



**NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA**

FACULTY OF ARTS

**DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY**

**COURSE CODE: PHL 107**

**COURSE TITLE: THEORIES OF HUMAN NATURE**



# NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA

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**COURSE  
GUIDE**

**PHL 107: THEORIES OF HUMAN NATURE**

**COURSE TEAM**

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**Course Guide**

**Introduction**

Hearty greetings to you all as you make your debut into this course PHL107. **PHL107: Theories of Human Nature** is a two-credit unit course for 100 level philosophy-major undergraduates of the National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN). The material is developed to equip you with the requisite knowledge about human nature in order to alert you about the innate human potentialities and how they can be harnessed for personal, communal and national transformation. The course guide gives an over-view of the course; it informs the student of what the course is all about, and provides information on the organization and requirements of the course. The course comprises three modules made up of fourteen (14) units.

Module 1 examines the Religious/Spiritual Conceptions of Human Nature within which the Controversies Surrounding the Issue of Human Nature, Christian Conception of Human Nature, the Islamic Conception of Human Nature, the Traditional African Conception of Human Nature and the Eastern Conception of Human Nature are treated. Module 2 evaluates the Scientific/Psychological Conceptions of Human Nature in which the Biological Conception of Human Nature, the Psychological Conception of Human Nature, the Behaviourist Conception of Human Nature and Parapsychological Conception of Human Nature are discussed. Module 3 is about the Philosophical Conceptions of Human Nature under which Materialist Conception of Human Nature, Idealist Conception of Human Nature, Dualist Conception of Human Nature, Transcendental Conception of Human Nature and Existentialist Conception of Human Nature are examined. In all, it shall be shown that human nature is complex and remains a recurrent discourse within the purviews of metaphysics, philosophy of mind, epistemology, anthropology, psychology, parapsychology, religion and science.

## **What You will Learn in this Course**

The overall aim of PHL107: Theories of Human Nature is to introduce the student to definitions of human nature, the fundamental theories, principles and questions about human nature. The religious, spiritual, scientific and anthropological issues bordering on human nature will be philosophically analyzed. The understanding of these fundamentals will help the student to appreciate, explain and critique some basic concepts and issues about human nature.

## **Course Objectives:**

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

- Have a comprehensive knowledge of human nature
- Define human nature
- Know the difference between human nature, human being and human person
- Differentiate anthropological description of human nature from metaphysical description of human nature
- Know that the discourse on human nature is essentially metaphysical
- Explain the religious/spiritual conceptions of human nature
- Understand and explain the presentation of human nature in Christianity
- Understand and explain the presentation of human nature in Islam
- Understand and discuss Traditional African Conceptions of human nature
- Understand and discuss Eastern conceptions of human nature
- Articulate the scientific/psychological conception of human nature
- Discuss the biological description of human nature
- Analyze the psychological description of human nature
- Evaluate the behaviourist analysis of human nature
- Understand and discuss the philosophical presentation of human nature
- Differentiate and understand the materialist, idealist and dualist conceptions of human nature
- Understand and differentiate the transcendentalist from the existentialist conception of human nature.

## **Working through the Course**

To complete this course of study successfully, please read the study units, listen to the audios and videos, do all the assignments, open the links and read, participate in discussion forums, read the recommended books and other materials provided, prepare your portfolios, and participate in the online facilitation.

Each study unit has introduction, intended learning outcomes, the main content, conclusion, summary, references/further readings and self-assessment exercises. You will be required to do these exercises. The exercises are meant to aid you in understanding the concepts under consideration. The introduction will tell you the expectations in the study unit. Read and note the intended learning outcomes (ILOs). The intended learning outcomes tell you what you should be able to do at the completion of each study unit. So, you can evaluate your learning at the end of each unit to ensure you have achieved the

intended learning outcomes. To meet the intended learning outcomes, knowledge is presented in texts, videos and links arranged into modules and units. Click on the links as may be directed, but where you are reading the text offline, you will have to copy and paste the link address into a browser. You can download the audios and videos to view offline. You can also print or download the text and save in your computer or external drive. The conclusion gives you the theme of the knowledge you are taking away from the unit. Unit summaries are presented in downloadable audios and videos.

There are two main forms of assessment—the formative and the summative. The formative assessment will help you monitor your learning. This is presented as in-text questions, discussion forums and self-Assessment Exercises. The summative assessments would be used by the university to evaluate your academic performance. This will be given as Computer Based Test (CBT) which serves as continuous assessment and final examinations. A minimum of two or a maximum of three computer-based tests will be given with only one final examination at the end of the semester. You are required to take all the computer-based tests and the final examination.

### **Course Materials**

The major components and materials for this course include:

- (i) Course guide
- (ii) Study guide
- (iii) Text books
- (iv) Assignment file

### **Study Units**

There are 14 study units in this course divided into three modules. The modules and units are as presented below:

#### **Module 1: Religious/Spiritual Conceptions of Human Nature**

- Unit 1: Controversies Surrounding the Issue of Human Nature
- Unit 2: Christian Conception of Human Nature
- Unit 3: Islamic Conception of Human Nature
- Unit 4: Traditional African Conception of Human Nature
- Unit 5: Eastern Conception of Human Nature

#### **Module 2: Scientific/Psychological Conceptions of Human Nature**

- Unit 1: Biological Conception of Human Nature
- Unit 2: Psychological Conception of Human Nature
- Unit 3: Behaviourist Conception of Human Nature
- Unit 4: Parapsychological Conception of Human Nature

#### **Module 3: Philosophical Conceptions of Human Nature**

- Unit 1: Materialist Conception of Human Nature
- Unit 2: Idealist Conception of Human Nature
- Unit 3: Dualist Conception of Human Nature
- Unit 4: Transcendentalist Conception of Human Nature

## Unit 5: Existentialist Conception of Human Nature

### **Presentation Schedule**

The presentation schedule gives you the important dates for the completion of your computer-based tests, participation in forum discussions and participation at facilitation. Remember, you are to submit all your assignments at the appropriate time. You should guide against delays and plagiarisms in your work. Plagiarism is a criminal offence and is highly penalized.

### **Assessment**

There are two main forms of assessments in this course that will be scored. The Continuous Assessments and the Final examination. The continuous assessment shall be in three-fold. **There will be two Computer-Based Assessments. The computer-based assessments will be given in accordance to university academic calendar. The timing must be strictly adhered to.** The Computer-Based Assessments shall be scored a maximum of 10% each, while your participation in discussion forums and your portfolio presentation shall be scored maximum of 10% if you meet 75% participation. Therefore, the maximum score for continuous assessment shall be 30% which shall form part of the final grade.

The final examination for PHL107 will be maximum of two hours and it takes 70 percent of the total course grade. The examination will consist of 5 questions out of which you are expected to answer 4.

Note: You will earn 10% score if you meet a minimum of 75% participation in the course forum discussions and in your portfolios otherwise you will lose the 10% in your total score. You will be required to upload your portfolio using *google Doc*. What are you expected to do in your portfolio? Your portfolio should be note or jottings you made on each study unit and activities. This will include the time you spent on each unit or activity.

### **How to get the Most from the Course**

To get the most in this course, you need a personal laptop and internet facility. This will give you adequate opportunity to learn anywhere you are in the world. Use the Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) to guide your self-study in the course. At the end of every unit, examine yourself with the ILOs and see if you have achieved what you need to achieve.

Carefully work through each unit and make your notes. Join the online real time facilitation session as scheduled. Where you miss the scheduled online real time facilitation, go through the recorded facilitation session at your own free time. Each real time facilitation session will be video recorded and posted on the platform.

In addition to the real time facilitation, watch the video and audio recorded summary in each unit. The video/audio summaries are directed to salient parts in each unit. You can access the audio and videos by clicking on the links in the text or through the course page.

Work through all self-assessment exercises. Finally, obey the rules in the class.

## **Facilitation**

You will receive online facilitation. The facilitation is learner-centered. The mode of facilitation shall be asynchronous and synchronous. For the asynchronous facilitation, your facilitator will:

- Present the theme for the week;
- Direct and summarize forum discussions;
- Coordinate activities in the platform;
- Score and grade activities when need be;
- Upload scores into the university recommended platform;
- Support you to learn. In this regard personal mails may be sent;
- Send you videos and audio lectures: and podcast.

## **For the Synchronous**

There will be a minimum of eight hours and a maximum of twelve online real time contacts in the course. This will be through video conferencing in the Learning Management System. The sessions are going to be run at an hour per session. At the end of each one-hour video conferencing, the video will be uploaded for view at your pace.

The facilitator will concentrate on main themes that must be known in the course. The facilitator is to present the online real time video facilitation time table at the beginning of the course. The facilitator will take you through the course guide in the first lecture at the start date of facilitation.

Do not hesitate to contact your facilitator. Contact your facilitator if you:

- Do not understand any part of the study units or the assignment
- Have difficulty with the self-assessment exercises
- Have a question or problem with an assignment or your tutor's comments on an assignment.

Also, use the contact provide for technical support.

Read assignments, participate in the forums and discussions. This gives you opportunity to socialize with others in the programme. You can raise any problem encountered during your study. To gain the maximum benefit from course facilitation, prepare a list of questions before the discussion session. You will learn a lot from participating actively in the discussions.

Finally, respond to the questionnaire. This will help the university to know your areas of challenges and how to improve on them for a review of the course materials and lectures.

## **References/Further Readings**

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**Module One (1): Religious/Spiritual Conceptions of Human Nature**

- Unit 1: Controversies Surrounding the Issue of Human Nature
- Unit 2: Christian Conception of Human Nature
- Unit 3: Islamic Conception of Human Nature
- Unit 4: Traditional African Conception of Human Nature
- Unit 5: Eastern Conception of Human Nature

**Unit 1: Controversies Surrounding the Issue of Human Nature**

**Contents**

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- 3.3 The Anthropological Dimension
- (i) The Psychological/Biological Perspective
- (ii) The Religious/Parapsychological Perspective
- 3.4 The Metaphysical Dimension
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- 4.0 Conclusion

- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise
- 7.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 8.0 References/Further Reading

### **1.0 Introduction**

The main purpose of this unit is to bring to the notice of the student the controversy surrounding the study of human nature. This shall be done by examining the different dimensions to the study of human nature. The differences between the anthropological approach and the metaphysical approach to the study of human nature will be explained. Reasons will also be advanced why the metaphysical approach is preferred to the anthropological approach. In essence, the fundamental aim of this study is to show that because human beings are metaphysical by nature, the question of human nature will continue to be recurrent.

### **2.0 Objective**

At the end of this unit, you are expected to:

- Justify why the question of human nature is controversial
- Describe the difference between the anthropological and the metaphysical approaches to the study of human nature
- Demonstrate that the question of human nature is fundamentally metaphysical.

### **3.0 Main Content**

#### **3.1 The Question of Human Nature is Controversial**

Let us begin by examining the difference between human being, human nature and human person. The term human being or simply human is the common name given to all the species called *Homo sapiens*. Generally, scientists consider all living people members of a single species known as *Homo sapiens* or human beings (Encarta, 2009). This definition shows that there are certain characteristics that are peculiar to human beings which constitutes human nature. Human refers to certain group of qualities, belonging to all and only human beings. These qualities are both physical and non-physical or mental. For example, we are all two-footed and featherless, but ‘featherless biped’ does not explain our socially significant characteristics. We are also all both animals and rational beings (at least potentially), and ‘rational animal’ might explain the special features we have that other kinds of beings, such as angels, do not (Schneewind, 1999: 398).

Beyond physical human attributes, the nature of human beings that we specifically speak about here are those mental characteristics of human beings that in turn determine our individual personalities. These include attributes like rationality, imagination, consciousness, emotions, language, culture, will power etc, all of which are native or natural to us. In other words, if these characteristics are removed, there will be nothing called human beings. These inherent qualities of

ours in turn form the bases for us to be nurtured in order for us to become persons. So what does it mean to become a person?

Human nature is the basis for us to be addressed as human beings and to acquire personhood. Thus, whereas human nature is intrinsic, inherent, native or natural to us as human beings, person or personhood is acquired through nurture and adaptation. In other words, societal upbringing within culture, religion, education and other social institutions, coupled with how we adapt to the societal norms, all go a long way in determining one's personhood. It is for this reason that "cultural psychologists seek to understand people as they are embedded within their various cultures" (Heine and Buchtel, 2009: 370). In other words, one can be a human being, without necessarily being a person. But it is not possible to be a person without being a human being.

To be a person means that one has attained, developed or acquired self-awareness, self-knowledge, self-realization, self-esteem and self-identity. A person is one who has attained a mental state of self-sovereignty or self-autonomy by which the individual knows that he/she is responsible for every of his/her actions. Such individual becomes holistically responsible as a moral and cultural entity who is legally and politically in solidarity with other members of the society.

There are two main dimensions to the study of human nature which are (1) the anthropological dimension and the (2) metaphysical/ontological dimension. Let us now examine the two dimensions to the study of human nature.

### **3.2 Dimensions to the Study of Human Nature**

As already stated above, there are two basic dimensions to the study of human nature; the anthropological and the metaphysical dimensions. These two dimensions provide comprehensive and inclusive ways of studying human nature. But whereas the anthropological description of human nature is diverse and imprecise, the metaphysical description of human nature is focused and precise. Again, whereas the anthropological description of human nature analyzes the things that human nature is capable of doing (i.e. the attributes and works of human beings), the metaphysical description of human nature examines those human traits that make possible the various abilities and attributes of human nature.

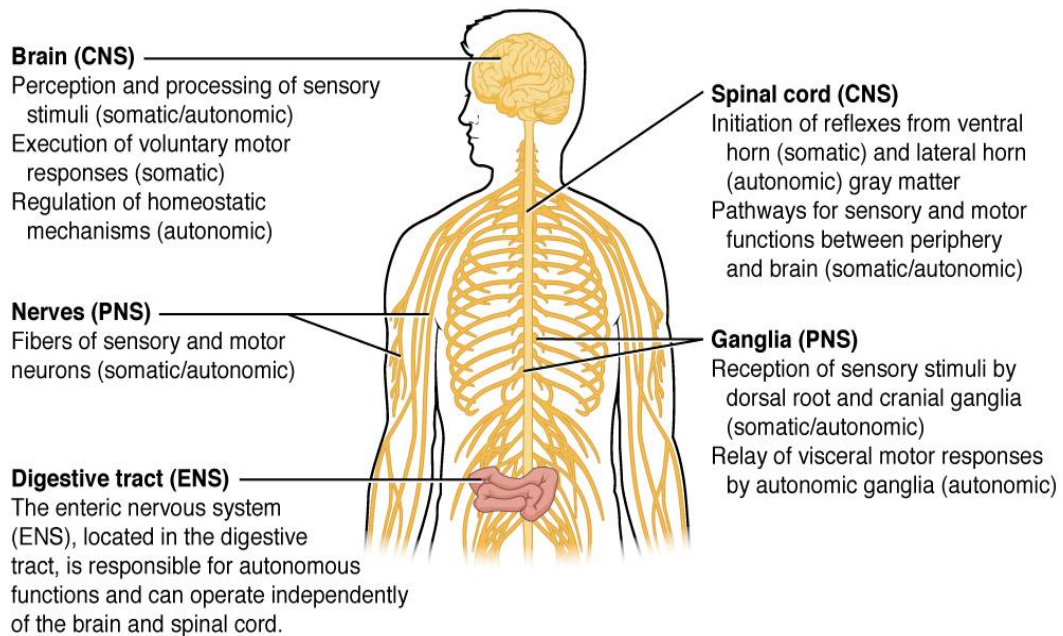
From its etymology, anthropology derives from two Greek words which are *anthropos* and *logos*. *Anthropos* can be translated as man or human being while *logos* variously translates as study, science, theory, craft, art or discourse. Anthropology can then be defined as the study of man, the science of man, the theory of man or the discourse on man. Recall that by the term man we mean human being, meaning that the term man is generic for both male and female genders of the human species (Unah, 2006: 129 & 137). However, in the attempt to have a comprehensive understanding of man, anthropology studies man from multidisciplinary and inter-disciplinary perspectives. This means that geography, psychology, parapsychology, sociology, religion, history, biology, political

science, archeology, linguistics, ethnology and almost all disciplines that study man from one perspective or another are all involved in the anthropological study of man. This is why it was earlier stated that anthropology is engaged in the imprecise and diverse study of man. This apart, by studying man from diverse perspectives, anthropology focuses on the study of the different abilities and attributes of man, not on the study of the basic traits that make possible the manifestations of the various abilities and attributes of man. In this unit, the anthropological analysis of human nature is deliberately limited to the psychological/biological and the religious/parapsychological perspectives.

### 3.2.1 The Psychological/Biological Perspective

Psychology is a discipline of thought like philosophy which is studied in the university. It is the empirical, observational and systematic study of human nature with regards to the human mind and behavioural patterns. The *Online Etymology Dictionary* states that as a term psychology derives from two Greek words which are *psykhē* meaning breath, spirit, soul or mind and *logos* or *logia* meaning study, theory, reason or discourse. When combined the term psychology would variously mean the study of mind, reasoning on soul, theory of spirit or discourse on the psyche. Likewise, biology is a discipline of thought studied in the university. *Online Etymology Dictionary* states that biology derives from the Greek *bios* and *logos*. Where *bios* means life, the addition of *logos* to *bios* makes biology to become the science of life or the study of living things. The connection between psychology and biology is neurology. Neurology comes from the Greek *neurologia* which is a combination of *neuro* meaning nerves or the central nervous system and *logos* which simply means study. Hence, neurology is the study of the form and functions of the central nervous system.

The concern of biology with the **Nervous System** is to show how every activity of the body is dictated by the **Central Nervous System** (i.e. the brain and the spinal cord), the **Peripheral Nervous System** (i.e. cranial and spinal nerves) and other **Sensory Organs** (i.e. eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin); which in turn determine human behaviour. This means that biology provides a foundation for psychology. In actual fact, psychology is involved in the empirical study of mind, consciousness and human behaviour. Below is a diagram of the central nervous system.



(Source: <https://www.istockphoto.com/photos/central-nervous-system-diagram>)

Biology and neurology are pivotal to the study of human nature because they both provide empirical and materialist approaches to the study of how emotions, feelings, instincts or premonitions and stimuli help to shape, direct or dictate human nature. In other words, besides psychology, biology and neurology are also pivotal to the materialist study of mind and human nature in philosophy and in particular metaphysics. This means that biology and neurology also make the connection between psychology and materialist study of mind and human nature possible.

### 3.2.2 The Religious/Parapsychological Perspective

Religion and parapsychology provide a non-materialist or spiritual dimension to the study of human nature. Most anthropomorphic religions present the view that the human being is a direct creation of the supernatural force or cosmic intelligence called God. This is clearly stated in Genesis 1:26-30, Quran 3:59, 38:71. “In Igbo creation story, Chineke created man as his physical representation on earth. Here, the God called Igwe, and the Goddess called Ala, (both components of the creator God, Chineke) met and formed human beings, male and female” (Ugwueye, Uzuegbunam, & Umeanolue, 2012: 180). According to the Igbo creation story, the first man that was created was named *Ifienta* or *Ihienta* meaning little or small light (signifying that Chukwu or Chineke is the ubiquitous and universal light), while the first woman that was created was named *Ada'm* meaning my (i.e. Chukwu's or Chineke's) first daughter. Again, in Hinduism we read that: “A lotus flower grew from Lord Vishnu's navel with Brahma sitting on it. Brahma separated the flower into three parts - the heavens, the Earth and the sky. Out of loneliness, Brahma split himself into two to create a male and a female. From this male and female all beings were created” (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides>).

Oluwatomiwa Ogunniyi explains that in the Yoruba story of creation, Obatala is the molder of the human frame, Ajala molds the human head, Ogun partitions the fingers and toes, while Olodumare gives breath to the creation of these other deities (<https://guardian.ng/life/yoruba-mythology-the-orishas-of-the-yoruba-race/>). In the Buddhism, the *Aggañña Sutta* (DN.27, online), states that humans originated at the beginning of the current *kalpa* as *deva-like* beings reborn from the *Ābhāsvara deva-realm*. They were then beings shining in their own light, capable of moving through the air without mechanical aid, living for a very long time, and not requiring sustenance. Over time, they acquired a taste for physical nutriment, and as they consumed it, their bodies became heavier and more like human bodies; they lost their ability to shine, and began to acquire differences in their appearance. Their length of life decreased, they differentiated into two sexes and became sexually active. Following this, greed, theft and violence arose among them, and they consequently established social distinctions and government and elected a king to rule them, called *Mahāsammata*, meaning the great appointed one.

The various religious accounts of the origin of the human being presented above attest to the earlier point made that religion sees human nature as something that derives from God. This accounts for the reason why religion looks at human nature from a spiritual or idealistic purview.

In the same vein, parapsychology presents an immaterialist conception of human nature. Stephen E. Braude defines parapsychology as the study of certain anomalous phenomena and ostensible causal connections neither recognized nor clearly rejected by traditional science. Parapsychology's principal areas of investigation are extrasensory perception (ESP), psychokinesis (PK), and cases suggesting the survival of mental functioning following bodily death (1999: 645). The word to note here is the prefix *para* which can mean after or beyond. Thus, whereas in psychology, the brain is regarded as the determiner of human consciousness and as such the decider of human nature, in parapsychology, human nature is traced beyond the brain. This unavoidably implies that human nature can be traced to a source or sources that is/are beyond the physical. Other activities of human nature investigated by parapsychology are telepathy, clairvoyance, clairaudience and auto-suggestion.

### **3.3 The Metaphysical Dimension**

The metaphysical study of human nature is focused on the analysis of the traits which are innate to human beings that make possible the manifestations of the various abilities displayed by human beings. In other words, the metaphysical study of human nature, is focused on the analysis of the native qualities that make human nature complex.

To illustrate, if we define metaphysics as “the corporate name for cosmology, cosmogony and ontology” (Momoh, 2000: 8): where cosmology is the study of the origin of things, cosmogony is the study of the relationship between the opposites and ontology is the study of the constituents of things; we would realize that

metaphysics comprehensively houses all theories about human nature. For example, cosmological studies of human nature will trace the source or origin of human nature to the human mind. From the purview of cosmogony, debate ensues if the mind is immaterial, material or both. If the mind is both immaterial and material, the question arises about how two substances that are non-identical can relate or cooperate. Ontological study of the mind will then focus on the analysis of the properties of the mind that makes it the determiner of human nature. Within this purview, the nature of the mind that makes human nature complex is studied. Topics like mind as consciousness or the conscious mind, the preconscious mind, the unconscious mind, reason, intellect, imagination, understanding, emotions, sensibility, the central nervous system etc, are discussed. These are all the activities of the mind that shape human nature.

The mind is sometimes called soul or spirit. Sometimes the terms mind, soul and spirit are used interchangeably. However, for the purpose of this unit, we consider spirit in the human body as the life-force or vital-force that animates the body and gives it life. The soul is the immaterial part of the mind that has cognitive capacity such as rationality and imagination (Idoniboye, 1973: 83; Hallen, 2000: 296; Orangun, 1988: 43; Okoro, 2017: 322-326). From the integrative purview, the mind comprises both immaterial and material parts. This means that the brain can be regarded as part of the mind. This is because the brain performs certain mental activities such as sensation and perception. Sensation is the ability of the mind to feel the world through the five senses. Perception is the ability of the mind to be aware of the world, including things and activities in the world through the ability of the memory to record and recall impressions or feelings about us (Hume, 1969: 132-135). You can see from the foregoing analysis that the mind is complex which makes human nature complex as well.

Other functions of the mind include volition, memory, cognition and imagination. Volition is the ability of the mind to decide, make choices, express hope in the future, have faith in the unseen as well as other activities such as love, hate, pleasantness, express delight etc. Memory is the ability of the mind to receive information about the world, store information, arrange or associate information about the world sequentially in alternate pattern, and to recall information. Cognition is the ability of the mind to rationalize, deliberate, contemplate, introspect, reflect, project and to negate situations. Imagination is the ability of the mind to represent the world in the forms of images and symbols. It is for this reason that the imagination is regarded as the faculty of vision or trance because it is able to visualize the world from its past and present circumstances to the future. In the process events are synthesized (Omoregbe, 2001: 36).

When we say that the mind is a metaphysical substance, what we mean is that the mind is the ability, capacity or power to think and to be aware of the physical and the non-physical things and vibrations around us. It is in this sense that we say that the mind is conscious of the world. Consciousness itself has the following characteristics (Omoregbe, 32-35):

- (i) It is a mental activity (i.e. it is never a physical activity).
- (ii) The fact that we are conscious of ourselves and the world around us cannot be doubted (Descartes, 1968).
- (iii) It is entirely subjective or inaccessible.
- (iv) It is non-spatial, non-physical, non-quantifiable, cannot be measured and cannot be localized.
- (v) It is always continuous.
- (vi) It is outward reaching, always reaching out for objects of thought (i.e. what Edmund Husserl calls *intentionality of consciousness*, Husserl, 1970: 15).
- (vii) It is reflective.
- (viii) Consciousness creates its own objects.

Beyond consciousness, there are also the sub-conscious and the unconscious aspects of the mind which will be discussed under the psychological conception of human nature.

From the analysis done so far, we submit that since the mind as the shaper of human nature, it means that human nature is primarily metaphysical issue. For this reason, this module privileges the metaphysical analysis of human nature over the anthropological analysis of human nature.

### **3.4 Preference of the Metaphysical Dimension**

The metaphysical account of human nature is more inclusive than the anthropological account of human nature. To illustrate, metaphysics is commonly defined as the study of reality. Where reality means all or everything that exists insofar as the human mind thinks of it, and if in this instance **human nature** is the reality under investigation, every other discipline outside metaphysics will present a piecemeal or fragmented account of reality. In other words, as many disciplines as possible will present a specialized account of human nature, while metaphysics presents a universal or inclusive account of human nature. Because every anthropological description of human nature amounts to a study of reality, it follows that all anthropological accounts of human nature are metaphysical. From the foregoing, we can then decipher two realms of metaphysics which are (i) metaphysics as anthropology or anthropological metaphysics and (ii) metaphysics as ontology. Metaphysics as anthropological studies is specialized, while metaphysics as ontology is general or universal. This is exactly how Immanuel Kant the German philosopher classified metaphysics (1970: 662). Martin Heidegger, another German philosopher, followed Kant in classifying metaphysics into two realms. Heidegger refers to all other disciplines that study reality from one perspective or another as *metaphysica specialis*. He refers to ontology which studies Being (i.e. a reality) from a universal inclusive perspective as *metaphysica generalis* (1959: 77). With reference to the study of human nature; *metaphysica specialis* refers to any discipline with a specialized perspective to the study of human nature (e.g. religion, biology, psychology and anthropology), while



*metaphysica generalis* simply refers to the ontological and metaphysical study of human nature from a universal and inclusive perspective.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

We began by making distinction between human being, human person and human nature. We stated that human nature is the basis being a human being and a human person. We also stated that for the fact that human nature derives its source and complexity from the human mind, makes the issue of human nature metaphysical. Because human nature is a metaphysical reality, it is best studied from metaphysical perspective. This apart, the metaphysical perspective to the study of human nature is also inclusive of the anthropological perspective.

#### **5.0 Summary**

- Human nature is a function of the human mind
- The complexity of the human mind makes human nature complex
- Human nature is basically a metaphysical issue
- As a metaphysical issue the discourse on human nature is recurrent
- The metaphysical discourse on mind is universal and inclusive
- Human nature is the basis for our being as humans
- Human nature is also the basis for our personality
- Consciousness, the subconscious mind, unconscious mind, preconscious mind, reason, imagination and the central nervous system are all parts and functions of the mind.

#### **6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise**

1. Define human nature and state the difference between human nature, human being and human person.
2. Make clear distinction between anthropological study of human nature and metaphysical study of human nature.

#### **7.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment**

1. Human nature is controversial because
  - (a) Human nature is the same as human being
  - (b) Human nature is the same as human person
  - (c) Besides being a recurrent issue, there are many perspectives to the study of human nature
  - (d) Human nature is the same as *Homo sapiens*
2. Human nature is the basis for
  - (a) Language/culture
  - (b) Thinking/invention
  - (c) Animalism/immorality
  - (d) All of the above
3. Human nature is
  - (a) Native
  - (b) Acquired
  - (c) Developed

- (d) Inherited
- 4. A human being simply means
  - (a) Man
  - (b) *Homo sapiens*
  - (c) Woman
  - (d) Hermaphrodite
- 5. Human personality is
  - (a) Acquired
  - (b) Native
  - (c) Intrinsic
  - (d) Extrinsic
- 6. The two main dimensions to the study of human nature are
  - (a) Psychological and biological
  - (b) Religious and parapsychological
  - (c) Metaphysical and anthropological
  - (d) Spiritual and scientific
- 7. The psychological/biological approach to the study of human nature is basically
  - (a) Idealistic
  - (b) Empirical, experimental and materialistic
  - (c) Imaginative
  - (d) Contemplative
- 8. Fundamentally, religion assumes that human nature derives from
  - (a) God
  - (b) Culture
  - (c) Mind
  - (d) Norms
- 9. One of these does not fall under the parapsychological study of human nature
  - (a) Clairvoyance
  - (b) Telepathy
  - (c) Sub-consciousness
  - (d) Telekinesis
- 10. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ are the two main perspectives in which human nature is studied as a metaphysical reality
  - (a) *Metaphysical specialist/metaphysical generalist*
  - (b) *Metaphysica specialization/metaphysica generalization*
  - (c) *Metaphysical particularism/metaphysical universalism*
  - (d) *Metaphysica generalis/metaphysica specialis*

<b>Solution:</b> 1. c, 2. d, 3. a, 4. b, 5. a, 6. c, 7. b, 8. a, 9. c, 10. d
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## **Unit 2: Christian Conception of Human Nature**

### **Contents**

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### **1.0 Introduction**

The objective of this unit is to discuss the Christian conception of human nature. As stated in unite 1, most world religions trace the source of human nature to God. This is consistent with anthropomorphic religions. For this kinds of religion, human nature is thought to be spiritual because it has other-worldly or supernatural origin. This kind of belief system is very much true of Christianity.

### **2.0 Objective**

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

- Identify and discuss the Christian conception of Human Nature
- State and explain the origin of Human Nature in Christianity
- Describe the Consequences of the Fall and Original Sin on Human Nature in Christianity
- Identify and evaluate the Concepts of Redemption and Immortality of the Soul in Christianity.

### **3.0 Main Content**

#### **3.1 Origin of Human Nature in Christianity**

In Christianity, the source of human nature is clearly stated in Genesis 1:26-27 and Genesis 2:7, 18-24. Gen. 1:26 states thus: And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. Verse 27 then states thus: So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. Further down in Gen. 2:7, the Bible states that: Then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of

life and man became a living being. From verses 18-24 is the story of how God created Eve from the rib of Adam after putting Adam to a deep sleep.

It is clear from the above that for Christianity human being was created in the image of God. This implies that human nature has a supernatural origin. In other words, there are certain inherent understandings about human nature in the biblical view:

- (i) each person is a unique individual such that every individual has power to act under his/her own initiative;
- (ii) as a whole, mankind is a good creation of God, firmly tied to the finite world, but with the important qualifications of dominion and stewardship, a freedom to move within the limits of time and space, and to affect the course of history;
- (iii) the real criteria for the exercise of that freedom is its correspondence to the will and intention of God which makes human beings to be in inseparable relation with their environment, God, neighbours and the larger human community.

Within the Christian belief system, human nature is godly because the individual is in a special relationship with the Creator. This means that the uniqueness of human nature lies with God directly not in a relationship with nature. Human nature is fashioned in the image of God. In other words, the Creator has endowed human nature with unique attributes of a free agent capable of love, a characteristic analogous to God's own self-expression (<https://peped.org/philosophicalinvestigations/article-biblical-perspective-human-nature/>; Clauson, 2015: 7).

### 3.2 The Composition of Human Nature in Christianity

Gen. 2:7, 18-24 clearly shows the composition of human nature. Man was molded of clay or dust and God breathed into the frame made so that man became a living being. This means that human nature is a composition of both physical and non-physical parts. But if in Gen. 1:26 it is stated that man was made in the image of God, the question then follows concerning the nature of this image. From the biblical story, it is obvious that human nature is the image of God in the human being. This is why within Christianity human nature is considered to be pious or holy.

To be specific, within Christianity, the image of God (i.e. human nature) in which man was made is no other than the human soul or the divine spark trapped in the human body. In essence, every human being carries within a share of the **Ultimate Reality** or the **Wholly Other**. It is in this sense that Christian scripture addresses human beings as little gods. In human nature, there is a "higher self," the soul or spirit, which aspires to the perfection of Pure Spirituality; there is also the "lower" state that is associated with all physical needs and desires. This means that human nature consists both infinite and finite essences (<https://peped.org/philosophicalinvestigations/article-biblical-perspective-human-nature/>; Clauson, 2015: 7). However, because of the doctrine of the salvation of the

soul, emphasis is placed on the soul over the body. The simple reason for this is that the soul is considered to be immortal while the body is mortal.

God has made man inherently good in God's own image and with the ability to act, to make decisions, and enter into relationship with God and fellow human beings. To be able to interact with other humans and the environment, human beings must be a compact of body and mind. Hence, for Christianity: "The soul is not an entity with a separate nature from the flesh and possessing or capable of a life of its own. Rather it is the life animating the flesh" (Hastings, 1963: 932). According to Millar Burrows and L. Kohler, the Hebrew *Nephesh* means primarily breath. It is often used also with the meaning "living being," human or otherwise. Thus in Gen. 2:7 the first man became a living *nephesh* when Yahweh's breath was breathed into his nostrils (Burrows, 1956: 135ff; Kohler, 1957: 142).

