B.C.E. "African communalism" are views from Africa that stress the meaning of human nature from the context of the priority of the community over the individual in the definition of human nature.

5.1 Mysticism in Asia: the human soul is intuitive

Mysticisms are ancient views about nature and reality. They hold a central place in the Asian countries, which in this particular respect, have depicted themselves as traditionally deeply religious, and where every aspect of culture--as their religions demand, is or ought to be a manifestation of religion. Asian mysticism originated out of the traditional *Weltanschauungen* of the East, and though at the price of racist stereotyping, the Asian mysticism might be seen as part of what is, in a sense, unique in the East, and so, about what is the basis of unique Eastern conceptions, including of human nature.

Commentators on the mysticism, Skirbekk and Gilje, define "mysticism" as the religious realm of knowledge where no problems are perceived to arise.² The two commentators have asserted that in its various forms of expression, mysticism emphasized on the intuitive nature of human nature and the absolutism of the universe. However, the scholars note that even though mysticism is motivated by absolutism, it is not necessarily opposed to rationality and analysis. Rather, it lays emphasis on mystical understanding as the only sure avenue and the pedestal for the deeper understanding of nature. It stresses that absolute knowledge of all kind, including absolute knowledge of human nature, derives--not through the relatively vain examination of the logicity of concepts, but by internal meditation in the human soul.

Contrasting from the claims of the reknown Western philosophers like Plato and Aristotle--that it is reason which makes humans human, because they can understand or hold their intuitions with reason, mysticism supposes, contrariwise, that instead, suspending the use of reason allows for a free and quiet meditation and fruitful contemplation. Allegedly, such power is the true source of

knowledge of the absolute nature of reality. Until the philosophers recognize this power that comes with the suspension of reasoning, mysticism asserts, neither the philosophers, nor mankind in general can ever find the way to the mystery of reality.

However, it emerges that this sense of knowledge in the sense in which it is expressed, is a matter of culture and traditional philosophical origins to serve certain Hindu, Buddhist, Zoroastrian and Chinese religious goals. By a degree of the consensus of the traditions, the mysticism reinforced the religious practices of the Buddhist, Chinese, Zoroastrian and Hindu beliefs. Thus, as Capra says, a famous mystic sage by the name Lao Tzu (604-531 B.C.E.) noted long ago, how mysticism supposed that the human mind can only adequately know by transcendence. This is because, as Lao Tzu stated, the exercise of reason and the use of concepts allegedly merely traps thought to the otherwise transcendable rationalistic methods of philosophy, namely, conceptual analysis and the testing of the logicity of language. But when the use of reason and analysis are surpassed, the limits established theretofore by reason and analysis are surmounted. Then, truth is revealed in its deepest and far more tenuous form, that is, in its integrative, holistic not analytic fashion. Hence, Lao Tzu stated, the mysticism is the potent form of knowledge, where the mind emphasizes on consolidation instead of division and the separation of reality into parts. This is the powerful ability, he stated, of the human nature ignored by the mainstream trends of thought of the Western philosophy but acknowledged, taught and highly trusted by the mysticism.³

In our view, granted that what is stated above is true about mysticism, mysticism brings out powerfully a suppressed side of the human nature, suppressed in the major trends of thought which enthrall the Western philosophy, such that when confronted by the major philosophical problems in

nature, the Western rationality-based philosophical traditions demand dominancy, though they do not necessarily succeed as a way of addressing the philosophical problems completely. For instance, the mysticism suggests that the individual is the beholder of knowledge; but instead of depending on rationality, the individual should be calm, clear the mind of all vexations of the spirit, and the mind of all concepts, logic and discourses completely. Accordingly, the inner perceptual matrix, and the outer powers of nature will take control and guide the individual.

According to the consensus of the mysticisms, two dominant attitudes arise: adapt to the world, or mentally take a flight from it, as an individual. The mysticism seems to be the school of thought which suggests that the proper use of concepts and logic is not equivalent to, and not even necessary for, knowledge and thinking (as the Western traditions of thought hold). Thus, in an attempt to find a place and the role of mankind, the mysticism held that humans can only know nature properly when they are intuitive. Any grand feelings about the ability to reason and to apply concepts logically, which humans have, are useful instruments for knowledge, but do not, allegedly, enable humans to know absolutely. Thus, a human being must curtail his passions and pathos, including reason.

Here below is how mysticism is conveniently espoused from the representative practices of the mysticism, namely, the practices and schools of mysticism--the *Vedas*, *Upanishad*, *Taoism*, *yin* and *yang*, *yoga* and *Zen*. But, we need to note, in advance, however, that although the mysticism is widely defended in them, it has to contend with enormous issues of concern such as the following reflect: Where, as the aforementioned Lyotard asks--after the consensus does the legitimacy of the mysticism reside?--in view, in our opinion, of the following problems that may be raised from

a "realistic" position: Mysticism uses and embodies reasoning to propound itself as a true philosophy, but it is ironical that it placates its followers to shun reasoning in the search for absolute knowledge. Further, while mysticism may be an element of human nature, there is no adequate evidence to suggest that it is either the ultimate goal, or the ultimate ability, of the human nature, nor even exclusively Asian. It appears that it is Asian only to the extent that the Eastern cultures and ways of life have interpreted and woven the mysticism in terms unique to the Asian cultures. Furthermore, the mysticism speaks as if reason and mysticism are necessarily exclusive ways of knowing; yet, it is the case that what the mysticism takes to be true rather by faith, reason can clarify; and vice versa that what reason proves to be true, the mysticism can confirm by its intuitions. In any case, mysticism does not and cannot assert reasons for its claims except by an appeal to reasoning. In view of these concerns, it would appear that the mysticism would express only a fragment of human nature; part of that fragment being the mystical element in the nature of humans.

5.1.1 The doctrine or the soul

Central in the mysticism is a view of the soul. According to the mysticism, humans are essentially souls. The souls are viewed as substances in transition; and the universe in which the souls are seen to belong is ruled by laws operating automatically in it. Thus, the souls are alleged as subject to those laws. Moreover, the soul has several capacities, which define it; but there are alleged ideal essences of the soul--for instance, intuition, which are its principles and principal capacities. It appears that according to the mysticism, a soul mirrors reality as it is in itself. This doctrine of the soul is important to understand the nature of the human nature.

1.2 The Vedas and Upanishad

Let us delve deeper into the perceived nature of the human soul through the *Vedas* and the *Upanishad*. Indeed, as a view of human nature, the mysticism seems to contend that mankind possesses an inherent principle of the soul, which constitutes the soul's metaphysical essence and an intrinsic faculty. The *Vedas* explains this as follows:

The *Vedas*, dated 2500-2000 B.C.E., are presumably the oldest in record in Hindu philosophy (much older than Homer). Though they embody thoughts and practices that seem to espouse nature worship, in which natural powers like fire (*agni*) and wind (*vayu*) which influence human and cosmic life are personified as gods, their underlying philosophy seems to be no different substantively--from what the ancient Greek philosophers like Thales, Anaximander and Anaximenes (and more recently Spinoza), for example, stated: that this world operates according to its own underlying order or natural laws. They are, indeed, embodiments of philosophy in search of the first principles of nature. Among the Asian ancients, the world and the soul are what the body is to the soul--inseparably associated. Such a belief is stored in the myths and the rites from which mankind still partake. The rites, for instance, reflect a basic faith that mankind can reach out to the underlying order. However, the underlying order is seen as a mystery to be discovered. Thus, for instance, the orders were believed to have first been revealed by gods to super-conscious seers. In the *Vedas*, the gods are held to be powerful as to be the custodians of the metaphysical, physical and moral order. Hence, the *Vedas* teach, humans are supposed to live their lives in such a way as to go along with the laws of nature, which in the "Vedic" language is to please the gods. Mankind, then, are urged through rituals, to seek the favour of the gods.⁴

On the other hand, the *Upanishad*--dated 700-600 B.C.E., literally means "secret teachings." They are said to be the concluding parts of the *Vedas*. The *Upanishad* are, however, most exalted practices for their transcendentalism and lofty teachings. In their account, emphasis is placed on the knowledge of the ultimate truth, which is similarly perceived as the underlying source of all things, and the final means to the liberation of every mankind. But precisely because *Upanishad* teaching is within the context of mysticism, it is alleged that it requires a seer to fathom the ultimate. Knowing the ultimate means knowing that reality is a unity, which is ceaselessly in motion, and that it operates according to its own laws. The quest for the discovery of the ultimate, thus, according to the *Upanishad*, is fathomed as a transcendental quest and beyond the reach of the senses and the ordinary intellect.

5.1.3 Taoism; of reason and intuition

Let us further exemplify how the mysticism illustrates the inherent metaphysical nature of mankind through *Taoism*. And what is this inherent nature? It is the inherent openness and invitation to flow with the bare codes of reality as a constitutive quality of every human being's existence. However, one needs to note that *Taoism* is a concept that blends the practices and the philosophical idiosyncrasies of, mainly, three major *Weltanschauungen* of the East, namely, Buddhism, Hinduism and Confucianism. It blends, also, the views of Buddhist, Hindu and Confucian seers like Confucius (551-479 B.C.E.), Hsu Tzu (300-250 B.C.E.), Fu Tzu (480-390 B.C.E.) and Lao Tzu.

Historians in Hindu philosophy, like Capra, give an incisive picture of the principal aspects of the *Tao* as follows: For *Taoism*, "flowing" with nature is an essential attribute of mankind, which enables mankind to transcend common experiences and peer into reality as it is. This analysis of

Taoism exposes the possibility of the multidimensionality of the human nature--ignored by the Western thoughts we have discussed. For instance, a fundamental idea of *Taoism* is the *Tao*. *Tao* is said to be being which, purportedly, underlies everything in the universe. *Tao* is an indeterminate, infinite and unchangeable reality which is unlimited in space and time. *Tao* (but, indeed, the Greek idea *apeiron*, since *Tao* is the older idea), seems to have some similarities with the types of questions and answers we are acquainted with from Western philosophy--questions of a metaphysical nature--like "What is the ultimate reality"? To this question Anaximander held, for example, that of all that exists in the universe, only the whole is ultimate and eternal. He called this whole, *apeiron*, which he pictured as a container--engulfing all cosmic events, objects and transformations. There is, indeed, between Anaximander's alleged *apeiron* and the alleged *Tao* a family resemblance. For, both the *Tao* and the *apeiron* are conceived as the point of origin and return of all being. Both are conceived as "non-being" in the sense that they are not concrete reality. But this is what precisely Anaximander implied by *apeiron*.⁵ However, while in the *Taoism* absolute reality is only to be grasped by the steady mind that has perforce transcended the rational paths, in the Western philosophy, it is the product of rigorous exploration of philosophical and scientific concepts of knowledge such as to attain the far more elastic level of the *Tao*.

However, according to *Taoism*, when the mind has reached the level of *Tao*, it gains power, it is believed, to contemplate the universe as it is in itself. Those who discover the "first principles" (or *Tao*) become a special breed of people (*Brahmans*). For example, such people know the correct social practices based on the view that the universe operates or behaves according to its own underlying order. The mystery of that order, *Tao*, is, on the one hand, the ultimate indefinable, infinite, unchangeable metaphysical order underlying all reality that can, allegedly, only be known

by few. In itself it is an inherently dynamic reality, the essence of the universe. According to *Taoism*, the same *Tao* in the physical reality underpins the vitality of humans and human society as the everlasting, all-pervasive power that enables one to know the right way of life and conduct--in a moral sense, for, *Tao* is the ultimate horizon of aspiration, and the pinnacle of all wisdom. Thus, accordingly, a *Taoist*--Van Tzu--stated, "... he who conforms to the course of *Tao*, following the natural processes of heaven and the earth, finds it easy to manage the whole world." In addition, while emphasizing the foregoing theme, a "Taoist"--Huai Nan Tzu-- stated, "... those who follow the natural order flow in the current of *Tao*."⁶

It is important to note the specific socio-cultural and historical backgrounds that instigated this mystical concept of the *Tao*. Our investigation, from among many other sources, including the brilliant work of Capra, *The Tao of Physics*, reveals that *Taoism* combines two most important elements in its expression. One, it is first and foremost a strict code of moral convention and social etiquette underpinned by the principle of the pursuit of happiness, according to which absolute happiness is achieved when one follows the absolute order of the universe (= *Tao*), acting spontaneously and trusting one's intuitions. Two, it is rooted in ancient philosophical views of a vision about the absolute nature of reality. As such, it is principally the metaphysical view that in order for one to understand nature completely, one must be a seer of sorts, i.e., without logic and the use of concepts observe nature and discover its way (or *Tao*). The *Tao* is not, according to this view, discoverable by science nor philosophy, because these are purportedly mere cognitive prototypes incapable of understanding the mystery of the universe. Thus, strict "Taoists" in answering back to this worldview quietly and contemplatively must observe the world.⁷

Clearly, then, we see that *Taoism* expresses an alleged ultimate way of life that placates individuals to shun rigorous reasoning in a concept of human nature in the light of which when it comes to the pursuit of absolute knowledge, being truly human in such matters, it is claimed, entails transcending reasoning such that an individual must confront the world in absolute transcendence.

If however, at first it would appear that mystics do not and cannot rigorously employ reason, it is not for the reason that the Buddhist, Hindu or Confucian followers cannot do that in their nature as humans, but that given the above mysticism, they ought to shun it for the more eidetic--that, in any case, controls them from underneath.

3.1.4 Yin and yang; a parallel of Aristotle's virtue notion

Yin and yang is one of the principal concepts in the Eastern world. It explains what the principal inherent faculty of mankind is, namely a dialectical intercourse with being. Let us begin from the view that *yin* and *yang* is the position that reality is cyclical in nature, and is characterized by ceaseless motions and change. As Lao Tzu, the aforementioned Eastern *Taoist* sage explains the essence of *yin* and *yang*, "... returning is the motion of *Tao*; going far means returning." This means that a central idea of *yin* and *yang* is that all developments in nature, both in the cosmic dominion and the human realm, show cyclical patterns of change. This change happens through polar opposites such as of expansion and contraction, or growth and decay, "... just as the person who wants to go further west will end up in the east, or further north will end in the south."⁸ Our observation reveals that the doctrine of *yin* and *yang* is advanced as an anticipation of a metaphysical or first principle governing all reality and its transformations. But precisely whether what it advocates--that is, whether reality's progress is cyclical, cumulative or unilinear, is

variable. In essence, though, *yin* and *yang* show a "dialectic" present, it is alleged, in all being. And by extension, in essence, all human beings, being part of being, are dialogical and dialectical beings--perpetually engaged in a dialectical dialogue with nature. This tension--the dialectical dialogue--constitutes mankind's primary life, and defines mankind's relation with and openness to reality as a whole. According to the doctrine of *yin* and *yang*, this dialectic constitutes mankind's metaphysical identity and primary mode of being, not just a cultural or religious one, but mankind's primary being.

Yin and *yang*, then, is an exposition of the specific way of being in, and confronting the world, traceable to those specific philosophies in the history of human thought attributable to such sages as Lao Tzu, themselves drawing from the ancient religions of the East. Indeed, beliefs in *yin* and *yang* are apparent in the practices and many common religious idiosyncrasies. For example in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, there is a Hindu religion's version of *yin* and *yang*, widely known as "reincarnation." Here, it is taught that mankind has no pre-eminence over his fate which it follows. That is, it is the view that in nature, analogically as in mankind, there exists the eternal cycle of birth and death. In mankind, the concept of reincarnation thus introduces a different conception of life and death, wherein life and death are not arranged linearly, in the sense that death is the end of life as we know it. On the contrary, the Hindu concept of life and death as captured in reincarnation is cyclical, though based on the two opposites--birth and death. It has, further, a moral implication in the life of mankind, trajecting to a basic moral principle. Here, the analogy of the worm that eats every thing in its path serves to bring out the moral and the metaphysical principles in force, i.e., those people, who have the ravenous lusts of worms, according to the belief in reincarnation, will become worms in the next life. The worm symbolizes those of us who possess insatiable greed to

consume forever without interruption--a typical glutton's trait as Nkrumah, Nyerere and Senghor may say. It is pertinent, therefore, to the Hindu of faith, to shun such destiny and to avoid being reborn as worms. Thus, according to the *yin* and *yang* believers, one must thus be wary of what they will be reborn or replicated into after death. But this depends on the life they lead on earth.⁹

That a dialectic constitutes mankind, and must define mankind's relation and openness to reality--is thus demonstrated, mysticism alleges, in the way mankind allegedly determines what is moral. Similarly, in this particular aspect, there exists, it appears, a parallel aspect between the *yin* and *yang* with Aristotle's doctrine of the "golden mean"--on how mankind allegedly does determine what is virtuous. The dialectic is appealed to in both Aristotle and the *yin* and *yang* as follows: According to Aristotle, neither of any two actions of dialectical opposites constitutes virtue. Virtue is the mean between the two extremes. So for example, if extravagance is a vice, so is its opposite--meanness; virtue is the mean between two, which is, generosity. But deciding the virtuous using the mean is the assumption of *yin* and *yang*--that the world exists essentially in tension. It holds that when something is pushed too far, a reaction takes place; or, when something is pushed to its extreme, its opposite occurs. Too much happiness, for instance, turns into unhappiness. In consequence, it is the principle of the mean that secures a balanced standard between the pendular (*yin* and *yang*) motions from one extreme to another.¹⁰

The appreciation of *yin* and *yang* as a rule of nature, and the internal law that binds mankind's and cosmic life, or as the alleged basis of mankind's genuine dialogue with nature, is expressed by *yin* and *yang* adherents as they try as much as possible not to be extreme, but be moderate in life. The result of living a life of moderation, it is claimed, is as this religious mysticism put it, *satori*, the

of supreme, unending peace and happiness--the result of being at one with others, the environment and reality. *Nirvana* and *moksha* in the Indian tradition, are the terms that closely correspond in meaning to *satori*, which mean peace in transcendence. Accordingly, every serious adherent of the mysticism anticipates the heavenly happiness, calmness and the peace of *satori*, because, with *satori*, it is alleged that even language is inadequate to express the degree of its attendant elation.