It can therefore be stated that the soul is a functioning, integrated aspect of human nature. It represents that part of human consciousness which moves toward fellowship with God. This is not, however, a union of like parts, of the fragment returning to the whole, but rather two individual identities joining together in positive relation, in communion. The soul can then be spoken of as being active, not as the prisoner of the body, but as its animating conscience. It enters into human activity, directing that action by offering up possibilities which correspond to the will of God. Colin Crowder has this to say about the Christian view of the composition of human nature.

For many theological anthropologists, it is axiomatic that the original Christian vision of humanity followed the Jewish tradition in affirming human life as a 'psychosomatic unity', distinguishing, but never separating the soul and the body as different dimensions of human existence. What is distinctive about the Christian vision of humanity, therefore, is not that it posits the existence of an additional entity, the soul, not recognized by other anthropologies, but that it posits the existence of an additional relation – a relation to God, as creator and redeemer – which encompasses all other relations which define us as individuals. The insistence that the human being is an 'embodied soul' or an 'ensouled body' (Crowder, 2000: 313).

Like most world religions, Christianity advances what can be described as a Divine Centered Conception of Human Nature. This can be seen in the thoughts of St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas who are regarded as foremost fathers of the Church. St. Augustine is of the view that human nature derives from God since human being was created by God. He affirms the absolute unity and the spiritual nature of the human soul. He affirms that the soul is simple and immortal. The soul has three functions: being, understanding, and loving, corresponding to three faculties: intellectual memory, intelligence, and will (<http://www.augnet.org/en/works-of-augustine/his-ideas/2302-anthropology/>).

According to Christian Tornau (2019) “St. Augustine contends that only the mind’s intellectual self-knowledge on the level of contemplative reason (its “memory of itself, knowledge of itself and love of itself”) qualifies as an image of God because only here are the three elements as closely related to each other as in the Nicene dogma and because they are as inalienable as the mind’s immediate presence to itself”. For Augustine, says Christian Tornau, the Trinitarian nature of God (i.e. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit) is the basis of the tripartite structure of human nature. As such, “Augustine thinks that the human being is a compound of body and soul and that, within this compound, the soul is conceived as both the life-giving element and the center of consciousness, perception and thought” (Ibid.).

St. Thomas Aquinas agrees with St. Augustine that God created man in God’s image and that man has a composite nature which comprises both the soul and the body. Like Augustine, Aquinas agreed that the soul is the rational and cognitive part of human nature. He also agrees that the soul is the coordinator and driver of the human will and body (Akinwale, 2020: 364). For example, as the rational part of man, the soul should control human sexual drives. This is how Aquinas acknowledged that human nature comprises both rational, biological and animalistic attributes (Unah, 2006: 133). To illustrate, Jason T. Eberl, states that in the *Summa contra Gentiles* (bk II, ch. 69), Aquinas states that:

Body and soul are not two actually existing substances, but from these two is made one actually existing substance. For a human being’s body is not actually the same in the soul’s presence and absence; but the soul makes it exist actually (in Eberl, 2004: 3).

By this assertion of Aquinas, says Eberl, it means that: “The intrinsic unity of matter and substantial form, body and soul, is responsible for the unified existence of a human being” (Eberl, 3). Hence, in *De unitate intellectus contra Averroistas* [DUI], ch. III, against the Platonic conception of a human soul as a substance which moves another substance—a human body—as an efficient causal agent, Aquinas contends that: “If you say that Socrates is not one simply, but one due to the aggregate of mover and moved, many incoherencies follow” (in Eberl, Ibid). By implication, for Aquinas, the human soul is not an immaterial substance as thought by Plato, but the breath of God or the life-force that endows the human body with life. Making a critique of Plato’s view that human nature is a combination of immaterial and material substances, Aquinas argued that - the primary incoherency in this view of Plato is that “Socrates would not be one being unqualifiedly (*unum simpliciter*), if Socrates is not *unum simpliciter*, then he cannot count as a substance” (*Summa Theologica* I, q. 76, a. 1; in Eberl, 2004, 3). The implication of this assertion of Aquinas is that “there is no real human claim on the soul; it is strictly a trace of the Absolute, which at death automatically escapes the body and eventually returns to its point of origin (<https://peped.org/philosophicalinvestigations/article-biblical-perspective-human-nature/>).

From the Christian conception of human nature, it can be established that freedom and grace are intrinsic to human beings. Freedom is an essential feature of human nature. It is the ability to form judgments and to act accordingly. But in acting freely, human beings either act within or outside the grace of God. In other words, by acting freely, human beings either act for or against God's intentions. Making judgments entails making decisions and choices, which are entirely human affairs. It is left for the individual to allow himself or herself to be guided by reason. To act in the ordinance of reason means to act in accordance with the direction of the Holy Spirit. One who acts in this order is under grace. To do otherwise is to fall out of grace (Titus, Smith, and Nolan, 1995: 31). This is exactly what happened in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve when they ate the forbidden fruit. This brought about the grave matter of Original Sin. The concept of Original Sin in Christianity led to the fall of man from the grace of God.

### **3.3 The Fall and Original Sin**

The doctrine of the fall of man in Christianity began with the disobedience of man (Gen. 3: 1-13), which led to the pronouncement of judgment by God (Gen. 3: 14-21) and the eventual ousting of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3: 22-24). The fall came about as a result of Satan, appearing in the image of the serpent, convincing Eve that she and Adam could eat of the tree of life and not die. Instead, they would gather self-knowledge by being able to distinguish good from bad. God's pronouncement of judgment is that Adam, representing the male factor, would toil to feed; while Eve, symbolizing the female factor, would bear birth pangs. Consequently, Adam and Eve were prevented from eating out of the tree of life, lets they gather immortality and live forever; they were sent out of the Garden of Eden.

The biblical story of the fall means that human beings fell out of God's favour. In chapter 28 of *The City of God* (2015), St. Augustine states that "ever since the Fall, the world has been divided into two cities (i.e. the city of God and the city of man), of which one shall reign eternally with God, the other shall be in eternal torment with Satan". According to Russell;

Saint Augustine taught that Adam, before the fall had free will, and could have abstained from sin. But as he and Eve ate the apple, corruption entered into them, and descended to all their posterity, none of whom can of their own power, abstain from sin (1972: 365).

By the above position, it means that since by the original sin of Adam and Eve humanity fell into damnation, only through God's grace can human beings be virtuous. In similar vein, Thomas Aquinas in the Bk. 1, Ch. LIII of the *Summa Contra Gentiles* (2005), argues that:

By mortal sin a man forfeits his last end to all eternity, and therefore eternal punishment is his due, no man can be freed from sin except



by grace, yet the sinner is to be blamed if he is not converted. Man needs grace to persevere in good, but no one can merit divine assistance.

If grace is interpreted to be synonymous with love, the implication is that by the fall, individuals are unable to establish truly personal, faithful relationships with God solely by their own efforts; except by the grace of God. According to Richardson, with the fall: “Man’s capacity for truth, beauty and goodness is thus seriously impaired, and God’s image in man is defaced; but not destroyed ... vestiges of divine image, likeness and capacity; no matter how fragmentary and distorted, still persist in humans to exercise reason, conscience or creative workmanship (<https://peped.org/philosophicalinvestigations/article-biblical-perspective-human-nature/>).

### **3.4 Redemption and Immortality of the Soul**

Redemption and immortality of the soul in Christianity is anchored on the idea of resurrection (Matt 28: 1-9; Mark 16: 1-8; Luke 24: 1-12). Resurrection brought redemption to mankind because by the supreme sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the only begotten son of God, humankind was given a second chance. As Christopher D. Zambakari put it:

A significant point of departure between Christianity and other religions is the fact that redemption precedes morality in the Christian framework. The fundamental problem for a Christian is not moral. It is spiritual. Moralizing religions assess a person based on deeds and morality. In Christianity, no amount of moral rightness can bridge the gap between humankind and God. That is why redemption cost God, His only Begotten Son. Basically, where one reaches the limit of human ability, there begins the opportunity for Christianity. It does what cannot be personally achieved (2018: 4).

By the extension of the fall, “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3: 33). But with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, redemption or salvation was restored to humankind. This means the restoration of grace to humankind, not by our efforts, but by the complete love of God. Like Apostle Paul said in Ephesians: “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Furthermore, the resurrection of Jesus Christ means victory over death. Again, humankind is given the grace of immortality or eternal life through righteous living and believe in Jesus Christ when resurrected bodies will face judgment on the last day. With the idea of resurrection in Christianity:

The individual person is conceived as an indissoluble psychophysical unity. At death the soul is separated from the body

and exists in a conscious or unconscious disembodied state. But on the future **Day of Judgment** souls will be re-embodied (whether in their former but now transfigured earthly bodies or in new resurrection bodies) and will live eternally in the heavenly kingdom (*Britannica*, online).

By the original sin of Adam and Eve came the fall, but through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ grace, redemption and immortality are restored to humankind.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

In this unit, we examined the Christian theory of human nature. The Christian conception of human nature is that humans are wholly divine in the sense that God and the heavenly host created humans in the image of God. Haven molded the human frame of clay, God breathed into the human nostrils so that humans became living stones. This means that human beings were created under the ordinance of grace. Due to disobedience, human beings fell from grace. The fall marks the beginning of original sin. Human grace then became dwindled. But with death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, human beings are once more presented with the divine opportunity for salvation and immortality.

#### **5.0 Summary**

- Human nature is divine because human beings were made in the image of God.
- Since human frame is made of clay in which is contained God's breath, it means that human s are both mortal and immortal
- Humans have a dual nature, the physical and the spiritual
- Human nature is wholly from God
- With the disobedience of Adam and Eve, humans fell from grace
- The Fall meant the corruption of human nature because of original sin
- Death and resurrection of Jesus meant payment of the supreme price of redemption
- Redemption or salvation means the restoration of grace to humankind
- Resurrection means triumph over death and guarantee to immortality gained through faith in Jesus Christ

#### **6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise**

1. Discuss the Christian conception of the origin and composition of human nature.
2. Justify the connection between human nature, grace, the fall, redemption and immortality in Christianity.

#### **7.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment**

1. In Christian ontology human nature is
  - (a) Divine
  - (b) Finite
  - (c) Infinite
  - (d) Natural
2. In Christian anthropology human beings are
  - (a) Disembodied spirits

- (b) Embodied spirits
  - (c) Purely spiritual
  - (d) Purely physical
3. Within Christian metaphysics, the composition of human nature is
    - (a) Physical alone
    - (b) Spiritual alone
    - (c) Both spiritual and physical
    - (d) Mental alone
  4. In Christian metaphysics, every human being carries within him/her
    - (a) A share of ultimate reality
    - (b) A wholly order
    - (c) A higher self
    - (d) All of the above
  5. The Jewish *nephesh* means
    - (a) Breath
    - (b) Spirit
    - (c) Body
    - (d) Ghost
  6. Within Christian metaphysics, the soul is
    - (a) A passive principle
    - (b) An active principle
    - (c) Force of fire
    - (d) Fire force
  7. In Christian metaphysics, the Fall depicts the following except
    - (a) Fall from God's grace
    - (b) Corruption of the human soul
    - (c) Redemption
    - (d) Beginning of original sin
  8. According to Richardson, with the Fall
    - (a) Man departed straight to hell
    - (b) Human soul was uplifted to eternal bliss
    - (c) Satan became owner of the entire universe
    - (d) Man's capacity for truth, beauty and goodness is thus seriously impaired
  9. Redemption and immortality in Christian metaphysics is anchored on the idea
    - (a) Resurrection
    - (b) Reincarnation
    - (c) Transmigration
    - (d) Transfiguration
  10. With the resurrection
    - (a) Death was immortalized
    - (b) Victory over death was attained, grace fully restored and immortality gained
    - (c) Immortality was lost
    - (d) Man became more sinful

<b>Solution:</b> 1. a, 2. b, 3. c, 4. d, 5. a, 6. b, 7. c, 8. d, 9. a, 10. b
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## **Unit 3: Islamic Conception of Human Nature**

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### **1.0 Introduction**

The focus in this unit is to examine the Islamic conception of human nature. This involves distilling the metaphysics and anthropology of human nature from the Islamic spirituality. The Islamic conception of man and the Islamic spiritual dimension to human nature will be discussed. The Islamic conception of salvation and immortality will also be discussed.

### **2.0 Objective**

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

- State and explain Islamic conception of human nature
- Identify and discuss the Islamic spiritual conception of human nature
- Describe the Islamic conception of human composition
- Identify and evaluate Islamic conception of salvation and immortality

### **3.0 Main Content**

#### **3.1 The Status of Humans in Islam**

Quoting from *The Qur'an*, Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak presents the Islamic conception of man thus:

Among all creations in the heaven and earth, only man has been bestowed with many distinctive qualities. As the recipient of these distinctive qualities from Allah the Almighty, man is placed on the highest pedestal in the hierarchy of creations. Some of these distinctive features are; man has been created in the best of forms, provided with the creative intelligence and given the power of speech and freedom of choice (*The Qur'an*, 2:31-34; 55:4; 76: 3; 95:1-4; Razak, 2018: 255).

The status bestowed on human beings by Allah, makes human beings to qualify as the *khalīfah* (vicegerent) on earth. It is for this reason as well that Allah put all created things in heaven and on earth under the service of humans (The Qur'an, 45:13; 17:70). Aisha Utz articulates the Islamic conception of humans, which distinguishes them from all other created things as follows:

- (i) A soul that is pure at birth and has the potential for good or evil
- (ii) A natural disposition to believe in Allah and to worship Him alone
- (iii) The ability to think and comprehend, using the mind and the intellect that Allah has provided
- (iv) Freewill to choose between the path of righteousness and the path of evil, along with limited freewill to carry out the choice that is made
- (v) Responsibility for their choices, which is related to freewill and ability (Utz, 2011: 96).

### 3.2 Human Nature in Islam

By Islamic conception, human nature is divine and exalted. Recall that for Islam, human beings occupy the highest pinnacle of creation. The Qur'an states that God has created man in the most beautiful and excellent manner: "We have indeed created man in the best of moulds" (95:4; Ali, 1989: 1670). This exalted position makes humans superior to angels and other luminous creations like the sun, moon, stars, etc. The exalted stature of humans is attested to by following verse:

We have honoured the sons of Adam; provided them transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things good and pure; and conferred on them special favours above a great part of our creation (17:70; Ali, 1989: 694).

However, there is a caveat to this exalted stature of humans, that is to say, humans have a choice to remain under grace or be fallen. As explained in *Sūrah al-Tīn*: 5, man will fall from the honoured position given by Allah when he transgresses the limits set by Allah (Razak, 2018: 256). Because of the exalted position of humans, they are also addressed as the *Khal Êfatullah fī al-arġ* (Allah's vicegerent on earth), above the angels and all other creations as can be seen in the following verse of *Sūrah Al-Baqarah*:

Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: "I will create a vicegerent on earth." They said: "Wilt Thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood?-whilst we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy holy (names)?" He said: "I know what ye know not" (2:30; Ali, 1989: 24).

Suggested above is a debate between the angels and Allah. Whereas the angels foresaw some negative attitudes in humans, Allah in His infinite wisdom saw many

the positive things about humans. It is consequent upon this that humans as Allah's vicegerent were bestowed with endless abilities among which are authority, freedom of action, intelligence, etc. According to Afzalur Rahman humans were created to be:

Totally independent and autonomous in his sphere of work on the earth and would be well-equipped with knowledge so that he could discover the secrets of the Universe through study, research and experience, learn to explain the forces of nature for his benefit, and gain mastery over them according to his own requirements and plan (1988: 1).

The title *Khalīfah* places humans in honoured position as Allah's deputy on earth which gives us the power and authority to rule over things of the earth and also manage and preserve the earth. As *Khalīfā'* or vicegerents, humans are only co-creators with Allah, not competitors or contenders (Al-Maududi, 1992: 66-68). This means that humans have a primordial nature (*fiṭrah*). The word *al-fiṭrah* in the Arabic could mean that humans are primordially made pure and sinless, in which case, Islam rejects the doctrine of original sin as espoused in Christianity. *Al-fiṭrah* could also mean humans haven't been made in the image of Allah, have the natural inclination to believe in and serve Allah (Qur'an, 30:30; Razak, 2018: 258).

Furthermore, Islam presents humans as comprising a dual nature of body and spirit (*rūh*). This can be seen in the verse of the Qur'an which states thus:

Behold! Thy Lord said to the angels: I am about to create man, from sounding clay form mud moulded into shape; "When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit, fall ye down in obeisance unto him (15:28-29; Ali, 1989: 26).

Obvious above is the fact that as progenies of Adam, humans were primordially made to be both mortal (i.e. moulded of clay) because we have bodies and at the same time immortal because we have in us Allah's breath which is the spirit of Allah in everyone of us (Razak, 2018: 258). For the fact that we as humans have in us a semblance of Allah, emboldens and endows us with the power and favour to deal what angels dread. Hence, humans are entrusted (*Amānah*) or charged with the responsibility to be caretakers of the heavens and the earth.

We did indeed offer the Trust to the Heavens and the Earth and the Mountains; but they refused to undertake it, being afraid thereof: but man undertook it- he was indeed unjust and foolish (Qur'an, 33:72; Ali, 1989: 1080-1081).

According to Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak the word *amānah* in the Holy Qur'an has various meanings. It could mean that humans are endowed with reason, intellect or the faculty of volition. It could mean the power and authority given to humans in

our capacity as *Khalīfah*. It could also mean the sum total of all the decrees, commands (*amr*) and prohibitions (*nahy*) present in the *Sharī'ah*. Since Allah devoted special time to the creation of humans, it follows that a **covenant** (*mīthāq*) necessarily exists between humans and Allah. By this covenant, humanity as a whole has accepted Allah to be their Lord and Cherisher while they were in the form of spirits or in '*Élam al-Arwāḥ* (i.e. in the realm of the spirits). This contract between man and his Lord has been made long before he was born into this world which continue to endure in the heart of every human being regardless of earthly distractions (Razak, 2018: 258-260; Rahman, 1988: 9-10). The covenant further confirms the position of humans as the vicegerents of Allah, a status that confers on us the privilege to the taught **attributes and beautiful names of Allah** (*al-asmā'*).

And He taught Adam the names of all things; then He placed them before the angels, and said: Tell Me the names of these if ye are right. They said: Glory to Thee: of knowledge we have none, save what Thou has taught us: in truth it is Thou who art perfect in knowledge and wisdom (Qur'an, 2:31-32; Ali, 1989: 24-25).

Because Allah taught *al-asmā'* to Adam, Adam and his progenies became the most knowledgeable of all creations in the heavens and on earth. However, Muslim scholars differ in their opinions about the exact meaning of *al-asmā'*. For Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *al-asmā'*, within the parameters of *Sūrah Al-Baqarah* verse 31, means: The names of things, the inner nature and qualities of things including feelings and desires. This refers to those qualities of feelings which were outside the nature of angels which were put by Allah into the nature of humans. For this reason, humans are able to love and understand love as well as initiate and make plans (Ali, 24). Hasan Langgulong on the other hand, says that *al-asmā'* within the context of verse 31 of *al-Baqarah* of the Qur'an refers to *al-asmā' al-Íusnā'*; which in turn refer to the investment on humans the attributes and beautiful names of Allah. This investiture empowers us humans to fulfill and perform our duties and obligations to be completely devoted to Allah in praise and worship (i.e. *'Ibādah*) (Langgulong, 1986: 263-264). According to Zafar Afaq Ansari *al-asmā'* depicts humans as having the inexhaustible capacity to acquire knowledge and demonstrate unrestricted wisdom. This ability further put humans above the angels and genies (i.e. *jinn*) (Ansari, 1992: 1-14; Razak, 2018: 83).

### **3.3 The Spiritual Dimension to the Study of Human Nature**

In Islamic philosophy, the spiritual dimension to the study of human nature is part and parcel of Islamic psychology. According to Aisha Utz, Islam offers spiritual alternative to the study of human nature. Within Islamic psychology, the study of human nature includes understanding the human soul, the ensuing human behavioural, emotional and mental processes all of which comprise both seen and unseen aspects that further influence these elements. Aisha argues that within Islam, the soul or psyche is not only psychological, it is as well metaphysical and spiritual. This is because by the doctrine of *fiṭrah*, Allah has by covenant imputed in



everyone's soul the natural inclination towards monotheism, whether the person is a Muslim or not (2011, 34-35).

Just as the body requires food and water to be constantly nourished, the nourishment of the soul as a spiritual entity comes from the very source of the soul who is none other but Allah. As put by Aish Utz:

Without this vital nourishment, the soul will suffer anxiety, depression and despair. Many humans who currently experience mental health problems are suffering from ailments of the soul, not of the mind. The soul is calling out for its food, but instead of getting the real food it requires – submission and closeness to Allah, it is fed junk food in the form of various psychotherapies and medications. For this reason, the soul continues to call out (Ibid., 35).

Contrary to Western scholarship where the treatment of human nature is basically secular, the Islamic conception of human nature is both secular and spiritual. Human nature is not seen from a purely physical perspective, it is seen as composing of both physical, mental and spiritual perspectives.

### **3.4 The Composition of Human Nature**

Within Islamic philosophy, human nature can be said to comprise the spirit, the heart, the soul or self, and the human will in connection with freedom versus determinism and accountability.

#### ***The Human Spirit (Al-Rūh):***

Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak, making reference to Hasan Langgulung, states that the Arabic word *al-rūh* has been explained in twenty five places in the Qur'an. *Al-rūh* could translate as “a life giving entity in” (22:29; 32:9; 21:19), “divine revelation in” (42:52), and as the “archangel Gabriel (*al-Rūh al-Amīn*) who brings the revelations to the prophets in” (40:15; 16:102; 26:199) (Langgulung, 238; Razak, 2018: 263). Since the focus in this unit is to discuss the Islamic conception of human nature, Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri description of *al-rūh* is considered to be more appropriate. Haeri explains that “the word *rūh* means spirit, and what it generally implies is the breath of life, or the origin of life. It is derived from the root ‘*raha*’, which means to animate or revive, to inhale or breathe, to leave or to go away” (1989: 46-47). In the view of Naumana Amjad, *al-rūh* is “an eternal, indivisible, non-corporeal and transcendental element that must have emanated from, or have been created by Allah the Almighty” (Amjad, 1992: 44). In another of his work, Langgulung explains the body-spirit (*jasad-rūh*) relationship in terms of ‘*Élam al-amr* (the world of Command) and ‘*Élam al-khalq* (the world of Creation). He further elaborates that *al-Rūh* belongs to the ‘world of Command’ and the body to the ‘world of Creation’. With regards to the creation of *al-rūh* compared to the body, Langgulung says:

Its creation depends spontaneously on exercise of Divine will or command without the need of preparation of any material, temporal or special ground. Because the creation of non-material beings in the world of Command happens immediately, since they come into existence no sooner than God commands them to be (1995: 15).

In contrast to the body which comes about by biological formation involving the fusion of the woman's ovum (egg) and the man's semen, *al-rūḥ* as human spirit is purely a spiritual essence that comes in to inhabit the body. This is made clear in *Sūrah al-Hijr*: verses 28 and 29 where it is stated that Allah breathed into Adam His spirit (*rūḥī*) after his (Adam's) physical and biological creation were completed; implying that *al-rūḥ* has a divine nature.

Explaining further, Langgulung states that whereas the body belongs to the world of Creation, making it to be subject to motion, change, alteration and bound by time and space, *al-rūḥ* belongs to the world of Command and therefore it is free from time and space, which makes it immortal or unperishable, invisible, incorporeal and transcendental. The unity of *al-rūḥ* with the body makes possible a living human being, while the separation of *al-rūḥ* from the body results to death. In the human body, *al-rūḥ* is operationalized through *al-qalb* (heart) (Langgulung, 1995: 16; Ansari, 1992: 11).

#### ***The Heart (Al-Qalb):***

The word *al-qalb*, meaning heart, is mentioned in hundred and forty-four places in the Holy Qur'an (Ansari, 6). According to Manzurul Haq, the Qur'anic rendition of heart (*al-qalb*) goes beyond a physical organ because the word *qalb* (i.e. as used in the Qur'an) refers to the subtle spiritual light that is contained within the cone shaped structure of the human heart. The physical human heart can be considered as the point of interaction between the body and the *qalb* as a spiritual entity (1992: 62). Zafar Afaq Ansari further explains that the *qalb* represents the capacity of humans to know and understand the reality of things, make evaluative judgments, and sift the right from the wrong. If the functions of the *qalb* are blocked the sensory organs lose their utility (Ansari, 6).

Manzurul Haq corroborates Ansari's view about *qalb*. Manzurul Haq states that the sense organs (i.e. the brain and the central nervous system) act as windows or gateways through which the transcendental *qalb* gets information (i.e. data gathering) of the physical world. It is through this process that sense perception is made possible. Through the illuminating function of the *qalb*, the information gathered from the senses are presented to the self as a basis for judgment and decision making (Haq, 62). Absar Ahmad agrees with Manzurul Haq. Absar Ahmad states that the *qalb* doubles as both the faculty of evaluative decision making and as the seat of intellectual faculties, understanding, affections and emotions. This double function makes it the center of the human personality, which in turn leads to a state of constant awareness and self-understanding. However, the functions of the *qalb*, can be disturbed by the continuous persuasive demands of

the *nafs ammārah* (i.e. the tendency of the self to be impelled towards evil), making it to lose its perceptual and cognitive functions. As a result of this, man's God-consciousness and his capacity for knowledge and sound judgment become clouded (Ahmad, 1992: 32).

Going further, Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak explains that in Arabic, the word *qalb* has relationship with *rūḥ* (i.e. spirit as a life giving entity) and *nafs* (i.e. soul or the human self) (2018: 268). According to Hasan Langgulung, in Arabic, the noun *qalb* is derived from the root verb *qalaba* which means to turn around or to revolve. Its unfixed, unstable and moving condition puts it in a situation whereby it will have an inclination or tendency either to follow the *rūḥ* or the *nafs*. During the time when the *nafs ammārah* becomes the dominant entity in the human psyche, the *qalb* becomes weak and feeble and makes its descent to the lowest of low level of the *nafs* to join the *nafs ammārah*. At this stage the *qalb*'s divine light fades away causing it to lose its power of cognition. On the contrary, when the *nafs muṭma'innah* becomes the dominant entity in the human psyche, then the *qalb* will move towards the *rūḥ*. At this stage, the *qalb* becomes luminous and enjoys peace and tranquility (1986, 276).

#### ***The Soul or Self (Al-Nafs):***

Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak states that the word *nafs* as mentioned in the Holy Qur'an in about 376 places, has several meanings. At many times *nafs* in the Holy Qur'an explains mainly the biological activities of man more than his conscious or cognitive part. It is also a general term used in the Holy Qur'an when referring to the whole of humanity. The word *nafs* is the singular of the plural *anfūs* or *nufūs* (Ibid.). In the view of Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri, *nafs* is indestructible, indivisible; its origin is from the realm of the unseen (i.e. non-time or pre-existence), lives in time and returns to non-time (beyond physical existence). Haeri states that *nafs* is an essence which is immortal and non-physical which provides the impetus of life for man's physical body. It can be easily influenced by the mind, will, intellect, heart and other cognitive processes (1989: 32).

Naumana Amjad on his part, explains that *nafs* as soul is the point of contact between *al-rūḥ* (Spirit) and the human body. Thus, whereas *rūḥ* as spirit is formless, *nafs* is subtle and it is the point where *rūḥ* takes form as images, sensation, ideas etc (1992: 42). From Abdullah Yusuf Ali, we learn that *nafs*, which is the singular of the plural *nufūs*, as mentioned in the Holy Qur'an has three dimensions.

- (i) *Al-Nafs al-Ammārah* (the *nafs* impelling towards evil /the evil Self)
- (ii) *Al-Nafs al-Lawwāmah* (the changing or blaming *Nafs* / the reproaching Self):
- (iii) *Al-Nafs al-Muṭma'innah* (the *nafs* at peace / the content Self) (1989: 564. 1565 and 1647-1648).

Rightly understood, these three dimensions of *nafs*, describe the three developmental stages of the *nafs*, starting from the lowest rung (*nafs ammārah*) and

gradually progressing towards the highest rung (*nafs mut'ma'innah*). According to al-Ghazālī, the upward dimension of the *Nafs* in its uppermost limit links it with the *rūh*, while its downward dimension links it with the world of matter through the sensory faculties of the body (Umaruddin, 1991: 1-10). In fact, the *nafs* is part and parcel of the human spirit (*al-rūh*). As such, during human death the *nafs* departs from the body together with the spirit to exist in another dimension of life known as '*Élam al-barzakh* (life after death) while waiting for *yawm al-qiyāmah* (day of resurrection) (Razak, 1997: 171-173).

***The Intellect (Al-'Aql):***

We learn from Hasan Langgulong that the word *al-'aql* (i.e. intellect) in the form of a noun does not appear in any of the chapters of the Holy Qur'an. Instead, the verb *aqala*, with its other derivatives is mentioned in over 49 places throughout the Holy Qur'an. Generally these verses refer to the thinking capacity of man (i.e. 2:24 and 75; 8:22; 67:10; Hassan, 1986: 276). The definition given by Shaykh Fadhlalla Haeri to the word *al-'aql* is:

The Arabic word for intellect is '*aql*, and is derived from the root *aqala*, which means to be endowed with reason, to possess intelligence, to comprehend, to understand. The intellect, in its highest sense, is a sublime power which receives the unveilings of pure light. In its lowest sense, it is the power of ordinary reasoning (1989: 51).

Muslim scholars such as Hasan Askari use the term '*aql juz'ī* to depict reason and the term '*aql kllī* for intellect. Shedding further light on this matter, Naumana Amjad explains that *aql juz'ī* or reason is the faculty of discursive and analytical thought, while *aql kullī* is the faculty of intuition (1992: 53). Within the Sūfī tradition, says Hasan Langgulong, the *aql* is lower in rank compared to the *qalb*. For the Sufi, *aql* is only capable of sense perceptions, while *qalb* has the capacity to receive the divine knowledge ('*ilm al-ladunnī*) inspired by Allah (1995, 12).

Commenting on the role of *aql*, Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas says that the term *aql* signifies the act of binding or withholding, which endows the self with the ability to denote objects by words or names. This makes *aql* the illuminating light within the self or a kind of spiritual substance by which the rational soul (*al-nafs al-nāṭiqah*) recognizes and distinguishes truth from falsehood (1991: 14). This means that the *aql* is the faculty of degrees of knowledge or comprehension such as perceptions, intuition, enlightenment, inspiration, etc.

***Freedom (Freewill) versus Determinism and Accountability:***

According to Abbas Husein Ali, "One significant point in al-Ghazālī's image of human nature deals with the problematic issue in modern psychology of free will versus determinism" (1995: 62). Abbas Husein Ali says that for al-Ghazālī, the balance between determinism and freedom is decided by the capacity of humans to make choices (*ikhtiyar*). The uniform succession of events is predetermined, but

man's *ikhtiyar* (freedom or freewill to decide or to choose) is an essential element of his own will. Citing Al-Attas, Abbas Husein Ali, states that *ikhtiyar* does not simply mean choice, rather, it is bound in meaning with its root *kh-y-r* which implies good. Thus opting for a bad choice is not *ikhtiyar*. Consequently, an individual through faith in God brings about deliberate and decisive reduction in the pressure of the animalistic urges which, in turn, liberates him or her from the terrible grip of any biological or environmental forces (Ibid.).

Aisha Utz corroborates the views of al-Ghazālī's and Al-Attas as presented by Abbas Husein Ali. Aisha states thus:

Several verses in the Qur'an indicate that humans have freewill to make choices in regard to their beliefs and deeds. This is an honour that Allah bestowed upon humankind and it sets us aside from the angels. As already been mentioned, this freewill is not absolute, it has limits (2011: 89).

However, the freedom or freewill to choose goes with accountability or responsibility. Hence, "Allah mentions that some people believe and do righteous deeds, by their own freewill and choice, and then enter paradise. Others disbelieve and do evil deeds, by their own freewill and choice, and enter hell ... So, whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it and whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it (Ibid., 89-90). Making choices and being accountable or responsible for those choices means that humans are endowed with the reasoning and thinking capacities to make judgments or draw conclusions. This also means that human beings have the ability to distinguish between virtue and vice. In essence, human beings have the knowledge to make distinction between good and evil. On this matter Aisha Utz states that:

Another important element is knowledge. Knowledge is strongly emphasized in Islam; it enables us to distinguish between good and evil, right and wrong, lawful and unlawful. Without knowledge, we would find ourselves in a complicated maze, attempting to find the correct path (Ibid., 90).

The fact that humans are capable of having knowledge and making judgments concerning right or wrong actions, means that humans must be accountable or responsible for their actions. This also means that human freedom is limited or restricted and as such determined.

### **3.5 Salvation and Immortality in Islam**

Islam teaches us that salvation is attainable through the worship of God alone. A person must believe in God and follow His commandments. There is only One worthy of worship. One God, alone without partners, sons, or daughters. Salvation and thus eternal happiness can be achieved by sincere worship. In addition to this, Islam teaches us that human beings are born without sin and are naturally inclined

to worship God alone and without any intermediaries. To retain this state of sinlessness humankind must only follow God's commandments and strive to live a righteous life. If one falls into sin, all that is required is sincere repentance followed by seeking God's forgiveness. Sin makes individuals to be pushed away from the mercy of God; however, sincere repentance brings a person back to God (islamhouse.com, 2013: 3).