There is no doubt that some basis for that *satorian* perception lies in the perceived dialogic nature of mankind. And because *yin* and *yang* emphasizes on living harmoniously in accordance with the purported everlasting turbulent order of the universe (i.e., *yin* and *yang*), the mysticism views, not only moderation and reliance on *yin* and *yang*, but also on all that goes with it, as the most important in the development of the character of a balanced human being, and by extension society, whether East or West.¹¹

5.1.5 Yoga

Let us additionally demonstrate, through *yoga*, how mysticism produced the uniquely Eastern ideas of human nature. *Yoga* is one of the classic concepts in the Eastern religious mysticisms and *Weltanschauung*. It is an age-old concept of related practices which isolate *yoga* from the other mystical doctrinal practices of the East. An examination of the *yoga* is, indeed, an introduction into the dimension of praxis as an attitude of commitment and openness to being. This element of the philosophy of *yoga* is easily decipherable from its practices. The *yoga* practices, for example, are really the marvels of bodily command and magical powers ascribed to its advanced devotees. But perhaps the *yoga*, too, more clearly depicts the distrust of reasoning in the search for the absolutist

knowledge of reality. It points to mankind's possible essential attribute for the perceived knowledge. For one, the philosophy of *yoga* distinguishes between "theorists" and "realists," reducing the problem of possessing absolute knowledge to either that of the "theorists" or the "realists." In the *Bhagavad-Gita*, the concept *yoga* itself denotes "practice" or "action." It may appear to subscribe to the "proof of the pudding," that is, to the view that the true test of knowledge lies (not in talking about what you know, but) in doing it. This is the view which the pragmatists in Western philosophy hold regarding truth. The pragmatists are philosophers who hold that a true statement is one which, after all, works. It holds that truth is not merely establishing that one or the other statement agrees with another, for, such a state of affairs remains merely a theory, unless the statement is proved in practice. But *yoga* is deeper. *Yoga* distances itself from *samśkhyā*, "theory." And just like in some ancient Western philosophies (e.g., of Thales), *yoga* connotes the pursuit of truth by action, rather than reasoning (inductively or deductively). But *yoga* connotes the pursuit for the truth through a *sādhana*, i.e., a spiritual physical *praxis*.¹²

But that is because *yoga* seems to suggest that action followed by the *sādhana* is the absolute state of mankind. The concept *sādhana* has a deeper meaning to be fully digested in a philosophy of human nature revolving around two key concepts, the *purusa* and the *prakṛiti*. *Purusa* means "pure spirit"; *prakṛiti* means the "unchanging nature of reality," including in people. In the context of the two concepts as realities of the world, the *sādhana* means the spiritual discipline required for the restoration of the original and free capacities of the individual self given the fleeting nature of oneself in a world of ceaseless change. *Viyoga* or separation from the self is regarded as the prime cause of confusion and suffering. *Yoga*, thus, means the exaltation of the discipline of the body wherein the wonderful harmony of the *purusa* and the *prakṛiti* are supposed to disclose true reality.

then, through the two concepts gave philosophical expression to the Eastern mysticism's aversancy against rationality and logic; the issue of whether its teachings are true is beside the point. It taught that only through the disciplined bodily actions will one achieve liberation from the limitations of flesh, the delusions of sense, and the pitfalls of thought, and thus attain knowledge of the absolute reality through the absolute union with the object of knowledge. *Yoga* clearly emphasized the action-oriented nature of the human nature, but with a difference. For *yogi* (those who ardently practice *yoga*), mankind can know absolutely in spiritual praxis, not in words; *padhana* is purportedly another dimension in the multi-dimensionality that human nature is.

Accordingly, Skirbekk and Gilje affirm why *yoga*, with its attendant disciplined practices, is perceived as the means to absolute reality. They add that sections of the devout *yogi*, found mostly among the less-educated poor of the East, believe that *yoga* may culminate in the absolute knowledge of reality and a happy state of mind—the *Brahma* or *nirvana*. Thus, obeying the demands placed upon them by *yoga*, the adherents insist that *yoga* approves only of physical exertion as the means of knowledge wrung in feats of asceticism, although, they contend, it does not approve of painful asceticism except only as means for the effusion of the physical and spiritual praxis.¹³

5.1.6 Zen

When it comes to the question of the possibly extra-dimensional nature of mankind, *Zen* concurs with the above mysticisms. It is a question of the "egg and the chicken" when it comes to whether it is *Zen* practices which elicited the *Zen* mysticism, or whether it is vice-versa. But clearly, our investigation reveals that *Zen* is one of the legitimating discourses of the Asian mysticism. *Zen* is

a peculiarly Chinese and Japanese philosophical and religious concept of accomplishing the Eastern mystical aspirations of appreciating the alleged extra-dimensional nature of mankind. No particular date is given for the origin of the *Zen*. However, it is as old as Buddhism (the latter dated about 700 B.C.E.). It is the view that there is a kind of "understanding," that is absolutely achieved with a mind that is free from reasoned thoughts. Where the Greek master-logician and philosopher, Aristotle--and most of the Western philosophy--emphasized on reasoning as the peculiarly human mode of being--as the rational and self-transparent way of knowing, the *Zen* Buddhism espoused powers like intuition, insight and meditation.

It is easy to see the associated origins of *Zen* in the Indian languages. A key Indian word in *Zen* is *karma*, i.e., "action." That is the *karma* way of knowing is "action" --oriented rather than based on intellectual prowess. Hence, the *Zen* devotees found allover China, India and Japan turn their backs on the world, aiming for an ascetic flight from it, for, the absolute truth, it is claimed, is not "out there," neither in texts, nature nor rigorous reasoning; it is inside us; thus, "... you must learn to find yourself." Thus, the *Zen* mysticism is the practice of grasping the world purportedly free from thoughts called "no-mind." From a broader view, it is a state of being of mankind where mankind are allegedly capable of knowledge, where "... thought is supposed to move without leaving any trace." *Zen* Buddhism holds that a "no-mind" state cannot be attained by conceptualizing, or by physical practices, but must come through direct and immediate insight. As Indian *Zen* thought reiterates, those who want to experience *nirvana* (i.e., "liberation" or "salvation"), must learn to free themselves from every thing that binds them to this world, including philosophical doctrine. Thus, as Capra states, the *Zen* devotees--believing that human nature is capable of this, abandon all theorizing and intellectual exercises to communicate their vision of truth by "non-symbolic words

and actions." This method of communication is also called "direct pointing." Accordingly, typical is the reply of one *Zen* master known as Yaoshan, who, on being asked, "What is the way [of *Zen*]?" answered, "... a cloud in the sky and Water in a jug." Hence, convinced *Zen* followers prepare themselves to be receptive to chanced but allegedly heavenly absolutist "discoveries" by sitting in meditation in anticipation of the knowledge of the absolute, while simply observing without making any mental comment of whatever may be happening. As further expressed by the Indian version of the *Zen*, it amounts to the view that the devotees must strive to discover their own self's connection to the world, for one can learn about nature, but that is not the same as having insight of nature. Insight of nature is, allegedly, only possible through the *Zen*, as the natural, original means that nature intended or, set forth for the mankind, which is the "no-mind" means.¹⁴

5.2 A critique

It is easy to raise matters of incredulity against these mysticisms. For instance, *Yoga*, *Zen*, *yin* and *yang* and *Tao*, do not give the total picture of the nature of mankind because, the mysticisms emphasize only on the "action" of a possible seer, leaving language and reasoning outside of the pool of the means of knowledge. Even if mysticism is granted, this is certainly a partial view of human nature. For, one notes that these same mysticisms (*yoga*, *Zen*, *yin* and *yang* and *Tao*), are expressed in logic. One can powerfully say that they are the language, philosophy and logic of the deceptive Eastern seers like Lao Tzu, Van Tzu and Fu Tzu, yet the theme which reverberates in their mystical thoughts--through and through--is the belittling of language and logic. This is self-contradiction.

Furthermore, the mystical views placate individuals to prepare to be receptive to incidental flashes of insight allegedly to know absolute reality. But this way of seeing mankind is to reduce one to a mere spectator resigned to the flashes of insight and the possible forces of nature (*Tao*). But this disposition towards knowledge need not, necessarily be universal; it is not even the only option available, possible and fruitful.

Moreover, the Eastern schools of mysticism may be challenged for a number of reasons: One, there exists some congruencies, between some concepts of the mysticisms and Western philosophical thoughts, not necessarily congruencies in the processes of knowledge, but in some of the results. To give but an example, *yin* and *yang* shows parallels with Aristotle's "golden mean," as we have noted, in demanding that virtue is the mean of any two opposite extremes. This means that not only mysticism is the avenue to knowledge.

Two, some of the reknown Western philosophers--like Pythagoras, for example, who contributed to the rather contentious philosophy that humans are made up of souls which are non-material in essence--were mystics. This is to say that mysticism is not unique to the East. Pythagoras in fact was a member of a famous mystical religious order in yore known as the Pythagorean Order, though he was not Asian.

Three, it is because the mysticism is opposed to reason and conceptual thought as the avenue to absolute knowledge that it emphasizes on "no-thought" and "direct pointing." Without proper understanding of these views of reality and human nature, we can easily mistake these Indian, Chinese and Japanese religious views with robust Indian, Chinese and Japanese philosophy.

mysticism raises fundamental philosophical problems in human nature. While compared to the dominant schools of thought and doctrines in Western philosophy like rationalism and empiricism, or Marxism and existentialism, the mysticism recognizes and defends intuition, contemplation and meditation as the only plausible avenues to absolute knowledge, let alone as having some of the profound features in the human nature. However, neither contemplation nor intuitions and intuitions have produced what the profound features of reality are, and in any case, both contemplations and intuitions need to be confirmed by reason because by default, they are not capable of self criticism and confirmation. Furthermore, reason is equally a natural quality of human nature capable to some reasonable extent of testing them.

Given the above arguments, it would seem that what the Eastern mysticism seems to reveal is its emphasis that there is perhaps a mystical side of human nature--and this is commendable. This mystical side is, within and without Eastern cultures, revealed as the intuitive visualization, non-thought-out symbolisms, or instant insights prior to conscious reasoning as our analysis above has shown. However, this is not to show that the Eastern philosophies reveal all there is to know about human nature. When and as emphasis is only on but a few of the elements of human nature, it seeks to silence those other elements of human nature, e.g., reasoning, which it does not emphasize.

5.3 The collective mind? Views of human nature from African communalism

Claims of communalism as being the profound constitutive component of human nature abound from and about indigenous traditional Black Africa. The essential belief in these views is that community is the foundation of being human--the belief itself allegedly said to be rooted in traditional African society. But successful defence of the view has not been without the price of

racist stereotyping against Black Africa. For, once it was assumed that indigenous Black Africans were communalistic, a corollary of this was also assumed that these same Africans lack individuality, initiative, courage and independence of thought; in short, they are purportedly irrational and emotional. But then this claim differs from the philosophy of the major sections of Western philosophy—that all mankind are by nature rational, for example. Thus, in the following discussion, we examine to what extent the so called African sense of human nature is plausible or not, but more importantly, to what extent it tackles the conceptual problems of human nature that arise in philosophical debate.

It is important to note at the outset that in the communalistic claims about Africa, Black Africans are perceived as communalistic in a sense in which other races are not. Behind this, however, is a philosophy of legitimation which seems to be based on the claim that socially and by nature, what defines mankind is to commune with others in life. And as already stated above, the observable nexus is the view that community is the basis of being human. Thus, as Kaphagawani stated: for a long time Africans have known that to be human is not to be individualistic, but "... life is based on a firm family foundation, and all institutions have their being and take their meaning from that unity whose place in society is jealously guarded and carefully protected."¹⁵ Meziqre reiterates this claim in his explanation of the term "African communalism." He says that, "it refers-- precisely to the social structure pervasive in traditional Africa in which every member voluntarily co-operates and is proud and much obliged to help another member of his or her community."¹⁶

That is, in the above and other communalistic theories which we will discuss, mankind's outstanding characteristic is not allegedly any metaphysical mark--not some inborn rational

capacity; but how one uses any inborn capacities for the promotion and the glory of society as he/she participates in it. In line with this same notion of "African communalism," Kaunda, a socialist thinker and former Zambian president, identified three pivotal points namely: one, traditionally, Africa is an "accepting" community in that it accommodates as essential elements of the community the young, the mature and the geriatrics. Two, Africa is an "inclusive" society in that the web of the relationships which involve some degree of mutual responsibility is widely spread. Three, Africa is a "mutual" society since it is fundamentally aimed at satisfying the basic needs of all its members and, therefore, individuality is discouraged.¹⁷

Therefore, according to the above studies, we must accept this broader community-based conceptualization of metaphysics if we are to have a proper theory of human nature thought in Africa and world over. It proceeds from the perspective that humans are more than social; rather, they "commune," in the sense of exhibiting humanness in the fashion reflecting deeper and broader ties and concern to one another than merely being social. As African social organization shows as Kaunda's, Mezique's and many other studies have shown, this is a key issue in any proclamation about human nature. Such an organization, however, seems to expound a philosophy of social organization characterized by life, where, possibly, because populations are relatively small, every body nearly cares for and socially participates in the life of another and every body else, at the very least by showing kindness, courtesy, care, reciprocity, consideration and friendliness to others.

Yet, the above commentators on African communalism seem to distinguish communalism from its possible opposite principally through the concept of "communion," which is allegedly the principal attribute of any human community. "Communion" is, as Iroegbu defined it, "... the active living

out and promotion of the community."¹⁸ In the furtherance of this view, more concrete examples have been drawn from the aforementioned philosophies that espouse the communion. For instance, Kaunda argued that the African communalism rejects the view that power and influence (as Nietzsche's existentialism held), be the most important pursuits over social harmony, morality and goodwill. African communalism promotes, instead, he suggested, the principles of responsibility to society and preference of the moderation of freedom and individuality over the anarchy due to the absolute freedom when granted to individuals. Other apparently concrete presuppositions made are as follows: an individual's whole sense of self depends on the society or community (i.e., to be is to be with others); what is right or wrong ultimately depends on the violation of, or respect to, that ontology; an African's worldview is anthropocentric (i.e., mankind is the centre of the universe, the object of life, an end not a means); an African's world view is underpinned by a metaphysics of forces in constant interaction with one another.

Further more, an African sense of life springs from such alleged values of communalism like a sense of familyhood, participation, sociality, relation, cooperation, social solidarity, mutual respect, self-respect, consideracy and concern for others. All of these are practical as well as philosophical concepts alleging that an African's worldview is not materialistic (metaphysically and in practice); every one has his/her place socially, but no one should be in distress. There also developed the view that an African sense of human nature is derived from, or should be based on, the contemporary African experiences. These are just but a few of the not necessarily bad principles presupposed in African communalism. But what are the specific historical backgrounds that might have led to the development of the philosophies of communalism? Of course, the ancient African traditions. But it is not sheer coincidence either that robust philosophical claims pointing to the

communalist nature of the African are found in the studies on African ethnology, theology, politics and philosophy. For sure, why had these to be the champions of African communalism?

5.3.1 Ethnological sources of African communalism

Ethnological studies are reknown defenders of the claim that Africans are communalistic. As the term "ethnological studies" suggests, they are studies that undergird the claim that Africans are communalistic as an "ethno," i.e., a race, community or group. Enchanted by "ethno," (= the "community"), "ethno" then was often seen in these studies as the beacon that undergirds the philosophy and the practices of communalism, and all that goes with them--like identity, language and thinking attitudes. Thus, ethnological studies such as those of naming and the family led to the view that the Black African people of culture are communal in their essence as a group. For example, studies in the African genealogy, for example, seeking to ascertain differences between the Western and African cultures, tended to reveal the deepest extent to which traditionally Africans traced their sense of individuality, identity and self-worth from one's immediate family to the extended family, the clan and the tribe or one's ethnic group. Social systems as studied by famous anthropologists like Malinowski, Sahlins and Evans-Pritchard,--for example, reinforced this view. Malinowski (1884-1942), for instance, noted that among the Trobriand Island people of New Guinea, all naming and social positions were traditionally handed in communion with the mother-line, from a man to his sisters' children. This exclusively matrilineal system is purportedly of paramount importance in all the Trobriand restrictions and regulations.¹⁹

Ultimately, Malinowski distinguished the African from the Western as follows: the African is communal, while the Western is individualistic, in thought and inclination. A comment is in order

here. This is a distinction in the formal structure of society. Thus, it is not surprising, however, that little effort was put by the reputable anthropologist to show African individuality rampant among the Africans. For, according to the anthropologists, the individual in African communalism--just like the individual in Marxism is "massified," i.e., his individuality is completely submerged. However, in a recent article, following a growing number of scholars with a similar idea, Mezique tried to show the extent to which the Africans are individualistic, and in some cases even overly so like any conceivable individualistic human.²⁰ Mezique's effort was an attempt to disprove the alleged wholesome communalistic mentality projected of the African. Thus, in one of his examples, he cites the case of a local chief who, besides other commonly known qualities which the chief possesses, wishes to be chosen on the basis of his specific individualistic qualities. If his example serves to demonstrate an instance of individuality among Africans, then the argument that Africans are communal, or even inclined to communalism, is not necessarily correct, or always applicable, because Africans can be, have been, and are often as individualistic as any other human being. However, our point is how from the ethnological sources we see the conjectural beginnings of the communalist philosophy of human nature about Africa.

For close to a century, the activities of the anthropologists in showing the role of social structures in determining and defining a communing African sense of human nature remained strong. In our own time, quasi-ethnological studies such as by Mbiti, Oduyoye and Shutte, have in particular exercised influence about how we think about the African sense of human nature. The pseudo-ethnologists, as their ethnological counterparts, responded to the conceptual gaps that exist about what is human nature, as to expound on the communalistic dimension of the individual and of the expected society. They assert, for example, that African systems of naming reflect a serious sense of

communion, not only with the living, but also with the dead, who though departed, are still regarded as a revered part of the community. Mbiti in particular, asserted this view through his philosophy of the *zamani*. Adagme affirms a similar communal position regarding the African when he asserted that the family, clan and the tribe are the kingpin of his Ga society. Shutte suggested that the concept *ubuntu*, common among many Africans is the foundation of the social organization of the African communal way of life.²¹

Shutte, for example, chose to expound on the concept of *ubuntu*, on behalf of his South Africa people--as a panacea to a people shattered by apartheid resulting in the exploitation against the rest of the masses of people by the powerful. *Ubuntu*, as he sees it is the concept which captures the communal insight--*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, "persons are persons through other persons." This expression, he states, reiterates the position that an indigenous traditional Black African community in Southern Africa, can be as integrated as a living organism can be. As every individual is part and parcel of the community, every individual is dependent on others and the community to survive and flourish.²² Thus, in one remarkable statement he explains of the sense of African communalism as follows:

Each individual is related to community, not as part to the whole but as a person is related to himself or herself. Each individual member of the community sees the community as themselves, as one with them in character and identity. Each individual sees every other individual member as another self. Thus, there is no room for a separation between the individual and community, and all the relationships and transactions between individual members and the community as a whole remain fully personal.²³

Shutte suggests that the traditional African sense of *ubuntu* can, and should be appealed to as the essence of communion. At this point then, he gives the historical basis, though, of his expression of the communalistic practices of the traditional indigenous Africa. He shouts regrets lamenting the breakdown of African communalism. He contends that this is the source of what he calls the "moral

"vacuum" afflicting South Africa today, because in his view, the contemporary South African society is torn between Western individualism and indigenous traditional African communalism.