Contrary to Christianity which argues that the sin of Adam and Eve led to the universal fall of man thereby ushering in original sin, Islam states that "Adam and Eve made a mistake, they repented sincerely, and God in His infinite wisdom forgave them. Humankind is not doomed to be punished, generation after generation. The sins of the father are not visited upon the sons" (Ibid., 4; Qur'an 20:121-122). This apart, Islam teaches that God is the most forgiving, and will go on forgiving, repeatedly. To err is human. Whether we erred inevitably or we deliberately committed evil, what matters is genuine repentance. As human beings, we are constantly in need of forgiveness. Life is fraught with trials and tribulations, but with the grace and guidance of Allah, humans are directed to use their intellects to make the right choices and decisions as prerequisite for eternal bliss.

From the analysis done so far, it is clear that immortality of the soul in Islam is dependent on two things which are:

- (i) the nature of the human soul (*al-nafs*) which is part and parcel of the human spirit (*al-rūh*), and
- (ii) Islamic doctrine of salvation.

Salvation in Islam does not require any intermediary as we have it in Christianity. Salvation in Islam requires complete devotion or total surrender to the will of Allah and the cardinal virtues of Islam which encourage individuals to be righteous by doing good deeds. It is this that earns one eternal bliss. However, salvation is possible due to the nature of the human soul which is capable of two things:

- (i) intellectualization or contemplation which enables it to comprehend the will and laws of Allah, and
- (ii) independent existence from the body as pure spirit.

Al-Farabi makes clarification of the nature of the soul which distinguishes it from the body. He agrees with Aristotle that the soul is the substantial form of the body, which makes it the principle of life in human beings by which humans think, feel, will and become animated (1962: 143; cited in Owosho, 2022: 93). Whereas the body has mass and is composed of parts, has weight, size, shape, is spatial, divisible and measurable; the soul is free of all bodily qualities. It is such that the body is quantitative, while the soul is qualitative. "The body is a product of the created world, while the soul is simply the product of the last separate intellect of the supersensible world" (Al-Farabi, 145; Owosho, 94). The qualities of the soul, which make it possible for it to have independent existence from the body as well

as indestructible, determines its spirituality and immortality. Thus, the separation of the soul from the body results into death.

Death means separation of soul from the body; Islam tells us that man is not annihilated as the result of death. He is only transferred from one world to another, where he begins a new life. The Holy Prophet has said: You have not been created for annihilation. You have been created for everlasting life. The only thing is that you are moved from one world to another (Al-Islam.org).

By Islamic doctrine, the manner by which the soul separates from the body is determined by the kind of life led by the individual. Sinners and the too attached to the world will have their souls separated from their bodies violently, while the souls of virtuous individuals and sincere devotees of Allah will experience a gentle departure. This means that immortality is of two kinds; eternal damnation or eternal salvation.

#### 4.0 Conclusion

In this unit, the Islamic view of human nature has been examined. In Islam, human beings occupy a special place in Allah's creation as the *khalīfah* (vicegerent) of the Almighty on earth, above all creatures, including the angels. This status bestowed on humans and the covenant between Allah and humans stems from the fact that humans were created in the likeness or image of Allah. This can be seen in the composition of human nature which comprises the human spirit (*al-rūh*), the heart (*al-qalb*), the soul or self (*al-nafs*), and the intellect (*al-'aql*). All these attributes of human nature endows humans with the freewill to make choices and take decisions. They also make humans to be accountable or responsible for their actions, which inadvertently means that humans are also determined by their actions. This apart, the nature of the human soul (*al-nafs*), which is part and parcel of the human spirit (*al-rūh*), bestows it with the capacity for salvation and immortality.

#### 5.0 Summary

- Human nature in Islam is divine and exalted, making human beings to occupy the highest pinnacle of creation as the Almighty's *khalīfah* (vicegerent) on earth.
- By this special placement, humans have a divine covenant with Allah which puts us above all creatures, including angels.
- Humans are endowed with all the qualities that put us as second to Allah such as (i) Human spirit (*al-rūh*), (ii) soul or self (*al-nafs*), (iii), heart (*al-qalb*) and the intellect (*al-'aql*).
- The nature of human soul and the human spirit makes humans to be capable of salvation or redemption and immortality.
- Islam grants its devotees direct access to Allah, no intermediaries.
- Salvation comes by ways of devotion to the will of Allah and by doing good deeds as commanded by Allah in the Qur'an.
- Human nature also endows humans with freewill
- Human nature also confronts humans with the challenges of determinism and accountability or responsibility

## 6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Discuss the origin, status and spirituality of human nature in Islam.
2. Describe the composition of human nature in Islam.
3. Analyze the connection between human freewill and salvation/immortality in Islam.

## 7.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

1. By the order of creation in Islam, Allah gave humans the status of \_\_\_\_\_ which means \_\_\_\_\_
  - (a) *Khalīfah*, vicegerent
  - (b) *Khalīfah*, viceroy
  - (c) *Khalīfah*, emperor
  - (d) *Khalīfah*, conqueror
2. The following are the characteristics of human nature in Islam except;
  - (a) Human soul is pure at birth and has the potential for good or evil
  - (b) Human soul is totally free without accountability or responsibility
  - (c) Human nature has the natural disposition to believe in Allah and to worship Him alone
  - (d) Human nature has the ability to think and comprehend, using the mind and the intellect that Allah has provided
3. The following are true about the Arabic word *al-fiṭrah* except
  - (a) Humans are primordially made pure and sinless
  - (b) Islam rejects the doctrine of original sin as espoused in Christianity
  - (c) Humans occupy Almighty status with Allah
  - (d) humans haven been made in the image of Allah and they have the natural inclination to believe in and serve Allah
4. By the dual nature of humans in Islam, humans are;
  - (a) Finite beings only
  - (b) Infinite beings only
  - (c) Indestructible
  - (d) Both mortal and immortal beings
5. According to Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak the word *amānah* in the Holy Qur'an means any of the following except;
  - (a) The indestructible ones
  - (b) Humans are endowed with reason, intellect or the faculty of volition
  - (c) The power and authority given to humans in our capacity as *Khalīfah*
  - (d) The sum total of all the decrees, commands (*amr*) and prohibitions (*nahy*) present in the *Sharī'ah*.
6. Since Allah devoted special time to the creation of humans, it follows that;
  - (a) Humans have become equals with Allah
  - (b) A **covenant** (*mīthāq*) necessarily exists between humans and Allah
  - (c) Humans have lesser status than angels in creation
  - (d) Only men are made in the image of Allah.
7. According to Aisha Utz, compared with Western psychology, Islamic psychology offers;
  - (a) Nutritive account of human nature



- (b) Intellectual and appetitive account of human nature
  - (c) Within Islamic psychology, the study of human nature includes understanding the human soul, the ensuing human behavioural, emotional and mental processes all of which comprise both seen and unseen aspects that further influence these elements
  - (d) None of the above.
8. The Arabic *Al-Rūh* refers to the human
    - (a) Intellect
    - (b) Body
    - (c) Heart
    - (d) Spirit
  9. The Arabic *Al-Qalb* refers to the human
    - (a) Heart
    - (b) Reason
    - (c) Soul
    - (d) Intellect
  10. The human soul or self in Arabic is known as
    - (a) *Qalb*
    - (b) *Al-Nafs*
    - (c) *Rūh*
    - (d) *Aqala*
  11. Human intellect in Arabic is known as
    - (a) *Al-ruh*
    - (b) *Al-nufus*
    - (c) *Al- 'Aql*
    - (d) *Al-Alaqal*
  12. The Arabic *ikhtiyar* depicts one of the following:
    - (a) Human freewill alone
    - (b) Determinism of human nature and destiny
    - (c) Responsibility of actions
    - (d) Human freedom or freewill versus determinism and accountability.
  13. Salvation in Islam is gained through;
    - (a) Believe and total devotion to the will of Allah and the doing of good deeds according to the stipulations of the Holy Qur'an
    - (b) Believe in the Holy Prophet as the way to Allah
    - (c) The cleansing of the original sin by Adam and Eve
    - (d) Defense of Islam through jihad.

<b>Solution:</b> 1. a, 2. b, 3.c, 4. d, 5. a, 6. b, 7. c, 8. d, 9. a, 10. b, 11. c, 12. d, 13. a
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## **Unit 4: Traditional African Conception of Human Nature**

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### **1.0 Introduction**

The focus in this unit is to discuss the African conception of human nature with specific attention on the Igbo and Yoruba conceptions of human nature. The concepts of human being, the composition of human nature and the nature of the human soul which endows it with immortality shall be examined.

### **2.0 Objective**

At the end of this unit, you are expected to:

- State and analyze Igbo theory of human being
- Describe the Igbo view of the composition of human nature
- Identify and discuss the Igbo view of the human soul which endows it with immortality and salvation
- State and explain Yoruba theory of human being
- Describe the Yoruba view of the composition of human nature
- Identify and discuss the Yoruba composition of the human soul which endows it with immortality and salvation.

### **3.0 Main Content**

#### **3.1 Igbo Theory of Human Being**

Igbo word for human being is *mmadu* or *mmadi* (Edeh, 185; Ekei, 2001; Okoro, 2017a and 2017b). Igbo ontology of human being is integrative in the sense that *mmadu* comprises *mmuo* (the spiritual or immaterial part of the human being) and *ahu* or *aru* (the physical or material part of the human being). *Ahu* consists of the physiological, biological, psychological and neurological functions of the body. It is subject to the laws of permanence and change as depicted by the four governing

elements *eke* (representing water), *orie* (representing air), *aho* or *afo* (representing earth) and *nkwo* (representing fire). These four elements can further be grouped into two. Whereas *eke* and *aho* represent permanence, *orie* and *nkwo* represent change. *Aho* as earth is the container, *eke* symbolizing water is the contained. *Orie* represents speed (of light or wind), *nkwo* symbolizes decomposition or alteration. For the Igbo, the four elements are four ways in which *Chukwuokikeabiama* (the Universal Ubiquitous Spirit) manifested itself in physical form.

Within the confine of traditional Igbo-African thought *mmadu* is conceived to be essentially transcendental or simply spiritual. D. E. Idoniboye amplifies this point when he states thus:

Spirit is the animating, sustaining, creative life-force of the universe. It is what gives anything its individuality. In human bodies it becomes the *mind* or *soul* so that the individual mind or soul shares in the collective mind-or-soul-stuff of the universe (Idoniboye, 1973: 83).

As stated earlier, the duality of *mmadu* comprises *ahu* and *mmuo mmadu*. *Mmuo mmadu* depicts man as pure spirit (i.e. pure consciousness) or simply the vital-force (i.e. causative agent) that animates the human body (*aru*) with consciousness. It is the invisible or intangible part of *mmadu* which as the source of life is associated (though not identified) with the breath. *Mmuo mmadu* or the immaterial part of human being further consists of *éké* (facticity), *agwu* (fallenness) and *chi* (the source of human transcendence or existentiality). As a living entity, *mmadu* is at the states of *aho* and *eke* in the sense that the body (*ahu*) becomes a container for the spirit (*mmuo mmadu*). On the reverse order, *mmuo mmadu* is contained in *ahu*. It is in this sense that the Igbo say that *mmadu* is both physical and spiritual (*okara mmadu okara mmuo*). At death, *mmuo mmadu* departs to *orie* (the spirit world) while *ahu* departs to *nkwo* (the process of decomposition).

The duality of *mmadu* portrays humans as beings that are both immanent and transcendent. Physicality depicts *mmadu* as an immanent or finite being with fallible tendencies, while pure consciousness depicts *mmadu* as a transcendent being with the infinite capacities to create, invent and discover, thereby making *mmadu* an ontological being with the propensity to transcend a given situation. Fundamentally, the whole talk about transcendence and immanence concerns which faculty of the mind institutes both “subjectivity” (which depicts the human ontological power to institute transcendence) and “objectivity” (which depicts the human ontic ability to relate with experience).

*Mmuo mmadu* as the vital force animating the body is the source of *ndu* (i.e. life). *Ndu* is the *potentia activa*, *vita activa* or spirit soul responsible for life. Thus, the connection between *ndu* and *mmadu* is *Du*, which means *to be*. *Du*, in this instance, denotes Being, making it the ontological foundation of existence. In actual fact, the Igbo word *du*, denotes that which has the ability and capacity to continuously

expand, develop or give rise to something else (i.e. reflecting the power of *mmuo*). This wise, *Du* is the ground that yields all grounds or the foundation of foundations (i.e. as reflected in the Igbo expression: *ihe/ife na du adu*). *Du* further connects with *Adu*. *Adu* means the propensity to be or the capacity to transcend. By this understanding, it means that *mmadu* is a double syllable word that consists of the prefix *nma* or beauty and the suffix *du* or *adu*. This implies that *mmadu* is the beauty of life or the beauty that is (i.e. *mmadi*). It also means that *mmadu* is ontologically transcending and ontically (i.e. existentially) transforming.

From biological, neurological, physiological and psychological perspectives, *ahu* or *aru* consists of the five senses and this include *anya* (eyes) for *ifuzo* (sight), *nti* (ears) for *inuihe* (hearing), *imi* (nose) for *inuinsi* (smell), *ire* (tongue) for *inuto* (taste) and the *ahunile* (the whole body system) for *mmetuta* (touch or feeling). *Mmetuta* further consists of *mmetuta ahu* (feeling of solidity or coming into encounter with conditions such as hot or cold, of liquid or of gas) and *mmetuta obi* (emotional feeling). The Igbo *obi* or *mkpuruobi*, refers to the heart which has both physical and spiritual essences. Encounter with the environment is made possible by the fact that *mmadu* is endowed with physical body to feel the world, and spiritual and mental capacities to interpret experiences of the world.

### 3.2 Igbo Theory of Human Nature

It is instructive from the above submissions that *mmuo mmadu* is the source of human nature. Human nature or human personality is known as *onwe* (Okoye, 2011; Okoro et. al. 2019) or more appropriately *onwe oye* or *onwe mmadu* in Igbo. *Onwe*, translated as the human personality or the *self*, further comprises *éké*, *agwu*, and *chi*. This ontological composition of *mmadu* derives from *Chukwuokikeabiama*, the universal ubiquitous spirit, which manifested itself in the physical world in three folds namely *éké*, *agwu*, and *chi*. In this regard, *Éké* is the portion or spark that every physical entity shares from *Chukwuokikeabiama*. *Éké* is female. It is that element which determines the nature or characteristics of things. In this instance, *éké*, would represent the passive or dormant state of things which has the potency of being activated. This wise, *chi* is the active force or positive vibration that activates *éké*. It is in this sense that the Igbo say that the type of *éké* a thing or person is endowed with determines the kind of *chi* the thing or individual attracts. The combination of *éké* and *chi* produces *ChiNéké*, which represents the combination of female and male energies. *Agwu*, properly known as *agwunsi*, which translates as the *Mind of God*, is the middle point between *éké* and *chi*. *Agwu* is the intermediary between mortals and the spirit world, which makes it the knower of the minds of God, the spirits and humans. For this reason, *agwu* represents the point of formation or the point between *éké* and *chi* where form or order takes shape.

In the human ontology, *éké* is the fulfilled path, the determined path or yesterday. It deals with the past which we can do little or nothing about. In existentialist term *éké* would refer to human facticity. *Agwu*, in the most ordinary sense refers to human fallenness which portrays humans as an emotional sentient weak entities that have the tendency to backslid, loose focus, be fallen or become entirely

prostrate. Again, we notice the human conflicting nature come into play. As a sentient being, *mmadu* is not different from the animals over which he/she rules and should one decide to rue the past, one will definitely fail to utilize ones *chi* possibilities. To lead life at the levels of *éké* and *agwu*, is to lead life at its ebb and the ebbing of life simply amounts to self-abandonment, to forfeiture. However, this is just the negative side to *agwu*. *Agwu* has its positive side. As the middle point between *éké* and *chi*, *agwu* also plays a mediating role. In other words, *agwu* plays a dual role. The duality to the function of *agwu* is that one who lacks self-discipline can easily be fallen. But one in a complete state of awareness or self-control has the privilege to exercise his/her will power and in the process, turns adversity into advantage. And this is what it means to be a *dike*. *Dike*, in Igbo, is a wise, brave and courageous person who exercises the strength or will power to alter situations for the common good. Therefore, *agwu* has the tendency to either facilitate ones misfortune or amplify ones fortune.

*Chi*, represents the human ego, super ego, or transcendental self, endowed with the ability to institute transcendence, making *mmadu* a being of possibilities, a being of boundless potentialities. *Chi* therefore, represents man's futuristic essence which is why it is used to depict man's destiny. Anyone who must strive to surpass the vicissitudes of life has no choice but to call upon ones *chi*. It is in this sense that the Igbo proclaim the transcendentality of *chi* thus: *onye kwe chi ya ekwe*, meaning if one affirms ones *chi* will affirm. Hence *chi* as ones transcendent essence is the fountain of ones will to power.

All of these fine features of the human being are purely ontological. The Igbo believe that this ontological qualities are dormant, latent or simply in a state of void at birth. Hence, the native abilities of *mmadu* need to be developed through the instrument of culture. In other words, granted that we have ontological endowments; nevertheless, it is society through cultural training and enlightenment that makes us human beings or persons. This point has been sufficiently made by Ifeanyi Menkiti. Menkiti categorically states thus: "As far as Africans are concerned, the reality of the communal world takes precedence over the reality of individual life histories, whatever these may be. And this primacy is meant to apply not only ontologically, but also in regard to epistemic accessibility" (1984: 171). In making this bold claim, Menkiti took a cue from John Mbiti's assertion about the structure of African communitarianism, which for Mbiti is anchored on the maxim: "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am" (1970: 141; cited by Menkiti).

### **3.3 Igbo Concepts of Salvation and Immortality**

Recall that we already stated that for the Igbo, *mmadu* or human being is a composition of *mmuo mmadu* (the human spirit or vital force) and *ahu* or *aru mmadu* (the human body). This makes *mmadu* to be a combination of *mmuo* and *ahu* (*aru*) as expressed in the Igbo assertion: *okara mmadu okara mmuo* (i.e. half spirit, half human). By this assertion, *mmadu* is an ontologico-ontic being or a being that possesses ontological and physical attributes. It is in this sense that *mmadu* is

said to be firmly and harmoniously situated in the four elements that comprise the earth which are *eke*, *orie*, *aho* or *afo* and *nkwo*. Whereas *eke* and *aho* (*afo*) represent the state of permanence, *orie* and *nkwo* represent the state of change. Such that where *aho* (*afo*) as earth is the conditioner of or container for *eke*, which is water; in the realm of change, *orie* represents motion or speed of wind or light, while *nkwo* represents decomposition (i.e. as found in the Igbo expression *nkwo*). Analogously, as living human beings (*mmadu*) we are in the states of *eke* and *aho* (*afo*) in the sense that *mmuo mmadu* is contained in *ahu* (*aru*) *mmadu*. In other words, the human spirit or life force is contained in the human body. At death, *mmuo mmadu* departs to *orie*, while *ahu* (*aru*) *mmadu* departs to *nkwo*.

It is instructive from the above that in Igbo, *mmadu* is both finite and infinite. The infinite part of *mmadu* is the basis for the discourse on salvation and immortality. Igbo conceptions of salvation and immortality can be found in the concepts of *ubandu* or *wholeness* (Ngele et. al. 2017) and *ilo-uwa* (Okoro, 2019) or reincarnation respectively. Both concepts are connected in the sense that *ubandu* or *wholeness* as salvation is the basis for *ilo-uwa* (i.e. reincarnation) which connotes the immortality of the soul in Igbo Traditional Religion (ITR).

Omaka Ngele et. al. (2017) make evaluation of Cletus C. Osuji's work on *The Concept of Salvation in Igbo Traditional Religion* (1977). Ngele et. al. state that Osuji's analysis of *ubandu* show that the Igbo conception of salvation is based on the eschatology of ancestorhood or ancestral reincarnation. They argue that Osuji's work also points out that eschatological ancestorhood for the Igbo is limited to deceased males who meet up with the required criteria (Ngele et. al., 2017: 4-5). Ngele et. al seriously queried Osuji's claim that only deceased Igbo adult male genders qualify as ancestors. They then explored Okorochoa's (1982) view of Igbo conception of salvation as alternative to Osuji's position. The crux of Okorochoa's findings rested on Igbo traditional experience of salvation through *Ezi-ndu* (viable life). The basis for this salvation, as Okorochoa showed, lies in moral rectitude through strict observance of *ofọ na oḡu* as encoded in the *Omenala* (Igbo moral codes of conduct). In Okorochoa's view, says Ngele et. al., the eschatological aspect of *Ezi-ndu* as salvation to the Igbo is *Ahamuefula* (may my name not be forgotten) which is the Igbo idea of continuity of earthly life (Ngele et. al., 5).

Kingsley Okoro on his part states that the general view of reincarnation as endless return of the soul of the dead into a physical body to continue another cycle of life, as being determined by one's karma, such that the soul may enter into either a lower life or higher one, migrate into either living or non-living objects; does not fit into the Igbo concept of *Ilo-Uwa* (2019: 1). Kingsley Okoro drew the following conclusions about the Igbo concept of *Ilo-Uwa*:

1. that in Igbo metaphysical ontology, reincarnation [*Ilo-Uwa*] is not for all dead persons.
2. That *Ilo-uwa* is an honour granted to worthy souls.

3. That in *Ilo-Uwa*, the reincarnating souls does not vacate his/her spiritual abode in the metaphysical world.
4. That the quest for *Ilo-uwa* is behind the drive for the developmental dexterity of an average Igbo person (Okoro, 2019: 1).

Kingsley Okoro goes ahead to explain the basic Igbo ontology that sustains the idea of reincarnation or *Ilo-uwa*. He argues that in Igbo philosophy, life is situated within the confluence of two realms of existences that are separated by a thin line; such that at death, one enters into the sphere of hereafter. This sphere is known as land of the dead or *ala mmuo*, is simply an extension of this physical realm or *ala mmadu* (2019: 5; Osunwokeh, 2015). To buttress his point, he explains that Parrinder must have had the Igbo people in mind when he remarked that “there is no sharp dividing line between the sacred and the secular as the material and spiritual are intertwined and the former is a vehicle of the later” (Parrinder, 1965). Hence, death is seen among the people as the beginning of a journey to the great beyond, a going home to the land of the spirits. Thus, life in this earthly divide is considered simply as a pilgrimage (Peter and Lois, 2000). To substantiate the transition from the physical to spiritual realm, Kingsley Okoro makes reference to Shabangu who gives a clearer picture of the idea of death among the traditional Igbo people thus:

Death is not merely a phenomenon of life, it is and more importantly a necessity. Proverbially, *death is a debt which everyone owes*. It is a debt which remains continually *outstanding*. The inevitability of death, however, does not lead the Igbo people to despair and fear. Rather it calls for an effort to reflect on the meaning of existence ... Then from the Igbo perspective, death is a necessity precisely because death is an opening into another level of existence. Given, therefore, the holistic dimension of Igbo thinking, man has no problem integrating the terrestrial and the spiritual levels of existence death notwithstanding (Shabangu, 2005: 85-89; Okoro, 2019: 5).

It is instructive from the above that for Igbo spirituality and religion human nature is both transcendent and immanent, both infinite and finite. Both aspects are inter-related in the sense that the transcendent or infinite part of humans is said to depart into immortality. However, departure into immortality is not automatic because every individual is required to live piously in order to gain salvation while on earth. Salvation and immortality then become ways of ensuring moral and ethical regulation of human life in the society.

### **3.4 Yoruba Theory of Human Being**

The Yoruba word for human being is *Eniyan*. *Eniyan* in Yoruba also refers to person or the human personality. According to Akanbi Deborah Modupe (2021: 8), *Eniyan* is a compound word consisting of *Eni*, meaning self; and *Yan* which means – flourishing existence. By implication, *Eni* represents the *Self* who must



understand that a flourishing existence can only take place in a world shared with others through harmonious relationship. *Yan* as such connotes that which has the propensity to transcend. In this instance, *Yan* foists upon *Eni* the responsibility to act rightly or the obligation to comply with moral principles and ethical rules that are meant to institute social cohesion.

### 3.5 Yoruba Theory of Human Nature

Barry Hallen is of the view that the Yoruba “*eniyan* or the person is composed of a physical body (*ara*) inhabited by a plurality of nonphysical or spiritual elements” (2000: 289). He articulates the views of A. B. Ellis, S. Farrow, Rev. Samuel Johnson, P. Talbot, Olumide Lucas, William Bascom, Bolaji Idowu and Pierre Verger (Hallen, 289-300) of the components of *eniyan* and summarizes them as follows:

- (i) **The Body:** Only specifically mentioned by Lucas, but it may be assumed the others took it to be so obviously a part of the person as not to warrant special mention, called *ARA*.
- (ii) **The Spirit or Soul:** A basic, vitalistic life force first mentioned by Talbot and confirmed by Lucas; called *EMI*.
- (iii) **The Centre of Conscious Identity:** All of the sources that speak of the person in any detail (Ellis, Farrow, Talbot and Lucas) agree that the Yoruba believe in a centre of personal identity identical with consciousness or mind (Talbot and Lucas), most often referred to as *OKKAN/OKAN*.
- (iv) **The Guardian Spirits:** Spiritual components of the person that are distinct from the centre of personality and to which the individual has occasion to sacrifice.
  - (a) Ellis and Lucas refer to a guardian spirit associated with the big toe, whose concern is the *eniyan*'s safety in the course of a journey, called *IPORI*.
  - (b) The same sources speak of a second guardian spirit associated with the stomach, but neither source is any more specific as to its function or responsibilities, called *IPIN-IJEUN* (though its inclusion as a distinct spiritual element is questioned by Bascom).
  - (c) The one point to which every source agrees is that the Yoruba refer to a guardian spirit or minor deity whose particular concern is the fortune (good or bad) of the person, called *OLORI* or *ORI*.
  - (d) Paradoxically, Lucas makes a deliberate point of also identifying *OKAN* as a guardian spirit (Hallen, 292-293).

Moses Akin Makinde (2007: Chaps. 5 & 6) and Olatunji Alabi Oyeshile (2006: 153-166) espouse the view that for the Yoruba, human nature is tripartite comprising *ara* (body), *emi* (the spirit soul) and *ori* (i.e. the duality of *eniyan* as physical head or carrier of human intelligence and as the destiny shaper and decider known as *ori-inu* (non-physical inner-head) or *eleda*. *Ara* depicts the material components of a person which include *Opolo* (the brain), *Okan* (the heart), and *Ifun* (the intestine). According to Oladipo, both *Opolo* and *Okan* are regarded by the

Yoruba as having some connections with human conscious activities, thinking, feeling, etc. *Opolo* is regarded by them as having connections with sanity and intelligence, to the extent that —when a person is insane, they say —*Opolo re ko pe*, meaning that the individual's brain is not complete or not in order (Oladipo, 1992:16). In this instance, *Ori* as physical head is part of *ara* in the sense that the five senses for experiencing the world are either contained in the head or controlled from the head. In fact, the whole activity of the central nervous system is controlled by *opolo* (the brain). On the other hand, *Okan* (psychical heart) which, apart from being closely connected with blood is also regarded as the seat of emotions and physical energy (Oladipo, 16).

About the formation of the physical frame of the human being, Moses Akin Makinde and E. D. Babatunde state that *Orisanla* or *Obatala* is the maker of the *ara* (body), *Ajala* is the maker of the *Ori* (physical head), while *Ogun* is the shaper of the toes and fingers (Babatunde, 2000: 325-328; Makinde, 2007: 104-105). This Yoruba account, also explains why there are malformed human beings. Although *Orisanla* (*Obatala*) is addressed as *a-se-kan ma ku* or perfect moulder, however, his creativity often came with certain imperfections or blemishes as expressed in the Yoruba saying: *opolopo dara, sugbon okookan ku die ka to* (Babatunde, 326). This was of main concern to *Orisanla* who then went to heaven to seek solution from *Olodumare*. In heaven, *Orinala* met with *Ajalorun* who exposed *Orisanla* to the fact that his creative works are in accordance with the chosen destinies of each individual. On the journey of unborn spirits to earth, some wished for a short but eventful life on earth, others said they wanted to be born blind, lame or malformed (*abiran*), (Babatunde, 327). It is through this process that albino (*afin*) becomes manifest.

Makinde and Oyeshile further state that for the Yoruba *emi* as the element which provides the animating force without which a person cannot be said to be living at all. It is such that after *Obatala*, *Ajala* and *Ogun* have completed the physical moulding of the human being, *Olodumare* the Almighty God breathes life into the molded frame. This breath of *Olodumare* becomes the vital force that animates the human body or *ara* (Makinde, 105-107; Oyeshile, 157). It is for this reason that *Ifa* addresses *emi* as the off-spring of *Olodumare* (Makinde, 105), making *Olodumre* the *elemi*; that is, the owner of life or the owner of breath (Oyeshile, 157-158). *Okan* (heart) and *eje* (blood) are the physical seats of *emi*.

*Ori* or more appropriately, *ori inu* as the inner head is the destiny decider, shaper or director which the Yoruba call *ayanmo*. While *Ajala* is the forger of the physical *ori* in heaven, the *ori inu* is chosen by every individual when each one appears before *Ajalorun* and later *Olodumare* to pronounce their mission and vision statement when each gets to earth (Babatunde, 327-328; Makinde, 113-118 & 120-121; Oyeshile, 157-159). This wise, the physical *ori* is the seat for the metaphysical *ori inu*.

Sunday Layi Oladipupo joins Segun Gbadegesin in rejecting the tripartite conception of human nature. For Gbadegesin and Oladipupo, the attributes of

human nature that have been outlined above are purely descriptive in the sense that they are preliminary to the conception of personhood within the Yoruba purview. The other arm to this natural or descriptive attributes of human nature is the normative or nurture, which involves the training or the cultural cultivation of the native attributes of *eniyàn* (Gbadegesin, 1998: 150; Oladipupo, 2018: 74). In Gbadegesin's view, Yoruba conception of human nature comprises *ara*, *okan*, *emi* and *ori*. However, the role Gbadegesin assigns to *okan* is not different from that assigned to *okan* by Makinde and Oyeshile. In other words, *okan* is not just part of *ara*, it (*okan*) along with *eje* (blood) are the physical seats of *emi* (life-force or spirit soul).

### 3.6 Yoruba Concepts of Salvation and Immortality

From the analysis of Yoruba theory of human nature, it is instructive that of the three elements *ara*, *emi* and *ori*, the latter two; *emi* and *ori*, particularly *ori inu* are infinite, which endows them with the propensity for immortality, which in turn acts as bases for salvation. Makinde, in his analysis of Yoruba theory of *orun meje* (seven heavens), outlines *emi* and *ori* as the elements that constitute the ground for immortality and salvation. Whereas *emi* is *Olodumare's* breath which constitutes the spirit soul in humans, *ori* is the destiny carrier and as the destiny carrier, *ori* determines if the individual's *emi* is qualified to return to the abode of *Olodumare* or not (Makinde, 2007: 153-156). This means that salvation depends on the fulfilment of the mission and vision statements which each individual soul stated before *Ajalorun*. Upon which the individual soul then embarked on the last stage of the journey to *Ile-Aye* (the surface of the earth) through *Bode* (gate of heaven). At the *Bode*, the Ori-carrying being meets with the *Onibode* (Gate-keeper) who will cross-examine the individual soul through a dialogue before entering the earth. The dialogue is solely based on the individual's mission in the world, which s/he is about to enter. The dialogue also contains what the earth-bound being hopes to achieve. To all of these the *Onibode* will say *to'o*, meaning it is sealed (Oladipupo, 2018: 71; Idowu, 1962: 183-184).

The personage would be instructed by *Onibode* to touch the tree of forgetfulness (*Igi-igbagbe*) sequel upon the final conferment of his/her destiny by *Olodumare* s/he becomes unconscious of his/her predestined lots. Thus the gate to the earth shall be flung open for the new entrant who is unconscious of all that lies ahead (Oladipupo, 71-72; Gbadegesin, 1998: 292). The unconscious being is then born into the world through pregnancy and childbirth. Salvation of the individual soul then depends on two principle things: (i) demonstration of good character (i.e. *iwa l'ewa*) which epitomizes *omoluabi* (virtuous individual) and (ii) fulfilment of the mission and vision statement said before *Ajalorun* and *Olodumare*.

Mohammed Akinola Akomolafe on his part is of the view that Yoruba belief in life after death is captured in three concepts namely (i) immortality, (ii) reincarnation and (iii) transmigration of the soul (2016: 42). The issue of immortality is portrayed by the fact that: "*Emi* is a non-material force responsible for life. Its presence ensures life and its absence means death. But the *emi* is itself immortal, and it may

reincarnate in another body” (Akomolafe, 40). Again, the question of the immortality of the soul is captured in the Yoruba proverb: *Aiye loja, orun nile*, which translates as – life is a temporal market place, heaven is the eternal home (Akomolafe, 43). Reincarnation as metempsychosis is the ability of the soul of a dead person to take a new body, which is captured in the Yoruba concept of *Atunwa* (Ogungbemi, 1997: 77; Akomolafe, 2016: 44) or *Atunwa aiye*. Transmigration of the soul in Yoruba belief is captured in the notion of *aku da aya*, which is a mid-point between belief in immortality of the soul on the one hand and reincarnation on the other. It is simply the belief that a person that is dead is capable of re-appearing in another place (not in the heaven, but in this physical world). This dead person goes to this new place with his/her body and soul (Akomolafe, 45).

#### 4.0 Conclusion

In this unit, we have examined African theory of human nature: the Igbo and Yoruba examples. In the process, the Igbo theory of *mmadu* and the Yoruba theory of *eniyan* were discussed. The Igbo and Yoruba theories of salvation and immortality were also discussed. It was amply demonstrated that for the Igbo and the Yoruba, human nature is at once, physical, metaphysical, spiritual and normative. The physical has to do with the body as portrayed by the Igbo concept of *ahu* or *aru* and the Yoruba concept of *ara*. The metaphysical has to do with the human cognitive powers to contemplate and rationalize as demonstrated by the Igbo concept of *chi* and the Yoruba concept of *ori*. The spiritual has to do with the immortality of the soul to which is connected the issue of salvation as depicted by the Igbo notion of *mmuo* and the Yoruba notion of *emi*. These native or natural endowments of human nature constitute the ground for the normative aspect of human nature which has to do with cultural upbringing of simply nurture.