5.3.2 The theological origins of human nature thought in Africa

A contemporary reader's position regarding an African sense of human nature is most probably influenced by the explorations of theologians and their positions on the African. Tempels is a good example of the theological sources over claims that indigenous traditional Africans are communal. But he is also important for appreciating the common assumption in an African theoretical perspective that an African sense of communing can not be properly understood, unless it develops against the background of the African community notion. Tempels can be used here as a representative of the theologians. In particular, he was remarkable for supporting the view that in Africa, the community envelops all else, including rationality, freedom and individuality; Africans are supposed to play their role in society for the promotion of society; and that, indeed, Africans are, he alleged, communal as a matter of a metaphysical principle allegedly embedded in the African people's worldview.²⁴

Indeed, Tempels expressed and debated the African communion but in a rather unique way. Historical sources reveal that Tempels (1906-1977) was a Belgian missionary working among the Baluba of Congo in the 1930s through to the 1960s. It is clear that Tempels' discourse for the legitimization of the African sense of human nature was motivated by, among other possible causes, religious concerns. According to his memoirs, while working in the Congo among the Baluba, he observed the difficulty of keeping African converts to Christianity firmly on the path of the faith. He observed that the African converts, whom he called the *evolues*, would backslide from the faith,

or practice a syncretism irrespective of knowing the faith. Within this framework, he obliged himself as a missionary to understand why they backslided in order to win them back to Christ. Tracing their unfaithfulness to its taproot, he claimed to have established that Africans have their own firm *Weltanschauungen* which they appealed to, prioritized and prized as alternative metaphysical bases and frameworks for understanding reality within the relative context of African and Western thought systems. The African *Weltanschauungen*, he noted, consist of a system of inherited and unchanging beliefs and practices, in his opinion, which revolve around a metaphysical principle he termed the "vital force." Around this force, he pointed out, revolve *Weltanschauungen* which, provided, in many cases, the dramatic alternative worldviews to the coveted Christian beliefs and practices. In a way, Tempels' work was among the very first to approach and formulate a theory of the African and his/her sense of human nature within the context of a metaphysics of community.²⁵

It is important to note that Tempels—besides being a missionary, and perhaps keen observer, was a speculative metaphysician as well, having fairly been acquainted with Western philosophy. Thus interpreting reality in terms of philosophical traditions, he speculated that it is the metaphysical principle of "vital force" that played a central role in determining the Baluba worldview. By this, he meant that the Baluba among whom he worked, believed that in the universe there is an all-pervasive power. Every individual and reality though a power in themselves, is subject to that power. This power (or force) determined the nature of the African system of relationships, efficaciously determining life and the social fabric of all society, including one's communion. But what did this mean? It meant that the belief in the presence of that power, he supposed, constituted the critical part of indigenous traditional Black African mode of being. It kept African traditions

rather through their common communalistic social structures it underpins. It led to his mundane view that an African world view is ideally static, one of eternal unchanging harmony; every event being determined and kept in check by the power behind. It led to his rather unfortunate view that communalism dominated the entire consciousness of the African

Jahn (1918-1973), a German philosopher of language, corroborated Tempels, who also at the metaphysical level of the analysis of some African languages, concluded that the African *Weltanschauungen* are underpinned by the linguistic form *ntu*. In Jahn's metaphysical speculation, *ntu* has a similar status as "vital force". For, *ntu*, he suggested, is the inmost principle in the African languages for expressing, ontologically, the social structures (*ubuntu*) and the life of a *muntu* (=an African people). This suggested to him that communalism is infused with the spirit of *ntu* as the "vital force" of being a *muntu*.²⁶

Thus, what Jahn and Tempels commonly claimed is that Africans are not only communalistic, but that the manifest communalism among traditional indigenous Black Africans was an expression of deep-rooted philosophical features at the level of metaphysics. So significant (or is it insignificant?) were the contributions of the above philosophers that their works were labelled "ethnophilosophy" by other philosophers, among whom is a Kenyan philosopher, Odera-Oruka (1944-1995), meaning that beyond showing that African are communalistic, the two, Tempels and Jahn, tried to show that Africans are helplessly communalistic—in terms of their roles in society, and for their concern for the promotion of society—for an alleged reason of metaphysics.²⁷

Yet, the controversy that the two works generated in the philosophical circles--based on the claim that Africans espouse a communion--shows the deep-seated doubts about the abilities of these works in their articulation of the precise nature of the African life, let alone its basis and the nature of human nature in particular. Critics have argued that although both Tempels' and Jahn's approaches are important attempts at speculative metaphysics, for, they focused on understanding the basic contents of the African communion, we may say that their conclusions were lacking in one important way; namely, they failed to articulate what may truly be the ontology of the people's metaphysics of their world, and hence failed to capture, the ontological basis of their life.

Successive critics articulated this failure in various ways. Mbiti is one of the critics, for example. Yet, the Mbitian critics seemed to accept Tempels spirit, though using observable features, pointing to the African communalism without necessarily articulating a metaphysics. And recall the views of Rousseau ["general will"] and Hegel and Marx ["state"]--that communion in society is important, and it is to be espoused within the context of taking into consideration the good of society. This point--that the African is communal, reverberates in Mbiti, Mugambi, Mulago, Nyerere, Nkrumah and Senghor. Mbiti, a clergy of Kenya, for instance contended in his *African Religions and Philosophy*, that the guiding light of the African sense of communality is the "past." He seemed to suggest that the traditional sense of African communalism is institutionalized on the value Africans traditionally attach to a common history. For all Africans, he stated, the past is the bond that ties all into one community--past, present and future--because every African essentially looks to the past as the unifying identity of the community and individuality, and for defining every aspect of one's social life.²⁸

Similarly, while Mugambi dismissed Tempels' thesis on the basis of "vital force," he embraced a sense of it nonetheless, though suggesting it as being "racist," for, in his view, communalism exists in Africa as it does throughout the world, and if "vital force" be its basis, then it should imply that the vital forces exist among all the people of the world. Mugambi noted how Tempels gave no indication, however, to the effect that "vital force" exists elsewhere in the world other than in Africa. This, Mugambi's maiden point in African philosophy, was that there is no evidence to suggest that the "vital force" exists neither in Africa nor elsewhere in the world. In consequence, he sought to replace the metaphysical concept of "vital force" with the institutional concept of "relation." Thus he contended that the pedestal upon which African communalism is based is not the abstract "alien" imposition of the principle of "vital force"--but "relation." Mugambi's comparison between the West and Africa leads to one institutional point: that the African prioritization of "maintaining relations" even in the face of adversity, is the source of the bond in an African sense of communalism. The African, according to Mugambi, thus shuns individualism because, then, when individuals become the centre of the universe, the communal spirit is curtailed. He contends that individualism was propelled into Africa by the Western worldviews, but it is alien to Africa.²⁹

The struggle to assert that Africans are communal was also undertaken by another native African clergy, a Congolese missionary and philosopher, Mulago. Mulago saw this element of communalism as the crucial one in African social organization. Unlike Tempels and some of the commentators, indeed, like Mbiti, who suggested that communalism should be transcended, Mulago's views deeply suggested of what coveted nature communalism is to the African. In his philosophy, Africans are commendably communal by tradition. Thus, he unreservedly demanded

social roles and social organization that reflects and resonates with the suggested tradition. But a possible push factor in Mulago's philosophy of human nature was theology, as it appears, and his target was primarily present day Christianity. Certainly, his emphasis of the element of communalism may be said to have immediate connection with the launch of ecumenism by Vatican II. Since following the launch of the African ecumenism, some African theologians demanded that the mission churches be recognized as grown and matured enough to integrate the traditions of African peoples into the expressive practices of the Church, especially in liturgy. Mulago was one of the theologians who had placed such a demand. But he also sought to express the theoretical underpinnings of this demand and its possible implementation, and suggestively by this means tried to push communalism beyond the racial divide into the rather universal Christian fraternity.³⁰

Situating his philosophy within ecumenism, therefore, in his analysis he observed how the strong sense of the African sociality can be used to serve as a rock-solid foundation for the very ideas of communion, unity and participation around which Christ's church is built--as one community and family writ large. Mulago seemed to imply in his thesis that complete communion can only be deciphered through the African community. Accordingly, commenting on Mulago's communalistic sense of the African, Masolo, a Kenyan philosopher, stated that when Mulago says that Africans are communal, he seems to imply that Africans are in communion in their approach to life. Mulago's philosophy of communalism can, however, in our view, be understood also in another light *via negativa*: Apart from his clerical intentions, the suggestive suspicion and tone that perhaps there is a factor for ignoring African communalism from the church is hard to dismiss in Mulago's work. Without doubt, in his thinking there is no better basis of communion than the African one, where each one felt reciprocally that each has material and moral rights and responsibility on others

in solidum. Thus, Mulago states that an African sense of communalism revolving as it does, in his opinion, around the key concepts of relation and participation, is a strong basis for an essentially African communalism, and by extension is the *in solidum* basis of the whole world. He does not see why this sense of communion should not be incorporated into the Church. In particular, the principle of individual concern for others, called in his native Congolese *ubumwe*--explains, he thinks, Congolese, and by extension can be used to underpin, African and world solidarity. *Ubumwe*, he states, has an underlying belief in the vital communion between members of a family, clan and the tribe or race, as each member of *ubumwe* strives toward being in communion with the whole. Even citing his Bakongo oral traditions, he says, the Congolese emphasize that God, the origin of life, communicated the *ubumwe* to the first ancestors, and demanded that it is every one's duty to perpetuate it to mankind. Allegedly, in the present and after life, one's success in life lies in the complete submission to the will of God who prescribed *ubumwe* for the love of mankind.

While it seems that his philosophy for legitimating African communalism found it necessary to emphasize communion, however, one, nonetheless, still wonders whether the day Mulago's sense of communion is given way, we would progressively see the Christian fraternity more happy in such a system where progressively and reciprocally, every individual is allowed to invade the consciences and liberties of others—by effectively participating in their lives. It is unclear, still, whether Mulago's views ever represent the African sense of human nature, nor whether his views were implemented for the Church's profit. But certainly, some social and political African thinkers advanced political and social programs for African states using similar communalistic conceptions.

3.3 The critics in African socialism and politics

There are political movements in Africa that have tried to give African communalism a robust and prescriptive status, drawing, as they do from traditional African cultures with a view to define the African communalistic sense of human nature for today. Being compellingly political, the proposals made were clearly not entirely an affirmation of an empirical truth, but to some extent, were normative assertions. They were a form of rebellion and a form of discourse addressed to local cultures, modern Africa and the world. They came to the fore against a background of national politics and Western influence, which seemed to throttle and make indigenous cultural practices redundant. But they were still philosophies that pointed to the metaphysics of communion as suggested by Tempels, for example. They seemed to insist that even in politics, Africans should play their roles as to keep, promote and sustain what is or was good in the communal society.

In this regard, Césaire's work seems to be one philosophical applause for the communalism. We say it was applause on behalf of communalism because Césaire, a Martinique poet and philosopher, thought that communalism as a concept can, and should be used to further the developmental aims of Africa--as Nkrumah and others in his opinion attempted to do. Communalism, Césaire noted, should not just serve the purpose of only diverting attention from the fundamental political problems which require urgent address, as the religious-context Tempels' communalism, in Césaire's view-point, did. But this is because Césaire possessed the conception that the critical role of a concept of communalism is one which must serve a positive role in creating the appropriate political programs suitable for a developing Africa.³¹ For this envisioned role though, we must invoke the works of other philosophers.

Claims that the values of communalism oversee the freedoms, interests and rights of the individual in traditional Africa pervade the works of Nkrumah, Nyerere and Senghor, for example. Theirs were partly attempts to define who human beings are, and then show what they should be in a new political and social dispensation, allegedly based on traditional Black African cultural assumptions with the intention of surpassing the political assumptions of the colonizers and their agents. Thus, Nkrumah (1909-1972), a Ghanaian president and think-tank, devised a major political programme for Africa, for example, based on communalism. He was a prolific writer, the author of many works, but three of his works, namely, *Consciencism*, *Neocolonialism* and *Africa Must Unite*, can be used to capture his main philosophical points as far as his envisioned programme was concerned.³²

Upon reading Nkrumah's works, one gets the impression that the aim of his writings was to champion African communalism by expounding on a metaphysics of an African worldview. In his view, this was for the purpose of liberating Africa from the yokes of neocolonialism.³³

Consciencism is clearly a work on how the modern African can benefit from communalism. *Consciencism* draws from African communalism, but as well as on Marxist principles--like the ownership of the means of production, and notions like "class" and "class-struggles," as the basis for recasting a concept of communal human beings for today's Africa. So in his *Consciencism*, Nkrumah insists that the traditional African society was egalitarian in that it was a society in which land and the means of production belonged to the community for the welfare of the community. It is clear that starting from this perspective, he intended to show how it defines a sense of human nature. He calls the ideology underlying the African societies, *consciencism*. He states that *consciencism* is based on a metaphysics which sees a unity in all matter, which is the basis of

communalism, since in communalism, people are all connected just like matter is. By extension of that metaphysics, if the community develops, so does the individual.

From our caricature of his enormous philosophy, one gets the impression that he depicts traditional African society as a pristinely caring society; not that there was no misery and exploitation, but that no one, he observed, would be allowed material distress. There were poor people, but they were respected and treated well; every one was expected to work for the good of the community. Holding the view that this is how Africa was and should have remained, that is a communal society, he laments how things have changed. He accepts that Africa changed a lot after colonialism. To this extent then African communalism's influence on his concept of politics becomes clearer. He turns to communalism for direction in the post-colonial period, noting that the contemporary African states are noxiously individualistic. His concept of politics underpins his dislike for capitalism. He loathes capitalist and neo-capitalist states that African states have become, since, as he states, these are alien political forms in Africa. They divided society into classes where some classes always exploit others in class-struggles. But what precisely is Nkrumah's notion of politics? He seems to imply that it should be based on some of the dictates of an African culture: For instance, Africans are conscientious in the statuses they occupy, and thus, play their roles well-informed by the principles for the betterment of society as a whole, not just for one single individual.

It is clear though, that Nkrumah did not advocate for a return to African communalism as such, since he acknowledged the fact that African societies have changed. Here was one of the unfortunate by-products of Nkrumaism: He advocated a one party government arguing that

multi-partism disunites, and is a ruse for perpetuating and covering up exploitation in society. He advocated the embracement of socialism as the new allegedly creatively thought-out form of social and political solidarity. His transition from communalism to socialism was to be effected from Marxist principles. This then ties very well with his philosophy that in an African mode of existence, there is an absolute quest for harmony. Social disharmony and class-struggles would cease when the masses have taken over the mantle of political space.

Nkrumah's murky notion of political communalism also underpins his Neo-colonialism, in which he revisited the issue that while traditional African societies were governed by the communal ideology rooted in communion, contemporary Africa is governed by the ideology of classes, of self-love and the accumulation of property in private hands. Like Marx about Europe, Nkrumah insisted and lamented on the view that the contemporary African societies are no longer what they are meant to be. He notes, however, that these class-dynamics brought totally fabricated angst.

While his notion of politics suggested that a proper human being should be social, caring and egalitarian, this, for example, exposed his sense of pillage which according to him drains African human and natural resources through the practice of neo-colonialism. He argued that neo-colonialism is more subtle than colonialism, but a bitter replacement for direct colonialism. Hence, he insisted that liberation from the grip of this noxious evil requires the socialist political re-arrangement through a socialist revolution.

But it is in *Africa Must Unite* where he extends to continental politics his socialist objectives therein in pursuant of his underpinning philosophy in politics. He calls for a continental African

government, in which regard, he states, the creation of the United States of Africa was the most urgent necessity in the African struggle. The pan-African community was to be based on a liberated Africa, to be liberated from his perceived neocolonialism through his philosophy and struggle which later came to be known variously as "Nkrumaism" and "scientific socialism." This was because his idea of socialism insisted that a new sense of African politics is one which must be creatively (i.e., philosophically) conceived. This, he observed, would defeat a major instrument of neocolonialism which, in his view, is the segmentation and balkanization of the African society.

We see then in our caricature of Nkrumah's philosophy for the legitimation of his sense of politics, his attempt to inform on the philosophical realities within which, in his view, the execution of his sense of politics is allegedly valid. Nkrumah's views connect to those of Senghor and Nyerere. Senghor and Nyerere were opposed to Western capitalism, for its alleged "inhumanism." Both (Senghor and Nyerere) made history in African politics by giving up political power voluntarily. Both condemned the vile rationalism of the West promoting individualism, noting it as the enemy for communalism, and claiming that it lacked humanness and the respect for humanity, and is unAfrican.³⁴

In Senghor and Nyerere, we see further the political foundations of communalism. Senghor and Nyerere were politicians, statesmen and intellectuals of their own calibre in Senegal and Tanzania respectively, who rose to political power after independence. Committed to new and radically different beginnings for their respective countries, they intended to create for their newly independent states political systems that would be radically different from the political systems of their colonizers. Thus, they articulated political programmes that would combine social values from

Africa's living indigenous traditions, with cultures from the world at large with an anti-capitalist ideology. They thought that their programs would not only provide the best political structures suitable for their states, but for all of Africa as a whole as they would supposedly reflect the culture, concepts and the aspirations of African peoples.³⁵

Central in Nyerere's politics of communalism was his philosophical notion of *ujamaa*. Nyerere's politics of *ujamaa* was partly bent on understanding his perceived African way of life and his perceived nature and communal role of mankind in such society. It began, for example, from what in his thought-provoking view refers to the sociality spirit rooted in traditional African culture about what is valuable in human life, and the view of humanity on which it is purportedly based. According to Nyerere (1922-82), the African way of looking at humans is not materialistic. A human being is not just an object that can be handled like a machine and controlled like technology. Such an attitude, he supposed, is dehumanizing--lacking the humane element, he says, pervasive in an African philosophy of life. That humane element demands that an individual be not viewed simplistically in terms of material possessions, or as a material possession. Grieving over the loss of this humane element, he says, an individual is not pure spirit either encased in a body. He refutes the Cartesian view that a human being is essentially a "ghost in the machine" Rather, Nyerere's humane conception sees both spirit and bodies as inseparable aspects, forming a more fundamental individuality that derives its significance, value and right to exist and lets others exist from placing an ominous value on the community and the environment. For Nyerere, the individual in Africa is like a cog in the great cycle of being, having a spiritual and a material side, an individual and communal side as well. In traditional indigenous Africa, he states, the individual, religion, the environment and the society have egalitarian mutual obligations on each other.