#### 5.0 Summary

- Human being for the Igbo and the Yoruba is at once physical, metaphysical, spiritual and normative.
- Put differently, human nature for the Igbo and the Yoruba is both descriptive and normative.
- For the Igbo and the Yoruba, human nature has a divine source.
- The divine source of human nature for the Igbo is *Chukwuokikeabiama*.
- The divine source of human nature for the Yoruba is *Olodumare*.
- Salvation of the soul for both the Igbo and the Yoruba depends on the destiny (i.e. the Igbo *akaraka* and the Yoruba *ayanmo*) and the good deeds of the individual.
- Salvation for the Igbo is known as *ubandu* or *wholeness*.
- For the Igbo *mmuo mmadu* is indestructible which makes it the source of human immortality.
- For the Yoruba *emi* is indestructible which makes it the source of human immortality.
- For both the Igbo and the Yoruba, reincarnation is prove of immortality of the soul.
- *Aku da aya* is another prove of the immortality of the soul for the Yoruba.

#### 6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Discuss the Igbo and Yoruba theories of human being

2. Graphically explain the Igbo and Yoruba doctrines of human nature
3. Explain the Igbo concept of salvation and immortality
4. Justify the Yoruba concept of salvation and immortality

### 7.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

1. Human being in Igbo is called
  - (a) *Mmadu/mmadi*
  - (b) *Amadi*
  - (c) *Nmandu*
  - (d) *Ihandu*
2. Human body in Igbo is called
  - (a) *Imi*
  - (b) *Aru*
  - (c) *Anya*
  - (d) *Nti*
3. Human soul for the Igbo is known as
  - (a) *Ndu*
  - (b) *Adu*
  - (c) *Mmuo mmadu*
  - (d) *Du*
4. *Eke, Ori, Afo* and *Nkwo* for the Igbo represent
  - (a) The four primordial elements of water air earth and fire
  - (b) Four market days of the week
  - (c) The four ways in which *Chukwuokikeabiama* manifested itself in the physical realm
  - (d) All of the above
5. In Igbo ontology of human being, *mmuo mmadu* is the source of
  - (a) *Ndu*
  - (b) *Onwe*
  - (c) *Du*
  - (d) *Adu*
6. The Igbo *Du* simply means
  - (a) Human being
  - (b) *To be* or Being
  - (c) Growth
  - (d) Development
7. The Igbo word for self is known as
  - (a) *Mmuo*
  - (b) *Ndu*
  - (c) *Onwe*
  - (d) *Agwunsi*
8. The self in Igbo ontology comprises
  - (a) *Aru, mmuo* and *ndu*
  - (b) *Mmetuta, obi* and *anya*
  - (c) *Onwe, mmuo* and *ndu*
  - (d) *Éké, agwu* and *chi*

9. The Igbo *ubandu* translates as
  - (a) Salvation or wholeness
  - (b) Immortality
  - (c) Transmigration
  - (d) Metempsychosis
10. The Igbo word for reincarnation is
  - (a) *Ije uwa*
  - (b) *Ilo-Uwa*
  - (c) *Ila- ulo*
  - (d) *Oje na mmuo*
11. The Yoruba word for human being is
  - (a) *Eniyan*
  - (b) *Ayanmo*
  - (c) *Ajalorun*
  - (d) *Orinsanla*
12. The Yoruba equivalent of self is called
  - (a) *Yan*
  - (b) *Eni*
  - (c) *Emi*
  - (d) *Okan*
13. \_\_\_\_\_ mean the propensity to transcend for the Yoruba
  - (a) *Eni*
  - (b) *Emi*
  - (c) *Yan*
  - (d) *Ori*
14. human nature in Yoruba is composed of
  - (a) *Opolo, Okan, ifun* and *eje*
  - (b) *Eleda, ipori, ori* and *okkan*
  - (c) *Ori inu, emi, ipori* and *ara*
  - (d) *Ara, okan, emi* and *ori*
15. In Yoruba concept of human nature, *ara* further comprises
  - (a) *Opolo, okan* and *ifun*
  - (b) *Eje, opolo* and *ifun*
  - (c) *Ifun, eje* and *ese*
  - (d) *Ori, eje* and *opolo*
16. The molders of the human *ara* in Yoruba mythology are
  - (a) *Ajalorun, Obatala* and *Onibode*
  - (b) *Orisanla, Ajala* and *Ogun*
  - (c) *Ogun, Sango* and *Yemoja*
  - (d) *Obatala, Osun* and *Oya*
17. The Yoruba word for destiny is called
  - (a) *Aku da aya*
  - (b) *Atunwa*
  - (c) *Ayanmo*
  - (d) *Kadara*

18. According to Makinde, the sources of salvation and immortality in Yoruba notion of human nature are
- Ori*
  - Emi*
  - Okan and eje*
  - Emi and ori*
19. Reincarnation in Yoruba means
- Atunwa*
  - Yetunde*
  - Yeside*
  - Babatunde*
20. Transmigration in Yoruba means
- Aku da ara*
  - Aku da aya*
  - Aku da aiye*
  - Aku da orun*

**Solution:** 1. a, 2. b, 3. c, 4. d, 5. a, 6. b, 7. c, 8. d, 9. a, 10. b, 11. a, 12. b, 13. c, 14. d, 15. a, 16. b, 17. c, 18. d, 19. a, 20. b

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## **Unit 5: Eastern Conceptions of Human Nature**

### **Contents**

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### **1.0 Introduction**

This unit is focused on the vivid discussion of the Eastern conceptions of human nature namely the Chinese and the Indian. Examination of the Chinese doctrine on human nature shall be centered on the Confucian Taoist theory of human nature. Evaluation of Indian doctrine of human nature shall be focused on the Hindu theory of human nature.

### **2.0 Objective**

At the end of this unit, you are expected to:

- Describe the Confucian Taoist view of human nature in Chinese philosophy
- Identify and discuss the Hindu theory of human nature in Indian philosophy

### **3.0 Main Content**

#### **3.1 Confucian Taoist Theory of human nature**

Hung-Chung Yen is of the view that many Chinese schools of philosophy have addressed the issue of human nature some of which are the theory of acquired habits from the Confucianists and Mohists, the theory of the original goodness from Mencius, the theory of evil human nature from Xunzi and the Legalists, and the simple and true theory of Taoism (Yen, 2015: 19). As a main strand of Chinese philosophy of human nature, “Confucianism was divided between various conflicting theories regarding human nature, such as the theories of acquired habits, the original goodness of human nature, evil human nature, the three classes of human nature (i.e., upper, middle, and lower), temperament, and the nature of talent” (Ibid., 21).

Confucius and his thoughts developed in the periods Warring States (i.e. Wei-Jin) and Han dynasty in ancient China. The thoughts of Confucius and the Han Confucians of the Wei-Jin (Warring States) period are contained in ancient texts such as *Analects of Confucius*, the *Xiaojing (Book of Filial Piety)*, and the *Yijing (Book of Change)*. According to Wang Jinyi, Confucius theorized that human

nature is composed of a fundamental element called *qi*, which helps to determine the commonality and the individuality of human nature. *Qi* is also the basis for the contrast between potential nature and realized nature (Jinyi, 2006: 26). *Qi*, which is also called *Chi* (<https://www.amcollege.edu/blog/qi-in-traditional-chinese-medicine>), translates as “steam, breath, vital energy, vital force, material force, matter-energy, organic material energy, or simply *pneuma*. In Chinese philosophy, medicine and religion, it means the psychological energies that permeate the universe (*Encyc. Brit. Online*).

Jana S. Rošker, in addition, gives philosophical, physiological, psychological and ethical interpretations of *qi* in relation to human nature. For Rošker, *qi* or *chi* “underlies every function and the totality of the human being” (2020: 119), making it the determiner of human nature.

It thus manifests itself as the vital force that underlays any form of life, as the principle of vital creativity, as the cause of any change and transformation, which in Chinese philosophy thoroughly has been seen as the fundamental precondition of life. In the process of breathing, one can see the evidence of life. Breathing in air and breathing it out results in the circulation of blood in the body, and so *qi* implies the meaning of internal life force. This life force is by no means limited to the automatic bodily functions; on the contrary, it also produces consciousness and awareness, and thus comprises the very foundation for every form of knowledge and wisdom. Because it is the power of continuous change, it elevates and becomes a cosmic (and even cosmological) power of creation (Rošker, 2020: 118; Geaney, 2002: 9).

The concept of *qi* was further developed by the Han Confucians who saw *qi* as the determiner of good and evil in nature. From this conviction that nature is a synthesis of good and evil, they deduced that human nature is a mixture of good and evil.

The fact of the human being is that he or she has both humanity (*ren*) and greed (*tan*). Both the *qi* of humanity and the *qi* of greed reside in the human person. The human person is formed after Heaven. Heaven has dual operation of yin and yang (passive and active cosmic forces), and the human person also has dual nature of humanity and greed (Jinyi, 2006: 33).

Wang Jinyi explains that Yang Xiong puts the matter more straightforward by stating thus: “Man’s nature is a mixture of good and evil. He who cultivates the good part will become a good man and he who cultivates the evil part will become an evil man” (Ibid.). From this dualistic view of human nature, Han Confucians developed the three grades of human nature to explain the differences in human beings.

Human nature can be divided into three grades: the upper, the medium, and the lower. The upper is good and good only. The medium may be led to be either upper or lower. The lower is evil and evil only (Jinyi, 35).

In Wang Jinyi's view, Xun Yue's puts the matter of the threefold structure of human nature thus;

Someone asks about Heaven's mandate and human effort. The answer is that there are three grades involved. The upper and the lower are unmovable. In between them human effort lies [i.e. what is between them is changeable through human effort]. People are alike in what they are destined, but through effort they become far apart. Therefore they either have good fortune or bad fortune, completely different from one another (Jinyi, 36).

Jinyi also points out that for Dong Zhongshu, the real issue about the three grades of human nature is about the ability to strike a middle path between the extremes of good and evil as captured in the following words: "Nature is named not to refer to the upper and the lower, but to the average" (Ibid. 38). According to Wang Jinyi, this position of Dong Zhongshu and the theory of the three grades of human nature is a reflection of Confucius' view in the *Analecets*, where Confucius observed that only the most intelligent and the most stupid do not change. It is based on this, that Confucius expresses the view that society should reform human nature through education. Education, should in turn be based on virtue ethics which is meant to teach the individual the way and the purpose of harmonizing the opposites to achieve self-balance.

Virtue ethics in Confucian *Taoism* is centered on the concept of *chung* or *zhong* (Confucius, 2015: vi; Qiyong and Tao, 2012: 22) also known as ethical conscientiousness, which refers to the positive side of *Jen* or *Ren*. *Jen* or *Ren* variously translates as benevolence, humaneness, human-heartedness or kind-heartedness (Confucius, vi, 2 & 119; Qiyong and Tao, 22). In other words the theory of *De* (Confucius, vii & 5; Yao, 2021: 5) or virtue ethics in Chinese is firmly anchored on the principle of *Jen* or *Ren*. *Ren* basically describes the personality or character of the Chinese *sheng* which means sage (Confucius, 29 & 119) who has attained the eminence of *man as man*. For this reason, the *sheng* is considered a virtuoso, a man of all-rounded virtue or simply the paradigmatic individual known in Chinese as *junzi* (Confucius, vi & 1; Shen & Shun, 2008: 7). There are the positive and the negative sides to *Ren*, namely *shu* and *zhong*. By emphasizing the maxim: "do not do onto others what you do not wish yourself, *Shu* represents the negative side to *Ren*; and by stating the maxim: "do onto others as you wish yourself", *zhong* represents the positive side of *Ren*. In Chinese virtue ethics (*de*) *shu* is likened to altruism, while *zhong* refers to conscientiousness.

On a general note, the doctrine of *Ren* encourages individuals to shun *li* or profit and act from the point of *yi*, meaning virtue or righteousness. Hence, the individual is advised to follow the path of moderation as a balance between the two sides to *Ren*. However, because of the positive note in *zhong*, conscientiousness is likened to voluntary goodness by which one is expected to act from absolute point of duty or to be consciously and steadfastly committed to one's duty (Angle, 2013: 1). Acting from the point of absolute duty in Confucian ethics means to – do for doing sake or to do for nothing. This makes ethical conscientiousness in Chinese ethics to be further connected to the principles of *Tao* and *Ming*.

Where *Tao* is understood as “the way, the power of the way and the mastery of its attainment, the primordial universal principle from which every other reality derives” (Le Guin, 2011); *Ming* refers to fate, destiny, mandate, enlightenment, the command, order, decree, rule or will of life or the totality of the conditions and forces of the entire universe (Confucius, 2015: 26, 60, 79, 111 & 119; Slingerland, 1996: 567). This means that understanding, mastering and accepting *Ming* is the way to the attainment of *Tao*. Thus, *Ming* becomes the process of ‘transcendental act’ by which the sage (*sheng*) is able to imaginatively harmonize his/her subjective thinking with the objectivity of things; which involves the deliberate interfusion of the principles of idealism and realism for the practical and pragmatic transformation of the world for the common good. This, exactly, is what ethical conscientiousness entails.

### 3.2 Hindu Theory of human nature

Apostolos Michailidis states that “Hinduism embraces the cultural inheritance of Indus-Sarasvati civilization (3000-1750 B.C), Aryan Vedism (1500-900 B.C), Brahmanism (900-500 A.D), indigenous Tantrism, the formation of six classical Hindu schools of thought (*darśanas*), Puranic Hinduism and Post-colonial Hinduism or Modern Hinduism and local forms of worship-that may be unique just in one location- known as Hinduism of villages or *grāma-Hinduism*” (Michailidis, 2020: 164).

Human being in Hinduism as captured in Sanskrit language is reflected in the words *mānava* and *puruṣa*. The terms *nara*, *pum̐s* and *dehin* are used to qualify the male, while the terms *nārī*, *strī*, *jāyā*, and *vanitā* are used to qualify the female. A human being is a combination of body and *ātman*, which could mean the spirit or the soul, but more accurately means the Self. Both terms are connected with the concept of *mokṣa* or *mukti* which translates as liberation (Ibid., 166).

Body in Sanskrit is called *śarīra* which derives either from the root *śri* (i.e. support or supporter) or from *śrī*, meaning that which is easily destroyed or dissolved (Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*; Macdonell, *Practical Sanskrit Dictionary*, online). This means that from birth to death the human body constantly undergoes change. This change continues at death with the body going through decomposition. This is expressed in the word “*tanu*, derived from the root *tan* which means *to grow* because body is growing since the time of birth” (Ibid., 167). This

latter interpretation of body as that which has the capacity to grow has some connection with *Brahman*, that is to say, where:

*Brahman* in Upanishads means *prayer*, which is derived from the root *brh*, meaning *to grow* or to burst forth. *Brahman* as prayer is what manifests itself in audible speech. The philosophic significance it bears in the Upanishads is the primary cause of the universe that bursts forth spontaneously in the form of nature as a whole and not as mere speech (Srivastava, 2010: 79).

Body in Hindu philosophy has negative, positive, spiritual, physiological, biological and sociological interpretations. In some traditions, it has been given a positive evaluation as the vehicle of the journey to liberation (*mokṣa*, *mukti*) or enlightenment (*bodhi*). In some other traditions it has been given a negative evaluation as a restriction or a confinement of the soul from which it must break free. As the renowned Indologist Klaus K. Klostermaier mentions:

Hinduism has an ambivalent attitude towards the body. On the one hand, there is a sharp dichotomy between body and spirit and most Hindu systems insist on *viveka* (*discernment*) through which a person learns to identify with the spirit and to consider the body as 'non-self'. On the other hand, the body is valued as a vehicle of salvation: all acts necessary to obtain liberation require a well-functioning body (2014: 41).

Hinduism espouses the view that the universe has undergone several cycles of evolution of creation and destruction, a process through which *ātman* reincarnated in different bodies, animal or human, according to its previous actions (*karma*). This means that the kind of body that a being has is determined by its actions in the past. The body along with its pleasure and suffering is the result of previous actions in a previous life. Some traditions claim that the *ātman* can be set free from the confinement of the body through meditation and ritual, while some Yoga traditions believe that the body can achieve immortality or at least great longevity. In some forms of Hinduism the body is important in being part of the body of God and conversely as symbolically containing the cosmos within it (Flood, 2006; Michailidis, 2020: 168). Sociologically, the kind of body a person has is a determining feature of the endogamous social group or caste (*jāti*) to which he/she belongs.

By the Doctrine of *Śarīra Traya* (i.e. Three Bodies), a human being has three bodies: a gross body (*sthūla śarīra*), a subtle body (*sūkṣma śarīra*), and a causal one (*kāraṇa śarīra*), which emanated from Brahman (i.e. the ultimate reality). Gross body (*sthūla śarīra*) -which corresponds to the mortal, material, physical body- is produced out of the gross forms of the five basic elements (*pañcabhūta*): ether (*ākāśa*), air (*vāyu*), water (*ap*), fire (*tejas*), and earth (*pṛthivī*). It is said to be built of skin (*tvacā*), flesh (*māmsa*), blood (*rudhira*), muscles (*snāyu*), fat (*meda*),

marrow (*majjā*), bones (*asthis*) and is subject to a six-fold change: birth, subsistence, growth, maturity, decay, and death. It has the capability to experience joy and sorrow and to form the basis of mundane relationships. At death the physical body perishes and its five constituent elements are dissolved. That body cannot be considered as the real *Self* (*ātman*), but as *non-self* (*anātman*) (Michailidis, 168-169).

Subtle body (*sūkṣma śarīra*) comprises the subtle forms of the five subtle elements (ether, air, water, fire, earth) which are unseen by physical eyes. The subtle forms of five subtle elements are the sources of the:

- (i) five organs of perception (*śravanadīpanchakam*) which are eyes, ears, skin, tongue and nose,
- (ii) the five organs of action (*vagadīpanchakam*), which are speech, hands, legs, anus and genitals,
- (iii) the five-fold vital breath, viz. respiration (*prāṇa*), evacuation of waste from the body (*apāna*), blood circulation (*vyāna*), excretion (*udāna*) which include sneezing, vomiting, crying and digestion (*samāna*),
- (iv) mind (*manas*) and
- (v) intellect (*buddhi*).

From the above, it is clear that for Hinduism the body comprises mind and vital energies which keep the physical body alive. It is the receptacle of thoughts and memories that continue to exist after death, serving as a vehicle of transmigration. Combined with the causal body it is the transmigrating “soul” or *jīva*, separating from the gross body upon death. However, still we cannot say that *jīva* is the real *Self* (*ātman*) (Ibid., 169).

Causal body (*kāraṇa śarīra*) is finer than the subtle body. It records past thoughts, habits and actions of an individual and carries the soul (*jīva*) of him/her from one life to another upon reincarnation. The causal body is merely the cause or seed of the subtle and the gross body. It is made up of “ignorance” (*avidyā*). As such, the causal body is characterized by emptiness, ignorance and darkness. It is the most complex of the three bodies and it contains the impressions of past experiences (Ibid., 170). Gross body, subtle body and causal body are the sources of desire. The three levels of bodies are also the basis for waking, dream and deep sleep respectively. The fourth dimension to these three levels of body is called “*turīya*”, which is the real state of consciousness. It is pure consciousness or super-consciousness which transcends the three common states of consciousness and experiences the infinite (*Ananta*) and the non-different (*advaita, abheda*). It is equated with *ātman* of the real *Self*” (Ibid., 172).

Already, it has been stated that in Hinduism, body (*śarīra*) is the vehicle for the self (*ātman*) and soul (*jīva*) which makes the Hindu theory of Mind/Body relationship complex. The complexity of mind/body relationship is seen in the several layers of sheaths of consciousness as follows:

- (i) the physical sheath or the sheath of food (*annamaya kośa*),
- (ii) the sheath of vital air (*prāṇamaya kośa*),
- (iii) the sheath of mind (*manomaya kośa*),
- (iv) the sheath of intellect (*vijñānamaya kośa*), and
- (v) the sheath of bliss (*ānandamaya kośa*).

These sheaths are located one inside the other like the segments of a collapsible telescope, with the sheath of the physical body being the outermost and the sheath of bliss being the innermost (Ibid.).

Hindu thinkers regard consciousness (*caitanya*, *citta*, *cetana*) as an attribute or an identical aspect of Self (*ātman*). Closely connected to *ātman* is “*menas* (mind) which is the faculty of memory and logic and is said to be faster than matter, energy or light” (Hari, 2010: 642). This makes consciousness to be voluntary, spontaneous or free. This makes consciousness to be a manifestation of *ātman*. *Ātman* in itself is identical with *Brahman* (the supreme almighty universal force and source). *Ātman* originally meant *breath*. With the passage of time, it became associated with whatever constitutes the essential part of humans, self or soul. *Atman* as the self or inmost truth of man becomes the cosmic soul or self. The unity between *Ātman* and the cosmic soul or self (i.e. *Brahman*) is expressed in the upanishadic teaching and saying “I am *Brahman*” or by the equation *Brahman–Atman*. This means that the individual as well as the world is the manifestation of the same reality and both are therefore at bottom one. There is continuity between nature and man.

The Vedantic psychology asserts that *Brahman* is the innermost universal being characterized by pure consciousness (*Chit*) and *Ātman* (the self) is the innermost individual being characterized by individual consciousness (*Chitta*). The essence of personality is something beyond body, life, mind and intellect. It is *Atman*, the self. Its chief attribute is consciousness. The self exists before, in and after the various states of consciousness: wakeful, dream and sleep. Denial of consciousness means denial of everything else (Srivastava, 2010: 80). Thus, in Hinduism, mind and self are not identical. The *self* is the knower (*kshetrajna*), the seer (*drasta*), the witness (*sakshi*), and the immutable (*kutastha*). The combination of *chit* and *achit* (consciousness and matter), *kshetrajna* and *kshetra* (knower and known), *karta* and *karana* (doer and its instrument) is the total personality called *Jiva* and *Jivatman* or simply the embodied *self* (Ibid., 80-81).

#### 4.0 Conclusion

In this unit, the Confucian Taoist theory of human nature and the Hindu theory of human nature have been examined. The views of Confucius and Han Confucians which developed in the Warring States (Wei-Jin) period of Chinese history was examined. This makes Confucian view of human nature to be divided between various conflicting theories of acquired habits, the original goodness of human nature, evil human nature, the three classes of human nature (i.e., tripartite nature of human beings comprising the upper, middle, and lower), temperament, and the nature of talent. Hinduism embraces the cultural inheritance of Indus-Sarasvati civilization, Aryan Vedism, Brahmanism, indigenous Tantrism, the

formation of six classical Hindu schools of thought (darśanas), Puranic Hinduism and Post-colonial Hinduism or Modern Hinduism and local forms of worship. Human being in Hinduism is captured in the words *mānava* and *puruṣa*. The terms *nara*, *puruṣ* and *dehin* are used to qualify the male, while the terms *nārī*, *strī*, *jāyā*, and *vanitā* are used to qualify the female. A human being is a combination of body and *ātman* which more accurately means the Self.

## 5.0 Summary

- In Confucian Taoism human nature is composed of the element called *qi* or *chi*.
- *Qi* or *Chi* translates as steam, breath, vital energy, vital force, material force, matter-energy, organic material energy, or simply *pneuma*.
- In Chinese philosophy, medicine and religion, *qi* or *chi* means the psychological energies that permeate the universe.
- For Rošker, *qi* or *chi* underlies every function and the totality of the human being.
- The *qi* or *chi* element is the source of good and evil making human nature a combination or mixture of good and evil.
- The duality of good and evil made possible by *qi* or *chi* can be resolved by the ability of human beings to find a middle path between good and evil.
- Finding a moderate path between good and evil results into the tripartite or three classes view of human nature.
- To lead a moderate life and resolve the conflict between good and evil human beings need to understand the concept of *chung* or *zhong* which means conscientiousness.
- *Chung* or *Zhong* refer to the positive side of *Jen* or *Ren*.
- *Jen* or *Ren* variously translates as benevolence, humaneness, human-heartedness or kind-heartedness.
- The Chinese *Sheng* is the sage who through the understanding of *Ren* and the practice of moderation is able to reconcile good and evil.
- *Tao* in Chinese means the way, the power of the way and the mastery of its attainment, the primordial universal principle from which every other reality derives.
- *Ming* in Chinese refers to fate, destiny, mandate, enlightenment, the command, order, decree, rule or will of life or the totality of the conditions and forces of the entire universe.
- Body in Sanskrit is called *śarīra*.
- *Śarīra* as a term derives either from the root *śri* (i.e. support or supporter) or from *śrī*, meaning that which is easily destroyed or dissolved.
- The changeability and perishability of body or *śarīra* in Hinduism is expressed in the word *tanu*, derived from the root *tan* which means *to grow* because body is growing since the time of birth.
- *Brahman* in Upanishads means *prayer*.
- *Brahman* as a term derives from the root *brh*, meaning *to grow* or to burst forth.
- *Brahman* as prayer is what manifests itself in audible speech.
- *Ātman* in Hinduism simply means *Self*.



- *Ātman* derives its source from *Brahman* and is therefore identical with *Brahman*, on the basis of which we speak of the interconnectedness of *Brahman-Ātman*.
- *Śarīra Traya* in Hindu philosophy is known as the Doctrine of Three Bodies.
- Thus, the human body in Hinduism comprises gross body (*sthūla śarīra*), subtle body (*sūkṣma śarīra*), and causal body (*kāraṇa śarīra*).
- Gross body (*sthūla śarīra*) corresponds to the mortal, material, physical body.
- Gross body (*sthūla śarīra*) is produced out of the gross forms of the five basic elements (*pañcabhūta*): ether (*ākāśa*), air (*vāyu*), water (*ap*), fire (*tejas*), and earth (*prthivī*).
- Subtle body (*sūkṣma śarīra*) comprises the subtle forms of the five subtle elements (ether, air, water, fire, earth) which are unseen by physical eyes.
- Causal body (*kāraṇa śarīra*) is finer than the subtle body.
- It records past thoughts, habits and actions of an individual and carries the soul (*jīva*) of him/her from one life to another upon reincarnation.

### 6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Give a vivid account of Confucian theory of human nature.
2. With illustrations, discuss the theory of *Jen* or *Ren* in Confucian Taoism.
3. Describe the Hindu theory of human nature.
4. Why is the concept of body (*śarīra*) important in Hindu metaphysics?

### 7.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

1. Human nature in Confucianism is composed of
  - (a) *Qi/Chi*
  - (b) *Li/Yi*
  - (c) *Jen/Ren*
  - (d) *Shu/Zhong*
2. *Qi* in Confucian Taoism means the following except
  - (a) Energy
  - (b) Matter
  - (c) Vital force
  - (d) Steam
3. *Qi* is also the source of
  - (a) Good
  - (b) Evil
  - (c) Duality and mixture of good and evil
  - (d) All of the above
4. *Chung* or *zhong* in Confucian Taoism simply means
  - (a) Altruism
  - (b) Effective altruism
  - (c) Selflessness
  - (d) Conscientiousness
5. *Chung* or *zhong* in Confucian Taoism is the positive side of
  - (a) *Jen*
  - (b) *Tao*
  - (c) *Ming*

- (d) *Chi*
6. *Jen* in Confucian Taoism means the following except
- Benevolence
  - Human insatiability
  - Human-heartedness or kind-heartedness
  - Righteousness
7. Sage in Chinese means
- Xunzi*
  - Zungi*
  - Sheng*
  - Shung*
8. The understanding of *Ren* and the practice of moderation in Confucian Taoism should lead to
- Self-understanding
  - Understanding of other selves
  - Astral projection
  - Ability to reconcile good and evil
9. *Tao* in Chinese means the following except
- Material energy
  - The way
  - The power of the way and the mastery of its attainment
  - The primordial universal principle from which every other reality derives.
10. *Ming* in Chinese refers to the following except
- Fate/Destiny
  - Predestination
  - Mandate/Enlightenment
  - Command, order or decree
11. Body in Sanskrit is called
- Śri*
  - Śrī*
  - Śarīra*
  - Śarīra Traya*
12. *Brahman* in Upanishads means
- Breath*
  - Matter*
  - Soul*
  - Prayer*
13. *Ātman* in Hinduism simply means
- Self*
  - Soul*
  - Spirit*
  - Mind*
14. The interconnectedness between *Ātman* and *Brahman* produces
- Ātman-Brahman* relationship
  - Brahman-Ātman* relationship
  - Ātman-Brahman* non-relationship

- (d) *Brahman-Ātman* non-relationship
15. *Śarīra Traya* in Hindu philosophy is known as
- Three concepts of the soul
  - Three concepts of the mind
  - The Doctrine of Three Bodies
  - The Theory of Mind-Body relationship
16. The human body in Hinduism comprises
- Gross body alone
  - Subtle body alone
  - Causal body alone
  - Gross body, Subtle body and Causal body
17. Gross body is known as \_\_\_\_\_ corresponds to the \_\_\_\_\_
- Sthūla śarīra*/mortal, material, physical body
  - Pañcabhūta*/mortal, material, physical body
  - Sthūla śarīra*/immortal, immaterial and non-physical
  - Pañcabhūta*/immortal, immaterial and non-physical
18. Subtle body is called \_\_\_\_\_ and comprises \_\_\_\_\_
- Sūkṣma śarīra*/ether
  - Sūkṣma śarīra*/the subtle forms of the five subtle elements (ether, air, water, fire, earth)
  - Sūkṣma śarīra*/water
  - Sūkṣma śarīra*/earth
19. Causal body means \_\_\_\_\_ and it is \_\_\_\_\_
- Kāraṇa śarīra*/self-sufficient
  - Kāraṇa śarīra*/redundant
  - Kāraṇa śarīra*/finer than the subtle body
  - Kāraṇa śarīra*/the vehicle for the brain
20. Soul in Hindu philosophy is known as
- Ākāśa*
  - Vāyu*
  - pṛthivī*
  - Jīva*

<p><b>Solution:</b> 1. a, 2. b, 3. c, 4. d, 5. a, 6. b, 7. c, 8. d, 9. a, 10. b, 11. c, 12. d, 13. a, 14. b, 15. c, 16. d, 17. a, 18. b, 19. c, 20. d</p>
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## **Module 2: Scientific/Psychological Conceptions of Human Nature**

- Unit 1: Biological Conception of Human Nature
- Unit 2: Psychological Conception of Human Nature
- Unit 3: Behaviourist Conception of Human Nature
- Unit 4: Parapsychology Conception of Human Nature

### **Unit 1: Biological Conception of Human Nature**

#### **Contents**

- 1.0 Introduction
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  - 3.1 Biology as a Life Science
  - 3.2 The Biological Structure of Human Nature
  - 3.3 The Biological Structure of Human Nature and Human Behavioural Pattern
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise
- 7.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 8.0 References/Further Reading

#### **1.0 Introduction**

This unit graphically examines human nature from the perspective of the science of biology. The central purpose of biology is to determine the characteristics of living things or living organisms. To achieve this task, biologists use the abbreviation MR. NIGER D, to express those traits that are common to living organisms. M – stands for Movement, R – stands for Respiration, N – stands for Nutrition, G – stands for Growth, E – stands for Excretion, the second R – stands for Reproduction, while D – stands for Death. However, the focus in this unit is not to discuss the characteristics which human beings have in common with other animals. The emphasis is to discuss the biological structure that determines human nature, which in turn determines human mannerisms or behavioural patterns.

#### **2.0 Objective**

At the end of this unit, you are expected to:

- Identify and examine the meaning of biology as a life science
- State and explain the biological structure of human nature
- Describe how the biological structure of human nature determine human behavioural pattern

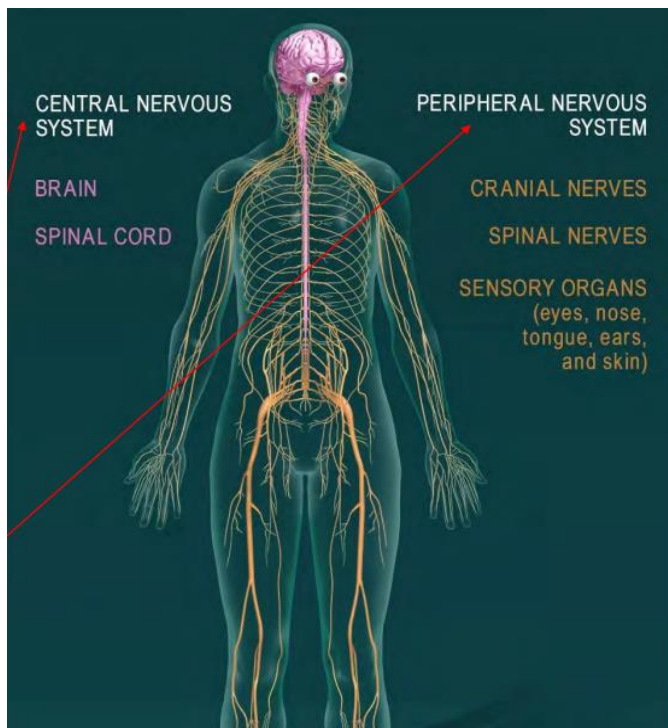
### 3.0 Main Content

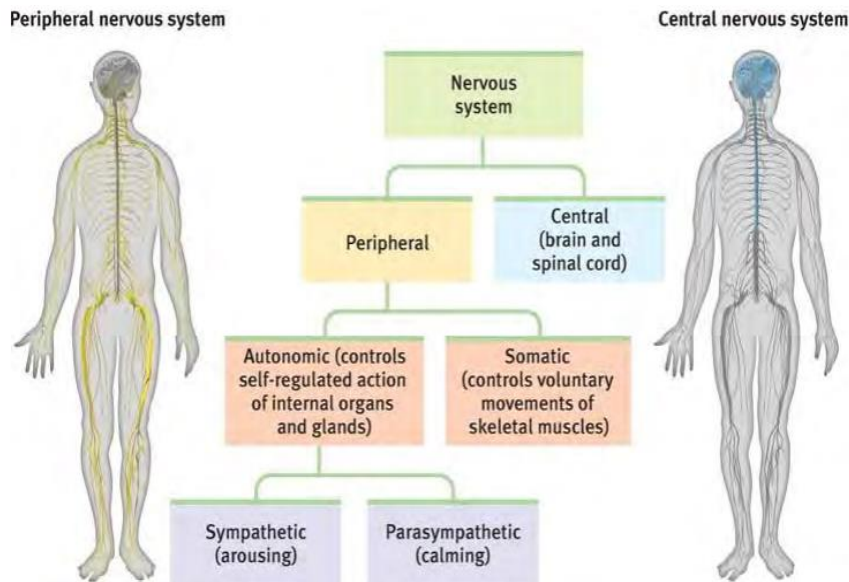
#### 3.1 Biology as a Life Science

Raghad S. Mouhamad defines biology as a science concerned with the study of life and living organisms, including their structure, function, growth, evolution, distribution, and taxonomy. He explains that the word biology is derived from Greek origin *bios* which means life and *logos* which means science or study. Therefore, biology is the science of Living Things otherwise known as Life Science (Mouhamad, 2018: 2). As a life science, biology studies the condition that distinguishes animals and plants as organisms from inorganic matter or non-living things. However, biology as a physical or empirical science is limited to the study of physical form of life. So, it does not study spiritual kind of life.