Here were some of the political implications: Accordingly, he claimed, to the African of culture, no individual will prosper at the expense of another or the society; class-culture was rejected. It led to his rather questionable view that the individual in Africa is rich or poor to the extent that the society is rich or poor and vice versa. That is, since in traditional African society, he noted, individuals took care of community and the community took care of the individuals, and since this demanded hard work, Nyerere was opposed to parasitism, where masses worked and a few prospered. He contrasted an African society with the Western which aimed at creating a happy society based on the exploitation of some people by others. This understanding of the idealized African society was imagined back even for defining the contemporary political leadership. For example, he contended that a leader's value should depend, not on an individual's personal achievements and aggrandisements, but on what a useful centre of shared life the leader is or becomes. This aspect of the nature of every leader reflects the fundamental nature of humans, Nyerere noted, and it is rooted, he suggests, in African culture, ecology and the concept of society, and it is expressed in African plays, sayings of wisdom and common practice, although it is expressed differently in different cultures and social contexts--depending on social and cultural configurations of the indigenous traditions.³⁶

On the other hand, Senghor (1906-2001), a well-known proponent of African communalism, similarly held thought-provoking views similar in tandem to those of Nyerere. But in his opinion, Islamic values play a central role. This was because in Senghor's version of the political communalism--called *negritude*--he expressed what he called his wish to restore the freedom and the dignity of African peoples once faced by the debilitating experience of slavery and imperialism. He often referred to his version of the political communalism as "the humanism of the twentieth

century," meaning that this was something new in a sense, that is, as a creative or recreated social and political thought. The issue at the tail-end of his theory was to propose African communalism, which would govern a view of mankind essentially based on two platforms and philosophical notions. These were: the adoption of the "humane" African values based on social virtue and cooperation among members on the one hand, and the adoption of Islamic virtues on the other—especially those that call for mutual self-respect among people and the practice of alms-giving. He observed that while the secular humane values will address the issue of economic alienation of the Black African in unison with the rest of the world's proletariat economically and socially estranged from humanity, the latter, the Islamic values of care and concern for others, would help loosen the economic distress against the Black as well as the Coloured peoples in the Diaspora.³⁷

He regards his *negritude* as a philosophy, i.e., not only as a political ideology, but essentially a culture, i.e., a group of values of the Black world and a way of living them, emanating from both the traditional African and the Islamic values. However, as a political ideology, he delighted that *negritude* is good politics because, purportedly, it puts humans at the centre of politics as subjects, i.e., as an end not a means. For him, the end of every African political system is the people as its beneficiaries. For that end, he did not embrace Marxism because, Marxism, as he stated, falls short because it stresses economic activity rather than the centrality of people and their humanness. Marxism dissolves individuality, he alleged. Marxism placed emphasis on the priority of economic forces and classes to the detriment of the individual people and humanness. Furthermore, he stated that treating people with dignity is a command of an African mode of existence, not, as Kant stated, merely a command of reason. Nor did Senghor subscribe to the crude capitalism and the individualism born of Western thought, which, as he stated, "stresses freedom and individuality

instead of community." He valued the African sense of community declaring that a clear valuable distinction exists between the core values underpinning the African, from what he called the "collectivist" European society. Thus, he stated that though even today, on a superficial level, an African displays a spirit of individualism, the African--as long as he/she is of culture--would gasp at the gap which separates the Western individualism.

Further more, Senghor expressed this difference in political orientation as rooted in the assumptions about human society rooted in the philosophy and the social organization of the African society, and explains the metaphysics of that social organization as follows: that at its core is placed the unflinching and fundamental values of social solidarity, concern, community and good for all. He seemed to imply that the nature of Africans is, metaphysically, communalism, and it debarred Africans from the common weal of individualism since antiquity.³⁸ Thus, comparing the Western with African societies, he stated that,

I would say that the latter [European society] is an assembly of individuals. The collectivist society inevitably places the emphasis on the individual, on his original activity and his needs. In this respect, the debates between to each according to his labour and to each according to his needs is significant. Negro-African society puts more stress on the group than on the individual, more on solidarity than on the activity and needs of the individual, more on the commitment of persons than on their autonomy. Ours [Africa] is a community society. This does not mean that it ignores the individual, or that collectivist society ignores solidarity, but the latter bases this solidarity on the activities of individuals, whereas the community society bases it on the general activity of the group.³⁹

At this juncture, one comment is in order: It must be noted that the sense of African communalism articulated as a result, reflected some influence of Marxism as it does African communalism--coming in to picture and formulate a view of human nature. Marxist principles of thought, for instance "revolution," "collectivism," "class-struggles" and "class-society" are balanced against the alleged principles of an African sense of communalism which, focussed at the outset on a notion or

picture of people living from the beginning in classless society, with each individual performing his duties for the good of the community at large. Thus, this "political communalism," as we call it, was not necessarily equivalent to the assumed idyllic pristine African communalism of yore. But the conceptual and the logical problems this "political communalism" engendered, in particular the unproven communalistic assumptions it was based on, were questioned in different forums. We shall not discuss the problems discussed in practical applications of the political communalism. But major issues of underpinning conceptual worry that cut across all forms of communalism were raised and discussed by professional philosophers such as the following discussion suggests.

5.3.4 The communal mind in African philosophy: conviction and its critics

One of the major foundations of the claim that traditionally Africa is and ought to remain communal is philosophy, especially from among the untrained philosophers. There have been trends of thought in African philosophy which espouse communalism as the core of African philosophy. There have been various reasons for this feeling. One factor was the challenge to philosophy for Africans to show whether they have a unique philosophy of their own. Many statements on this, however, produced racial stereotypes rather than the truth. Thus, Abrahams, for example, in his *The Mind of Africa*--claimed to demonstrate that traditional indigenous Africans have a concept of philosophy that can only be communalistic, and that this was because the mind of the Africans and their lives are based on the communalistic conception of society and reality as a whole. An outcome of this then was that because the activities and life of the Africans are based on the communalistic conception, the communalistic conception is so true to the extent that it allegedly forms the mental constitution of every traditional indigenous African; and the purported convivial mind of the Akan, in his opinion, manifest much of what is based on that conception.⁴⁰

However, other philosophers notably among them Odera-Oruka and many others mounted spirited arguments against the triviality of any such a claim, maintaining that the mind of the African is not different from others.' The triviality of a communalistic claim was seen as due to the fact that the communalistic theses considered only the communalistic behaviours which, can also be interpreted as purely instrumental. And since the critiques, there has never been a going back to the apparently instrumental basis of communalism--without scruple. Further more, the intention behind the philosophical critiques was a critical clarification of what the communalistic claims amounted to. Thus, accordingly, in his clarification, Odera-Oruka interpreted the communalistic theses through representative communalistic philosophers like Mbiti, Senghor and Tempels maintaining that their theses were attempts to substitute essential elements of human nature, to justify a substitution for the purely communalistic instrumental interests.⁴¹

According to Odera-Oruka, Tempels and Mbiti argued trajecting likewise as Abrahams that communalism is of the inmost value of African societies, and they sought the basis for this claim in the social organization and outlook of the African toward reality, and thus, demanded that Africans espouse a communal philosophy devoid of any serious rigorous reasoning, purportedly to the extent that their worldview and social organization is communal. For instance, Tempels in his much discussed work, *Bantu Philosophy*, supported this view as follows: For centuries the African remained communal without any striking changes in his social organization. African philosophy, he stated, constituted the shared African worldviews which emphasize on equal participation and equal knowledge. An individual's ideas do not constitute a philosophical system.

In line with this thought, Tempels found it necessary to support that with a metaphysical principle-- "vital force": The principle governing that communalism was not a passing temporal law, but, as he put it in rather ignoble terms, a metaphysical principle, and thus, an atemporal law he called "vital force." He argued that in the thought, conscience and feelings of every African, there is, lurking there, the notion of a "vital force" as the governing law, and an all-pervasive power that rules all being and the dynamics of reality, and this determined social life and thinking as well.

One reason as to why Tempels' view of an African sense of human nature is rejected is that it leads to the upsetting view that the African individual is completely subordinate to the community in one's actions and duties. Thus, according to Temples, because of "vital force," every African village and every individual in that village is not expectedly different in the mind from the mind of another--in the past as in the present and the future--in terms of the thoughts held and about "vital force." Consequently, the totality of the beliefs and passions of every individual are similarly substantially the same to those of the rest, since individuals and the collectivities share in the same corpus of beliefs. But this means that the individual does not and cannot rise above the collective views and have radically different positions about the world and reality. Not that the individual is not critical; but allegedly that an individual's criticalness reflects nothing but criticism of detail, that is insufficient to generate tension enough for the criticism to rise above the already established communal worldview. We can only note here that the claims of Tempels that Africans are incapable of individualistic thought are not supported by evidence.

Tempels' view is, however, the similar trajectory that Senghor took in his much talked about *negritude* philosophy, when he reiterated that rationality was not a fundamental element. For,

reportedly, Africans relate to the world through feelings and participation rather than abstract, critical, individualistic reasoning. Perhaps it was a cynicism against the West, but it led to the distressing view that Africans do not reason but merely intuit. In that cynicism, if at all, Senghor had contended that reasoning leads only to individualism and independence of thought that diverts from the coveted communal traditions. But traditional communalistic tendencies ingrained in the intuitive feelings, habits and traditional thoughts of the African, outlast individualism and subversionary thought which, is worthy to indigenous African social thought. It is from this fear of the demise of the African social fabric from which partly Senghor argued that White people are rational, while Africans are emotional. In his own words, "emotion is Black, logic is White."⁴² Yet, such public pronouncements tended to produce, maintain and perpetuate a racial stereotype that indigenous traditional African philosophy is communalistic, rather than seeing it as a matter of cultural insistence.

This background espoused by Odera-Oruka is necessary to appreciate his reaction and that of many other philosophers against the communalistic theses. Let us start here with Ochieng' -Odhiambo. His warning is pertinent. Ochieng' -Odhiambo, a Kenyan philosopher, asserted that the issue that "rationality is Western and irrationality African" was overblown, and should not continue to be overblown. He cautions over the need to be careful not be exclusive on this matter, such as to claim that reason is Hellenic or emotion is African. In other words, he observes, for one to argue that reason is White, while emotion is Black, is foolhardy, and an obvious case of some form of paranoia. We should, instead, he urges, read, interpret and understand Senghor and the likes as simply asserting that while the West is predominantly rational, Africa is predominantly emotional. To be fair to Senghor, this is the appropriate reading and interpretation.⁴³

Ochieng'-Odhiambo's comments are part and parcel of the philosophical position that logic, rationality or reason is not just another instrument that the African possesses and uses for the betterment of society, but a foundational element for his/her human self-transcendence and self-assertion. If Ochieng'-Odhiambo's lamentations are correct, likewise, then, from a similar interpretative backdrop, one appreciates why Mbiti must be challenged when he depicted Africans as communalistic in their philosophy. Any value that espouses individualism against the communal values, he stated, must be rejected as unAfrican. For him, the bond that brings in the communal nature of Africans in their philosophy is the Africans' past, a view which does not necessarily coincide with other views on the same as will be shown. Thus, one appreciates why, for instance, both Nyerere and Nkrumah opposed what they saw as "tribal" communalism, and hence they called for the need of Africa to reinvent itself through the creation of a new creative consciousness which for Nyerere was *ujamaa*, and Nkrumah, philosophical *consciencism*. Towards that refuted past, Mbiti claimed that to the traditional African, that "past," in terms of a shared history and moral values was the cement that glues the present with the past, and ties the present with the future life of the African. It is, allegedly, a past of illogicality. Yet, it is, he suggests, when the African neglects that past when he/she tends to veer off African communalism. As it serves to keep values intact and the social fabric held, through this past, the distinctive communalistic ethic lasts.⁴⁴

Speaking of the West African experience largely, Diop contends that it is Islamization and ancient urbanization together with the formation of Islamic empires throughout West Africa that, not only facilitated a detribalization of much of that region, but led to the formation of all kinds of practices and institutions including intellectual and philosophical ones in historical cities like Timbuktu. He

was among the very first philosophers to concede that in Africa, logic was a major instrument in the context of its contact with Islam.

But among the very first of the professional philosophers, however, to doubt that traditional Africans did possess philosophy was Hountondji. For his part, Hountondji did insist that Africans are, have been or can be communalistic. In his version of philosophy, he suggested that strictly, communalism was an ideology of the illiterate. Thus, in his *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality*, he advanced a serious critique against the communalists' theses on behalf of philosophy. He put up a sustained critique against communalism--blaming it for being anti-reason, and was an antithesis in African philosophy.⁴⁵

But then to appreciate Hountondji better, one should put him in historical context. Two historical and philosophical questions seemed to concern him: Is there a Black African philosophy? If there is, what is it? His work was thus part and parcel of the critical ongoing debate in the area of African philosophy. Hence, he insisted that for the purposes of the dignity of the African philosophy in particular, communalism of any sort must be transcended, since philosophy as he observed, is an independent, transcendent exercise of rigorous, critical and creative thinking which, does not and cannot exist in a traditional Africa where and because it lacked writing and is communal.

Two requirements, namely, literacy and independence, according to him, are a prerequisite for philosophizing. These furthered his argument that philosophy can, and does exist only in contemporary Africa. Incredulously, though, he stated that some philosophers have inclined to the exercise of exposing the mythologies of the African people, parading them as philosophy. He

insists that the depiction by a section of scholars that indigenous Africans are communal, or inclined to be communal, whether in their thought or in their social organization, though correct, it is this that has been the source of major confusions in philosophical thought. Of course, he noted that one of the objectives of that was noble: it was to redeem Africa from the contempt meted out against Africans by some anthropologists and philosophers--like Levy-Bruhl, who contended that Africans did not have a philosophy of whatever nature, allegedly by virtue of default mental or social structures. Hountondji's concern, however, was not this seeming positive element; it was the problem which, in his opinion, the communalist thesis created and perpetuated, namely, the view that apparently there was, is, or can be, an African philosophy which is communal.

Hountondji's response to the communalist theses is a disturbing one to a counter critic though, for some major reasons. First, it undesirably suggests that indigenous traditional Africans were not capable of logic. Second, it suggests that philosophy cannot exist in communalistic societies since, as he stated, the communalist spirit is the cause of the problem in Africa insisting as it does on shared worldviews.

On the contrary, Odera-Oruka did not concede that logic is cultural, racist or speciesist. He suggested that logic is germane to the African as it is to the White. In Odera-Oruka's sage philosophy, one sees the struggle we have been discussing above to articulate the metaphysical elements true to the human nature of the African. Odera-Oruka championed the philosophy that since antiquity, Africans have had a culture of reflective, rational thinking. In a 1974 research project, he passionately tried to show this: that there have existed in Kenya, and by extension, traditionally throughout indigenous Africa, philosophers, by showing that African traditions and

customs were based on philosophical theories and concepts developed and preserved in the explicit thoughts of the traditional African thinkers (sages).⁴⁶ Some of these thinkers (the sages), he stated, being free from external influence, can and have risen above the masses of the communities to which they belong, to possess independent philosophical ideas of their own.

In that 1974 sage project, although his inclination was patriotic (to prove that communal Africa is not devoid of the indigenous, rational and independent thinkers), that project culminated in a number of academic works, notable among which is *Trends in African Philosophy*. In this work, the thoughts of some African sages, representative of the communal thoughts were exposed and examined. At the same time, some African sages representative of philosophical thoughts were paraded and analyzed. According to Odera-Oruka, sages have existed in Africa ever since and, indeed, every age and every culture has their own sages. The Odera-Orukan philosophic sages were shown to possess independent thoughts which set them apart from the thoughts of the rest of the communities to which they belonged. According to him then, genuine African philosophies (like political and social philosophies and philosophies of human nature) reside in the thoughts of the sages. If, for example, we want to know what human nature is in African philosophy, we need to pick up from the sagacious reasoning of the African sages.

The Odera-Oruka view, however, that since antiquity Africans held a culture of reflective and rational thinking, did not show, according to Mudimbe, that there are, to the least, differences in practices that reflect different practices of logic. Thus, Mudimbe, a Congolese philosopher of much repute, did not seem to agree with Odera-Oruka on the precise nature of African philosophy (and philosophers); though he seemed to agree with the philosophy that indigenous Africans were

capable of reflective independent thought. Mudimbe suggested--and here we do agree with Mudimbe, that first, the Odera-Orukan sages are said to be philosophical simply because they can reason like Plato or Socrates from which the contemporary African philosopher can pick concepts from, as happens in Western philosophy. That is, if we look at the Odera-Orukan sages in his *Trends in African Philosophy*, for example, the sages seem to be judged capable of independent thought, and as being philosophers because they use the same Western-generated categories like rationality, objectivity and independence for philosophically making sense of reality. If this is the case, then, according to Mudimbe, African philosophy has not been able to extricate itself from Western philosophy to show the existence of its own authentically African philosophy.⁴⁷

As Mudimbe noted, the greatest problem facing African philosophy, he pointed out, is the choice of the conceptual categories with which African philosophy can be discovered, but at the same time as to express its own power and identity. Thus, Mudimbe pointed out that the salvation to this problem lay in the knowledge and the use of African concepts, standards and discourses used for philosophizing. We see, in his *Fables and Parables*, for example, an appeal to the communalistic values like social harmony and egalitarianism as pedestals for philosophizing. These discourses, he laments, are missing in contemporary African philosophy; but they have, though, traditionally been there in Africa for ages, in making sense of the world.

Today, he stated, the challenges can be how to strike a balance between the traditional (communal) and the modern Western philosophical values. African philosophy is torn between the two directions, namely, the traditional and the Western. It has failed in spite of the efforts of the philosophers like Odera-Oruka, Diop and Hountondji, to make use of Africa's unique advantage to

benefit from its unique position for the improvement of human values. In Mudimbe's view his approach requires, especially for the contemporary African philosopher trained in the Western analytic tools, a marriage between the anthropological excavation of the ancient discourses as found in the communal fables, debates and parables, and the application of the modern analytic tools and concepts so as to construct, in a dialectical manner using both the African discourses and the modern Western philosophical discourses, a rational discursive discourse about reality. It led to the view that his approach is the source of the possible perfect philosophical Afrocentrism yearned for in philosophy; it lies as an anchorage for identifying the rules which guide the rationalization process at the level of traditional discourse. His work, *Fables and Parables*, in our view, is an example of how this kind of exercise is perceived as possible.

Let us come towards the end of this section by making the following remarks: That from our above examination, we found out that among the various factors that brought the above philosophical debate to the fore, one important factor was the implications and the assertions by the proponents of the communalist theses which theoretically excluded a sense of rationality from the list of important qualities in Africans. This significantly prompted the philosophical debate to allegedly restore the role and place of rationality, especially in philosophy. That the claims that in Africa it is the community which contains, envelops and defines all cultural phenomena, including rationality, prompted, in part, the philosophers' reaction to the communalistic theses to reassert the instrumental value of logic in the African cultures.

5.4 A critique

It is true that a human being has many thoughts some of which are shared throughout the community. This is an irreducible truth from the communalistic position. However, many criticisms can be raised against a communalistic thesis. The communalistic claims contradict the claims of eminent Western philosophers like Hobbes, who held that mankind are essentially solitary in nature. Hobbes argued that humans are, indeed antisocial, they are only compelled into a social life because of various reasons which include fears against one another, self-preservation and the preservation of their private property.

Furthermore, some of the eminent Western philosophers agreed that mankind as a whole live in societies, but this is nothing but contracts between the rulers and the ruled (as in Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau) or loose associations (as by Aristotle) between a ruler and the ruled. That is, humans do not necessarily live in communion and therefore, need not be communal.

Furthermore, there appears to be a similarity between the African communion and the *polis* of Plato. Plato envisaged the *polis* as a communal society of sorts, in which people live in society by performing duties according to their natural abilities and inclinations for the benefit of the community. Plato's commune was probably more compact because it was some sort of a caste system in which people would perform fixed duties according to their natural talents. However, although it was conceived along similar lines such as for the benefit of the community, social good, sociality and sociality, it was not egalitarianism or communion.⁴⁸ Yet, if one were to look at caste-based societies, or other models of society, such as that of Marx, it would appear that humans were not originally communal necessarily.

Our inquiry reveals that communalism as such does not necessarily seem to be viable any longer given the changes that have taken place in contemporary African society. For this and other reasons, African "scientific" socialism was born. But some of what was born is noxious. For instance, Nkrumah believes that African states are only fit for single-party democracies. This is one of the unfortunate by-products of his philosophy. Yet, all over Africa today, there are relatively vibrant and healthy multi-party democracies; indeed, Uganda is a no-party democracy. The African political communalism itself acknowledged one thing: that any communalism needs to be scientific (or philosophically derived) given the changes that have taken place. Yet, the conceived African communalisms seem to be wanting as political ideologies or philosophy in the face of competition. To this extent then we go along with a number of useful propositions that are suggested in this chapter about human nature: that the contemporary African must continue be reflective; she/he must continue to rise to the occasion and know that things must change, if they should; that some general claims, like "the African person is not individualistic," or, "the African is communalistic" are unhelpful but simply too general or merely normative. Thus, we agree with Hountondji, on the one hand when he asserted that communal philosophy is not, always palatable; indeed, according to him, it is the very antithesis of philosophy. His claim that in this particular case, individualism and independence are of a critical nature for philosophy is pertinent. He stated that strictly philosophy requires the independent, disinterested exercise of reason, which is not possible for the faithful subscriber of communal philosophy, since communal philosophy demands allegiance rather than independent, disinterested and even subversive exercise of reason.⁴⁹ Thus, in a similar vein, Odera-Orika maintained that in every society, there is the uncritical, communal philosophy, as well as critical and speculative philosophy. This means that Africans are as critical and speculative as they are communal.⁵⁰

One of the major problems of the communalistic position, however, is the assumption that Africans "are communalistic by nature."⁵¹ In our inquiry, this assumption serves only to evoke a rather idealized picture of the Africans with their focus lying on some traditions that serve the communalistic perspective. According to our analysis, an African sense of communalism amounts to no more than what any human being can be as a result of a philosophical theory or practice as the above analysis has shown. What can be correctly said, the analysis reveals, is that indigenous traditional African societies were communal in their social organization, metaphysical assumptions and cultural or social ethics. What makes and can make such a sense of African communalism unique, or even appear natural, is that such elements as communalism, or African socialism, contain within them certain metaphysical assumptions about reality located and transmitted within specific African social and cultural contexts. This way of viewing the African *ubuntu* means that it is possible to stamp out elements of the African communalism, or even individuality, which are undesirable. Insisting that the African mind is communal "by nature" is not entirely supported even by ordinary experience. Clearly, there is good reason to suppose that the communalistic social organization exists as an opposition to a sense of individualism, but this is rooted in concrete specific cultural contexts. Even though there are fairly good reasons for the communalistic position, communalism is not entirely warranted as the absolute theory of human nature.

5.5 Summary and conclusion

In this chapter, we have examined the concepts of human nature in non-Western societies. In the Eastern society, for example, we observed that ideally humans are said to be of such a nature as to be at ease with the universe, in the sense that they "flow" with the natural order(s) of the world, rather than contradicting them. Or else one should transcend culture and enjoy the beauty of

transcendental reality in a passive quietist stance. We observed that in African philosophies of human nature, a perfect human being is perceived in the communalistic theses as one who is communalistic. In other words, while individuality is not necessarily denied, an ideal human being is perceived—in these philosophies—as one who is social, caring, compassionate, practical, sharing and a useful source of community, neighbours, next of kin and one's own wellbeing. These were suggested by some thinkers as some of the perceived pedestals upon which communalism stands.

So, our findings from this chapter are that the philosophies of human nature of the non-Western society are offshoots of philosophical and cultural practices and ideas prevalent in the non-Western societies. Unless the philosophical perspectives are specified, the concept of human nature is without the meaning it has. But this notion of human nature is not static too. We observed this from various sources. For instance, from politics communalism was championed bearing in mind the cultural roots of the traditional African civilizations, and as a reaction for example to the perceived brute individualism prevalent in Western societies. In turn, the non-Western philosophies of human nature sought to turn the back to all forms of excessive application of reasoning that championed individualism that, in the views of these philosophies, is detrimental to being human. Yet, Nkrumah's concept of communalism differs in important aspects from that of Nyerere, and Nyerere's differs from Senghor's. Nkrumah for instance calls for a one party community; Nyerere insists on equality even in poverty, while Senghor believes in the view that certain Islamic values are paramount for a new African community—a view not necessarily shared by the others.

We also observed that there are some real and conceptual problems with the communalistic conceptions of human nature, and these, together with the historical considerations, do not

necessarily make communalism in principle the ultimate definer of what human nature is. For example, communalism does not explain how an individual can get its freedom and rights to express its individuality as an individual, which is what individualism in the Western sense guarantees, and the practice on which it thrives.

Having underscored the philosophical and conceptual basis of the above philosophies of human nature, in the next chapter we examine the basis of contemporary philosophies of human nature in both Western and non-Western societies.

5.6 Notes

1. See J. F. Lyotard, "The Postmodern Condition," eds. J. C. Alexander and S. Seidman, *Culture and Society: Contemporary Issues* (Cambridge: Cambridge university Press, 1990), N. Murphy, *Anglo-American Postmodernity: Philosophical Perspectives on Science, Religion and Ethics* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1997), V. Y. Mudimbe, *Parables and Fables: Exegesis, Textuality and Politics in Central Africa* (London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991).
2. The reader must note that our primary sources in Eastern mysticism below are R. C. Zaehner, ed., *Hindu Scriptures* (London: 1968), and A. Whaley, trans., *Analects of Confucius* (London: 1964).
"Mysticism" is the school of thought which holds that the nature of reality is inexpressible and cannot be truly experienced in any ordinary experiential and rational way. By extension of this argument, it implies that any description of a mystical experience only seeks to evoke, excite or spark intimations of the experience. See for a further exposition Gunnar Skirbekk and Nils Gilje, *History of Western Thought* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 21-31.
3. See Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of Parallels Between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism* (Flamingo: Fontana paperbacks, 1983), pp. 115-131.
4. Our source on *Vedas* and *Upanishad* is *Bhagavad-Gita*, trans., R. C. Zaehner, *Op. cit.*, bk., iv-v.
Cf. G. Skirbekk and N. Gilje, *Op. cit.*, pp. 28-29.
5. The ideas here are derived from the *Bhagavad-Gita*, *Ibid.*, and F. Capra., *Op. cit.*, p. 117 ff.
6. For Anaximander's views on nature, see, for example, E. Zeller, *Outline of the History of Greek Philosophy* (New York: Meridian Books, 1955), pp. 25-37. Cf. G. Skirbekk and N. Gilje, *Op. cit.*, F. Capra., *Ibid.*, p. 129.
7. See F. Capra., *Ibid.*, pp. 115-131, G. Skirbekk and N. Gilje, *Ibid.* On the same matter, see A. Whaley, *Op. cit.*. Similar views on *yin* and *yang* are expressed by Confucius in the sixth century B.C.E.
8. G. Skirbekk and N. Gilje, *Ibid.*, F. Capra, *Ibid.*
9. G. Skirbekk and N. Gilje, *Ibid.*

10. *Ibid.* F. Capra., *Op. cit.*

11. *Ibid.* Also see G. Skirbekk and N. Gilje, *Op. cit.*

12. Bhagavad-Gita, *Op. cit.*, bk., v.

13. *Ibid.* Also note that the concept *Brahma* means what is "all-encompassing, absolute and divine." In this sense, it comes close in meaning to *nirvana* (= "salvation") in Indian thought.

14. For our analysis of *Zen*, here and below, see *Bhagavad-Gita*; also see F. Capra, *Op. cit.*

15. Quoted by D.N. Kaphagawani, "On African Communalism: Philosophical Perspective," ed., J. M. Nyasani, *Philosophical Focus on Culture and Traditional Thought Systems in Development* (Nairobi: Rabine Printing Works, n.d.), p. 286.

16. The quote is by J. R. Meziue, "The Emergency of African Personality," ed., S. O. Mezu. *The Philosophy of Pan Africanism* (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1965), p. 36.

The concept "communalism", it should be noted, refers to a state of being of a community. In another sense it is a way of life. A community is said to exhibit "communalism" (or to be communal) when its members interact with a greater spirit of communing (or sharing) and participation in their lives.

"Communalism" as a way of life is distinguished from "individualism", which is the state of being of a community or a way of life where individual interests override those of sharing and participation.

17. For these and the following views by Kaunda, see Kenneth Kaunda, *A Humanist in Africa* (London: Longmans, 1966), p. 24ff.

18. See, V. Manimala, "Towards a Dialogical Philosophy of Culture," ed., J. M. Nyasani, *Philosophical Focus on Culture and Traditional Thought Systems in Development* (Nairobi: Rabine Printing Works, n.d.), p.49.

19. See Bronislaw Malinowski, *The Father in Primitive Psychology* (New York: The Norton Library, 1954), pp. 11-19. Also see M. D. Sahlins, *Tribesmen* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1968). The view on "social organization" was expressed by many anthropological works like E. Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society* (Chicago: The Free Press, 1957), A. R. Radcliffe Brown, *Structure and Function in Primitive Society* (Glencoe: The Free Press, 1952).

20. J. R. Meziq, *Op. cit.*
21. See Madupo Oduyoye, "Patrilineal Spirits," ed., E. Ade. Adegbola, *Traditional Religions in West Africa* (Nairobi: Uzima Press, 1983), pp. 289-297, A. Shutte, *Ubuntu: An Ethic for a New South Africa* (Johannesburg: Cluster Publications), J. S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1969).
- The reader should note that *ubuntu* means the quality of being a *untu*, i.e., a *untu* is a person whose personhood is measured by the way he/she uses his talents, and abilities. A *untu* is one who uses them to perform their roles not at the detriment of community but for the promotion and the glory of society.
22. A. Shutte, *Ibid.*, pp. 20-217.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
24. See Placide Tempels, *Bantu Philosophy* (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1969), pp. 51-69, 177.
25. *Ibid*
26. *Ibid*. See Janheinz Jahn, *Muntu: An Outline of the New African Culture*. trans., M. Greene (New York: Grove Press, 1961), pp. 100ff.
27. See H. Odera-Oruka, *Trends in Contemporary African Philosophy* (Nairobi: Shirikon Publishers, 1990), pp 1-20.
28. J. S. Mbiti. *Op. cit.*
29. See J. N. K. Mugambi, "The African Experience of God," ed., H. Odera-Oruka. *Thought and Practice. Journal of the Philosophical Association of Kenya*, 1974, pp. 53-56.
30. Mulago writes in French, so our account on Mulago is based on Masolo's interpretation of him. See D. A. Masolo, "Western and African Communalism: A comparison." Unpublished paper.
31. Cesaire's position is cited from P. Hountondji, *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality*. trans., H. Evans and J. Ree (London: Hutchinson Library for Africa, 1983), pp. 36-38.
32. See, for instance, J. K. Nyerere, *Ujamaa: The Basics of African Socialism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), L. S. Senghor, *On African Socialism*. trans., M. Cook (New York: Freiderick Praeger, 1964),

- K. Nkrumah, *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for Decolonization and Development, with Particular Reference to the African Revolution* (London: Heinemann, 1964). Further, a liberal reference is made of articles by the above thinkers in F. I. Hord and Jonathan, S. L., eds. *I am Because We Are: Readings in Black Philosophy* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), pp. 24-93.
33. This view reverberates--not only in Nkrumah's works, but also in the works of Nyerere and Senghor as we shall shortly see. Nkrumah has other objectives as well, like to articulate an African metaphysics. On African metaphysics, for instance, he tends to think that Africans are not materialistic. Our analysis of Nkrumah is based on the following works by Nkrumah: *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for Decolonization and Development, with Particular Reference to the African Revolution* (London: Heinemann, 1964), *Africa Must Unite* (London: Heinemann, 1963), *Neocolonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (London: Nelson, International Publishers, 1967).
34. J. K. Nyerere, *Op. cit.*, L. S. Senghor, *Op. cit.*
35. *Ibid.*
36. See for our citation and analysis of Nyerere here and below, Nyerere's works mentioned above.
37. L. S. Senghor, *Op. cit.*
38. *Ibid.*
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 93-94.
40. Our reference on this and the exposition below is H. Odera-Oruka, *Op. cit.*, pp. 72-73ff. Also see for further reference J. S. Mbiti, *Op. cit.*, P. Tempels, *Op. cit.*, L. S. Senghor, *Op. cit.*,
41. See Odera-Oruka, *Op. cit.* A critique of the communalistic philosophy is also undertaken by Paulin Hountondji, in his *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality* (London: Hutchinson University Library for Africa, 1983). For Tempels, and Mbiti's theses, see P. Tempels, *Ibid.*, J. S. Mbiti, *Ibid.*
42. On Senghor's views, see L. S. Senghor's works mentioned above. For Tempels views on "vital force," see Tempels, *Ibid.*, pp. 51-69..
43. Discussion on this matter was held in Nairobi, Kenya, on several dates in August, 2006 between the author and professor F. Ochieng'-Odhiambo of the University of West Indies, Barbados.

44. J. S. Mbiti, *Op. cit.*, See for Diop's views, Cheikh Anta Diop, *Precolonial Black Africa*, trans. Harold Salemson (New York: Lawrence Hill Books, 1987), chapter 1-3.
45. Hountondji's views are derived from P. Hountondji, *Op. cit.*
46. H. Odera-Oruka, *Op. cit.*
47. Mudimbe's views are derived from V. Y. Mudimbe, *Parables and Fables: Exegesis, Textuality and Politics in Central Africa* (London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1991).
48. J. Sommerville and R. E. Santoni, eds., *Social and Political Philosophy: Readings from Plato to Gandhi* (New York: Doubleday, 1963).
49. Mudimbe, *Op. cit.*
50. H. Odera-Oruka, *Op. cit.*
51. See D. A. Masolo, *Op. cit.*

Chapter six

Contemporary Western and non-Western concepts of human nature and their foundations

The preceding investigation (chapter two, three, four and five) reveals the conceptual platforms (e.g. existentialism) and the cultural factors (such as mysticism) that influenced and propagated various conceptions of human nature.¹

We turn now to analyze contemporary philosophies of human nature in our own times, and examine the circumstances that evoked them. The philosophies defined their own focus, goals and aspirations, but in turn, social and cultural factors shaped their expression as well, reflecting the very historical forces that they attempted to make sense of. They are, in fact, philosophies which show the contestation of the prevalent notions of human nature, which were discussed earlier, and they critique several widely-known philosophical concepts in human nature theory. But what circumstances evoked them? What were their responses?

6.1 Contemporary Western philosophies of human nature

Through an examination of the contemporary Western philosophical scene, it is clear that the contemporary Western philosophies have not simply accepted the issues and the assumptions passed on by their predecessors. In fact, the contemporary Western philosophies illustrate how the cultural environment functions as a "grid" deciding what will be considered relevant and irrelevant. Though they have nothing of the depth of mind as of their predecessors, the vigour of their insight serves to underlie the conundrum and the heavy task that is the definition of human nature.

In particular, one notes that there are Western philosophies which are secure in their assumption that important philosophical issues emerge correspondingly, if not exclusively, out of the Western experiences. Accordingly, Rorty, an American socio-political philosopher, denies the Sartreian and Nietzsche's conception of the individual which is free and individualistic. Nor does Rorty, however, just claim to continue a Marxist sense of the individual in which an individual is part of the community of a larger whole within which the individual is "massified" by means of an incarnation of a historically creative mind.² But in the light of his Hegelian beginning, his philosophy of the individual defines itself both as a critique and his sense of enrichment of the rest of the Western philosophy. For example, in his discussion of individualism, he decries Western philosophy in which, as he states, in the face of the competing individual's good, an individual does not have obligation to the common good.

6.1.1 Liberal and radical senses of individualism compared

It is clear from Rorty that new influences surface to shape the expressions of the contemporary philosophies of human nature. For instance noted is the need to understand afresh the *raison d'etre* of the state, that is, whether it exists to serve or not to serve the common good. A second influence, he notes, is the robust feeling of patriotism in a new world that is increasingly becoming allegedly individualistic. According to Rorty, these influences reveal themselves in two intellectual forms, namely, "liberal" and "radical." For Rorty, these classifications define the focus of the contemporary debate on the problem of human nature.

But we must hastily point out that intellectual contact with different cultures, such as with China, India and with Africa--have also posed challenges on human nature thought, and they have raised

philosophical issues on human nature as our excerpts might have indicated in chapter five--and we do not wish to take the liberty to re-discuss the issue here.