#### 3.2 The Biological Structure of Human Nature

As hinted earlier in unit 1 of module 1, the biological structure of human nature is no other but the nervous system composed of the central nervous system, which comprises the brain and the spinal cord, and the peripheral nervous system which consists of cranial nerves, spinal nerves and the sensory organs [Baum, National Institutes of Health (.gov)].





**Source:** [Baum, National Institutes of Health (.gov)]

Howie Baum who compiled the above diagrams explains that the nervous system is the most complex body system and the body's prime communication and coordination network enlivened by a circuit of electricity. The vastness and complexity of the nervous system is such that the individual nerves from one body, if joined end to end, could reach around the world two and a half times. The brain and spinal cord are the central nervous system, while nerves and sensory organs make up the peripheral nervous system. Together, the central nervous system (CNS) and the peripheral nervous systems (PNS) transmit and process sensory information and coordinate bodily functions. The brain and spinal cord (the CNS) function are the control center. They receive data and feedback from the sensory organs and from nerves throughout the body, process the information, and send commands back out. "Nerve pathways of the PNS carry the incoming and outgoing signals. The spinal cord transmits signals to and from the brain and commands reflexes" (<https://www.visiblebody.com/learn/nervous/s>). All the sensory organs of sight, hearing, tasting, smelling and touch are connected to the brain through the spinal cord. This apart, the spinal cord can shoot out a reflex command without bothering the brain, called a *reflex arc* (Ibid.).

### 3.3 The Biological Structure of Human Nature and Human Behavioural Pattern

Neuroscience or neural science (plural, neurosciences or neural sciences) comprises any or all of the sciences, such as neurochemistry and experimental psychology, which deal with the structure or function of the nervous system and brain. It is the study of how the nervous system develops, its structure, and what it does. Neuroscientists focus on the brain and its impact on behaviour and cognitive functions. Not only is neuroscience concerned with the normal functioning of the nervous system, but also what happens to the nervous system when people have neurological, psychiatric and neurodevelopmental disorders (<https://neuro.georgetown.edu/about-neuroscience>).

Modern neuroscience is focused on understanding how the nerve cells of the brain direct human behaviour. This include:

- (i) how we learn from experience
- (ii) how we remember
- (iii) how we direct our movements, and
- (iv) how we communicate with each other.

The human brain is thought to be composed of about a hundred billion ( $10^{11}$ ) nerve cells and about 10 to 50 times that number of supporting elements or glial cells. Some nerve cells have relatively few connections with other neurons or with such effector organs as muscles or glands, but the great majority receive connections from thousands of other cells and may themselves connect with several hundred other neurons. This means that at a fairly conservative estimate the total number of functional connections (known as synapses) within the human brain is on the order of a hundred trillion ( $10^{14}$ ) [“The Nervous System and Behaviour”, 1989: National Academy of Science (US)]. These form the essential *wiring* of the nervous system on which the extraordinarily precise functioning of the brain depends for information processing.

According to Andrew Davis and C. J. Clegg, the brain controls the functions of the body by:

- (i) receiving information from sensory receptors
- (ii) integrating and correlating incoming information in association centres
- (iii) sending impulses to effector organs (muscles and glands), causing bodily responses
- (iv) storing information and building up an accessible memory bank
- (v) initiating impulses from its own self-contained activities
- (vi) the brain is also the seat of personality and emotions
- (vii) it enables us to imagine, create, invent, plan, calculate, predict and perform abstract reasoning
- (viii) the cerebral hemispheres are responsible for activities such as memory, complex behaviour, emotions, learning, body controls and other complex functions
- (ix) the cerebellum is responsible for actions such as involuntary muscle movements of posture and balance as well as all precise, voluntary manipulations involved in hand movements, speech and writing
- (x) the medulla oblongata is responsible for the regulation of heart rate, ventilation of the lungs (i.e. breathing), blood pressure, swallowing, digesting and vomiting (2017: 7).

There are other internal functions of the body controlled by the nervous system. However, the focus of this unit is to examine how human nature is determined by our biological nature. From the above analysis, it is obvious that the biological



structure of human nature is responsible for human emotional and rational activities. It follows that as we are biologically rational and intellectual, we are also biologically instinctive like animals. This means that like animals, we also have sexual drives and the tendency towards aggression and territoriality.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

From the analysis done in this unit, it can be seen that the human body is not just a wonderful and very complex system; it is in fact, a foundation or determinant of human behaviourism. This automatically means that the biological structure of the human body is absolutely an indispensable factor in determining human nature. Put differently, the human biological structure provides a physical, empirical and factual foundation for the study of human nature.

#### **5.0 Summary**

- Biology as a science is concerned with the study of life and living organisms, including their structure, function, growth, evolution, distribution, and taxonomy.
- Biology derives from the Greek *bios* which means life and *logos* which means science or study.
- Therefore, Biology is the science of Living Things otherwise known as Life Science.
- As a life science, biology studies the condition that distinguishes animals and plants as organisms from inorganic matter or non-living things.
- However, biological study of life excludes the study spiritual kind of life.
- The nervous system is the determinant of human nature.
- It is composed of the central nervous system (CNS), peripheral nervous system (PNS) and the sensory organs.
- The CNS further consists of the brain and the spinal cord.
- The PNS further comprises cranial nerves and spinal nerves.
- The sensory organs are eyes (for sight), ears (for hearing), nose (for smelling), tongue (for tasting) and skin (for touch of feeling).
- The nervous system (NS) is therefore, the determinant of human biological, psychological, physiological, neurological, rational, intellectual and animalistic tendencies.

#### **6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise**

1. To what extent can biology be defined as the study of life?
2. Discuss the biological structure of human nature.
3. How does the biological structure of human life determine human behavioural pattern.

#### **7.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment**

1. The following are the features of biology as a life science except \_\_\_\_\_
  - (a) The study of atoms and light waves
  - (b) The study of life
  - (c) The study of living organisms

- (d) The study of the structure, function, growth, evolution, distribution, and taxonomy of living organisms
2. The nervous system (NS) is composed of the following except \_\_\_\_\_
    - (a) The central nervous system and peripheral nervous system
    - (b) The pancreas and esophagus
    - (c) The brain, the spinal cord and spinal nerves
    - (d) The sensory organs
  3. According to Howie Baum, the nervous system is the \_\_\_\_\_
    - (a) The simplest body system of mammals
    - (b) The most complex of human bodily system alone
    - (c) The most complex body system and the body's prime communication and coordination network enlivened by a circuit of electricity.
    - (d) ICT compartment of the body
  4. Howie Baum further states that:
    - (a) The nervous system can conduct electricity
    - (b) The nervous system can also function like an electronic device
    - (c) The nervous system would not be able to function without heart beats
    - (d) The vastness and complexity of the nervous system is such that the individual nerves from one body, if joined end to end, could reach around the world two and a half times.
  5. Which of these is not true
    - (a) The nervous system is a perfect example of how an AI device functions dynamically
    - (b) The brain and spinal cord are the central nervous system, while nerves and sensory organs make up the peripheral nervous system
    - (c) Together, the central nervous system (CNS) and the peripheral nervous systems (PNS) transmit and process sensory information and coordinate bodily functions
    - (d) The brain and spinal cord (the CNS) function as the control center. They receive data and feedback from the sensory organs and from nerves throughout the body, process the information, and send commands back out
  6. Only one of these is biologically true
    - (a) All functions of the body are controlled from the heart
    - (b) All the sensory organs of sight, hearing, tasting, smelling and touch are connected to the brain through the spinal cord
    - (c) The electrical charges of the body is the vital-energy from God
    - (d) Without the gift of breath from God the body would simply be lifeless
  7. Neuroscience means the same thing as
    - (a) Algebra
    - (b) Logarithm
    - (c) Neural science
    - (d) Psychiatry
  8. Neuroscience comprises of the following except \_\_\_\_\_
    - (a) Neurology
    - (b) Neurochemistry
    - (c) Experimental psychology

- (d) Ophthalmology
9. Neuroscientists focus on the study of
- (a) The brain and its impact on behaviour and cognitive functions
  - (b) Human consciousness
  - (c) Human conscience
  - (d) Human parapsychological activities
10. The following are the focus of modern neuroscience except \_\_\_\_\_
- (a) How we learn from experience
  - (b) How digestion and food circulation takes place in the body
  - (c) How we remember
  - (d) How we communicate with each other.

<b>Solutions:</b> 1. a, 2. b, 3. c, 4. d, 5. a, 6. b, 7. c, 8. d, 9. a, 10. B
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## **Unit 2: Psychological Conception of Human Nature**

### **Contents**

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- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise
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### **1.0 Introduction**

This unit aims at examining the psychological perspective to the study and understanding of human nature. In the process, the meaning and purpose of psychology as a science, the physical or empirical and the non-physical (i.e. spiritual) dimensions to psychology will be examined. It would be seen that biology, culture, religion and spirituality are not only connected to psychology, they in fact, form foundations for psychological studies and vice versa. It would also be seen that psychology acts as a foundation for the Behaviourists' and parapsychological conceptions of human nature.

### **2.0 Objective**

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

- Describe the Meaning and Purpose of Psychology as a Science
- Identify and Explain Materialist Perspective to the Psychological Study of Human Nature
- State and Discuss Idealist/Spiritualist Perspective to the Psychological Study of Human Nature

### **3.0 Main Content**

#### **3.1 Psychology of Human Nature: Meaning and Purpose**

David G. Myers defines psychology thus:

The scientific study of behaviour and mental processes. Behaviour is considered to be anything that an individual does, or any action that can be observed by others. *Mental processes* are the internal, subjective, unobservable components, such as thoughts, belief, feelings, sensations, perceptions, etc, that can be inferred from behaviour (2007: 2).

Aisha Utz on her part states that psychology as a science attempts to answer questions such as: what is our basic nature? From where do our thoughts, feelings and behaviour emanate? How possibly can we control or change our basic nature? In dealing with these questions Western psychologists employ the scientific method which entails empirical enquiry, observation, experimentation, and rigorous analysis, with the principal goal of describing, explaining, predicting and controlling human behaviour, mental processes and emotions (2011: 25).

The term psychology is derived from the Greek word *psyche* which is often used interchangeably with mind, soul, and spirit. The basic meaning of the Greek word *psyche* was life in the sense of breath. Derived meanings included spirit, soul, and ultimately self in the sense of conscious personality or psyche (Liddell and Scott, 1987; cited in Butto, 2019: 1). Nader Butto further explains that compared to the word *psyche*, the word *mind* does not show a specific way of usage. Its meaning was more dependent on the context of its usage rather than any single meaning. Thus, while the religious believe the mind houses the spirit and an awareness of God, scientists are of the view that the mind is the generator of ideas and thoughts. He explains that it was not until the 14th and 15th centuries that the concept of mind was gradually generalized to include all mental faculties, thought, volition, feeling, and memory (Butto, Ibid.).

In the west, psychology began as a deliberate academic study from the philosophy of David Hume, the Scottish philosopher who propounded the serial or bundle theory of mind. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, psychology became a highly regarded science of the mind. In the early 1900s, Sigmund Freud introduced his psychoanalytic theory and despite much advancement in the study of psychoanalytic theory, Freud's basic thoughts have continued to shape views on the theory of the human mind as the determinant of human nature.

### **3.2 Materialist Psychological Studies of Human Nature**

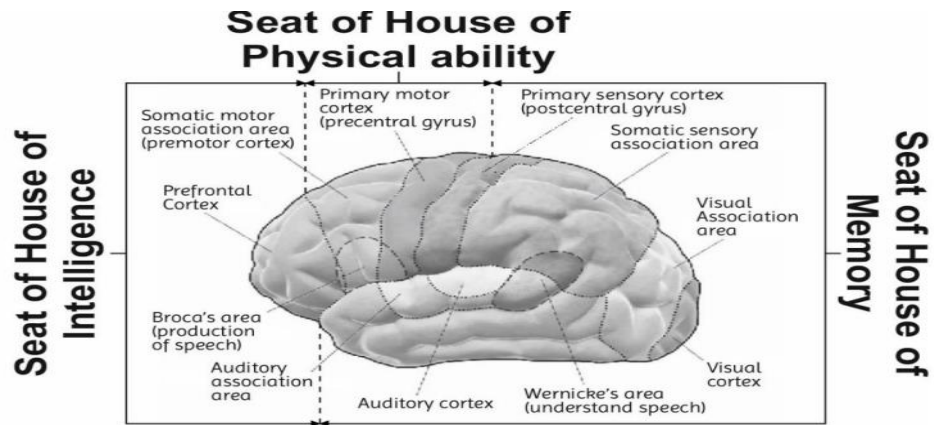
Sigmund Freud postulated a tripartite (i.e. three parts) structure of human nature which are the *id*, *ego*, and *superego*. Each develops at different stages in our lives. The *id* is the primitive and instinctual part of the mind that contains sexual and aggressive drives and hidden memories, the *superego* operates as a moral conscience, while the *ego* is the realistic part that acts as a mediator between the desires of the *id* and the regulating control of the *superego*. Sigmund Freud also theorized that human nature also comprises the *conscious*, *preconscious*, and *unconscious* minds. The *conscious* mind consists of those events which we are aware or conscious of, the *preconscious* mind comprises events that we are in the process of becoming conscious or aware of, while the *unconscious* mind include those events that we are unaware or unconscious of (Carlson, 2010: 453; Butto, 2019: 2). The connecting point between Freud's postulations of the *id*, the *ego* and the *superego* and the *conscious*, *preconscious* and *unconscious* minds is that they provide a materialist understanding of consciousness, the subconscious and the unconscious as processes of the brain.

Krishanu Kumar Das sheds further light on this issue. He defines consciousness as “our subjective experience of the world and the mind” (2021: 4). He explains that Sigmund Freud, at the beginning of his career, used the term *subconscious* to mean activities of mind that occur below the level of our conscious mind. But later he preferred to use the term *unconscious* for the same purpose and abandoned the usage of the former word. Then, in his “Topographic theory of mind”, Freud divided the mind into three domains – *conscious*, *preconscious*, and *unconscious*, making *preconscious* a subterranean layer interposed between the *conscious* and the *unconscious* and for this reason, the *preconscious* has access to both of the *conscious* and *unconscious*. For Freud, the contents of the unconscious can reach the conscious only by passing through the *preconscious*.

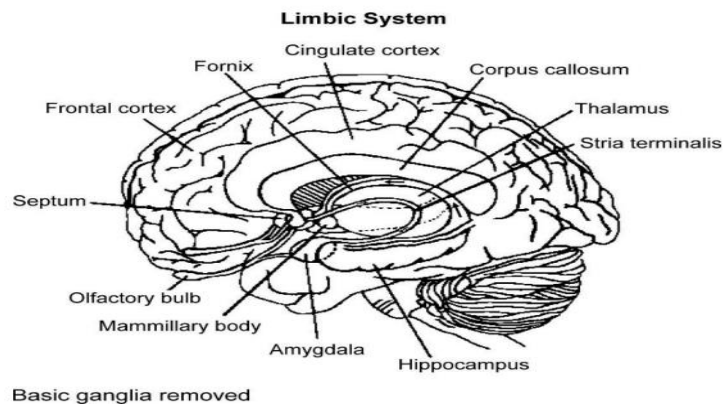
According to Krishanu Kumar Das “all of our activities of the mind can be divided into three domains, (i) Conscious (ii) Subconscious, and (iii) Unconscious” (Ibid., 5). The conscious activities of the mind, states Krishanu Kumar Das, are centered in four major houses in our brain which include:

- (i) House of Memory
- (ii) House of Intelligence
- (iii) House of Emotions, and
- (iv) House of Physical Activities.

These four houses of the mind are again sub-partitioned into three faculties of the mind namely (a) Reflexive Faculty, (b) Short-term Faculty, and (c) Long-term Faculty. According to Krishanu Kumar Das, though the activities of these houses can be conducted in our conscious realm of the mind, they can be run subconsciously too. And they can regulate or influence the centers responsible for brain’s unconscious autonomic activities also. He illustrates this with the aid of diagrams as presented below:



(a): Houses of 'Memory', 'Intelligence', and 'Physical Activities'.



(b): House of 'Emotions'.

**Fig. 1: Location of Four Major Houses (a & b)  
(Image in 'a' adapted from Blausen medical gallery)**

(Source: Das, 2019: 6)

Krishanu Kumar Das goes on to explain that the - Controlling cabins of all of these houses are situated in different areas of the brain (Fig.1). The house of intelligence is controlled by the prefrontal cortex situated in the frontal area of the cerebral cortex of our brain. The house of physical activity is controlled by the motor and premotor cortex of our brain. The house of emotion is maintained by the limbic system of the brain, which is composed of limbic cortex, a rim of cortical tissue around the *hilus* of the adjoining cerebral hemispheres, and a number of associated deep structures – the *hypothalamus*, the *amygdala*, the anterior nuclei of thalamus, the para-olfactory areas, the fornix, the *hippocampus*, the *nucleus accumbens*, the *cingulate gyrus*, the mammillary bodies, the orbitofrontal cortex, and the *septal nuclei* (Fig.1b). And the house of memory is run by memories that are stored in auditory association area adjacent to primary auditory cortex (Fig.1a). He states that besides sensory or perceptual information, memories of intellectual processes

that we've already undergone, and memories of past emotional experiences are also stocked in frontal association area and association area in limbic cortex respectively. He explains that of these four houses, the house of emotions sets our goals, the house of memory and the house of intelligence are our means, and the house of physical activities effectuate our output actions. Input is done by different sensory perceptions that can affect the houses or can be stored as memories in the house of memory for variable times (Ibid., 5-7).

It is by the functions of these four houses that consciousness is made possible. From the analysis done above, it can be seen that consciousness happens inside of us. Consciousness is simply a subjective exercise that enables us to become aware of the external world through the five senses and the memory. The five senses are responsible for feeling the external world which is called sensation, while the memory by receiving, storing, recalling and associating information is responsible for what is called perception. Note that by the term associating, it means that the memory arranges the data or information gathered in serial order or in order of sequence. Note also that this association of information happens alternately in which ideas or impressions are arranged in pairs (see Hume, 2007: 16-18).

Krishanu Kumar Das also presented a materialist (brain) description of the subconscious and the unconscious mind. According to him, though the subconscious remains predominantly beyond the reach of the conscious mind, nevertheless, many of our mind's activities are processed in subconscious mind. The subconscious mind connects with the conscious mind through intuition, imagination and dreams. This means that whatever activity we are consciously engaged in, is being recorded by the subconscious mind. This means that the subconscious mind functions as a backstage to the conscious mind. The subconscious activities are dependent on learned knowledge or embedded memories – informational memories, intellectual memories, emotional memories – all types of memories. Subconscious can act with wide knowledge that has been gathered consciously. But subconscious cannot perceive anything itself. Subconscious cannot watch, hear, touch, taste, smell and so on. It can only work with the recapitulated memories of these feelings. The conscious mind and the subconscious mind work very closely, hand-in-hand. Our subconscious activities are our brain's automatic activities dependent on pre-embedded knowledge, and do not give any feelings to us; whereas, our conscious activities always give us particular feelings (Das, 2021: 9-10).

About the unconscious mind, Krishanu Kumar Das explains that the brain's unconscious activities are those which are not regulated by our conscious and subconscious drives – like regulation of the heart beats, regulation of the visceral functions, body temperature regulation, cerebellar maintenance of tone, posture and coordinated muscular activities, and others. These are biological activities of the body controlled through the autonomic functioning of the peripheral nervous system which is located in *hypothalamus* of the brain. However, any activity of either conscious or subconscious mind may have influence on these parts of the



brain (i.e. the *hypothalamus*). That is to say, the conscious mind and the subconscious mind can also influence the unconscious activities of the mind. For example, emotional effects like fear produces the dilatation of pupil and increased sweating. Similarly, rigorous muscular activities increase heart rate and respiratory rate. The unconscious activities of brain can also be projected into conscious awareness, but not in a direct pathway. This could be mediated through indirect sensory pathway; like palpitation, visceral pain, urges for defecation and micturition, etc. Reflex conditioned reactions have a major subconscious component. In some cases, it may have all three components of mind (Ibid., 11-12). The connection between the conscious, subconscious and unconscious minds can be illustrated with the aid of a diagram as shown below:

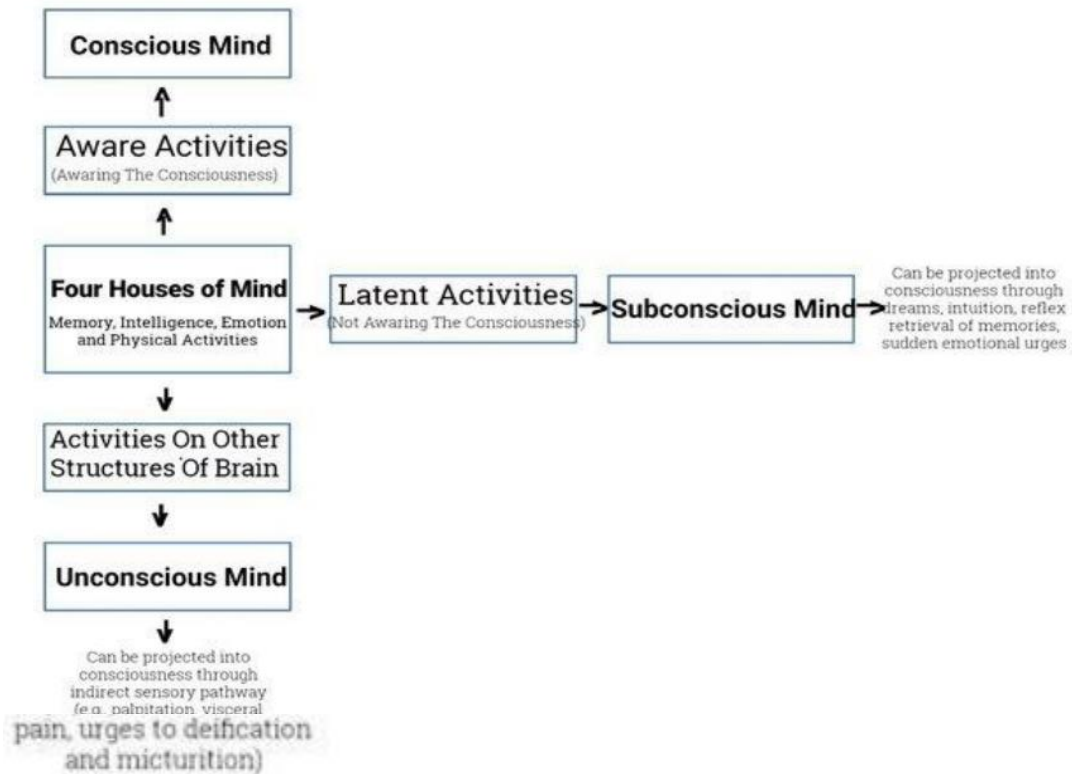


Fig. 2: Schematic Diagram of Mind [Adapted from Das, 2016; cited in Das, 2021: 13]

### 3.3 Idealist/Spiritualist Psychological Studies of Human Nature

Nader Butto emphasizes the importance of the idealistic/spiritual psychological perspective to the study of human nature. Making reference to spiritual disciplines, he states thus:

Spirit is essentially formless intelligent energy, which has become individualized by the splitting of God's energy when it animates the physical body become soul with an expressed individuality, which is in many religious and philosophical systems. It denotes the inner essence of a being, which comprises its locus of sapience (self-awareness) and metaphysical identity (2019: 2).

According to Nader Butto, Souls are usually described as immortal (surviving death in an afterlife) and incorporeal (i.e. without bodily form). He however, also grants that some are of the view that souls have a material component and have even attempted to establish the weight of the soul.

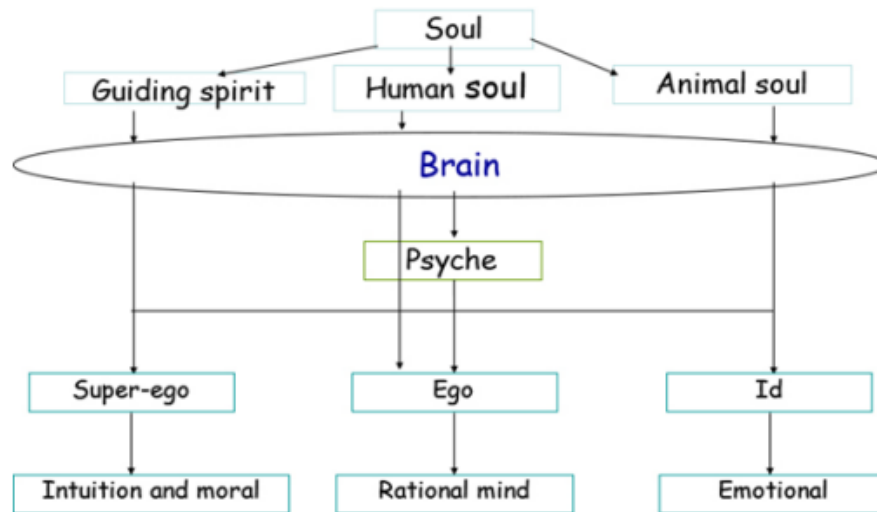
He identifies three parts of the soul possessed by every human being, which combine energy and information namely (a) Animal soul, (b) Human soul, and (c) Guiding spirit. The animal soul is the magnetic field inherited from our parents that guides anatomical and physiological functions. Like every magnetic field that has two poles, the bio-magnetic field stems from two main poles that were originally formed from the fusion of the magnetic field between the magnetic male energy of the spermatozoa and the magnetic female energy of the ovum. This is the original prenatal essence, which is nourished and developed during pregnancy (Ibid., 3).

Butto explains that after birth, the life and mind of new born babies are nourished by the prenatal essence received primarily from their mother and from the postnatal essence received from food and air as well as both parents' love. This field comprises the energy that affords life, order, and vitality to the body. Thus, it is the cause of life, self-nourishment, growth, decay, movement, rest, perception, sensations, emotions, and instinctive intellect. It is also the primary motivation in life. It is mortal as it vanishes with death to transform to other less sophisticated forms of life such as insects, plants, and minerals. The animal soul is an apple-shape magneto-electric field that exists in all living organisms to control and regulate the bio-electric activity of all cells (Ibid.). He illustrates this with the aid of a diagram as presented below:

Animal soul is divided into three components namely (a) the vegetative soul, (b) the sensitive soul, and (c) the intellectual soul. The vegetative soul comprises two major poles and a magnetic field. It is the source of vitality which is present in all organisms (vegetative or animal). He relates the sensitive soul as it is conceived within Indian culture in which the sensitive soul is related to seven chakras, which are related to emotional aspects. Furthermore, each chakra is related to one of the seven aspects of life. The emotions of the first chakra are related to territorial and material aspects, the second to sexuality and productivity, the third to social life, the fourth to familiar life, the fifth to self-realization, study, and work, the sixth to a spiritual path and mission in life, and the seventh to religion and faith in God. He states that the intellectual soul is related to 12 standard meridians, which are also referred to as principal meridians. This is a concept in traditional Chinese medicine that refers to a path through which the life-energy known as *qi* (i.e. the Igbo *Nmuo* or the Yoruba *Emi*) flows.

Put differently, the animal soul can be said to be the biological, physiological and neurological functions of the body. The sensitive soul can be said to be the charges formed at the seven points where the spirit or intellectual soul joins the body which Indians call chakras. The intellectual soul is likened to the guardian spirit. It is in this sense that Nader Butto makes distinction between **spirit** and **psyche**. He

defines - soul as the energetic aspect of an individual and the psyche as the functional aspect formed from the interaction between the energy of the soul and the brain. The psyche itself comprises the *id*, *ego*, and *superego*, and originate from the interaction of the three parts of the soul and brain. The interaction between each part of the soul produces a specific part of the psyche (Ibid., 5). Butto illustrates this with the aid of a diagram thus:



[Soul–psyche relationship: The three parts of the soul interact with the brain to produce the three parts of the psyche (Butto, 2019: 50)].

This idealist/spiritual psychological presentation of human nature by Nader Butto prepares the ground for a parapsychological account of human nature.

#### 4.0 Conclusion

From the discussion done so far, it can be seen that the psychological analysis of human nature combines both scientific and spiritual perspectives. The scientific perspective presents a materialist and empirical approach to the study of human nature, while the spiritual perspective presents an idealistic approach to the study of human nature. The former reduces human nature to biological, neurological and physiological structure centered on the brain and the nervous system. The later traces the study of human nature beyond physical existence to the supersensible.

#### 5.0 Summary

- Psychological study of human nature started in the West as an empirical science from the philosophy of David Hume.
- It is in this sense that Myers defines psychology as the scientific study of behaviour and mental processes.
- Psychology derives from the Greek *psyche* which translates as mind, soul, breath, self and spirit.
- Sigmund Freud postulated a psychoanalytic theory of human nature which presents a tripartite structure of human nature comprising the *id*, *ego* and *superego*.

- Sigmund Freud also postulated that human nature as consciousness consists of the *conscious* mind, *preconscious* mind and *unconscious* mind.
- Following Sigmund Freud, Krishanu Kumar Das presents a materialist conception of human nature that consists of the *conscious* mind, *subconscious* mind and *unconscious* mind.
- Nader Butto presents a spiritualist psychological account of human nature.
- By the spiritualist account, human nature is animated by spirit which in the human body becomes soul.
- Soul is immaterial, immortal bodiless or incorporeal.
- According to Butto, soul is made of three different components, which combine energy and information namely (a) Animal soul, (b) Human soul, and (c) Guiding spirit.
- Ultimately, human nature comprises of spirit and psyche; the former being incorporeal, the latter being physical.

### 6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

1. How true is it that the psychological study of human nature combines both spiritual and physical perspective?
2. Give a vivid explanation of the materialist account of human nature.
3. Make evaluation of the spiritualist account of human nature.

### 7.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

1. According to David Myers, psychology is the:
  - (a) The scientific study of behaviour and mental processes
  - (b) The rigorous study of human activities and mental processes
  - (c) The scientific study of human feelings and mental activities
  - (d) The systematic and historical study of human feelings and mental activities
2. In the view of Aisha Utz, Western psychologists employ the:
  - (a) Examination of human feelings, beliefs and mental activities
  - (b) Scientific method which entails empirical enquiry, observation, experimentation, and rigorous analysis, with the principal goal of describing, explaining, predicting and controlling human behaviour, mental processes and emotions
  - (c) Systematic and critical investigation of human thoughts and emotions
  - (d) Historical evaluation of human behaviour and mental activities
3. The term psychology is derived from the Greek word \_\_\_\_\_ which is used interchangeably with \_\_\_\_\_
  - (a) *Psycho*/mind, soul, breath, self and spirit
  - (b) *Psycha*/mind, soul, breath, self and spirit
  - (c) *Psyche*/mind, soul, breath, self and spirit
  - (d) *Psychell*/mind, soul, breath, self and spirit
4. Psychology began as a deliberate academic study from the philosophy of
  - (a) John Locke
  - (b) George Berkeley
  - (c) Francis Bacon
  - (d) David Hume

5. Sigmund Freud postulated a tripartite structure human nature comprising the
  - (a) *Id, ego, and superego*
  - (b) *Libido, cogito and ego*
  - (c) *Superego, id and nous*
  - (d) *Id, cogito and nous*
6. Sigmund Freud identified three kinds of minds that make human nature which are
  - (a) *Unconscious, conscious and conscientious*
  - (b) *Conscious, preconscious, and unconscious*
  - (c) *Subconscious, conscious and unconscious*
  - (d) *Superconscious, unconscious and conscience*
7. For Krishanu Kumar Das the *conscious* mind consists of four houses which are
  - (a) Imagination, Reason, Emotions and Memory
  - (b) Emotions, Understanding, Sensibility and Inspiration
  - (c) Memory, Intelligence, Emotions, and Physical Activities
  - (d) Vision, Intuition, Mental and Metaphysical Activities
8. The four functions of the memory include the following:
  - (a) Sensation, inspiration and perception
  - (b) Perception, imagination, concept formation and inspiration
  - (c) Inspiration, intuition, imagination and revelation
  - (d) Reception, storing, recalling and association of information
9. One of these statements is not true of the subconscious mind
  - (a) It has no connections with the conscious mind in any way
  - (b) Though the subconscious remains predominantly beyond the reach of the conscious mind, nevertheless, many of our mind's activities are processed in subconscious mind
  - (c) The subconscious mind connects with the conscious mind through intuition, imagination and dreams
  - (d) This means that whatever activity we are consciously engaged in, is being recorded by the subconscious mind
10. One these statements is also not true of the subconscious mind
  - (a) The subconscious mind functions as a backstage to the conscious mind
  - (b) The subconscious mind is the power of God in the human being
  - (c) The subconscious activities are dependent on learned knowledge or embedded memories.
  - (d) Subconscious can act with wide knowledge that has been gathered consciously
11. One of these is wrong about the subconscious
  - (a) But the subconscious cannot perceive anything itself
  - (b) The subconscious cannot watch, hear, touch, taste, smell and so on. It can only work with the recapitulated memories of these feelings
  - (c) The subconscious is purely spiritual and has strong revelatory powers
  - (d) The conscious mind and the subconscious mind work very closely, hand-in-hand
12. The unconscious mind can be said to be
  - (a) The brain's unconscious activities which are not regulated by our conscious and subconscious drives

- (b) Activities of the brain dealing with the regulation of the heart beats, regulation of the visceral functions, body temperature regulation, cerebellar maintenance of tone, posture and coordinated muscular activities, and others
  - (c) Biological activities of the body controlled through the autonomic functioning of the peripheral nervous system which is located in *hypothalamus* of the brain
  - (d) All of the above
13. According to Nader Butto, the human soul consists of
- (a) Animal soul, Human soul and Guiding spirit
  - (b) Animated soul, Humane soul and Directed soul
  - (c) Inanimate spirit, Divine spark and Guardian spirit
  - (d) None of the above
14. \_\_\_\_\_ consists of the vegetative soul, the sensitive soul, and the intellectual soul
- (a) Human soul
  - (b) Animal soul
  - (c) Guiding spirit
  - (d) Physical house
15. One of these is wrong
- (a) The intellectual soul is likened to the guardian spirit
  - (b) The soul is the energetic aspect of an individual
  - (c) The soul and the psyche are not related at all
  - (d) The psyche as the functional aspect formed from the interaction between the energy of the soul and the brain.

**Solution:** 1. a, 2. b, 3. c, 4. d, 5. a, 6. b, 7. c, 8. d, 9. a, 10. b, 11. c, 12. d, 13. a, 14. b, 15. c

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## **Unit 3: Behaviourists Conception of Human Nature**

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- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise
- 7.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 8.0 References/Further Reading

### **1.0 Introduction**

This unit examines the behaviourist view of human nature. Behaviourism as a theory of human nature began as a school of psychology. It is mainly concerned with the behaviours that are associated with feelings, thinking, imagining and desiring. The theory of behaviourism was originated by the American psychologist John B. Watson. Behaviourists maintain that since human consciousness is subjective and cannot be subjected to empirical observation, it is better to focus on the study or observation of the manifestations of human consciousness, which include observable tendencies such as desires, feelings, emotions, hunches or premonitions, thinking, imagination and so on. This wise, behaviorists believe that beyond human subjective factors, there are also objective environmental factors that influence human behaviour. It is in this sense that behaviorists talk about nature versus nurture and a combination of both as influencing factors on human nature.

### **2.0 Objective**

At the end of this unit, you are expected to:

- Describe Behaviourism and its Meaning and Origin
- State and Explain Types of Behaviourism
- Identify and Discuss Determinants of Human Behaviour: Nature, Nurture or Both

### **3.0 Main Content**

#### **3.1 Meaning and Origin of Behaviourism**

In the view of P. A. Lamal, behaviourism is the scientific study of behaviour or simply behaviour analysis through science (2000: 255). George Graham on his part defines behaviourism as the scientific, empirical and psychological study of behaviour (2023). For Shanjendu Nath, behaviourism stands for a group of theories, which define consciousness in terms of bodily behaviour which is observable to others. The theory emphasizes observable stimuli; responses to and consequences of these observable stimuli as determined by the physical conditions of the body

and its interaction with the environment. It strongly de-emphasizes mind as a contributory factor to behaviour (2013: 1). Jesús Aparicio de Soto, in his understanding sees behaviourism as that part of psychological studies that deals with measurable experiences or behaviours using scientific means (Aparicio de Soto, 2022: 1).

The origin of behaviourism can be traced back to psychology and philosophical schools of thought such as empiricism, logical positivism and analytic movement. Recall that psychology as an academic discipline started at the behest of David Hume's empiricist discussion of human nature. It is in this sense that William James defined psychology as the description and explanation of state of consciousness as such. Against this subjectivist presentation of psychology, William Mc Dougall, an English psychologist, preferred to maintain a behaviourist view of psychology. William Mc Dougall initiated this new approach in his work, *Physiological Psychology*. In this regards, William Mc Dougall can be said to have laid the foundation for the emergence of a full blown account of behaviourism by J. B. Watson, the American psychologists, who in 1913 founded the school of behaviourism.

Watson very categorically stated that the idea of consciousness as believed by the traditional psychologists is wholly absurd. Because it neither can be perceived by any sense organs nor can it be tested by any test tube. Those who believe its reality cannot study it satisfactorily because it is wholly a subjective notion and only a matter of private inspection (Nath, 2013: 1).

For the sake of making psychology a pure science of behaviour, Watson concentrated his studies only on observable and measurable behaviour. It is on this ground that he discarded mentalistic terms such as consciousness, soul, mind, mental life, images and ideas. He regards thought and imagination to be implicit muscular behaviours. In similar vein, he regards emotion as consisting of "Profound changes of the bodily mechanism as a whole, particularly of the visceral and glandular systems" (Armstrong, 1993: cited in Nath, 2013: 1).

### **3.2 Types of Behaviourism**

The question of the types of behaviourism is linked to the issue of the origin of behaviourism. George Graham and Shanjendu Nath state that there are three types of behaviourism as follows:

- (i) Methodological behaviourism
- (ii) Psychological behaviourism and
- (iii) Analytical, logical or philosophical behaviourism

Methodological behaviourism is a normative theory about the scientific conduct of psychology. It claims that psychology should desist from the study of mental events or from constructing internal information processing accounts of behavior. It posits



that psychology should rather concern itself with the study of the behavior of organisms. Methodological behaviorism is a dominant theme in the writings of John Watson. Historically, methodological behaviourism, like analytical behaviorism, has its origin in positivism. A fundamental goal of positivism is to unify psychology with natural science. It is on this note that Watson wrote that “psychology as a behaviourist view is a purely objective experimental branch of natural science. Its theoretical goal is prediction and control” (1913: 158; Graham, 2023). Because methodological behaviourism repudiates all or most of our common sense mental concepts such as, beliefs, conscious mental states, sensations and so on, it is also called *eliminative behaviourism*. Eliminative behaviourism believes that all our behaviours originate from external stimulation in the environment (Nath, 2013: 2).

Psychological behaviourism is a research programme within psychology. It explains human and animal behaviour in terms of external stimuli, responses, learning histories, and reinforcements. Psychological behaviourism is present in the work of Ivan Pavlov (1849–1936), Edward Thorndike (1874–1949), as well as Watson. Its fullest and most influential expression is B. F. Skinner’s work on schedules of reinforcement in which behaviour is measured basically on stimuli (Graham, 2023; Nath, 2013: 3).

According to George Graham, psychological behaviourism has its historical roots in the theory of classical associationism of the British Empiricists, John Locke and David Hume. According to classical associationism, intelligent behavior is the product of associative learning. As a result of associations or pairings between perceptual experiences or stimulations on the one hand, and ideas or thoughts on the other, persons and animals acquire knowledge of their environment and how to act. Associations enable creatures to discover the causal structure of the world. Association is most helpfully viewed as the acquisition of knowledge about relations between events. Intelligence in behavior is a mark of such knowledge.

Skinner’s theory of radical behaviourism is the fullest and most influential expression of the psychological behaviourism. Skinner did his experimental works mainly in comparative psychology. He virtually rejected psychological behaviourism in favour of a strongest version of Watson’s views. He argued that behaviour should not be studied for observing mental processes. It should be studied for its own sake. According to Skinner, there is no need studying mental processes because mental processes are manifested in behaviour. Skinner’s radical behaviourism does not believe that any reference should be made to inner states of organism that may be the causes of behaviour. It rather firmly believes that the study of behaviour should follow the pattern of the natural sciences such as chemistry and physics. Thus, while Watson believes that behaviour depends on preceding stimulus, Skinner believes that behaviours are dependent upon what happens after the response. However, in contrast to Watson, Skinner’s radical behaviourism combines all three forms of behaviourism, that is, methodological, psychological and analytical types of behaviourism (Nath, 2013, 3; Graham, 2023).

Shanjendu Nath explains that analytical behaviourism, which is also known as philosophical or logical behaviourism, deals with the meaning or semantics of mental terms (i.e. concepts) within philosophy. It states that what is called mental conditions are nothing but behavioural dispositions. It forms the basic orientation of the works of Gilbert Ryle and the later works of Ludwig Wittgenstein. For example, Ryle says that 'belief' is a deterministic dispositional word among other words. Dispositional words signify abilities or tendencies to do or to act. The term 'belief' can connote any of the following concepts: obstinate, wavering, unswerving, unconquerable, stupid, fanatical, whole-hearted, intermittent, passionate, and childlike. Ryle also says that some or all of these adjectives are appropriate to different nouns, such as, trust, loyalty, bent, aversion, hope, habit, zeal and addiction. "Beliefs, like habits, can be inveterate, slipped into and given up; like partisanship, devotions and hopes they can be blind and obsessing; like fashions and tastes they can be contagious; like loyalties and animosities they can be induced by tricks" (Ryle, 1949; cited in Nath, 2013: 3). When the term 'belief' is attributed to someone, it characterizes what the person might do in a particular situation and it does not attribute the person concerned with a particular internal state or condition

Tracing the origin of analytical behaviourism, George Graham and Shanjendu Nath state that the theory has its roots in the philosophical movement known as Logical Positivism. Logical positivism proposes the theory of *verificationism* or *verifiability* which states that the meaning of statements used in science must be understood in terms of experimental conditions or observations that verify their truth. Applied to psychology, verificationism states that mental concepts refer to behavioral tendencies and so must be translated into behavioral terms. Analytical behaviorism helps to avoid a metaphysical position known as substance dualism. Substance dualism is the doctrine that mental states take place in a special, non-physical mental substance (the immaterial mind). Analytical behaviourism rejects the theory of substance dualism completely.

### **3.3 Nature versus Nurture as Sources of Human Behaviour**

With regards to the behaviourist appraisal of human behaviour, nature refers to all of the genes and hereditary factors that influence who we are - from our physical appearance to our personality characteristics. This means that behaviourist study of human nature connects with **epigenetics** in biology which is the study of heritable changes in gene function that do not involve changes in DNA sequence. Nurture refers to environmental factors that influence our growth and behaviour. Here, the issue of nurture resonates with the school of empiricism in philosophy which is the belief that people are born as a blank slate (i.e. *tabula rasa*) to learn everything from their environment (<https://kpu.pressbooks.pub/evpsych/chapter/human-behavior-nature-or-nurture/>).

Environmental factors include but not limited to parenting style, birth order, peers, family size, culture, language, education etc. The main argument for nurture is that

the environment is what makes us who we are. Those who are on the extreme side of nurture are empiricists. They believe humans are born as blank slates and acquire all information from their environment through their five senses. Behaviorism, as established by John Watson, states that all behaviour is a result of stimulation from the environment or a consequence of the individual's previous conditioning. This means that behaviorism as a school of psychology sides more with the arguments from nurture.

Beyond Watson's version of behaviourism, the truth is that human behaviour is determined by both nature and nurture. In reality, both genetic and social influences contribute to an individual's behaviour. On this note, psychologist Eric Turkheimer states that there are essentially **Three Laws of Behaviour Genetics** thus:

- (i) First Law: All human behavioural traits are heritable
- (ii) Second Law: The effect of being raised in the same family is smaller than the effect of the genes
- (iii) Third Law: A substantial portion of the variation in complex human behavioural traits is not accounted for by the effects of genes or families (Ibid.).

Eric Turkheimer explains that genes only make up 50% of our behaviours while the rest is influenced by our environment. By implication, the omnipresence of genetic influences does not mean that behaviour is less psychological or more biologically determined, the truth is that environmental conditions to a large extent influence the upbringing and behavioural tendencies of people.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

This unit particularly shows that behaviourism as a school of thought on human nature extensively draws from biology, psychology and philosophy. The connecting point between the three strands (biology, psychology and philosophy) is science. Hence, behaviourism is interested in the empirical, physical and materialistic study of human nature. This explains why behaviourism draws from epigenetics in biology and the theory of environmental influence in psychology. Both the biological and psychological angles to behaviourism have their foundations in the schools of thought of empiricism and logical positivism. Empiricism by its *tabula rasa* (completely blank) state of the mind at birth theory, postulates that the environment has huge influence on human behaviour by way of nurture. Logical positivism on its part, by its principle of verifiability, insists that only processes of behaviour that are verifiable should be considered as cogent.

#### **5.0 Summary**

- Behaviourism is the scientific, empirical and psychological study of behaviour.
- It defines consciousness in terms of bodily behaviour which is observable to others.
- The theory emphasizes observable stimuli; responses to and consequences of these observable stimuli as determined by the physical conditions of the body and its interaction with the environment.

- It is that part of psychological studies which deals with measurable experiences or behaviours using scientific means.
- William Mc Dougall, an English psychologist, pioneered the theory of behaviourism in his work *Physiological Psychology*.
- However, the school of behaviourism was founded by J. B. Watson the American psychologists in 1913.
- Watson concentrated his studies only on observable and measurable behaviour.
- It is on this ground that he discarded mentalist terms such as consciousness, soul, mind, mental life, images and ideas.
- Methodological behaviourism, Psychological behaviourism and Analytical (i.e. logical behaviourism or philosophical behaviourism) are the three variants of behaviourism we have.
- Methodological behaviorism is a dominant theme in the writings of John Watson.
- Methodological behaviourism is a normative theory about the scientific conduct of psychology that concerns itself strictly with the study of the behavior of organisms.
- Psychological behaviourism is a research programme within psychology.
- It explains human and animal behaviour in terms of external stimuli, responses, learning histories, and reinforcements.
- Ivan Pavlov, Edward Thorndike, John Watson and B. F. Skinner are major proponents of psychological behaviourism.
- Analytical behaviourism deals with the meaning or semantics of mental terms (i.e. concepts) within philosophy.
- Gilbert Ryle and Ludwig Wittgenstein are major proponents of analytical behaviourism.
- Nature, with regards to behaviourism, refers to all of the genes and hereditary factors that influence who we are.
- Nature as an issue in behaviourism connects with **epigenetics** in biology.
- Epigenetics is the study of heritable changes in gene function that do not involve changes in DNA sequence.
- Nurture refers to environmental factors that influence our growth and behaviour.
- Nurture as an issue in behaviourism draws extensively from the position of the philosophical school of empiricism that the environment influences the mind.

### 6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Explain the meaning and origin of behaviourism
2. Identify and explain the types of behaviourism that we have
3. Which has dominance over human nature; Nature or Nurture?

### 7.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

1. One of these is not a definition of behaviourism
  - (a) It is a metaphysical and spiritual study of human behaviour
  - (b) It is the scientific, empirical and psychological study of behaviour.
  - (c) It define consciousness in terms of bodily behaviour which is observable to others.

- (d) It emphasizes observable stimuli; responses to and consequences of observable stimuli as determined by the physical conditions of the body and its interaction with the environment.
2. For the sake of making psychology a pure science of behaviour
    - (a) John Watson developed a spiritual theory of behaviour
    - (b) Watson concentrated his studies only on observable and measurable behaviour
    - (c) Watson focused on the study of nature and nurture as influences on human behaviour
    - (d) Watson rejected both empiricism and logical positivism as philosophical foundations of behaviourism
  3. Methodological behaviourism is otherwise known as
    - (a) *Scientific behaviourism*
    - (b) *Sociological behaviourism*
    - (c) *Eliminative behaviourism*
    - (d) *Metaphysical behaviourism*
  4. According to Shanjendu Nath, \_\_\_\_\_ believes that all our behaviours originate from external stimulation in the environment
    - (a) *Analytical behaviourism*
    - (b) *Psychological behaviourism*
    - (c) *Deterministic behaviourism*
    - (d) *Eliminative behaviourism*
  5. Historically, psychological behaviourism has its roots in
    - (a) Classical associationism
    - (b) Consequentialism
    - (c) Cognitivism
    - (d) Relationalism
  6. The philosophical foundations of psychological behaviourism is rooted in
    - (a) Continental rationalism
    - (b) British empiricism
    - (c) German idealism
    - (d) postmodernism
  7. Skinner's brand of behaviourism is known as
    - (a) Pure behaviourism
    - (b) Consistent behaviourism
    - (c) Radical behaviourism
    - (d) Graphic behaviourism
  8. Fundamentally, analytical behaviourism deals with
    - (a) Analysis of human biological states
    - (b) Analysis of human psychological states
    - (c) Analysis of human spiritual states
    - (d) Analysis of the meanings of terms or concepts that describe human behaviour in different situations
  9. One of these is the odd one out
    - (a) Premier Law of Thermodynamics
    - (b) First Law: All human behavioural traits are heritable

- (c) Second Law: The effect of being raised in the same family is smaller than the effect of the genes
  - (d) Third Law: A substantial portion of the variation in complex human behavioural traits is not accounted for by the effects of genes or families
10. Going by Eric Turkheimer **Three Laws of Behaviour Genetics**, the relationship between nature and nurture with regards to human behaviour is
- (a) 40/60
  - (b) 50/50
  - (c) 60/40
  - (d) 70/30

**Solution:** 1. a, 2. b, 3. c, 4. d, 5. a, 6. b, 7. c, 8. d, 9. a, 10. b

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## **Unit 4: Parapsychology Conception of Human Nature**

### **Contents**

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### **1.0 Introduction**

In this unit, the psychic and parapsychological activities of the mind which constitute yet another dimension to human nature will be examined. Such activities include telepathy, clairvoyance, divination, soothsaying or augury, incantation, prayer, miracle, magic, precognition, faith healing, apparition, psychokinesis, poltergeist, near death experience, out of body experience, reincarnation, witchcraft, sorcery, past-life regression and clairaudience. These phenomena of the mind are usually classified as religious, spiritual or simply occult activities. They are so-called because they defile scientific explanation in most cases. But since there are so many human activities that attest to the veracity and authenticity of such occurrences, it is difficult to dismiss them with a wave of the hand. More so, such human activities predate empirical science.

### **2.0 Objective**

At the end of this unit, you are expected to:

- State and Describe the Meaning of Parapsychology or Psychic Science
- Identify and Explain Extra Sensory Perceptive (ESP) Activities of Human Nature
- Describe Psychokinetic (PK) Activities of Human Nature

### **3.0 Main Content**

#### **3.1 Parapsychology or Psychic Science Explained**

Parapsychology also known as psychic science is a science of human nature that studies the powers of the human mind beyond the boundaries of biology, neurology, empirical psychology and behaviourism. The connecting point between the biological, empirical psychological and behavioural studies of human nature is neurology. Neurology, as already stated, is the science of the nervous system which has been extensively discussed. However, psychology has both empirical and spiritual dimensions to it. Thus, whereas empirical psychology studies the brain and nervous activities of the mind, parapsychology studies the activities of the higher faculties of the mind such as the *intellect* or *reason*, *imagination*, *understanding*

and the human *will* to spontaneously or voluntarily inspire self to initiate causal processes that are non-physical. It is in this sense that Satwant K. Pasricha clearly makes distinction between psychology and parapsychology thus:

Psychology is the scientific study of behavior and experience. Parapsychology studies anomalies of behavior and experience, called paranormal experiences. Paranormal phenomena transcend the boundaries of time, space and force (2011: 1).

From the above quotation, we gather that whereas psychological activities of human nature are time, space and force bound, parapsychological activities of human nature transcend physical limitations. It is in this sense that parapsychology is defined as *paranormal* activities of the mind. The suffix *para* simply means after or beyond, making parapsychology to be a science of human nature that goes beyond the materialistic and empirical study of human nature. Hence, where psychology deals with the ability of the mind to initiate physical causal connections, parapsychology deals with the capacity of the mind to initiate non-physical, metaphysical and spiritual causal connections. It follows that by our nature, we have the ability not only to cognize the link between causes and effects of phenomena that are non-physical; beyond this, we actually have the ability to cause or initiate causal processes that are spiritual or non-physical. This ability of human beings to psychically (i.e. spiritually) affect human states or conditions (i.e. physical or spiritual) positively or negatively without physical contact constitutes the realm of the human phenomena known as parapsychology or psychic science.

Recall that Nader Butto stated that idealistic, psychic and spiritual dimensions to the study of human nature deals with the study of the influence and relationship the human spirit has with and over the body. He describes the human spirit as the vital-force or life-force which every human being shares in common with the cosmic spirit or universal intelligence. He also stated that the human mind consists of the spirit and the psyche. In the human body, spirit becomes the soul, such that where the soul is the energetic aspect of an individual, the psyche is the functional aspect formed from the interaction between the energy of the soul and the brain. This position of Butto is corroborated by Dagogo Idoniboye who states thus:

The ontology of any distinctively African world-view is replete with spirit; spirit is the animating, sustaining creative life force of the universe. Spirit is real. It is as real as matter. Its reality is primordial and it is, if not superior, at least as primitive as that of matter. In its pure state it is unembodied. In the human body it becomes the soul. So that the human soul shares in common with the universal spirit (1973, 83).

In line with the position of Nader Butto and Dagogo Idoniboye, Carlos S. Alvarado and Michael Nahm examine the view of Hereward Carrington (1880–1958) who in 1921 propounded “a vitalistic view of psychic phenomena that included the idea of



a biological force projected from the human body” (2011, 91). Alvarado and Nahm both compared Hereward Carrington idea of vital force with Franz Anton Mesmer theory of *animal magnetism*. In the same vein, Efram Sera-Shriar reviews Richard Noakes’ work on physics and psychics that is aimed at the evaluation of the relationship between occult and science in Britain. Again, Efram Sera-Shriar’s concern is about the issue of *animal magnetism* (2020). Animal magnetism is also described as magnetic force, magnetic field or universal force which circulates inside the human body and provides the body with life and power that enables the voluntary and involuntary functioning of the body (Alvarado and Nahm, 2011: 91). Baron Karl Reichenbach describes the universal force as the “*Od*”, which he says is ‘not only generated by the human body, but also by magnetism, crystals, light (including sunlight and moonlight), heat, friction, chemical processes and electricity, among other causes’” (Ibid.). Reichenbach states that processes of the human body such as digestion and respiration produced *Od*. He explains that sensitive persons were able to perceive this force in different ways. Some perceive it visually as lights and auras around magnets, crystals, plants, and individuals. Some perceive it as sensations of temperature and discomfort. The universal force or *od* is conductible through all other bodies; it is capable of being either directly accumulated on, or transferred by distribution to other bodies.

Para-psychology is divided into two main branches which are:

- (i) extra-sensory perception (ESP) which is the study of communications ostensibly without the known sensory organs and
- (ii) psychokinesis (PK) or the study of physical events that apparently occur without involvement of any recognized motor organs (Pasricha, 2011: 4).

### **3.2 Human Nature and Extra Sensory Perception**

According to Satwant K. Pasricha, a considerable number of cases of paranormal experiences have been carefully investigated, found authentic by independent investigators, and published in the scientific books and journals of high standards. These include telepathy, near-death experiences (NDEs) and out-of-body experiences (OOBE), apparitions, poltergeist and reincarnation.

Telepathy involves emotional feelings or connect between the parties involved. It is the apparent communication between two minds without the use of known sensory channels. This kind of psychic activity was initially called *thought transference* and later came to be known as telepathy. Telepathic communications usually occur between persons who share a bond of affection or love. In precognition, an individual experiences awareness of future events in the absence of the possibility of a rational inference. Precognitive experiences, like other paranormal experiences, vary in range and amount of details and specificity. Precognitive experiences are usually unpleasant when they occur and are generally concerned with accidents, deaths or other disastrous events. Apparition involves visual appearance which suggests the presence of a deceased person or animal or of a living person or animal not within the sensory range of the percipient. Such

communications are perceived in visual and auditory modalities and occur usually in a state of altered consciousness (Ibid., 4-5).

Near-Death Experiences and Out-Of-Body Experiences are associated with those who have had such experiences. Such individuals usually narrate their experiences which involves encountering another part of themselves different from their physical or bodily self. It involves experiencing oneself as pure energy or pure spirit. In the case of near death experience, the individual witnesses the presence of one's relatives who had passed on. The aspect of reincarnation that portrays extra sensory perception is memory transfer which involves a child having a vivid remembrance of the activities transpired in his/her life in a previous existence. For example, some children have phobia for water because of the memory transfer of how they drowned in the river in their previous existence. The issue of reincarnation can also produce a state of past-life regression in which the individual involved suffers from split personality order in which the person's previous life experiences hypnotically influences or controls the individual's consciousness in the present life [i.e. the case of *Ogbanje* (one with slit personality disorder)] in Igbo. Note here that Igbo *Ogbanje* is not the same as the Yoruba *Abiku*, the Igbo equivalent of Yoruba *Abiku* is *Umenwa*, that is, spirit children who decide to punish their parents by dying and reincarnating severally].

### **3.3 Human Nature and Psychokinesis**

As earlier stated, psychokinesis (PK) has to do with the ability of the mind to cause material objects to move or to cause healing or harm on the body or state of being of another without physical contact. In this case, examples of PK would include poltergeist phenomenon, paranormal healings and other activities such as witchcraft and sorcery that involve the ability to psychically affect another person's material state of being without any physical contact.

Poltergeists refer to the movement of objects without the use of any physical means. Such occurrences have been reported even in ancient literature. However, in the past century, a number of authentic cases have been recorded by the investigators of such phenomena that they were able to witness themselves, at first hand. It has been observed to occur—almost always—in the presence of someone in the age range of 10-20 years, usually in the presence of emotionally disturbed adolescents (Pasricha, 5).

Paranormal healing is the same as spiritual healing which has to do with the laying of hands that may involve the use of prayer, rituals and incantation. Paranormal or spiritual healing sometimes involves the use of spiritual objects that are said to possess psychic energy. The important point to note here is that healing is delivered without the use of drugs, syrups, injections, surgery or any of the methods used in orthodox medicine. In sorcery, objects like amulets and charms are empowered to psychically affect a targeted person or persons. Objects of sorcery work through hypnosis. Hypnosis is an induced state of consciousness in which the person under such state loses his/her voluntary or spontaneous state of mind. Witchcraft is a

psychic activity which involves affecting anyone's physical or spiritual state of being without physical contact. The point to note here is that in sorcery and witchcraft, the witch, wizard or sorcerer has the psychic ability to psychically alter the state of being of someone else without direct physical contact.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

Parapsychology can also be called spiritual or psychic psychology. This means where psychology concerns itself mainly with the physical or brain processes of mind and consciousness, parapsychology deals with the study of the spiritual/soul dimension of mind which is beyond physical consciousness that involves the functions of the nervous system. Parapsychology has to do with the functions of the higher faculties of the mind which include imagination, reason, the understanding and will. These faculties of the mind rely on the memory in order to relate with the physical world. It is for this reason that parapsychology deals with activities of the mind that are paranormal such as poltergeist, paranormal or spiritual healing, sorcery and witchcraft.

#### **5.0 Summary**

- Parapsychology also known as psychic science is a science of human nature that studies the powers of the human mind beyond the boundaries of biology, neurology, empirical psychology and behaviourism.
- Parapsychology studies the activities of the higher faculties of the mind such as the *intellect* or *reason*, *imagination*, *understanding* and *will* to spontaneously or voluntarily be inspired to initiate causal processes that are non-physical.
- The suffix *para* simply means after or beyond, making parapsychology to be a science of human nature that goes beyond the materialistic and empirical study of human nature.
- The ability of human beings to psychically or spiritually affect human conditions (i.e. physical or spiritual) positively or negatively without physical contact constitutes the realm of human phenomena known as parapsychology or psychic science.
- In other words, parapsychology has to do with soul consciousness or animal magnetism.
- Animal magnetism is also described as magnetic force, magnetic field or universal force which circulates inside the human body and provides the body with life and power that enables the voluntary and involuntary functioning of the body.
- Baron Karl Reichenbach describes animal magnetism as *Od*.
- Parapsychology comprises Extra-Sensory Perception (ESP) and Psychokinesis (PK).
- Extra-Sensory Perception (ESP) which is the study of communications ostensibly without the known sensory organs and
- Psychokinesis (PK) or the study of physical events that apparently occur without involvement of any recognized motor organs.

#### **6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise**

1. Clearly define and describe parapsychology
2. Describe ESP and analysis three activities of ESP that you are familiar with

3. Define psychokinesis and explain three activities of psychokinesis that you know.

### 7.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

1. Parapsychology deals with paranormal activities of human nature because
  - (a) It goes beyond the states of biology, neurology, psychology and behaviourism
  - (b) It is beyond the spiritual and the physical at the same time
  - (c) It purely a physical activity
  - (d) It has nothing to do with the physical at all
2. One of these is not an ESP activity
  - (a) Telepathy
  - (b) Poltergeist
  - (c) Clairvoyance
  - (d) Reincarnation
3. One of these is not an activity of psychokinesis
  - (a) Poltergeist
  - (b) Faith Healing
  - (c) Telepathy
  - (d) Witchcraft
4. Spirit in the human body has been variously described as \_\_\_\_\_ except
  - (a) Animal Magnetism
  - (b) Magnetic Field
  - (c) Magnetic Force
  - (d) Material Energy
5. Telepathy is the ability to
  - (a) Communicate between two minds without the use of known sensory channels
  - (b) Communicate between two minds with the use of known sensory channels
  - (c) Communicate between two minds with the use of known sensory and non-sensory channels
  - (d) None of the above
6. In precognition;
  - (a) The individual knows telepathically
  - (b) An individual experiences awareness of future events in the absence of the possibility of a rational inference
  - (c) The individual knows prophetically
  - (d) An individual is teleported transcendentally
7. Psychokinesis has to do with
  - (a) Kinetic energy
  - (b) Supernatural energy
  - (c) The ability of the mind to cause material objects to move or to cause healing or harm on the body or state of being of another without physical contact
  - (d) Conventional force
8. Poltergeist refers to
  - (a) Ability of the mind to communicate across vast distance
  - (b) Belief in the supernatural
  - (c) Spiritual healing
  - (d) The movement of objects without the use of any physical means

9. Paranormal healing means any of the following except
  - (a) Orthodox medicine
  - (b) Faith healing
  - (c) Spiritual healing
  - (d) Laying of hands
10. Witchcraft can be described as a
  - (a) Diabolic activity
  - (b) Psychic activity which involves affecting anyone's state physical or spiritual state of being without physical contact
  - (c) Physical activity that involves affecting people's life negatively
  - (d) Psychic paradise

<b>Solution:</b> 1. a, 2. b, 3. c, 4. d, 5. a, 6. b, 7. c, 8. d, 9. a, 10. b
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### **Module 3: Philosophical Conceptions of Human Nature**

- Unit 1: Materialist Conception of Human Nature
- Unit 2: Idealist Conception of Human Nature
- Unit 3: Dualist Conception of Human Nature
- Unit 4: Transcendentalist Conception of Human Nature
- Unit 5: Existentialist Conception of Human Nature

#### **Unit 1: Materialist Conception of Human Nature**

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  - 3.2 Dialectical Materialist Conception of Human Nature
  - 3.3 Central-State Materialism and Human Nature
- 4.0 Conclusion
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##### **1.0 Introduction**

Module three of this course examines the philosophical conceptions of human nature from materialist, idealist, dualist, transcendentalist and existentialist perspectives. It would be seen that the philosophical appraisal of human nature encompasses all the perspectives so far examined and even beyond. This particular unit discusses the materialist interrogation of human nature. Materialism is a monistic and reductionist account of human nature. It is monistic because it insists that the only true way to study and understand human nature is from a physicalist and empirical purview. It is reductionist because even if it grants a spiritualist account of human nature, it reduces this spiritualist view of human nature to a materialistic perspective. It is in this light that Gilbert Ryle dismisses the notion of spirit or soul as a mere ghost in a machine or like the smoke given off by the burning wood. This makes behaviourism a materialist account of human nature. In this unit, we shall examine two main approaches to the materialist account of human nature which are (i) Dialectical Materialism and (ii) Central-State Materialism.