However, on the "liberal" axis, Rorty sees Simmel (1858-1918) and a Hungarian Marxist philosopher--Lukes, among others. On the "radical" axis are philosophers like McIntyre -- a British-American philosopher. For us, these philosophers are representative enough for our discussion of the two concepts, and the points we wish to advance: Where "liberalists" support individuality as the essence of human nature, the "radicalists" propose common good; where the "radicalists" propose the rights of the community over the individual, the "liberalists" support private interests over the community. In other words, the "liberalists" are those who hold that individuals must promote their own good at anyone time; while the "radicalists" hold that the common good overrides the good of the individual such that though as much as possible one must promote his own good, when faced with a choice between the individual and the common good, one must endeavour to promote the common good.

For centuries, Rorty states, these two concepts have, in fact, exercised the greatest influence in the consciousness of Western people--as the conceptual bases for the social organization of societies, and for debating ideas of human nature. The success of Rorty's categorization in capturing the alleged Western notions, however, lies in its exposure of the bigger picture: that the "liberal" and the "radical" concepts, moreover, reveal the class and the ideological divides amongst the people and the states to which these concepts apply--and the values that the people and states share or do not share. For instance, the adherents of the "liberal" concept continue to take human nature as essentially individualistic and a-historical in the sense that people are, ideally, perceived to be

impersonal as their perceived metaphysical basis in cultural practice. In the "radical" sense, although the impersonal individual is kept in view, the touchstone is the "collective" called the community, in which the state controls and regulates the individuals--but sustaining the view that although individuals are in a community, they are independent and separate as well.³

Thus, one of the key concepts of the human nature theory which the above notions discuss is the role the individual holds in community. Hence, it is important to understand how these two sets of concepts ("liberal" and "radical") hold the community by distinguishing the two senses of the community to which individuals are seen to belong by them, and thus the culturally or socially specific information that we, as observers, may find necessary for philosophical reflection.

It is pertinent to note that the two concepts attempt to extend the range of the possibilities of the meaning of human nature, through a fresh interpretation of the relationship between a possible metaphysics and common practices on the one hand, and through social classes and the state, on the other. Hovering over the two concepts is the Hegelian notion of the state as an entity abstracted from the social and historical forces, which as --we now know, creates and conditions it in the empirical reality of its social existence. Hegel did this while presenting civil society as the class of social forces transcended only by the universality of the state. Hovering beyond the Hegelianism of the state, are for example, neo-Marxisms--where the alleged universal state is challenged as a notion protecting particular interests paraded under the false banner of universality in which the state is nothing but an instrument of oppression.

However, if our Rorty's outline of his view is right--that there is the essentially "radical" sense of the individual, then it is true that the individual thrives in a community in which the individual is favourably perceived as metaphysically connected to the state in such a way that it makes each individual a considerable element of that community. In this particularly Hegelian sense, the community is akin to a *Weltanschauungen*, i.e., there exists a mandatory frame of reference equal to state principles, rules or certain common moral, scientific, ideological and social views about the world that unites or binds the individual to the state.

Simmel captures this neo-Hegelian ("radical") sense of the individual as follows:

The total organism that has grown out of the individual engaged in the division of labour and which includes and mediates their interrelated effects and counter effects, shifts, & to speak, into a location high above them. The specificity of the individual thus requires a powerful political constitution, which allocates his place to him, but in this fashion, also becomes his master. It is for this reason that this individualism, which restricts freedom to purely inward sense of the term, easily acquires an anti-liberal tendency. It thus is the complete antithesis of eighteenth century individualism, which, in full consistency with its notion of atomized and undifferentiated individuals, could not even conceive the idea of a collective as an organism that unifies heterogeneous elements.⁴

From this quote, Simmel extends to the argument that what makes up an individual in the "radical" sense, is the state in the sense of the state being able to override individuality to create a common ethic and ideology for the advancement of the common good, as the inner and core value which makes the separate individuals members of the community. This specifically Hegelian idea of the individual is fundamentally in conflict with the philosophical reflections essentially rooted in the "liberalist" view about the role of the community, in whose sense, as Senghor observed, "The state is nothing but a watchdog for the protection and preservation of the freedoms and privileges of individuals against the hostilities of others."⁵

These concepts, "radical" and "liberal", are, it must be reiterated, not just concepts, they allegedly define the spectre of the being of the people in the Western society. Thus, for Simmel, there is a clear difference between the two notions of the community which is not merely one of emphasis, but of two distinct realities as well about how people should live. So, as he states, in the "liberal" sense, individuals are perceived as so independent that they are brought together only by some, indeed, preferably few, legal or other such bonds for the survival of society. The lesser the state-interventions, purportedly the better the society is. Hence, from these two distinct conceptions of the place of human actors vis a vis community, there then proceeds the model persons and their perceived social interactions.

Similarly, in emphasizing on this notional discrepancy as exposed by the two Rortyan intellectual forms (the "liberal" and "radical,") Lukes observes the moral values that eject from the two as follows: that while the characteristically "liberal" sense of the individual is negative, signifying individual isolation and social dissolution the characteristically "radical" sense is "positive," signifying individual self-fulfillment and the organic unity of individuals in society. Thus, he states, there is quite distinct from the "liberal" sense of individualism another sense whose characteristic reference is Hegelian. This "radical" sense, though it emphasizes on individual uniqueness, originality and self-realization, it contrasts sharply, as he says, with the rather "sterile, rational, universal and uniform standards" of the "liberal" individualism.⁶

Lukes' views compare favourably with Simmel's observation that the "liberal" individualism leads to the belief that ideally, individuals are and ought to be atomized and differentiated, wherein the state is concerned largely for the protection of one's private good. It will not conceive of the idea of

a community or state as the basic entity that exists primarily for the common good of the community as a community.

Rorty further clarifies on the "liberalist" position through his philosophy that despite any social thrust in the "liberalist" notion, individuality is freed from social ties and common responsibilities--past, present and future--as long as those ties militate against private self-aggrandizement.

In contrast, McIntyre, who, subscribes to the "radical" sense of individuality, completely devalues "liberal" individuality and its attendant concepts of uniqueness, independence and self-assertion where not even a common history or the state matters --on behalf of a rational moral obligation to the community and the state.⁷ McIntyre's philosophy is an attempt to redefine human nature, and portray an obligation to the community as what defines humankind. He seems to distinguish the "radical" from the "liberal" individualism as two distinct heavily-weighted ways of understanding a human being and life. For him, however, the source of the liberalist view is analytic philosophy. That is the "liberal" view is domesticated in the philosophy--tracing to Plato, which has been striving for rational and disinterested individuality. The former, the "radical" sense, has its basis in "holistic" philosophy, i.e., in seeing the individual and the community as mutually interdependent and responsible for each others wellbeing.

McIntyre defends the "radical" Hegelian sense of individuality for placing at the centre of the social fabric the common good, common interests, common direction and destiny. His conception of the essence of the individual is one in which, like in Hegel and Marx, an individual is a person who is socially embedded, who will and must relate to others through history and tradition as the binding

forces and the forces of obligation to one another. These elements (tradition and history), are perceived as important, in McIntyre's view, for patriotism and as far as they make an individual's idea of the social good to extend beyond crude individualism.

It would appear that what McIntyre asserts here and outlines about the West--that it is individualistic in the liberal sense--is true, to the extent that today, for instance, solidarity behind the state requires some major event, like terrorism, or a perceived threat of terrorism to galvanize citizens. Thus, for him, in such a conceptualization, an individual's actions are right or wrong whose consequences are not only good to the individual, but to the community within which the individual is located.

6.2 Contemporary non-Western concepts of human nature

Like contemporary Western concepts of the individual, contemporary non-Western concepts of the individual are influenced by their social contexts as well. They are illustrative of the "social context theory" as our above analysis of human nature has shown. For instance, we have already seen how ancient reflection upon some Indian, Japanese and Chinese *Weltanschauungen* replicates the socio-cultural mentality of Buddhist, Hindu and Confucian mystical thoughts regarding the proper nature of people: e.g., by alleging that humans ought to be calm, modest and peaceful in life within the context of Buddhist, Hindu and Confucian mysticism.⁸ Then these philosophies go ahead to espouse the types of values which, according to them, ought to govern the people. One need only consider the simple but important case on human nature of an ancient Chinese Taoist philosopher, Dong Zhongshu and, his perception of the role of the state for a further illustration. He observed that governments mould and shape human beings because humans are naturally endowed with the

capacity for goodness. However, humans cannot become good without the intervention of the state. For him, governmental laws literally force people to be good because they establish a system of rewards and punishment. For Dong Zhongshu, deep contemplation and empathy with nature, and not philosophy, would reveal human nature. In one case he expresses his views using a common Chinese analogy of the tomato seed: The seed of a tomato is not actually good any less than a tomato seed is a tomato. In order to become a tomato, that seed must be nurtured and cultivated. In another case he alludes to another Chinese analogy: the capacity of the eye to see. The ability of the eye to see is a dispositional capacity. Dong raises an interesting question: Can a person see when asleep? He says, well, in one sense "no," because people asleep do not see. However, in another sense, sleeping persons *can* see; all they have to do is wake. By "wake," he means feeling the moral obligation to consciously take charge to work toward the good of others and one's Own.⁹

But contestable issues arise. For instance, not every one agrees that contemplation and empathy characterize human nature in its entirety. Further, he suggests that there is no such thing as a human being that is either good or evil, but this is contradicted by some philosophies of the human person as depicted by some Western philosophies (e.g. of Hobbes and Rousseau) which hold that a human being is essentially evil or good. There are other views which need to be defended too. For instance, Dong Zhongshu states that human nature as revealed in practice rid of philosophy and science reveals that humans contain within them both the elements of goodness and evil. But, this is not enough to say that humans are by nature evil or good. People can be changed for the better. It is possible that human nature is good or evil only to the extent of how it is nurtured or cultivated.¹⁰

Naturally, the concept "human nature" undergoes change in a different social and cultural context. Accordingly, in contemporary Black Africa, as in the philosophies of Senghor, Nkrumah and Nyerere, humans are depicted as communal.¹¹ Yet, in the philosophers' conceptions, the idea that philosophy is the function of existential conditions reigns. For instance, there is a clear attempt to turn away from a presumed idyllic African communalism, and an attempt is made by the philosophers to systematically debate and establish a theoretical framework for a possible communalism suitable for the contemporary Africa. None of them accept wholly the Western notions of human nature as well, as their ideal of human nature for grounds of instilling individualism, for instance. The philosophies hold that the proper nature of mankind is revealed through, or by understanding the role of society, for mankind. *Ubuntu* is the central concept in the contemporary African philosophical debates on human nature and culture.¹²

As a concept, *ubuntu* is portrayed as an abstract quality (replacing "vital force"—which Tempels suggested). *Ubuntu* permeates—and purportedly ought to permeate and govern the actions of the state and community. It is, in essence, communion, meant for the preservation and growth of the individual and the community. But it is equally presented as a metaphysics in so far as it is seen as the original state of mankind. It as well addresses the present-day social problems of the division of powers, for example, as *ubuntu* is intended to provide internal restraints in the exercise of power, and the exercise of questionable hegemonial control over resources and possibly holding the whole of the community at a ransom.

But still questions arise: the day when all else has given way to communalism, i.e., the day when the mega-narrative of communalism has been fully implemented, will we progressively see the

improvement on the human condition? Without going far from our main point, although it may not be easy, nor even necessary, to sum up the *ubuntu* views of all the philosophers of communalism in this section, the work of Shutte, an essayist from South Africa, in our view is illustrative of the yearning and defence of *ubuntu* recently.¹³

Beginning with rightly connecting his *ubuntu* notion with the demands of social existence in South Africa--in which he lives, Shutte notes of the centrality of the *ubuntu* as follows:

South Africa has in the past become famous in the eyes of the world for one thing in particular--apartheid. This was our special product as typical as our gold. The world knows nothing of our secret riches. Apartheid buried them underground, deeper than gold. I am thinking of *ubuntu*. That vision was hidden, forbidden.¹⁴

That is, the vices of apartheid, namely, racial segregation, stereotyping and separate development which make life difficult for a majority of the South African people based on colour divide are clearly at the background instigating his *ubuntu* concept. He explains that *ubuntu* can recast mankind for the contemporary world, and he recommends it for South Africa and the rest of humanity. Since, in his view, *ubuntu* stands for communion, it allegedly shuns all the vices of apartheid based on segregation. According to Shutte, the ideal human person must be structured by *ubuntu*.

Discussing the appropriate *ubuntu*, he maintains, in his view, that *ubuntu* reveals itself as a peculiarly African community, and he recommends the canon to endorse values of communalism for a community torn apart by years of racial division and threatened with Western capitalism and individualism. He sees *ubuntu* as the source of the salvation to what he describes as a "moral vacuum" in post-apartheid South Africa--a vacuum created by the collapse of apartheid. He describes that "moral vacuum" as a new South Africa torn between Western values and African

traditional culture resulting in "... seeing morality merely as either a set of [superficial] conventions or practical rules, but not absolute esoteric doctrines."¹⁵ Thus, he writes, of his alleged impressive value of *ubuntu* compared to the alleged pathetic Western moral codes as follows:

Ubuntu is the exact opposite of apartheid. Apartheid's key idea is separation, separate development. development through separation. At the centre of *ubuntu* is the idea that *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, persons depend on persons to be persons. This is our hidden secret This is something we can now reveal to the world.¹⁶

It is clear though, that he depicts his notion of *ubuntu* as a historical product born on the one hand from certain living indigenous African traditions, compared to the Western ethical concepts which most African people do not allegedly comfortably identify with. He depicts *ubuntu* as the product borne from the experiences of his post-apartheid nation; his philosophy is clearly a reaction against the West's moral grand narratives allegedly justifying individualism and exploitation. Thus, he further writes of *ubuntu*: "... it is an ethical concept for communal life, and expresses a vision of what is valuable and worthwhile in African traditional forms of life...a vision rooted in the ancient cultures of Africa and which is at the centre of the culture of most of the indigenous South Africans."¹⁷

His philosophy leads to at least one practical goal of his: besides brute content, *ubuntu* community has a perceived function which the dominating Western theories cannot allegedly provide under the circumstances, namely, to ameliorate apartheid and post apartheid ills as they derive from one race of people exercising hegemonic control on political, economic and cultural life over others. He realizes that the problem has to be handled at the concrete as at the philosophical level where values interact with the reality of apartheid, and his perceived post-apartheid experiences in general. Thus, for him, a human is a person capable of fully participating in life and its demands. But this is incapacitated by apartheid, for example. Thus, at the core of his *ubuntu* community is a

romantic view of *ubuntu*, implying that *ubuntu* creates better people who deeply care and feel for each other. Hence, it should be relevant for South Africa, and by extension, the entire humanity.

There is, too, the concept of "political liberation" in a country when its tendentious deployments are instruments of oppression of one class of people (its citizens) as it sustains its rule over them. Liberation is impossible, however, he observes-- since through oppressive practices, one is not enabled as to participate fully in the affairs of one's country. Thus, his "liberation" is to be effected from innovative application of the *ubuntu* as a view of existence from indigenous traditions of Africa that purportedly "... will make South Africa a truly humane society."¹⁸ Thus, in Shutte, the *ubuntu* philosophy is purportedly brought to further social interests in the contemporary world. In principle, the world may have changed, but *ubuntu* is relevant.

Indeed, at the heart of Shutte's *ubuntu* community is the struggle against the contemporary social structures in modern South Africa, a struggle in which he sees any abandonment of *ubuntu* community as an act of betrayal. Such struggles as that of Shutte are struggles for social change, and have historically been at the centre of the clamour for social advancement of working class people. They have shown that class-divisions and class-rules are key issues in social philosophy. In our own century, no doubt they have exercised a lot of influence. In the case of Shutte in particular, what is significant is why a majority of the South African people are disprivileged in South Africa. The suspicion that social practices--like apartheid--created to sustain them inconcomitant with communalism are to blame, is hard to dismiss in his work. In this context, his philosophical grapple does not differ fundamentally from those of the fathers of "scientific" communalism, namely, Nkrumah, Senghor, Kaunda and Nyerere.¹⁹

Thus, Shutte extends his discussion to deliberate, likeably, many issues of contemporary philosophical and cultural concern in *ubuntu* context, one of which is the aims of education. Of course Shutte here is talking about the contemporary system of school education. When it comes to education, he spins his own moral narrative of legitimation around *ubuntu*--as a metaphysics. He contends that education should not be offered for self-determination as is the case with the largely Western aims of education, but it should be offered for "self-transcendence." This particular objective, in his view, resonates with his desire to transcend the perceived Western individualism and its concomitant principle in education, allegedly, "education for self-interests." "Self-transcendence" in his view engenders the values of self-determination but within the confines of the communitarian metaphysics, where "self-transcendence," in his opinion, means self-transcendence for the mutual benefit of the self and community. However, Shutte does not entirely tackle, nor does he seem interested to tackle, the issue of how it can be that the interests of the individual as an individual can be catered for in such a "communalistic" system of education which, is what the capitalist or non-communalist morality upholds against communalism, and, indeed, which seems to capture and hold sway the new South Africa.²⁰

Let us end our exposition in the current chapter with the following general question: What eventually does this Shutte's sense of communalism guarantee us? There is one thorny issue: To some reasonable extent it would appear that his envisaged communalist turn would merely modify the external forms of the dictatorship over the individual. Certainly, while in the perceived Western societies, the state--even the most liberal, bounds the individual to it, within communalism the community bounds and suffocates the individual as well. In either case, the individual gets no respite, though he/she is freer in the perceived Western societies. However, Shutte's philosophy

contributes to freeing morals--placing an African metaphysics as a guide to philosophy. As we see, communalism is truly a philosophy based on a central but unproven metaphysical principle in African communalism, namely, "I am because we are."

6.3 Summary and conclusion

In this chapter, we have looked at both contemporary Western and contemporary non-Western philosophies about human nature and their foundations. We have observed that for the philosophies examined, cultural influences are an ineliminable part of them. Our analysis, however, specifically reveals the extent of the influence of the chosen concepts of the community and its related aspects, which take centre-stage in these philosophies in the definition of human nature and the attendant nature of the distribution of the good. For example, we have observed that while the "liberal" philosophies of human nature continue the individualistic Hegelian tradition of thought as started by the Western pioneers of philosophy, in which the individual as an individual is more important than the community, the meaning of the community is different in the "liberal" and "radical" traditions. In the "radical" traditions, the community determines the distribution of good unlike in the "liberal," where private interests override. On the other hand, in the contemporary non-Western thought, communalism continues to redefine the extent of the role of the community in the affairs of the distribution of the good, and in the role of the individual in the distribution of the good.