##### **2.0 Objective**

At the end of this unit, you are expected to:

- Dissect and Understand Materialism as a Metaphysical Theory of Human Nature
- Describe Dialectical Materialist Account of Human Nature
- Explain Human Nature in Central-State Materialism

### 3.0 Main Content

#### 3.1 Materialist Metaphysical Conception of Human Nature

As a metaphysical principle, materialism maintains that the material, the physical, the tangible, the visible and the corporeal, which appeal to the five human senses, is the real. For this reason, materialist conception of human nature supports and draws from all physicalist account of human nature such as biology, neurology, physiology, empirical psychology and behaviourism. Evaluating the history of the school of materialism in Western philosophy, Joseph Omorogbe states that the roots of materialism can be traced as far back as the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, involving prominent names as Democritus, Leucippus and Epicurus who held atomistic view of the universe. During the Christian era, precisely from 400 AD to 1400 AD, and up to 1600 AD, the materialist view of the universe was stifled (2001: 10-11). The materialist principle resurfaced in the modern period of the history of Western philosophy in England with the emergence of Thomas Hobbes' (1588-1689) work, *Leviathan*, where he espoused the materialist view of human nature. John Locke (1632-1704) and David Hume (1711-1776) toed similar line of thought with Hobbes. In France, the materialist understanding of human nature is best represented by the view of Julien Offroy de La Mattrie (1709-1751), the French physician and philosopher, who in his two works, *Man, a Machine* and *Natural History of the Soul*, propounded the theory that humans are pure material beings with souls that are also purely material in nature. Humans, he maintained have similar structure as animals (Omogregbe, 11; *Britannica*. online). The difference between humans and animals, he opines, is the size of the brain. Human nature is complex because of their large brain size. However, a most comprehensive materialist account of human nature in the modern phase of Western philosophy is that of Baron Paul Von Holbach (1723-1789). He was a German philosopher who in his book, *The System of Nature*, held the view that humans are products of nature whose every bodily function is nature determined.

#### 3.2 Dialectical Materialist Conception of Human Nature

Dialectical materialist conception of human nature is the same as Marxist psychology of human consciousness. Marxism is founded on the ideas of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels which has been largely propagated by the likes of Vladimir Lenin, Joseph Stalin and Kwame Nkrumah. According to Omogregbe, Lenin views:

Consciousness as the product of matter at its highly developed stage. There is nothing like spiritual force in the universe. Everything in the universe is matter in motion. The human mind is matter; the only forces operating in nature are material forces, produced by matter in motion (Omogregbe, 12).

In dialectical materialist conception of human nature, all thinking processes including willing, affections, reflection, deliberation, projection etc, are not just operations of the brain, but series of electromagnetic activities of the brain. It is in this sense that Kwame Nkrumah states that:

Mind, according to philosophical materialism, is the result of a critical organization of matter. Nervous organization has to attain a certain minimum of complexity for the display of intelligent activity, or presence of mind (1978: 24).

From the above submission, we gather that for dialectical materialists, mind is a qualitative emergence from the quantitative transformation of matter.

### **3.3 Central-State Materialism and Human Nature**

Central-state materialism developed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It largely agrees with dialectical materialism that all functions of the mind are brain processes. This means that like Marxist psychology of human consciousness or dialectical materialist conception of human nature, central-state materialism wholly agrees with the biological conception of human nature. The slight difference between the two is that whereas central-state materialism focus on the activities of the central nervous system, dialectical materialism deals with the complete activities of the brain. Recall that brain functions comprise the *central nervous system* which consists of the brain and the spinal cord and the *peripheral nervous system* which consists of the cranial nerves, spinal nerves and sensory organs. Central-state materialism is primarily focused (but not restricted to) on the activities of the central nervous system from which it derives its name. Philosophers who defend the central-state materialist conception of human nature include U. T. Place, Donald Davidson and Ted Honderich.

U. T. Place is a contemporary British philosopher and psychologist. He posits that for science to be able to investigate consciousness as an indispensable attribute of human nature, then consciousness must be no other than brain processes. It is only as a neuro-psyhic activity that consciousness can be investigated by science whether in the present or in the future. But if consciousness is purely a mental or metaphysical activity, science would not be able to investigate it (Place, 1956).

Donald Herbert Davidson is an American materialist philosopher. In three of his works; “Mental States” (1970), “The Material Mind” (1973) and “Psychology as Philosophy” (1974) respectively, proposed what he calls *anomalous monism*, which as a theory of mind states that mental events cannot be explained as physical laws of nature because they are not determined by these laws. His theory of anomalous monism is a variant of identity theory of mind in which he argues for the identity of mental and physical events. He explains that if a mental event causes physical event, then both must be operating under the same natural law. In which case the supposedly mental event is actually a physical event. In other words, mental events cannot cause physical events, but physical events can cause mental



events. However, it is difficult to scientifically predict mental events because not all physical events can cause mental events.

Ted Honderich is a Canadian and a Professor of Philosophy at the University of London. He developed a materialist conception of human nature that is deterministic which comprises three levels of hypotheses thus:

- (i) Psychoneural Nomic Correlation
- (ii) Causation of Psychoneural Pairs and
- (iii) Causation of Actions

The psychoneural nomic correlation hypothesis states that there is a correlation or a connection between psychological and mental events which can be explained in terms of the laws of nature which govern both mental and psychological activities.

For each mental event of a given type there exists some simultaneous neural event of one of a certain set of types. The existence of the neural event necessitates the existence of the mental event thus being necessary to the neural event (1988: 107).

The bottom line of Honderich's argument is that both neural and mental events are products of the central nervous system. Since both events derive from the same source, it means that mental events entail neural events and vice versa; hence, "If N, then M". Since both events derive from the same source, it means that neural events not only trigger off mental events; they in fact, happen simultaneously.

In Causation of Psychoneural Pairs, Honderich outlines seven constraints which facilitate our understanding of the nature of psycho-physical correlation thus:

- (i) **Mental Realism** by which Honderich admits the reality of mental events or mental states.
- (ii) **Psychoneural Intimacy** which acknowledges the simultaneous correlation of mental events and neural events.
- (iii) **Mental Indispensability** which admits that mental events also cause both neural events and bodily actions.
- (iv) **Persona Indispensability** refers to the conscious state of the individual as a person to deliberately initiate or cause mental events, neural events and bodily actions.
- (v) **Over-determinism** acknowledges that either mental or neural events has the capacity to simultaneously trigger off a corresponding mental or physical events.
- (vi) **Neural Causation** states that neural events have corresponding neural causes, and
- (vii) **Causation** which admits that the mind has the innate capacity to initiate or cause mental events and neural events and bodily actions to happen (Omoregbe, 2001: 15).

By the expression psychoneural pairs, Honderich means that there is necessarily a psychoneural union or correlation between mental events and neural events and vice versa. Hence, the psychoneural pairs is also known as *the union theory* which deals with the ability of the central nervous system to spontaneously and simultaneously initiate *cause* and *effect* relation between mental events and neural events.

In the Causation of Action, which is the third hypothesis, Honderich postulates that human bodily actions as well as human intentions happen as a result of the combined factors of mental events and neural events.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

From the general analysis done so far, it can be seen that human nature is complex. Human nature is beyond materialist conception. Hence, the materialist conception of human nature can be regarded as just an aspect of human nature. This makes the materialist conception a monistic and reductionist account of human nature. In other words, the materialist conception of human nature represents just one part, but never a holistic account of human nature.

#### **5.0 Summary**

- The materialist account of human nature is a metaphysical evaluation of human nature from a physicalist perspective.
- The materialist conception of human nature supports and draws from all physicalist account of human nature such as biology, neurology, physiology, empirical psychology and behaviourism.
- The materialist conception of human nature resurfaced in the modern period of Europe in England in the philosophies of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and David Hume.
- Other materialist who discussed human nature in the modern period of Europe are Julien Offroy de La Matrie the French physician and philosopher and Baron Paul Von Holbach the German philosopher.
- Dialectical materialist conception of human nature is the same as the Marxist psychology of human nature.
- In dialectical materialist conception of human nature, all thinking processes including willing, affections, reflection, deliberation and projection are both operations of the brain and series of electromagnetic activities of the brain.
- Central-state materialism which emerged in the 20<sup>th</sup> century largely agrees with dialectical materialism; paying major attention on the central nervous system (i.e. of the nervous system) which consists of the brain and the spinal cord.
- Defenders of central-state materialism include U. T. Place the British philosopher and psychologist, Donald Herbert Davidson the American materialist philosopher and Ted Honderich a Canadian and a Professor of Philosophy at the University of London.

## 6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Discuss the materialist conception of human nature.
2. What is the main proposition of dialectical materialist conception of human nature?
3. Explain the central state materialist conception of human nature.

## 7.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

1. According to Julien Offroy de La Matrie human beings are
  - (a) Pure material beings with souls that are also purely material in nature
  - (b) Pure spiritual beings with souls that are also purely material in nature
  - (c) Pure rational beings with souls that are also purely material in nature
  - (d) Pure emotional beings with souls that are also purely material in nature.
2. **Julien Offroy de La Matrie** believes that
  - (a) Human beings have the same brain structure as animals
  - (b) Human nature is complex because of the large brain structure
  - (c) Human beings have smaller brain structure than animals
  - (d) Human nature is highly spiritual and emotional.
3. The statement “Consciousness is the product of matter at its highly developed stage. There is nothing like spiritual force in the universe. Everything in the universe is matter in motion” is associated with
  - (a) Metaphysical materialism
  - (b) Central-state materialism
  - (c) Dialectical materialism
  - (d) None of the above
4. The statement “Mind is the result of a critical organization of matter. Nervous organization has to attain a certain minimum of complexity for the display of intelligent activity” is associated with
  - (a) Karl Marx
  - (b) Joseph Stalin
  - (c) Vladimir Lenin
  - (d) Kwame Nkrumah
5. In the view of Baron Paul Von Holbach human beings are
  - (a) Products of nature whose every bodily function is nature determined
  - (b) Products of God’s creation
  - (c) Products of evolution
  - (d) Entirely spiritual entities
6. According to U. T. Place
  - (a) Science can successfully investigate consciousness
  - (b) For science to be able to investigate consciousness as an indispensable attribute of human nature, then consciousness must be no other but brain processes
  - (c) Science cannot investigate human nature because human nature is spiritual
  - (d) None of the above
7. The theory of *anomalous monism* is associated with
  - (a) U. T. Place
  - (b) Ted Honderich
  - (c) Donald Herbert Davidson
  - (d) Baron Paul Von Holbach

8. Anomalous monism can be regarded as
  - (a) A dialectical materialist theory of mind
  - (b) A behaviourist theory of mind
  - (c) A mentalist theory of mind
  - (d) An identity theory of mind
9. Ted Honderich is famous for
  - (a) Deterministic theory of human nature
  - (b) Spiritual determinism
  - (c) Economic determinism
  - (d) Fatalism
10. One of these is not a theory of human nature by Ted Honderich
  - (a) Psychoneural Nomic Correlation
  - (b) Causal Neurology
  - (c) Causation of Psychoneural Pairs
  - (d) Causation of Actions

<p><b>Solution:</b> 1. a, 2. b, 3. c, 4. d, 5. a, 6. b, 7. c, 8. d, 9. a, 10. b</p>
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## **Unit 2: Idealist Conception of Human Nature**

### **Contents**

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- 2.0 Objective
- 3.0 Main Content
  - 3.1 Idealist Metaphysical Conception of Human Nature
  - 3.2 Subjective Idealist Conception of Human Nature
  - 3.3 Objective Idealistic account of Human Nature
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
- 6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise
- 7.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment
- 8.0 References/Further Reading

### **1.0 Introduction**

This unit is dedicated to the discussion of the idealist conception of human nature. The term idealist as used in this context refers to a philosopher who upholds the principle of idealism. Idealism is an opposing metaphysical school of thought to materialism. Where materialism upholds matter as the sole and ultimate reality, idealism propagates the doctrine that the sole and ultimate reality is spirit, soul or idea. In essence, idealism maintains the view that the really real is the immaterial, the incorporeal, the non-physical, non-visible and the intangible. This makes idealism an opposing monistic and reductionist metaphysical principle to materialism. Hence, idealism becomes the metaphysical principle that underpins all perspectives that propagate cultural, religious and spiritual views of human nature. These include Igbo conception of human nature, Yoruba conception of human nature, Christian conception of human nature, Islamic conception of human nature, Indian conception of human nature, Chinese conception of human nature and parapsychological conception of human nature.

### **2.0 Objective**

At the end of this unit, you are expected to:

- Describe Idealism as a Metaphysical Theory of Human Nature
- State and Analyze the Subjective Idealistic Conception of Human Nature
- Identify and Discuss Objective Idealistic Conception of Human Nature

### **3.0 Main Content**

#### **3.1 Idealist Metaphysical Conception of Human Nature**

With regards to human nature, idealists and idealism argue that human beings are essentially spiritual or non-material entities. In this case, the material body is regarded as incapable of independent existence without spirit or soul or idea. Recall that from the religious and spiritual perspectives, the material world is regarded as a creation of the Universal Spirit called God. Thus, within the Christian and Islamic

perspectives, the material world is a creation of God. By implication, the material world is an extension of Spirit or Soul. Within the confines of Igbo/Yoruba and Indian/Chinese spirituality, the physical world is regarded as the body of the Universal Spirit or God. In which case, the material world is congealed spirit. From these two perspectives, we can derive two accounts of idealism which are subjective idealism and objective idealism.

Subjective idealism states that the existence of the material body is dependent on the human spirit, just as the existence of the material world is dependent on spirit, soul or idea. This wise, the Christian and Islamic view of human nature can be classified under subjective idealism. In philosophy, George Berkeley's expression *esse est percipi*, is a perfect example of subjective idealism. On the other hand, objective idealism states that what we see as material body or the material world is a self-projection, a self-manifestation of spirit. In other words, matter or body is not totally an independent entity on its own, in actual fact, the existence of matter or body is dependent on spirit which is the fundamental reality underlying the existence of matter. The Igbo/Yoruba and Indian/Chinese world outlook and conception of human nature reflect the objective idealist view of reality and human nature. In philosophy, the views of Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (the German Idealists), Francis Herbert Bradley, John Foster and Timothy Sprigge (the British Neo-Idealists) are perfect examples of objective idealism. John Foster, for instance, states that the ultimate reality is spirit and that the physical world is the logical construction of this spirit consciousness (1982). Timothy Sprigge on his part, states that the entire world is made of consciousness and that this consciousness is the ultimate reality (1983).

### **3.2 Subjective Idealist Conception of Human Nature**

As put by Joseph Omoregbe, "Berkeley, the father of subjective idealism denies the existence of matter on empiricist grounds" (2001: 6). Empiricism as a theory of knowledge supports a materialist view of the world. Empiricism states that what we perceive directly in the world are qualities such as colour, size, height, figure, solidity, odour, motion, etc, all of which appeal to the five senses of smell, sight, taste, hearing and touch, which in turn correspond to the five organs of the body; nose, eyes, tongue, ears and skin respectively (2002: 14). Beyond this empiricist position, Berkeley took the argument one step further by stating that all the qualities perceived are ideas in the mind. He states that the paramount issue in the act of perceiving or perception is the mind or self that perceives. "This perceiving, active being is what I call mind, spirit or myself, because it is evident there is no other substance than spirit or that which perceives" (2002: 27).

For Berkeley, the mind is a spiritual substance. He also insists that only spiritual substance exists. Matter exists in so far as it is perceived by mind which is a spiritual substance. By implication, human nature is essentially spiritual. Human body exists because of the perceptual ability of the mind. Put in a layman's language, the body exists because mind as a spiritual substance provides it with vitality as well as recognize and affirm its existence through perception. By the act of intuition or

what Berkeley calls inner feeling or reflection (Ibid., 37), the mind affirms its own existence and by the inference affirms the existence of other minds. To confirm that the existence of the body or matter depends on the mind, Berkeley says that what the human mind does not perceive, God as the universal mind perceives it. Insofar as body of matter is perceived by mind, it (body or matter) exists.

*Esse est percipi aut percipere* – to be is to be perceived or to perceive. In other words, to be is to be either a perceiver, a subject, a mind (spirit) or an object of perception (an idea) (Ibid., 31).

It is clear from the above that for Berkeley, human nature is basically spiritual and the body exists only as an idea in the mind. Mind in itself is a spiritual substance.

### **3.3 Objective Idealistic account of Human Nature**

The German Idealists, Friedrich W. J. Schelling and Georg W. F. Hegel, are two philosophers whose views represent an objective idealist account of human nature. Schelling, in his theory of Transcendental Idealism, completely rejects the dualistic account of human nature. He propounds a theory of the *Absolute* which happens to be the source of the human soul and the human body. This means that mind and matter or spirit and body are two ways in which the *Absolute* manifests itself in reality. But this *Absolute* in itself, is the same as the Universal Spirit or Universal Consciousness, meaning that both the human spirit and the human body are manifestations of the Universal or Absolute Consciousness. It also implies that the human body, like the physical world is a mere projection of the universal spiritual substance called the *Absolute* (Omoregbe, 2001: 7-8).

In his *Phenomenology of Mind* (2001), Hegel propounded a theory of human nature which can be regarded as a comprehensive improvement of Schelling's conception of human nature. Like Schelling, Hegel is anti-dualist and an ardent propagator of objective idealist conception of human nature. Hegel postulates that it is in human nature to conceive of a dichotomy between mind and body, spirit and matter. He explains that this mind-body dualism or spirit-matter bifurcation stems from the illusion of reflection. Because at the childhood stage or pre-reflective stage of our lives, we see ourselves as one with nature, as part of nature, we do not see ourselves as detached or independent of nature (Priest, 1991: 33). In other words, the dichotomy between mind and matter is a demonstration of self-maturity and self-discovery. Hence, the attempt to separate mind from body and spirit from matter readily shows that they are one unified entity. In actual fact, matter is an expression of spirit, like body is an expression of mind, making them one inseparable and indissoluble entity.

For Hegel, consciousness as a determining feature of human nature, is in stages. The first is the stage of sense certainty or pre-reflective stage which has to do with sense data (i.e. sensation) feeling of the world or the gathering of information from the environment through the five senses. From this pre-reflective stage of sense certainty, we graduate to the **second** stage which is the stage of perception by which

data or information gathered from the environment become associated. By this act of association, we gradually begin to graduate from knowledge of particulars to universal knowledge. Association of sense data is the process of abstraction. It is the process by which universals are abstracted from particulars and it is through this process that concept formation begins. This process of abstraction takes us to the **third** stage of consciousness which is the stage of **explanation**. This stage of explanation involves the description of the terms, laws and principles that underpin phenomena intended to facilitate scientific understanding of the world. Thus, the stage of explanation is the same as the stage of scientific **understanding** or simply the stage of **understanding** which involves a synthesis of the first two stages of **sense certainty** and **perception**. From this third stage, we move to the **fourth** stage of consciousness which is the stage of self-consciousness. According to Hegel, this fourth stage is the stage of **self-awareness** by which the human ego as the subject of consciousness distinguishes itself from the object of consciousness. It is at this stage that the subject-object dualism (i.e. bifurcation) is introduced by the human ego into consciousness. The unique thing to note about this fourth stage of self-consciousness is that it involves a dialectical processes of **thesis**, **anti-thesis** and **synthesis**. It through this dialectical process that consciousness elevates to the **fifth** and final stage which is the stage of **Reason**. Reason, for Hegel, is the stage of the synthesis of consciousness and self-consciousness, which results into the overcoming of duality. This overcoming of duality involves the synthesis of the **real** (i.e. what consciousness perceives itself to be) and the **ideal** (i.e. what consciousness ought to be like). Consciousness at this stage comes to the realization that the real and the ideal, the finite and the infinite, subject and the object, the mind and the body, etc, are products of one universal entity called **Universal Reason** or **Absolute Spirit** (see Omoregbe, 2001: 9-10).

It is at this point that the individual attains the realization that there is neither duality nor diversity in the universe. Rather, the entire universe is the self-projection of one universal spirit substance also known as **Absolute Reason**. The individual also attains the realization that the entire universe is under the providential plan of **Absolute Reason**. This final stage of self-realization graphically captures Hegel's tenet of object idealism.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

This unit has graphically x-rayed the features and tenets of idealism as a theory of human nature. The point to note here is that idealism as a metaphysical school of thought admits and grants the fact that human nature transcends material or physical existence. This makes idealism to easily support spiritual, cultural, religious and parapsychological views of human nature. However, like materialism, idealism is a monistic and a reductionist account of human nature. Hence, where materialism supports a wholly physical or material structure of human nature, idealism on its part propagates an entirely non-physical or immaterial account of human nature.



## 5.0 Summary

- Idealists and idealism argue that human beings are essentially spiritual or non-material entities.
- Within the school of idealism, the material body is regarded as incapable of independent existence without spirit or soul or idea.
- Subjective Idealism and Objective Idealism are the two types of idealism that discuss human nature
- George Berkeley espouses the view of subjective idealism
- Objective idealists include Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (the German Idealists), Francis Herbert Bradley, John Foster and Timothy Sprigge (the British Neo-Idealists).
- For Berkeley, the physical world and all physical objects are ideas either in the human mind or in the universal mind.
- For the objective idealists, especially Schelling and Hegel, the physical universe and all physical objects are manifestations of the universal spirit.
- For Schelling, the universal mind is the **Absolute**, while for Hegel the universal mind is the **Absolute Spirit** or **Absolute Reason**.

## 6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Discuss the idealist conception of human nature.
2. What is the main proposition of subjective idealist conception of human nature?
3. Explain the objective idealist conception of human nature.

## 7.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

1. Subjective idealism states that the
  - (a) Existence of the material body is dependent on the human spirit, just as the existence of the material world is dependent on spirit, soul or idea
  - (b) Material body and material objects are independent of mind or spirit
  - (c) Material body and material objects are in themselves spiritual entities
  - (d) Material body and material objects are simply energy substances
2. \_\_\_\_\_ is a subjective idealist
  - (a) Schelling
  - (b) Berkeley
  - (c) Hegel
  - (d) Bradley
3. \_\_\_\_\_ is famous for the expression *Esse est percipi aut percipere*
  - (a) Timothy Sprigge
  - (b) John Foster
  - (c) George Berkeley
  - (d) Georg Hegel
4. One of these is not true of George Berkeley
  - (a) The mind is a spiritual substance
  - (b) Only spiritual substance exists
  - (c) Human nature is essentially spiritual
  - (d) Human nature is material
5. Which is the odd one out

- (a) George Berkeley
  - (b) Georg Hegel
  - (c) Joseph Schelling
  - (d) Francis Herbert Bradley
6. \_\_\_\_\_ is the founder of the theory of the Absolute
- (a) Hegel
  - (b) Schelling
  - (c) Bradley
  - (d) Foster
7. \_\_\_\_\_ is famous for the theory of **Absolute Spirit or Universal Reason**
- (a) Schelling
  - (b) Berkeley
  - (c) Hegel
  - (d) Sprigge
8. George Hegel developed \_\_\_\_\_ stages of consciousness
- (a) Two
  - (b) Three
  - (c) Four
  - (d) Five
9. One of these is not true of Hegel
- (a) Spiritual materialism
  - (b) Sense certainty
  - (c) Perception
  - (d) Scientific understanding
  - (e) Self-consciousness
10. According to Hegel, at the stage of Reason, the human mind is able to
- (a) Identify duality
  - (b) Overcome duality
  - (c) Become one with duality
  - (d) Appreciate duality**

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## **Unit 3: Dualist Conception of Human Nature**

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### **1.0 Introduction**

This unit examines the dualist conception of human nature. The term dualist refers to a philosopher who propagates the view of dualism which is a metaphysical school of thought. The noun dualism, derives from the adjective dual which means two, making dualism a two realm metaphysical theory of human nature. Thus, contrary to materialism and idealism that propagate monistic and reductionist view of human nature, dualism combines materialist and idealist perspectives of human nature. This is exactly what is meant by dualist conception of human nature. Whereas materialism promotes a physicalist conception of human nature, whereas idealism upholds an immaterialist conception of human nature, dualism states that human nature is both material and immaterial, physical and non-physical. This makes dualism to be a more accommodating and a more comprehensive theory of human nature.

### **2.0 Objective**

At the end of this unit, you are expected to:

- Discuss Dualism as a Metaphysical Theory of Human Nature
- Identify and Explain Plato's and St. Augustine's Views of Human Nature
- Describe vividly Rene Descartes' Mind-Body Interactionism Theory

### **3.0 Main Content**

#### **3.1 Dualist Theory of Human Nature**

Howard Robinson (2020) espouses the view that the term dualism has been used in various ways in the history of thought. In general, idealism states that there are two categories of things in the world – spirit and matter. This wise, dualism contrasts with monism and pluralism. Monism states that there is only one sole element in the world – spirit or matter. Pluralism states that there are several categories of things in the world (i.e. spirit, matter, trees, animals, human beings, God, ancestors, etc). Put differently, monism promotes a unipolar worldview. Dualism promotes a

two realm view of the world. Pluralism promotes diversity and multiplicity (i.e. a multi-polar or pluripolar world). With regards to human nature, dualism admits that human beings are both spiritual and material beings, non-physical and physical beings or immaterial and material beings. This means that dualist conception of human nature accommodates biological, empirical psychological and behaviourist theories of human nature on the one hand, and cultural, religious, spiritual and parapsychological theories of human nature on the other hand.

Consequently, the dualist conception of human nature raises a set of problems entirely different from the materialist and the idealist presentations of human nature. The basic problem with materialist conception of human nature is either the complete denial of the immaterial structure of human nature or the reduction of the non-physical structure of human nature to a material state. In the same vein, the fundamental problem with the idealist conception of human nature is either the complete denial of the material structure of human nature or the reduction of the physical structure of human nature to an immaterial or non-physical state. Since the dualist conception of human nature accommodates both the material and immaterial conceptions of human nature, there arises different sets of problems which are enumerated below:

- (i) Which of the two aspects of human nature (mind or body) controls the other?
- (ii) How do two different entities (mind and body) capable of independent existence relate or interact?

These two basic questions are central to the dualist theories of human nature in Western philosophy.

### **3.2 Plato's and St. Augustine's Conceptions of Human Nature**

Plato is regarded as the father of dualism (Omogbe, 2001: 1) in the history of Western philosophy. For him, human nature comprises of spiritual and material substances. He regards the human soul as the vital force in the human being which is entrapped in the body until its departure from the body at death. This means that death is a liberation of the soul from the prison of the body. When the soul departs from the body, it floats back to the world of forms, which is its original home. This also implies that "the union between the soul and the body is loose and accidental" (Ibid.). It also means that the body is not only inferior to the body; in fact, the body derives its origin and control from the soul. Since for Plato, the physical world is merely a photo copy of the metaphysical world of forms, it follows that the body is an imperfect replication of the soul.

St. Augustine was a Christian Platonist. For this reason, his conception of human nature, is strikingly similar to that of Plato. Like Plato, St. Augustine describes the human being as – a rational soul using a mortal and an earthly body. For him, the soul is superior to the body and for this reason, it (the soul) controls the human body. It follows that the problem of mind-body interaction does not exist since the

soul controls, moves and acts on the body. On the other hand, the body cannot act on or move the body (see Augustine, 2015; Omoregbe, 2001 and Russell, 1972).

### **3.3 Rene Descartes on the Interactionist Conception of Human Nature**

Rene Descartes, the French continental rationalist, is the one who made it clear that there is a dilemma concerning the interaction of mind and body as different entities with different properties. This dilemma can simply be described as the problem of **mind-body duality**. This issue is succinctly put by Joseph Omoregbe thus:

It was Descartes who brought the problem of mind-body interaction to the focus in Western philosophy. It should be noted that Descartes uses the word **mind** to mean the soul, so that the mind-body interaction problem is really the soul-body interaction problem (2001: 2).

Rene Descartes is a reformed modern Platonist who believes that the soul or mind is a different entity from the body. But unlike Plato, Descartes does not see the soul as being a prisoner in the body, he does not see the body as being a prison for the soul, he also does not see the soul as being superior to the body or the body as being inferior to the soul. Corroborating the foregoing statement about Descartes, Elizabeth S. Haldane and G. R. T. Ross explain that Descartes was more interested in the inter-relationship between the mind and the body.

Nature teaches me that I am not only lodged in my body as a pilot in a ship but that I am very closely united to my body and that I form as it were, a single whole with it (Haldane and Ross, 1986: 159).

Obviously, Descartes had a completely different concern about the mind (soul)-body relationship. His specific concern was to resolve the riddle of soul-body relationship which dualist philosophers before him did not bother about. But how did he arrive at the conclusion that the mind and the body are two different entities? How did he arrive at the conclusion that the soul has properties that are different from those of the body? Of course he did this through the **methodic doubt** (Okoro, 2011: 62) which is a self-reflexive rationalist methodology or system for probing and purifying the self in order to attain indubitable knowledge. As put by Descartes himself: *I came to regard as false whatever merely looks like the truth ... The first rule was to accept as true nothing that I did not know to be evidently so* (Descartes, 1960: 42 & 50). Moving from this first stage of the methodic doubt, which is the stage of Real and Universal but Methodic Doubt (Okoro, 63), at the second stage of the methodic doubt, which is the stage of **Fundamental Truth** (Okoro, 64), Descartes arrived at the primordial irrefutable and indubitable truth of the self as the ultimate foundation of all human conscious, subconscious and unconscious activities. So, he concludes thus: *cogito ergo sum* meaning *I think therefore I am* (Descartes, 61).

Consequently, it is through the process of methodic doubt that Descartes reached the realization that the **self** as **mind** or **soul** is a spiritual or immaterial substance different from the body which is a material or physical substance.

Insofar as I am a thinking thing and not extended and on the other hand, I have a distinct idea of the body insofar as it is extended, not a thinking thing, it is certain that I (that is the mind or soul by which I am what I am) am really distinct from my body and can exist without it (Haldane and Ross, *Ibid.*).

It also through the methodic doubt that Descartes reached the conclusion that he has a body and that this body has properties quite different from those of the soul. He arrived at this next level of truth at the third stage of the methodic doubt which is the stage of **Clear and Distinct Ideas** (Okoro, 64-65). It is at this stage that Descartes admitted the existence of the matter (including the material world and the material body), which amounts to the acceptance that human nature comprises both immaterial and material substances. By contrast, whereas the body is extendable the soul or mind is non-extendable. As extendable, the body has the following properties: mass, weight, size (i.e. including all geometrical shapes measurable in terms height, length, breadth, round, cone, triangular, rectangular etc) and is capable of movement or motion. The mind or soul does not have any of these material properties. However, in Aristotelian parlance, the soul constitutes the source of motion or the vital force responsible for the motion of material things.

This Cartesian conception of human nature created the problem (dilemma) of the **mind-body interactionism** or the **dualistic problem** (Omoregbe, 3). As earlier stated, this has to do with how two substances (spiritual and material) entirely contrast and with different properties interact. Descartes replies that they both interact at the point of the **pineal gland**, which is located in the *innermost part of the brain* (*Ibid.*), that is, sandwiched between the cerebrum and the cerebellum. This is how the mind-body relationship became a recurrent metaphysical problem.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

So far, we have seen that dualism as a metaphysical school of thought supports a dual or two realm world outlook. This wise, the dualist conception of human nature combines both the materialist and idealist conceptions of human nature. In other words, the dualist conception of human nature admits that human nature is both material and immaterial. By implication, dualism entails other kinds of problems outside those of materialism and idealism. The fundamental problems involved in the dualist conception of human nature concerns which of the substances (soul or matter) is either superior or inferior. Another basic problem associated with dualism is about how two substances with entirely different properties can inter-relate. However, the dualist conception of human nature lays the foundation for the transcendentalist conception of human nature.

## 5.0 Summary

- Dualist conception of human nature combines both materialist and immaterialist perspectives of human nature.
- However, dualist conception of human nature suffers from the dilemma of dualistic problem.
- The dualistic problem is about which of the substances of human nature controls the other and how two completely different substances can interact.
- For instance, Plato regards the body as a prison of the soul and the soul as a prisoner in the body.
- He regards the human soul as the vital force in the human being which is entrapped in the body until its departure from the body at death.
- Like Plato, St. Augustine describes the human being as – a rational soul using a mortal and an earthly body.
- For St. Augustine, the soul is superior to the body and for this reason, it (the soul) controls the human body.
- Rene Descartes, the French continental rationalist, brought the mind-body duality problem into limelight.
- Descartes came about the confirmation of the existence of the difference between the mind and the body through the methodic doubt.
- Descartes concludes that the mind and the body interact at the point of the pineal gland.

## 6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Discuss the dualist conception of human nature.
2. Describe Plato's and St. Augustine's conceptions of human nature
3. Vividly explain Rene Descartes' conception of human nature.

## 7.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

1. Dualism as a theory of metaphysics supports
  - (a) A two realm view of human nature
  - (b) A one realm view of human nature
  - (c) A three realm view of human nature
  - (d) A multifaceted view of human nature
2. Dualism raises the following problems about human nature except
  - (a) Which of the two aspects of human nature (mind or body) controls the other?
  - (b) How a plural structure of human nature can be coordinated?
  - (c) How do two different entities (mind and body) capable of independent existence relate or interact?
  - (d) None of the above
3. In the history of Western Philosophy, Plato is regarded as the father of
  - (a) Materialism
  - (b) Idealism
  - (c) Dualism
  - (d) Realism
4. One of these is not true of Plato
  - (a) For him, human nature comprises of spiritual and material substances.