Suffice it to say that the notions of human nature emerging therein emerge from the constant mutual interactions with the relevant cultural experiences and the relevant philosophical concepts, which seek to defend communal metaphysical assumptions.

Our analysis reveals that even the "radical" tradition in the Western thought with its apparent communalistic tendencies, does not compare very well with the neo-communalism of the contemporary non-Western communitarian thought over human nature, since "communing" in the traditional African sense, it emerges, involves much more than the distribution of good for common benefit. Profoundly in this deeper sense, communalism is the view that a human being is a human being thanks to the community which makes him or her human.

However, we wish to reiterate, as our investigation reveals, that if the Western and the non-Western are hereby taken to be the sole concepts of human nature, they do not, in their present form, exhaustively answer the question, "What is human nature?" precisely in view of their conceptual incompatibilism. That is, none of these studies completely answers the question in spite of their attempts to define human nature as the analysis above has shown.

6.4 Notes

1. This point of the socio-context bases of knowledge comes out powerfully in many chapters of our work, for instance, chapter three.

2. See Richard Rorty, *Objectivism, Relativism and Truth: Philosophical Papers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). In particular, reference is made to Rorty's chapter entitled "Democracy or Philosophy."

It should be noted that the contemporary philosophy of human nature, whether by Rorty or otherwise revolves around the two concepts "liberal" and "radical."

It must also be borne in mind that in our study the term "individualism" is used in the socio-political sense. As a concept in social and political theory, it means that the concern of all political and social community is to preserve the rights, guarantee the independence and enhance the development of the individual persons. By extension, the government must desist to interfere in the lives of individual person's; the best government is one least present or least causing interference in people's lives.

3. See Richard Rorty, *Ibid.* Our primary sources on the issues raised here include Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), Stephen Lukes, *Individualism* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1973)

Rorty seems to imply that the terms, "radical" and "liberal", are not just concepts, but, indeed, descriptions of two lived-out forms of individualism in the contemporary West.

It should be noted also, as we have already stated in chapter five, that the term "community" implies "the characteristic of communing, i.e. sharing." It is a characteristic of individuals or members taken together and seen in coordinated interaction. Thus, it is possible to talk of several kinds of "community" based on the degree of communing or levels of social interaction. For instance, an "atomistic" community may be said to be one where members have the greatest autonomy; the "undifferentiated mass" is the community where members have the least autonomy and the highest degree of communion. In the middle of the two models lie several possibilities, of which the "radical" is one of them, for example.

4. As quoted in D. A. Masolo, "Western and African Communalism: A Comparison," unpublished paper, p. 4.
5. *Ibid.* Herein in his work quoted, Masolo gives an incisive discussion of Simmel.
- While Masolo's discussion is quoted from his work noted in note 4, Senghor's observations are cited from Leopold S. Senghor, *On African Socialism*, trans., M. Cook (New York: Frederick Praeger, 1964).
6. See Stephen Lukes, *Op. cit.*, pp. 17-18.
7. See Alasdair MacIntyre, *Op. cit.*, pp. 204, 216-220.
8. For the discussion on Buddhism, Hindu and Confucianism, see our chapter five.
9. A concise introduction to Dong Zhongshu's mysticism is given by D. Stewart and H. G. Blocker, *Fundamentals of Philosophy* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1996), pp. 506-513.
10. See our chapter five for an introduction to Dong Zhongshu and eastern mysticism.
11. For our discussion here and below on African communalism, see J. K. Nyerere, *Ujamaa: The Basics of African Socialism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1988), K. Kaunda, *A Humanist in Africa* (London: Longmans, 1966), L. S. Senghor, *Ibid.*, D. A. Masolo, *Op. cit.*, Nkrumah: *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for Decolonization and Development, with Particular Reference to the African Revolution*, (London: Heinemann, 1964), *Africa Must Unite* (London: Heinemann, 1963), *Neocolonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism* (London: Nelson, International Publishers, 1967).
12. *Op. cit.*
13. Reference is made here to Augustine Shutte, *Ubuntu: An Ethic for a New South Africa* (Johannesburg: Cluster Publications, 2001). Also see for our discussion on the same matter below, J. K. Nyerere, *Op. cit.*, K. Kaunda, *Op. cit.*, L. S. Senghor, *Op. cit.*, K. Nkrumah, *Op. cit.*
14. A. Shutte, *Op. cit.*, p. 2.
15. *Ibid.* p. 3. Also see pp. 1-15 of the same work for a detailed viewpoint.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 1-15.

19. J. K. Nyerere, *Op. cit.*, K. Kaunda, *Op. cit.*, L. S. Senghor, *Op. cit.*, D. A. Masolo, *Op. cit.*

20. See A. Shutte, *Op. cit.*, pp. 1-15.

A similar conclusion as that from Shutte above can be drawn from most contemporary African concepts of the individual. Consider the Adigo saying, for example, *Mutu ni aatu*, that is, "A person is because of other persons." This is an utterance said when certain social contexts arise. For example, on occasion of a misfortune befallen upon an individual, or when the successful accomplishment of a task demands the help of others, one may retort *Mutu ni aatu*. It essentially means one is enabled in such situations courtesy of others.

The Adigo are an East African Mijikenda community with a very strong sense of community. The concepts *Uutu* (near equivalent to *ubuntu*.) as the case may be (i.e., the quality or state of being a *mutu*, singular for *aatu*), is very close to the Adigo's own sense of communality. Thus, in the two ordinary social contexts, the Adigo saying serves to confirm a communal ethic. Although the utterance stated in the abstract points to or assumes an eternal and transcendent nature of humans, it is an ethic and as such, the utterance is not eternal and transcendent itself; it is a finite ethical language limited by temporality and particularity of existence.

Chapter seven

Conceptions of sub-human nature from Western and non-Western thought as extensions from prevailing philosophical concepts

We have seen in chapter four, five and six how philosophies about human nature influenced by such cultural elements as communal social structures, have led to the development of specific concepts about human nature, and even in some cases, the alleged place of humans of such nature in society. For instance, we have seen in chapter three and four how cultural experiences led to specific Western concepts about human nature. At the centre of the Western specifications of human nature, have been philosophical ideas such as the concept of reason. While many of the non-Western societies followed--in their view, the sensible practice of condemning what in their wisdom were the inappropriate perceived natures of humankind, and the supposed ensuing evil forms of governments and social organization. However, it emerged that both the Western and the non-Western philosophies of human nature merely caricature human nature as they exaggerate human nature features which they consider most important and worthy of humans.

Our investigation in the current chapter reveals that concepts of sub-human nature similarly emerged from the philosophical discussion about human nature—projecting themselves as extensions from the well-known concepts in the philosophical debates about the human nature. In other words, the notions of human nature became part and parcel of a process in the creation and formulation of images or the conceptions of the perceived sub-human and even non-human natures. Notice that we mentioned elements of this matter in section 2.6 and 5.3, for example.

The prefix "sub" in the concept "sub-human nature" connotes "below", "less than" or "lacking something." Vain, however, is any suggestion that any of the conceptions of sub-human, inhuman or even non-human natures are necessarily biologically natural, universal or immortal. In other words, the resultant conceptions of the sub-human, inhuman and non-human nature served cultural interests as well, sustaining the perceived "normal" human nature concepts. One need only look at the following simple but pertinent examples to understand this point

7.1 The gender debate and the legitimating philosophy in Western thought

"Legitimation" is the practice of validating norms, and is a major philosophical practice. A common theory in philosophy about how illegitimate gendered practices are or can be has always been that philosophy legitimated gender practices by propounding a notion of human nature that acted as the theoretical framework within which androcentrism thrived. The core of that philosophical notion about human nature is that ideal people are rational. Once this was granted in the Aristotelian and the Cartesian philosophies, it followed that people who do not, or can not exhibit rationality, fall way behind the ideal. In other words, a sense of the notion of an alleged "sub-humanity" or non-humanity emerged as the product of the catachrestical extension. For instance, Plato may be said to have originated this sort of extension in his philosophy that, only the rational know the truth, from which Descartes picked his notion of cogitating beings that only thinking beings are the sole knowers of truth. Although this may not be the only notion from which the senses of sub-humanity developed, congruent to this view, though, there grew the outlook that the "ideal" human being is one who is free from passions, and the constrictions of culture and personal bias. Indeed, the notion that a knower must be cold rational and objective, derived its specificity from such widespread philosophical speculations since Hesiod.¹

Thanks to Hesiod, Plato and Descartes, it is possible to note how this philosophy of sub-humanity progressed and what it led to. Thus, for instance, the philosophy of Hesiod, an ancient Greek poet, was one of validating androcentrism. He stated in his portrayal of women using a Greek story about Zeus that, Zeus (a Greek god) created women in order to make men miserable. From women, he alleged, came the entire race of wives; as he says, the dangerous female race and "tribe" (of wives) who live with men and bring them nothing but harm. He reiterated, for instance, that there is no help forthcoming from women in dreadful poverty; but they are ready enough to share with men in wealth.² After enumerating all the ills that Hesiod thought women bring upon men, he concluded that women are irrational. Regrettably, it is this same implication--that some people are irrational--that was picked and developed by Plato and Descartes several centuries later, when in their philosophies they insisted that the ideal class of knowers are men because only they are purportedly self-conscious, autonomous, responsible, self-controlled and free from passions--individuals willing and able to account for one's claims, and to judge and decide rationally.

As we mentioned in chapter two and three, philosophers as early as Plato urged logic as the chief instrument in their approach to life, because, in their opinion, it is superior; and whoever uses it, is superior. Even in the contemporary world, in modern-day social affairs and in some contemporary sections, that notion of human nature--that the ideal is the rational has been naturalized as the background notion in conceptions of whom and what ideal people are, and as the basis for conceiving opposites. It is a notion that privileges certain characteristics as the alleged evidence of the ability to develop and exercise rational choice and control over life, the world and relationships. The notion takes it that the measure of a truly human being is the exercise of wisdom, through the absence of subjective personal involvement; since, allegedly, the presence of the elements of that

involvement is purportedly congruent to poorly developed rational elements. Subjective personal involvement was associated with "lesser" beings.

This notion--of specific philosophical origin and purpose, unfortunately became the near-universal theory for understanding the behaviour, ideas and rights of people. As we mentioned earlier, rationality and freedom are the highest sanctions in Western philosophy, and as such, they are the cardinal principles of Western morality, for example, such that when we surveyed the essence of the entire system of Western philosophy, juxtaposing it with some of the major cultural practices, we concluded that reason offered one of the most stable foundation. For instance, it was the critical theoretical framework by which some philosophers sought to provide the basis from within which colonialism, racism and slavery would thrive through a process of class-idealization. For example, some philosophers wrote that it was right for Africans and non-Europeans to be colonized and subordinated, because they allegedly fell short of the rational standard. In that regard, Kant is well known for having claimed that Black Africans--whether men or women, are rightfully subordinated, because although in them the rational capacity is present, it is weakly developed. Because of this, they cannot govern themselves but must submit to the deliberative capacity of White people. On a similar misconceived dehumanizing pretext, some philosophers in the past sanctioned the then existing practice of slavery. Aristotle, for instance, though respected for his philosophical prowess, warranted the right of some people to enslave others stating that rational people are allegedly free people; free people are, ideally, superior to women and slaves because rational people are reasonable while slaves (men and women) have only enough rationality to hear and obey orders.³ Likewise, St. Aquinas once wrote--dehumanizing women and justifying the rule of men over women as follows:

Good order would have been wanting in the human family if some were not governed by others wiser than themselves. Therefore, by such a kind of subjection woman is a subject to men, because in man the discretion of reason predominates.⁴

In the mainstream Western philosophies as have seen, being rational involved a renunciation, and, instead, eschewing rationality, which regarded all other possible alternatives as inferior. This renunciation stand was the common stand against irrationality and values. This is not to say that the above philosophers were right in their conceptions, but to prove how their conceptions projected from the prevailing alleged rational pedestal of thought regarding human nature.

For instance, the foregoing St. Aquinas' quote reflects nothing but misconceived thinking that comes in to sanction segregating a whole class of women as a block by providing the wrong theoretical backing and framework. St. Aquinas' ruminations were, it may be noted, nothing but an instance of a common philosophical pretext, its kind often used to unfairly justify androcentrism, Eurocentrism, slavery and colonization. We say it was misconceived because an alternative thinking by some philosophers led to different but apparently more informed conclusions on the treatment of people, though not necessarily radically different. Because here we have confined ourselves to the gender debate to serve as an example, let us give appropriate examples from therein. For instance, in his good wisdom, Locke's idea of the rights of women came to be rooted in his view that women's thinking and situation in androcentric societies is not natural or to be based on an alleged metaphysical mark. While some of his predecessors even wrongly thought that the idealized conceptions about people were natural conceptions, Locke did not renounce women; he followed the good wisdom of Aristotle in condemning that thought. He did not believe in the principle that God or a purported irrationality made women subordinate to man; but that human law, misconceptions and customs made man feel supreme.⁵

Similarly, Masham whom Locke correctly described as a theologian and philosopher, held the view congruent to Locke's that custom brings about a differential understanding, cements misconceptions and the treatment of people and, consequently the wrong notion that women are of a different nature to men. Therefore, in her opinion, since custom is a principal magistrate of people's lives, let people by all means, endeavor to obtain good customs.⁶

Locke described Masham to a friend in glowing terms as follows:

The lady herself is so well versed in theological and philosophical studies and of such an original mind that you will not find many men to whom she is not superior in wealth of knowledge and ability to profit by it. Her judgment is excellent, and I know few who can bring such clearness of thought to bear upon the most abstruse subjects, or such a capacity for searching through and solving the difficulties of questions beyond the range. I do not say of most women, but even the most learned men.⁷

Masham, fondly referred to as "lady Masham" by Locke, is famous for having championed the rights of British women to have good education, challenging existing social and philosophical mores, and castigating men in particular who were against good customs as "lowly." Since they were unable to rise above the conventional prejudice of society, she stated, they were destitute for knowledge.⁸

Her conception of the origin and content of gender-based suffering of people was a product of her culture and her philosophy yet, a different brand of philosophy, though, namely, that. women are not irrational by nature, and by a proper change of conceptions through education, it is possible to change the misconceived beliefs, customs and the norms that oppress people, and by extension of the same principle, emancipate slaves and all other oppressed people. Masham herself considered Locke as one of the very few men who had transcended the common socio-cultural beliefs.

7.2 Beck's dispositional opposites and suggestions about sub-human nature:

Africa, Asia and Europe compared

Let us demonstrate further how the philosophical notions of human nature led, and continue to lead to the notions of sub-humanity, or inhumanity and therefore in a sense, a confirmation of our above thesis that philosophical and cultural concepts are at the centre of sub-human nature conceptions. Let us, in the following example, focus on a line of thinking by a contemporary philosopher, Beck, whose line of thought was held by prominent philosophers of the past like Montesquieu (1689-1755), a British baron and philosopher.

Montesquieu suggested that non-Westerners as a block are uncivilized, supposedly because of the geographic regions they come from. Today, in the twenty first century, this trend of thought is represented by Beck. At the centre of this argument, however, is an emerging notion toward giving greater respect to other cultures. An attitude of learning, rather than denunciation or conversion seems to be emerging. Beck, a little known author of "The Creative Proportions between the World Cultures," wishes to depict a non-White as non-rational, but he is neither different nor original in his line of thinking. He emphasizes--probably following Montesquieu's theory in geography, of the purported decisive role geographic factors play in shaping human nature. Thus, he contended that in the world, there are primordial dispositions of humans which are determined through the physical realities. Beck uses the climatic conditions of Europe, Asia and Africa as his penetrative instruments of analysis to argue like Montesquieu, that climate invariably determines a disposition of humans' to life.⁹ Accordingly, when looking at Africa and the Asiatic region, he writes:

It appears to be a giant bulk of mainland filled with oppositions, which have no less gigantic dimensions, and determined by transcontinental far-reaching climate rich in contrasts; just think of the monsoons and the trade winds, which cover enormous regions of Asia and Africa.¹⁰

Compared to Beck's Africa and Asia, Europe, he states, "... shows the face of a delicately differentiated landscape, interrupted and marked by many oceans and middle-sized seas and determined by a moderate climate."¹¹

Based on these observations, he paints his image of Africa and Asia as follows:

Therefore, it might be no surprise if in Africa and Asia, reality was understood as unlimited unity of strong contrasts, and man there developed according sensitive, intuitive ability and basic habit. Hereby in the information of its surface the continent of Africa shows more in checking transitions and has sharp oppositions, as does the continent of Asia. Thus, Africa invites man to live immediately out of nature, to choose the vital identification with nature as his way of life.¹²

Following from that quotation is a basic congruence between Beck and the anthropologists like Levy-Bruhl. While the anthropologists saw non-Whites as non-rational (intuitive, sensitive) because of purported mental structures, Beck used the element of the environment. But he and the anthropologists are two sides of the same old story, which will hold, (and this is also what Marx suggested), that intelligence does mean something different in different societies given certain existential conditions.

Nor does Beck's theory intend to bring solace to Asia. It leads to the unhappy statement which was also made in chapter four about Asia--as Beck puts it, that: "[Asia]... rather provokes an intellectual withdrawal, a way of life shaped by introverted spiritually keeping distance (and confronting) against nature by balancing calmness."¹³

So, when it comes to a comparison with Europe, Beck's Africa and Asia have allegedly irreversibly transgressed the boundaries of rationality. He asserts:

In Europe nevertheless, according to the mentioned geographical climatic conditions of life, the conscious primarily inclines to differentiate and to structure reality rationally;

there is the typical tendency of setting demarcation and far-reaching articulating tendency.

The more intuitive disposition of the African and Asiatic consciousness seems to have a more immediate and original relationship to reality; the European disposition, the stronger inclination to rational differentiation, demands more clearly an objectivation which puts the empirical reality into substance, a reflection turned outside.¹⁴

Yet, any incredulity in Beck's undermining of Africa and Asia must be understood against Beck's background: Beck's intention is not just to speak "from" the existential conditions of Europe, Africa and Asia against the existence of a similar or identical human nature therein comparative to that of Europe, but in truth he is a product of Western "logocentrism" too: thus, he may be sympathetic to existential conditions, but wrongly sees them as invariably determining rationality. However, where Beck is sympathetic to the prevailing existential facts, Bhabha and Fanon below are not; instead they yell regrets, and grieve about the denunciation notions created about the African and call for change.¹⁵

7.3 Bhabha and Fanon on the social sources of colonial stereotyping

Bhabha and Fanon provide good examples of our thesis that concepts about sub-human nature are projections of philosophical conceptions about what humans are or ought to be and must be examined and not taken at face value. Bhabha, a political critic and philosopher, went beyond the cultural lines to explore the kinds of concepts that structured and stereotyped the colonized in the colonies. He asserted that all over the colonies, the colonial subject was stereotyped in such a way as to confirm the West as superior and most rational. This stereotyping emerged from racial relations that served to structure and order the relations between the colonized and the colonizer. At the centre of that stereotyping, Bhabha notes, are conceptions, fears and phobias. Among the conceptions, he notes that the concepts of rationality and bestiality were at the very centre of the racial relationships, and went a long way to sustain the relationship between the colonizer and the

colonized. From his extensive study, Bhabha notes how there flowed the myth that Black people are beastly. It was the crowning mythical calamity about the Black people which, as our further investigation reveals, Okot p'Bitek--a renowned Ugandan literary writer--called the myth of the "primitive man." P'Bitek suggested that the myth of the primitive man was sustained by the coexistence between concepts and social realities. Its genesis was the myth that in Africa, there are people as black as coal, who are uncivilized, beastly, wild and savage--whose life teems with degeneracy and unreason. For Bhabha, to none of the colonizers was this myth, however, given as a freehold. He suggested that the notion of the "primitive man" with its attendant concepts of irrationality, emerged as a response to a persistent cultural urge, on the one hand, to give internal expression and theoretically valid form to the colonial impulses of reckless philosophical, political and economic self-assertion of the colonizers.¹⁶ One of the concepts to be asserted was the notion of irrationality. So within that kind of perception of the individuals in the colonies--coupled with fears and phobias against the colonized, the Western colonial governments constructed the nation-states, he observes, in such a way as colonial subjects became subjects for government "normalizing processes." Skin colour became a sign of degeneracy and impunity, a sign for judging and administering. Bhabha finally suggests that the signification is not only a site of fears and fantasies, but a reflection of the standing colonialist social structures as well.¹⁷

Similarly, Fanon (1925-1961), though his philosophy differs in content from that of Bhabha, it provides a good example of how culture and projections from the philosophical notions of human nature led to biased conceptions. He explains how, for him, the myth of unreason became a source of phobia and fetish, veiling the social relations that it was supposed to perpetuate. Central in Fanon's exposition, however, is the role conceptions play.¹⁸ Thus, in the often quoted citation

below, Fanon depicts how the purported conceptions of reason and unreason are conveniently veiled in cultural practice. He pictures and states of the perceived degenerate status of one colonized individual:

My body is given back to me sprawled out, recoloured, clad in mourning in that white winter day. The Negro is an animal, the negro is bad, the negro is shivering because he is cold, the little boy is trembling because he is afraid of the nigger, the nigger is shivering with cold, that cold goes through your bones, the handsome little boy is trembling because he thinks that the nigger is quivering with rage, the little White boy throws himself into his mothers arms: Mama, the nigger's going to eat me up.¹⁹

Thus, in that quote, the "nigger" is depicted as a symbol of unreason; but class relations and philosophical notions demand that he/she must be depicted as such as well. So, as the White child in blank fear trembles given its social class and socially expected alleged cognitive dispositions, this picture cultivates, or is cast as cultivating, albeit imaginary, such fears as baseless as those horrors which children imagine coming upon them. Yet, Fanon states, this dread and darkness of the mind of some of the White people cannot be dispelled except by a deliberate change of the conceptions which sustain that fear and dread, and the desolation and the anguish of the nigger-culture.

7.4 Summary and conclusion

In this chapter, we have looked at some of the ideas cast over perceived sub-human and inhuman natures projecting from philosophies of human nature. Our basis for the discussion of the alleged pathological natures is the belief that at the centre of these conceptions, at least in part, are philosophical notions. We analyzed some of the ideas cast, for example, of the colonized and women. Our investigation reveals that these as ideas exist as projections from the perceived ideas of the alleged normal human being. We observed further, for example, that women are portrayed, in sections of philosophy, as the "second sex," and lumped together with slaves. Not only the ideas

but some cultural practices serve to reinforce, sharpen and mirror it. For instance, the cultural practice of androcentrism reinforced (and continues to reinforce) the ideas that "ideal" people are those who are, through and through, "unlike women." This, in conjunction with androcentrism and patriarchy, are in turn used to discriminate against women. Thus, our finding is that conceptions about alleged ideal human nature, together with cultural practice, reinforce each other in a dialectical mutually supportive relationship that determines what normal and sub-normal human natures are; or, (vice versa) that the perceived abnormal human natures determine what "normal" or "perfect" human nature is in a mutually interactive fashion.

7.5 Notes

1. This account about Hesiod is cited from T. Digby, *Men Doing Feminism* (London: Routledge, 1998).
2. T. Digby, *Ibid.* Also see Descartes' account of human nature in, Rene Descartes, "Meditations on First Philosophy," eds., R. Cummins and D. Owen, *Central Readings in the History of Modern Philosophy: Descartes to Kant* (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1992), especially meditation 1 and 2.
3. Quoted from G. Boyd, *Man of Reason* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1984).
4. *Ibid.*
5. See J. Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed., Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), especially treatise two, sections 4, 54, 55, and treatise one, sections 29, 45, 4760-65.
We acknowledge the guidance given to us on this matter through the article by Melissa. A. Butler, "Early Liberal Roots of Feminism: Locke and the Attack on Patriarchy," eds., N. Tuana, and R. Tong, *Feminism and Philosophy: Essential Readings in Theory, Reinterpretation and Application* (Oxford: West View Press, 1995), pp. 27-47.
6. See M. A. Butler, *Ibid.*, particularly the subsection, "Locke and the Rational Woman", pp. 43-46.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 43-46.
9. H. Beck, "Europe-Africa-Asia: The Creative Proportion between the world Cultures." Unpublished paper presented to the *Six Annual Conference for African Philosophy and Studies*, Nairobi, Kenya, 2000, pp. 4-15.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*
15. Reference is made to the work of H. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), and F. Fanon, *Black Skins, White Masks* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1968).

16. H. Bhabha, *Ibid.*

17. *Ibid.*

18. Reference is made to F. Fanon, *Op. cit.*

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 113-114.

Chapter eight

Conclusion

The history of philosophy reveals the concepts of human nature as being a record of philosophers' reactions, in thought and their wisdom, in adapting to and making sense of human nature within specific but diverse conditions of life--like political strife, social misery, indigenous traditions, modernity, and generally the need to improve people's quality of life. The history of that philosophy shows that the philosophers sought to understand and ameliorate the conditions of life of people by discussing the foundations of human nature concepts and the meanings and the implications attached to them. However, in their interpretation of human nature, the philosophers created many and new meanings.

In chapter one of this thesis, we raised the question: Are there "purist" conceptions of human nature, that is, are there conceptions not predetermined by culture and social contexts? We hypothesized that all philosophical concepts about human nature are likely to be influenced by social contexts and are historically contingent, that is, there is no such view of human nature that is likely to be a universal image, and that there are likely to be a plurality of views about human nature. The inquiry into the philosophy of human nature from chapter two to seven revealed that none of the views about human nature is free from cultural instigation in the first place. That instigation unveiled, instead, as some of the profound forces, such cultural factors as intellectual schools and trends of thought, social and political developments, moral concerns and other factors. It revealed the philosophy of human nature as a response to practical, theoretical and conceptual demands elicited by diverse and changing circumstances. As we moved on in our analysis from one

historical contingency to another, and from one cultural context to another, one indeed got the impression that the philosophy of human nature is a way of the negotiation of human nature concepts albeit at the level of philosophical discourse in our case

We also raised the pertinent central philosophical question at the beginning: "What, after all, is human nature, if anything"? We should note that in our inquiry, human nature seems to be nothing but the alleged substance of humans beings, together with the range of expected behavior of people over time, it is philosophical conception (or conceptions) people have allowed to form in the mind about what it is to be a human being--as philosophers perpetually compose and reconsider, philosophically, the related components of those conceptions. These conceptions sustain the images of people's human nature.

Our investigation revealed, further, that human nature does not just involve the factual characteristics ascribed to human nature. Although they may coincide with human nature, the philosophy of human nature, indeed, orientates towards the possible characteristics normatively ascribable and recognizable in humans; and these are a substantive part of the conceptions of human nature. In the process of philosophically creating meanings of human nature, the ensuing concepts are the media by which people "know" human nature. And this is of special interest to us since, for many of us, human nature concepts are often operative without necessarily of us being aware of them in the sense philosophers are. For the philosophers, there is the deliberate attempt to be critically self-conscious of these concepts.

In retrospect, it is possible to divide the historical development of a Western philosophy of human nature into five major phases according to the cultural and conceptual demands that took place. These phases are rationalist/empiricist, Marxist, existentialist and linguistic. In the rationalist/empiricist phase, there is an effort to compose a general concept on the epistemological demand that the rational nature of humans is paramount for various reasons such as the solution of problems, and that that rational nature must be understood in its profundity. In the Marxist period, a major analysis of human nature is undertaken, emphasizing on the social element. Here, work and social solidarity are posited as features uniquely and befittingly of the metaphysical stance of mankind's existence. In the existentialist phase, since the world is perceived as changed in such a way as it is no longer profitable to believe, for example, in God, it characterizes a new attitude toward human nature for the purported promotion of the dignity and the recognition of the efforts of mankind. It is an attitude which holds that to be human is to be free to decide whom humans want to be as humans; and to clog that freedom is to clog the alleged primal being of mankind. In the linguistic phase, there is a concentration on another major front of investigation of the humanness of humans. This front is language. There is a growing pre-occupation with the issues raised from inherited conceptual philosophical problems about human nature, and of new problems arising from peculiar past experiences, which philosophers seek to deal with differently. There is an expanding need to understand human speech in relation to rational thought, intelligence and the expression of reality.

In these major works of rationalism, empiricism, existentialism and the linguistic view, however, we see the culmination of a Eurocentric development in the notion of human nature that began with Plato's reductivism in his consideration of the nature of the human individual, which culminates in

corpus of alleged logical evidence and related philosophical theory. It led, albeit revocably, to the view that perhaps souls, rationality and liberty are among the vicarious elements which absolutely compose, distinguish and define human nature. No philosophers writing today can afford pretence to ignore this conceptually rich source of critical information and its implications for conceptualizing the nature of human nature.

Rationalism, empiricism, existentialism and the linguistic school of thought, however, revealed, for their major inherent conceptual weaknesses, because the problem of what human nature is, is both an existential problem as well as a conceptual issue. For instance, these schools of thought de-emphasized the body over the mental spirit in their characterization of human nature. They stressed the abstract elements of the soul, for instance, as the exclusive elements of the humanness of humans--abilities like rationality. However, in stressing these elements, they ignored the decisive material dependence by all states of the soul, for instance, upon the conditions of the body. No wonder Marx, for instance, defended this latter position when he highlighted on the effects of existential conditions and the environment on human nature. He argued that liberty and rationality that so much guided and inspired the philosophers in the Western philosophy of human nature, are, for instance, elements that were constantly constructed through social, cultural and economic processes as processes of habit and belief-formation dependent on cultures and experiences. He thus suggested that not all humans in all cultures share the same notions of human nature.

The second setback in these schools of thought we observe arises from the attempted reduction of human bodies to minds or ideas such as the philosophies in the West perceived human nature as identical to the abstract ideas of what the mind can produce, like freedom and rationality. But such

picture shed about human nature was projected from a misunderstanding of the absolute nature of reality. A complete nature demands seeing human nature as determined by and arising partly from specific historical contexts, and instigated by the specific contexts in the determination of whom humans are. All the concepts, say, rationality, were a social phenomena. To give an example, rationality, for instance attracted most attention from philosophers as a neutral and sober way of solving practical as well as conceptual problems. All the concepts of human nature discussed in our thesis have individually been shown to be images of what human nature can be under particular circumstances.

Moreover, it is clear that the philosophy of human nature emerged in a changing society, and the ideas of human nature are identified with one or the other of the social forces that the transitions contained. None of the views of human nature emerged as the insinuated universal illustration of a fixed picture of human nature, but only a possible picture or version about what humans purportedly can or ought to be, given, given social-contexts.

Globally, the philosophers of human nature generated theory, but they did, too, perform the role of players and referees of culture and human experiences as well. Theirs was an effort at a qualitative assessment of what humans can be and ought to be, what life is and ought to become. New cultural experiences brought new explorations and simulated new conceptions of human nature. Individually, however, the philosophies barely resulted in an agreed-upon shared meaning about what humans are and should be. Their notions of human nature described and continue to describe, the philosophers' common inquiry, though their conclusions are diverse, because their starting points were diverse. The arguments and concepts, though they define a common field--which uses

These approaches and arrives at diverse conclusions, the problem of who a human being is, remains generalizations from the experiences known.

Another pertinent hypothesis of our research was that probably there is no general or overall image of human nature. Our discussion, however, reveals that the philosophy of human nature has overall, dominant and interesting images simulated about human nature. Accordingly, the main elements and foundations of a Western simulation can be isolated as follows: That the elusive elements of human nature are neither largely physical nor biological, but logical elements, i.e., elements about a possible human nature--the elements associated with Western civilization such as rationality and individuality. These purported exclusive but elusive elements are supposed to characterize humans' habits, their culture and conception of humanity. Indeed, as Bronowski asserted, for the development of science, philosophy and political communities, these were prerequisites.

From this overall perspective derived the picture of an ideal person, i.e., of what, ideally, a human being ostensibly should be: i.e., that is a person who is independent, rational and intelligent, uninfluenced in his or her generation of knowledge by culture and the passions that so commonly influence the commonplace people.

But how is this picture to be judged? This is, indeed, a Western picture of human nature—a bigger than life Western picture of human nature but not an absolute; informative of human nature, and based on a metaphysics of individuality, rationality and freedom. But there are other images, menacingly insistent, very powerful views about what human nature is, which reveal not only deep contrasts but also pertinent possible areas of inclusion in conceptualizing of human nature. One of

these images is found in areas like African philosophy and *Weltanschauungen*. It is the view based on the metaphysical claim that the one metaphysically basic element constitutive of the humanness of humanity is a sense of belongingness and primary responsiveness to community. This conception, though perhaps less dominant in the traditional and Platonic circles, is nonetheless, not only conceptually present, but actually lived in traditional African *Weltanschauungen*, for example. The conception is upheld because the human person is perceived to be the person in communion. It is a conception which in traditional African thought is advanced from within the communitarian ethic and mode of social organization.

There is also the powerful Marxist model for example, where all humans are portrayed primarily as workers; where work is perceived as the primary social process and existential metaphysics of shaping and transforming mankind's material and social worlds--as it creates people as social beings, as they create goods and services. Marxism's point is that it is by work that people become humans; work is the primary being of mankind.

One must note that the various broad conceptions about human nature we have cited above, and in the body of our thesis are, of course, enlightening on human nature, embedded, as they are, in the major trends of philosophy--trends like Marxism, existentialism and African communalism. At the heart of them all is metaphysics. For to argue that humans are rational, communal, free or not, is to assume an ultimate state of being--which is a metaphysical stance. Yet, metaphysics alone did not obviate the conceptions. Cultural issues were important as we have mentioned. To be more precise, the perceived metaphysical stances were an expression of the broader cultural influences as well.

Consider, for example, the notions of "abnormal humanness" such as "individualism," or the view that absolute humanness is being the communal being. The relative validity of these can be contextualized in relation to relevant theoretical contexts and the relevant influencing social structures.

In view of the above discussion, our research then leads to one general focus for any further research on human nature and, how concepts of human nature should be judged as follows: The problem of defining human nature is both a conceptual as well as an existential problem. As a conceptual problem, it is an attempt to seek for the foundations--in thought, of human nature thought. As such it postulates concepts like rationality, communality, and the extra-dimensionality of humans as the purported metaphysical foundations of human nature. As an existential problem, one realizes that the concepts of human nature arise in close interaction with the social and historical environments. The best example is how the philosophical notion of personhood has been naturalized in conceptions of whom and what ideal "men" are and could be in androcentric society as a notion that privileges certain characteristics as evidence of the ability to develop and exercise rational choice and control over life, the world and relationships.

We mentioned that the philosophical notion takes it that the measure of a man is the exercise of wisdom through the absence of subjective personal involvement. Subjective personal involvement was associated with purportedly lesser beings, allegedly like women. This notion became the near-universal theory for understanding the behaviour, ideas and the rights of women and other people as our study has shown. Thus, "purists" need not see the social-context basis and the historical situation of philosophy as a negative element, but as an inescapable part. It should not be perceived

is a problem but, indeed, as a positive advancing step in that it is useful for enlightening the philosophies, and for discussing future befitting conceptions--which may draw from them.

The overarching focus emergent from this thesis is the interdependence of the philosophy of human nature and social contexts, for, it is clear that there can be no philosophy of human nature, which is exclusive of the instigation of and influence by culture.

Thus, today as philosophers learn to evaluate philosophy and adopt the concepts of human nature for the present day, we must learn to accept this: that for any concept of human nature, human nature, therefore, is--first and foremost, not completely known. Being culturally instigated, it is only in part realized; imaged in the practices and concepts specific to the particular social contexts about what human nature entails and should be--framed from the context of specific people's experiences. It behooves people to re-examine the prevailing concepts for alternatives where a notion does not critically reflect the most rational goals.

Let us put the above point differently as follows: Our research reveals the fusion of philosophy and culture rather than their separation, and we have cited many examples in the thesis to illustrate this, like the sociopolitical, religious and philosophical roots of the notion that indigenous traditional Africans are communal by nature, or even non-rational.

For further research, we recommend the following: one, given the varieties of concepts of human nature available and possible, we recommend that a framework for judging between them should be discussed. Two, we recommend studying further the emerging theories of human nature because

they lay claims on knowing what the nature of mankind is. For example, we recommend, for further study, "communaucracy." It is a good candidate in an increasingly emerging philosophy of human nature and social organization emerging out of Africa about a possible lifestyle for humankind. Its study seems more pertinent today in a world where war and peace seem to be dictated by the self-interests of states, its rulers or *ad hoc* groups against commonplace moral, ethical and rational considerations.

We highly recommend the way forward as follows: that engaging the philosophy of human nature dialectically with its social and historical contexts, like for our contemporary case now with the discoveries in science, and an examination of the impact of major intellectual movements on human nature concepts as this study has done, is always necessary for the critical and better understanding of human nature.

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