- (b) He regards the human soul as the vital force in the human being which is entrapped in the body until its departure from the body at death.
- (c) Death is a liberation of the soul from the prison of the body.
- (d) The soul is mortal because it perishes with the body at death
5. \_\_\_\_\_ was a Christian Platonist
- (a) St. Augustine
- (b) St. Aquinas
- (c) St. Bonaventure
- (d) St. Origen
6. \_\_\_\_\_ described human being as a rational soul using a mortal and an earthly body.
- (a) St. Francis
- (b) St. Augustine
- (c) St. Aquinas
- (d) Pope John Paul II
7. One of these is not true of Rene Descartes
- (a) He was a French continental rationalist
- (b) He was a reformed Platonist
- (c) He agreed with Plato that the soul is a prisoner in the body
- (d) He deferred from Plato by stating that the soul and the body are closely united because the soul lodges in the body like the pilot in a ship.
8. Rene Descartes is famous for raising
- (a) The monist problem
- (b) The reductionist problem
- (c) The pluralist problem
- (d) The dualist problem
9. Rene Descartes reached the conclusion that the soul and the body are two distinct entities that interact through the process of
- (a) Methodic doubt
- (b) Systematic doubt
- (c) Spiritual meditation
- (d) Scientific evaluation
10. According to Descartes, the soul and the body interact at the point of the
- (a) Pituitary gland
- (b) Pineal gland
- (c) Thyroid gland
- (d) Adrenal gland

<b>Solution:</b> 1. a, 2. b, 3. c, 4. d, 5. a, 6. b, 7. c, 8. d, 9. a, 10. b
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## **Unit 4: Transcendentalist Conception of Human Nature**

### **Contents**

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Objective
- 3.0 Main Content
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  - 3.2 The Faculties of Human Nature and their Functions
  - 3.3 The Integrated or Unified Theory of Human Nature
- 4.0 Conclusion
- 5.0 Summary
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### **1.0 Introduction**

The transcendental theory of human being sheds further light on how comprehensive and integrated (united) human nature is. This is because the transcendentalist conception of human nature succeeds where the dualist conception of human nature fails. The dualist conception of human nature is able to show that human nature is both material and immaterial. By so doing, the dualist conception of human nature is able to justify the veracity of all theories of human nature that are materialistic (i.e. biological, empirical psychological and behaviourist conceptions of human nature) and idealistic (i.e. cultural, religious, spiritual and parapsychological conceptions of human nature); thereby showing that human nature is both material and spiritual. But the dualist conception of human nature is unable to (1) explain the faculties of the soul and (2) show how the soul as an immaterial substance is able to relate with the body as a material substance such that they both form a perfect unity. This is where the transcendental theory of human nature succeeds. The transcendental theory of human nature is able to show that human nature is one compact whole, with each unit of human nature performing its function simultaneously towards a common unity.

### **2.0 Objective**

At the end of this unit, you are expected to:

- Describe the Transcendental Theory of Human Nature
- Identify and Explain the Faculties of Human Nature and their Functions
- Describe the United or Integrated Structure of Human Nature

### **3.0 Main Content**

#### **3.1 The Transcendental Theory of Human Nature**

The transcendental theory of human nature was introduced into Western philosophy by the German philosopher Immanuel Kant. The word **transcendental** is an adjective derived from the noun **transcendence**. Transcendence portrays human

beings as teleological entities who are incurably and inadvertently futuristic and optimistic. It is the inherent intellectual and spiritual powers to deliberately project into the future. The future can be likened to the void. Void is a latent formless state or simply a complete state of chaos that throws up boundless possibilities. Possibilities challenge human beings to vigorously demonstrate their powers of transcendence by altering adversities into advantages. By this act, we project from the known realm into the unknown realm. Each time we do this, we open up new vistas of hope, we recreate and reinvent. This act of reinventing and recreating comes about due to the human ability to form unity or to form synthesis. This power to form unity or to synthesize is the function of the human imagination which ensures that human beings are able to function coordinately as beings that are both immanent and transcendent.

The term immanent portrays human beings as entities with material or physical body capable of relating with the physical world. The term transcendent portrays human beings as entities with the metaphysical powers to go beyond physical experience into the transcendental world of possibilities. Immanuel Kant put it this way:

We shall term those principles, the application of which is confined entirely within the limits of possible experience; **Immanent**, those on the other hand, which transgress these limits, we shall call **Transcendent** (Kant, 1970: 298).

This makes transcendence to be simply a theory of beyondness. Hence, the term transcendental is used in portraying human beings as entities with the power to either “employ or misemploy their transcendent abilities or categories” (Ibid., 299). Therefore, by the transcendental theory of human nature is meant an integrated or unified theory of mind, which portrays humans as entities capable of both physical and metaphysical activities as well as forming interconnectedness between the physical and the non-physical activities of the mind.

### **3.2 The Faculties of Human Nature and their Functions**

Immanuel Kant identified four faculties of human nature which are sensibility, imagination, understanding and reason. These four faculties have their functions which can be categorized into two main realms of the physical and the metaphysical. The physical realm is the same as the realm of the immanent and it is represented by the faculty of sensibility. To the metaphysical realm belong the faculties of imagination, understanding and reason. Enumerated below are the four faculties of human nature and their functions:

- (i) ***Sensibility or Intuition:*** This simply refers to the **nervous system** which further comprise the **central nervous system** and the **peripheral nervous system**. The Central Nervous System further consists of the **brain** and the **spinal cord**. Note here the **memory** is part of the **central nervous system**. The Peripheral Nervous System further consists of the **cranial nerves** (i.e.

nerves of the brain), **spinal nerves** (i.e. nerves of the spinal cord) and the **sensory organs** (eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin). These constitute the physical part of the mind which forms the foundations for biological, empirical psychological and behaviourist conception of human nature. Without this aspect of human nature, it would be impossible for us to have physical experience or material encounter with the world.

- (ii) **Understanding (also known as Apperception, Thought or Intellect):** This is the faculty of concept formation. It is the non-physical power of human nature to form concepts. Concepts are both empirical and non-empirical. Empirical concepts coordinate mental states that direct physical activities of the mind, while non-empirical concepts coordinate mental states that direct non-physical activities of the mind. Generally, concepts provide rules of direction for human actions whether mental or physical.
- (iii) **Imagination:** This is the faculty of image formation or the power of human nature to form images. This power to form images is responsible for the following activities of the mind which are: (1) trance experience, (2) ability to form synthesis or the power to form connectedness and (3) ability to recreate, reinvent or bring something new into existence which is called revelation. In trance, we gather vision and illumination, we experience an image in a wand of light which brings about illumination, illumination brings about revelation (i.e. un-concealment); revelation in turn brings about vision. All of these processes would not be possible without the power to form synthesis, connectedness or interconnectedness.
- (iv) **Reason or Transcendent Reason:** This is the faculty of ideas or the power of the human nature to form ideas. It is with this ability that human beings are able to ascribe form (notion or ideas) to things, so that our seeing of the world and the things in the world is primordially or pre-experientially informed by ideas. Because of this power or ability, we possess the capacity to ascribe meaning to the world, making cognition a three way activity or three level awareness (i.e. consciousness as conscious consciousness). It is for this reason that Kant refers to the faculty of **reason as transcendent reason**. He also refers to the **ideas of reason as transcendent ideas**. By these expressions, Kant means that reason is capable of knowledge independent of experience (i.e. knowledge *a priori*). However, Kant warns that we should not operate at this realm of reason without reference to experience (i.e. sensibility or intuition) in order to guide against illusions of the mind.

**DIAGRAM ON THE FACULTIES OF THE MIND, THEIR CATEGORIES AND FUNCTIONS**

	<b>FACULTY</b>	<b>CATEGORIES</b>	<b>FUNCTIONS</b>	<b>GENERAL OF COMMON CHARACTERISTIC</b>
1.	INTUITION (or sensibility as the <i>a posterior</i> or immediate condition of consciousness).	Space and Time	Non-creativity or receptivity. It funds and activates reason with raw sensory data. The symbiosis between intuition and thought is called presentation or representation (see Heidegger, 1962, 28 and Unah, 1997, 39-41).	All faculties of consciousness are transcendental.  Together they constitute the foundation of knowledge and point towards the creative and inventive power of human nature.  Together they institute human transcendence and autonomy over nature.
2.	THE UNDERSTANDING (or the apperception or thought is the <i>a priori</i> or mediate condition of consciousness).	The Twelve (12) Categories of the Mind	Editor of reality (Concept formation or place where sensibility attains final purification through the process of schematism. It is the light of the soul or the source of mental illumination.	
3.	IMAGINATION (the mediator)	Process of Transcendental Deduction.	Synthesizer. Image formation, “a function of the soul described as productivity” (Unah, 55) or re-productivity. As the mediator or point of symbiosis, “it is the initiator of transcendence or point of transcendence itself” (Heidegger, 136-37).	
4.	REASON (or pure reason)	Region of Transcendental illusion (i.e. if unguided by the functioning of the first three faculties).	Legislation. Institutor or legislator of the ideas (i.e. the hunch) which first ignite our curiosity or awareness about entities around us. Its nature is such that it must always transcend the bounds of experience a quality that endows the mind with the ability for autonomy.	

**Diagram 1** (Source: Chiedozie Okoro’s PhD thesis, Department of Philosophy, University of Lagos).

With the structure of human nature discussed above, it is clear that human beings are capable of all sorts of thinking capacities and all sorts of activities. It means that by our inherent nature, we are beings capable of endless possibilities. It means that intrinsically we are capable of making meaning and meaninglessness at the same time. It means that it is in human nature to create and to destroy, to make and to

mar. It means that all the powers of thinking including cognition, reflection, self-reflection, introspection, intuition, deliberation, premonition, revelation, description, understanding, imagination, sensation, perception, apperception, telepathy, clairvoyance, clairaudience, hypnosis, sorcery, witchcraft, spirituality, religious knowledge, scientific knowledge, technological knowledge, etc, are native to and possible by human nature. In sum, human nature is capable of conscious, unconscious, preconscious and subconscious activities and beyond. Hence, human nature is the basis for **Human Intelligence (HI)**, which in turn is the ground for **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**.

The point to note at this juncture is that the comparison of AI to HI is basically on the basis of utility or functionality. This particular line of reasoning is premised on the fact that AI demonstrates more of resilience, reliability and accuracy in terms of output or performance of tasks compared to human beings. But if by artificial intelligence (AI) we mean machine intelligence (MI), it logically follows that what has been added to machine is intelligence. Put differently, machines were invented by human beings to facilitate human labour aimed at reducing drudgery. As time went on, the materialist understanding of human nature led some philosophers like Julien Offroy de La Matrie and Baron Paul Von Holbach to compare the structure of the human body to that of the machine. This materialist outlook immensely catalyzed the transformation of bare machines to machine intelligence. It is the addition of intelligence to machine that led to the era of AI.

Consequently, AI can be regarded as the replication of HI at the materialist level. In essence, going by all the preceding analysis of human nature to this point, it can be seen that AI only reflect just a part of human nature, that is to say, the material or physical aspect of human nature. Obviously, human nature transcends material functions and material existence. No matter how complex a piece of AI device is, it cannot exactly and holistically replicate those attributes of human beings. To be specific, the issue of the soul as that part of human nature that houses human reason, intellect (i.e. thought) and imagination, which form the basis for human transcendence and will power to spontaneously surpass vicissitudes will be most difficult to replicate.

### **3.3 The Integrated or Unified Theory of Human Nature**

Two basic deductions can be made from **diagram 1** above and the analysis made of the diagram thus:

1. All the faculties of the mind that determine human nature function unitedly as one integrated or unified whole. This unified or integrated nature of the mind endows us humans with:
  - (a) Self-autonomy, self-sovereignty or self-realization which is the basis for self-recognition and self-esteem (i.e. self-dignity);
  - (b) The power for **coordination** of both self and environment. Environment in this instance, refers to other selves and our surrounding (immediate and remote); and

- (c) The power for **consciousness** as well as the **conditions for consciousness** (Scott, 1972: 626). Consciousness is the ability to think, to cognize, to be aware, to experience, to acquaint, to describe, to know, to deliberate, discuss, reflect, project etc. The ability for consciousness also include the native capacities of consciousness to institute both its internal and external conditions for being conscious. The internal conditions of consciousness are intrinsic to consciousness, while the external conditions for consciousness are constituted by consciousness itself. The internal conditions of consciousness are the same as the characteristics of consciousness which are:
- (i) Mental ability for mental capacity,
  - (ii) Indubitability of my conscious state,
  - (iii) Subjectivity or inaccessibility by others
  - (iv) Non-spatiality, non-extended and non-physical,
  - (v) It not stoppable; hence, continuous,
  - (vi) Intentionality or the ability to relate with objects of thought,
  - (vii) Reflectivity and self-reflexivity, and
  - (viii) Ability to cognize the outer world and the things therein
- (Omoregbe, 2001: 32-35).

The external conditions of consciousness include the outer world and the events therein both nature made and human made.

2. All the faculties of the mind that determine human nature function simultaneously which results into the spontaneous activities of the mind. This spontaneous or voluntary activities of the mind is known as **will** or **will power**. Will or Will Power is the human ability to make decisions, choices, exercise faith and hope in the future. Will or Will Power is the resolve to voluntarily mobilize oneself towards achieving self-set goals.
3. Interdependence or complementarity between the physical (immanent) and the non-physical (transcendent) parts of the mind which endows humans with the ability to relate the subjective (i.e. internal conditions of consciousness) experience with objective (i.e. the external conditions of consciousness) experience. Interdependence or complementarity of the mind enables the subject-object (i.e. *noesis-noema*) relationality and the cognition of such.
4. Synthesis or the act of synthesis, which is the power of the mind to instruct harmony or homogeneity into heterogeneity, order into disorder, form into formlessness or chaos. It is simply the power of the mind to form unity, making the mind a unifier. By this ability of synthesis, interdependence or complementarity of the immanent and transcendent parts of the mind is made possible, thereby endowing humans with the power to create and to destroy, to make meaning and meaninglessness.

Points 1 to 4 enumerated above can be illustrated with the aid of a diagram as shown below:

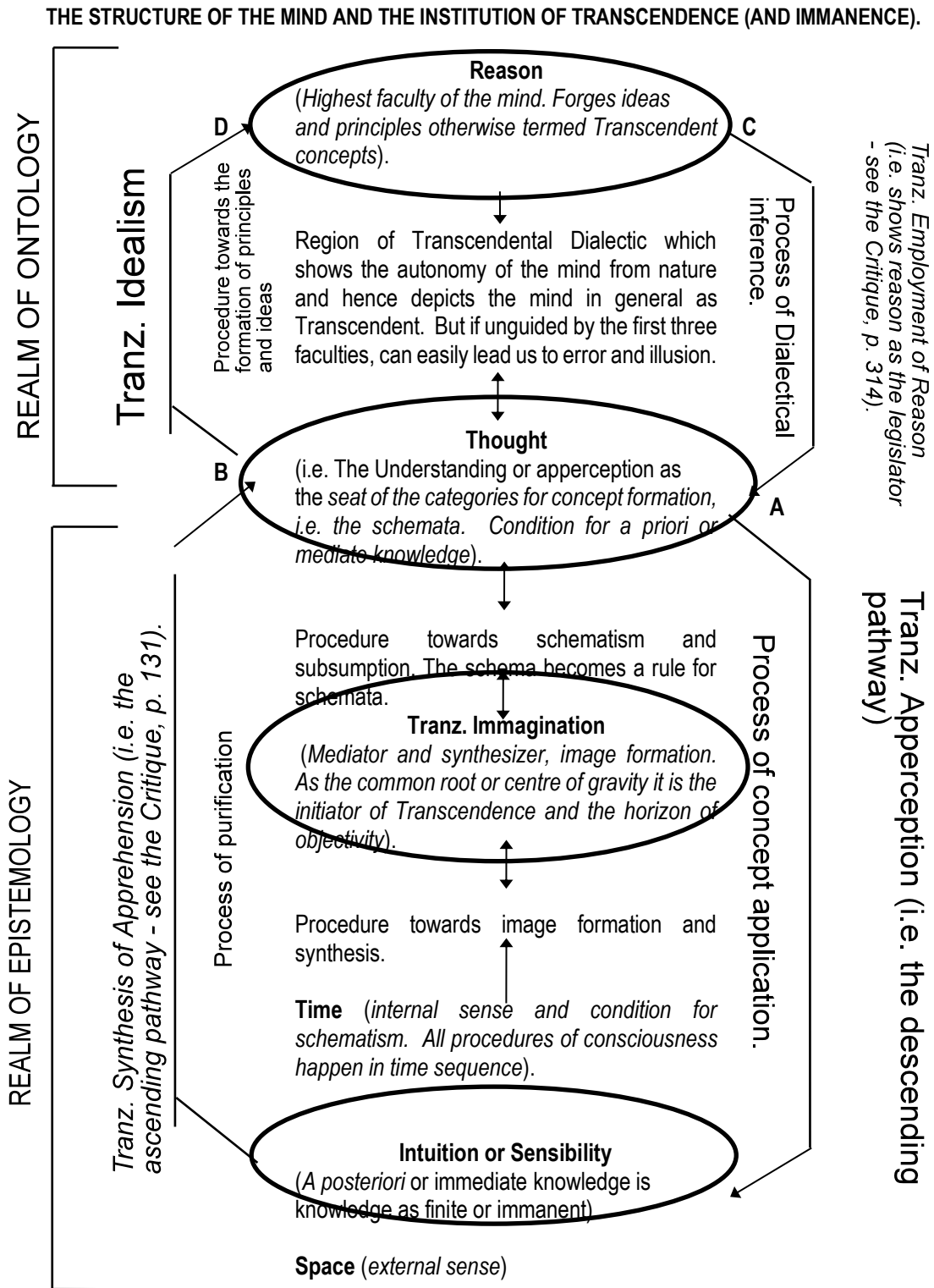


Diagram 2. The diagram is drawn from (the study of) four texts: (1) Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*; (2) C. D. Broad's *Kant, An Introduction*; (3) Martin Heidegger's *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*; and (4) J. I. Unah's *Heidegger: Through Kant to Fundamental Ontology*; (Source: Okoro, 2001)



Above is the diagram displaying the immanent (physical or material) and transcendent (non-physical or immaterial) structure of human nature. The physical or material part of human nature, called sensibility (i.e. intuition) comprises **space** and **time**. **Space** is the same as the **outer sense**. It consists of the cranial and spinal nerves and the sensory organs, which are responsible for gathering information about the world known as **sensation**. **Time** deals with the functions of the **memory** which is part of the Central Nervous System (CNS). The memory performs these basic functions thus: (a) receiving information, (b) storing information, (c) associating information in serial inference or in sequence and (d) recalling information (i.e. remembering); which together constitute perception. All functions of the mind (be it physical or non-physical) must happen through the memory, if not, such mental activity will not be remembered.

Reason as the faculty of ideas and understanding as the faculty of concepts and rules belong in the realm of the immaterial or the transcendent. Now, with sensibility we are capable of physical activities. With reason and understanding, we are capable of immaterial activities. This raises the question of how these two realms interconnect or complement each other. This is the function of the imagination or the transcendental imagination which functions as the intermediary or mediating faculty between sensibility on the one hand, and reason and understanding on the other hand. Because of the mediating function of the imagination, reason/understanding and sensibility become interdependent or complementary; such that sensibility supplies thought (i.e. understanding) with information, while thought supplies sensibility with concepts. It is in this sense that Immanuel Kant states thus:

Without sensibility no object would be given to us, without understanding no object would be thought. Thoughts without content are empty, intuition without concepts are blind (1970: 93).

From the above, it can be seen that by the structure of the mind, it is in human nature to seek for both meaning and meaninglessness in the affairs of the world.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

From the transcendental theory of human nature, we gather the clue to the fact that human nature is at once compact and complex. It is this compact and complex structure of human nature that make it possible for human beings to possess the boundless abilities for meaning making. This wise, the transcendental theory of human nature prepares the ground for the evaluation of the existentialist conception of human nature.

#### **5.0 Summary**

- Transcendental theory of human nature is also known as the integrated or unified theory of human nature.
- The transcendental theory of human nature shows that human beings are both immanent (physical) and transcendent (non-physical) entities at the same time.

- Sensibility or intuition is the terminology which Immanuel Kant used to refer to the nervous system which further consists of the Central Nervous System (CNS) and the Peripheral Nervous System (PNS).
- The non-physical or immaterial parts of human nature include imagination, understanding and reason.
- Imagination or transcendental imagination is the faculty of the mind that enables interdependence or complementarity between the material and immaterial parts of human nature
- Because of the compact and complex structure of human nature, human beings are capable of boundless activities.
- By the structure of human nature also, we are capable of all activities classified as conscious, unconscious, preconscious and subconscious.

### **6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise**

1. Explain the transcendental theory of human nature.
2. Discuss the faculties of human nature and their functions.
3. Discuss the integrated or unified structure of human nature.

### **7.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment**

1. One of these is not true of the transcendental theory of human nature
  - (a) It is at once monistic, reductionist and dualistic
  - (b) It is able to explain the faculties of the soul and their functions
  - (c) It is able to show how the soul as an immaterial substance is able to relate with the body as a material substance such that they both form a perfect unity.
  - (d) The transcendental theory of human nature is able to show that human nature is one compact whole, with each unit of human nature performing its function simultaneously towards a common unity
2. The transcendental theory of human nature was introduced into Western philosophy by the
  - (a) Italian philosopher Immanuel Kant
  - (b) German philosopher Immanuel Kant
  - (c) Spanish philosopher Immanuel Kant
  - (d) French philosopher Immanuel Kant
3. The term transcendence means the following except
  - (a) Transcendence portrays human beings as teleological entities who are incurably and inadvertently futuristic and optimistic.
  - (b) It is the inherent intellectual and spiritual powers to deliberately project into the future.
  - (c) It is the inability to form interconnectedness or synthesis
  - (d) It is the power to form unity or to synthesize through the imagination which ensures that human beings are able to function coordinately as beings that are both immanent and transcendent.
4. The term immanent portrays human beings as entities with
  - (a) Spiritual powers
  - (b) Religious powers
  - (c) Intellectual powers

- (d) Material or physical body capable of relating with the physical world
5. By the transcendental theory of mind is meant
    - (a) An integrated or unified theory of human nature, which portrays humans as entities capable both physical and metaphysical activities
    - (b) A spiritual ability to perform extraordinary acts
    - (c) A religious ability to perform miraculous acts
    - (d) An intellectual power to think and organize
  6. Which is the odd one out
    - (a) Sensibility
    - (b) Emotions
    - (c) Understanding
    - (d) Imagination
  7. In biological parlance, sensibility refers to
    - (a) The Central Nervous System
    - (b) The Peripheral Nervous System
    - (c) The Nervous System
    - (d) The Sensory Organs
  8. Which of these is the faculty of concept formation
    - (a) Reason
    - (b) Imagination
    - (c) Sensibility
    - (d) Understanding
  9. One of these is the faculty of synthesis and image formation
    - (a) Imagination
    - (b) Sensibility
    - (c) Reason
    - (d) Understanding
  10. \_\_\_\_\_ is the faculty of ideas and illusion
    - (a) Understanding
    - (b) Reason
    - (c) Sensibility
    - (d) Imagination
  11. Because of the integrated structure of human nature
    - (a) Human beings are only capable of conscious activities
    - (b) Human beings are only capable of subconscious activities
    - (c) Human beings are capable conscious, unconscious, preconscious and subconscious activities and beyond
    - (d) Human beings are capable of preconscious and unconscious activities alone
  12. The unified or integrated nature of human nature endows us human beings the following abilities except
    - (a) Self-autonomy
    - (b) Power of coordination
    - (c) Power of consciousness as well as the conditions for consciousness
    - (d) Capacity of delusion, illusion and destruction only
  13. Will or Will Power is the human ability to make
    - (a) Decisions, choices, exercise faith and hope in the future

- (b) Form ideas
  - (c) Form concepts
  - (d) Deceive people
14. The interdependence or complementarity of the material and immaterial parts of human nature enables human beings to
- (a) Recognize material things alone
  - (b) Cognize as well as form relationality between the subject and the object of consciousness
  - (c) Comprehend spiritual things
  - (d) Understand the things of God
15. One of these is not true of the human power to form synthesis
- (a) It is the power of the mind to instruct harmony of homogeneity into heterogeneity, order into disorder, form into formlessness or chaos
  - (b) It is simply the power of the mind to form unity, making the mind a unifier
  - (c) It is the power in humans to mimic and challenge God
  - (d) It endows humans with the power to create and to destroy
16. According to Immanuel Kant, the human faculty of sensibility comprises
- (a) Duration and Dimension
  - (b) Induction and Deduction
  - (c) Actuality and Possibility
  - (d) Space and Time
17. The category of **space** of the human faculty of sensibility refers to
- (a) The Peripheral Nervous System and the sensory organs which are responsible for sensation
  - (b) Human emotions
  - (c) The act of perception
  - (d) The abilities of sight and smell
18. By the category of **time**, Immanuel Kant meant
- (a) Shallow memory
  - (b) The memory as the faculty of reception, storing, associating and recalling information which is responsible for perception
  - (c) Retentive memory
  - (d) Deep psychology
19. \_\_\_\_\_ is known for the expression “Thoughts without content are empty, intuition without concepts are blind”
- (a) Emmanuel Kant
  - (b) Georg Hegel
  - (c) Immanuel Kant
  - (d) Karl Marx
20. Form Kant, the term **understanding** can variously translate as
- (a) Spirit
  - (b) Concept
  - (c) Rules
  - (d) Apperception, Thought or Intellect

**Solutions:** 1. a, 2. b, 3. c, 4. d, 5. a, 6. b, 7. c, 8. d, 9. a, 10. b, 11. c, 12. d, 13. a, 14. b, 15. c, 16. d, 17. a, 18. b, 19. c, 20. d

### **8.0 References/Further Reading**

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## **Unit 5: Existentialist Conception of Human Nature**

### **Contents**

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### **1.0 Introduction**

This unit is devoted to the discussion of the existentialist conception of human nature. The terms existential, existentialist and existentialism all refer to individual human existence or simply human existence. The goal of the existentialist conception of human nature is to describe human nature in its everydayness. Existentialists want to explain human beings and their activities as experienced in their daily endeavours. Human existence simply refers to human conditions of living as they influence human individual freedom to make decisions and choices on a day to day basis. Freedom to decide and to choose is a subjective matter which Jean-Paul Sartre refers to as the problem of subjectivity, which Martin Heidegger says is the basis for existential time. Mastery or failure to master human conditions of living determine whether we are authentic or inauthentic beings, whether we have demonstrated our existentiality (transcendence) by surpassing our facticity or whether we are fallen; all or which help to determine our destiny.

### **2.0 Objective**

At the end of this unit, you are expected to demonstrate a profound understanding of:

- Existentialism as a Philosophy of Human Existence
- Existentialist Ontology of Human Nature
- Human Nature as Ontic or Existential

### **3.0 Main Content**

#### **3.1 Human Nature and Human Existence in Existentialism**

For the purpose of this unit, the existentialist exposition of human nature as the foundation of human existence shall be limited to the existential phenomenology of Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre. Incidentally, both of them were influenced by Edmund Husserl's phenomenology. But whereas Husserl was a pure phenomenologist whose focus was on the analysis of human consciousness in relation to the apprehension of the essences of things, Heidegger and Sartre

channeled phenomenology towards existentialism. In other words, Heidegger and Sartre made phenomenology an instrument for analysing human existence. Because they existentialized phenomenology, Heidegger and Sartre are called existential phenomenologists.

The choice of Heidegger and Sartre is because both made the deliberate discussion of human nature the foundation of human existence. Both discuss the human being as a transcendent and an immanent being, which within the existentialist purview are labelled ontological and ontic analysis of human nature. Put differently, within the perspectives of Sartre and Heidegger, there is the analysis of the ontology of human nature and how the ontological qualities of the human being manifest existentially (i.e. the ontic) on a day to day basis. Thus, where ontology is the theory of Being, and if for Heidegger Being is the ground of metaphysics and the ground that yields other grounds, “it follows that the discourse on human ontology, applies to the study of the *self*, which, as the source of human transcendence, constitutes the ontological essence of human beings” (Okoro, Uduma and Odim, 2019). The preceding point is reiterated by Heidegger who states thus: “Every philosophy which revolves around an indirect or direct conception of transcendence remains of necessity essentially an ontology” (1967: 441). The ontic refers to the real, actual and physical existence and the conditions of general human existence in its everydayness.

Another point to note is that whereas Heidegger came from the analysis of Being to the analysis of human being, Sartre’s preoccupies himself with the direct analysis of human being as an ontological entity who inadvertently manifests its ontological powers existentially (see Omoregbe, 1999a: 198&203-204; 1999b, 71&87-88). Heidegger argued that Being can only be understood and analyzed by human being because it is intrinsic to human nature to do so (Iwuagwu, 2017: 29). Hence, it is through the analysis of human nature, which Heidegger calls *Daseinanalytic*, that the understanding and analysis of Being is realizable and actually realized. For Sartre, Being manifests itself exactly the way it is through human existence (1969: xxi). Because both philosophers believe that human existence is the irrefutable and indispensable foundation for the understanding of Being and for the actualization of the boundless possibilities of the human ontological prowess, they acquiesce to the fact that human existence precedes human essence. In essence, humans must first exist before they can acquire essence. It is on this basis that existentialists proclaim that “existence precedes essence” (Sartre, 1946; <https://philosophy.lander.edu/intro/articles/sartre-a.pdf>, 3).

The bottom line here is that human nature is primarily existential. It is through the performance of our daily existential activities that we are able to realize and actualize our ontological abilities and in the process acquire essence in accordance to our individual attitudes to life. Nevertheless, it should be noted that whereas for Heidegger human being is the medium to understanding of Being (Nwigwe, 2002: 268), the discourse on human being forms the direct focus of Sartre, not Being. In

other words, whereas for Sartre human existence is premised on human being, for Heidegger human being and human existence are premised on Being.

### 3.2 Human Ontology and Human Existence in Existentialism

By the expression human ontology is meant analysis of the existential structure of human being which endows humans with the power of transcendence, a fundamental feature that distinguishes humans from all other things in the world. Based on this intrinsic human nature Heidegger declares thus: *The being that exists is man. Man alone exists* (1967: 438). He goes ahead to emphatically assert that rocks, trees, horses, angels, God, etc, are but they do not exist. He explains that by this position, he does not mean that humans alone are real, he does not mean that humans are superior to other things or that other things are inferior to humans, he does not mean that other things are mere appearances or ideas in the mind; rather, what he means to say is that: “Man is the being whose Being is distinguished by the open-standing standing-in in the unconcealedness of Being, from Being, in Being” (Ibid.). In place of the term *man*, Heidegger uses the German term *Dasein* to qualify human being. As put by Jim Unah:

Heidegger uses the technical term *Dasein* to designate man for obvious reasons. The word *man* is merely categorical (i.e. a class name) and therefore, grossly inadequate for describing the entity whose mode of being is not only radically different from that of other entities, but which possesses a native capacity for self-creation, self-orientation and self-detachment (Unah, 1996: 6).

For Heidegger, the term *man* refers to the conventional way of describing human being in traditional ontology, especially in religion and theology, as a project completed, finished and fixed. On the other hand, the term *Dasein* portrays human being as an on-going and incomplete project with boundless capacities for meaning making. *Dasein* depicts human beings as entities with inexhaustible powers to always transcend and surmount vicissitudes by constantly creating and recreating, inventing and reinventing. *Dasein* depict human beings as existential entities who are always teleological and futuristic in outlook. Human existence is continually evolving, always projecting beyond any given moment, thereby making the human being a moving subjectivity and an active humanity. For this reason, Heidegger distinguishes **existenz** from **existentia**. The former simply refers to human existence while the latter refers to other entities other than *Dasein* as phenomena **present at hand**. *Existentia* relates to a passive way of existing such as the lying around of things which is characteristic of non-human entities (Unah, 59).

In the first part of *Being and Time*, Heidegger identifies three ontological (internal) attributes of the human being thus: (i) facticity, (ii) existentiality or transcendence and (c) fallenness. These ontological attributes, define “human existential traits and temporality” (Unah, 65). Facticity portrays the human condition as **bare factual thrownness** (i.e. the **already given**) which we absolutely cannot do anything about. We were born into the world un-negotiated, without prior knowledge and without



our consent. As we burst into the world, we met circumstances that were never in any way our own making. To make things worse, these circumstances keep getting complicated. Even as we live in the world, we encounter circumstances which some of the times are not of our own making. Be that as it may, we have the choice to either brace up to the challenges confronting us or take to despair by constantly ruminating and regretting about the past. If we brace up to the challenges of life, we tap on our power of **existentiality**, but if we constantly despair, ruminate and regret, we become fallen. Hence, existentiality is the human vibrancy to challenge and to negate and by so doing transcend and surmount given circumstances no matter how mountainous. Fallenness is perilous inactivity, constant despair and fixed regrets or the incapacity to rise up, surmount and surpass. This wise, existentiality is the way to **authenticity** (i.e. the **authentic life**), while fallenness is the way to the inauthentic life or inauthenticity.

The externalization or objectification of the ontological (internal) attributes of human being is made possible by what Heidegger calls the *existentialia* (Omeregbe, 1999a: 198; 1999b: 72). It is for this reason that Jim Unah states that the *existentialia* is - the animus of authentic existence which are also known as the basic categories of human existence (Unah, 1996: 72-73). The *existentialia* consists of **mood** or **feeling, understanding** and **speech**. Mood is one's mental state, mental disposition or state of mind which readily puts one at the vantage point of understanding. Granted, one is not in control of what happens out there in the world, but one is in control of one's state of mind. Hence, one's mood puts one in a state of equanimity, tranquility or composure to appraise and gather deep understanding of existential conditions. This makes understanding to be vivid appraisal and comprehension of existential circumstances. Thus, pertaining to our daily existential endeavours, mood and understanding are complementarily at the foundation of speech. The equiprimordiality of mood and understanding to speech is seen in the fact that thought, the *logos* of speech, is directed by mood and understanding. In essence, the mastery of mood coupled with profundity of understanding determine the dexterity of speech. It is in this sense that an individual is said to be a skillful or talented speaker. The skillful combination of mood, understanding and speech, determine how authentic or inauthentic an individual could be.

As earlier stated, Sartre is interested in the analysis of the concrete human being. Unlike Heidegger, Sartre does not see human being as a medium to the understanding of Being, but as an existential entity in whose being belongs nothingness as the power base to negate or alter, making human being the only conscious being or the being-for-itself on planet earth.

Human reality carries nothingness within itself. Man is the being through whom nothingness comes into the world. The being by whom nothingness comes into the world must be its own nothingness ... Man is always separated by nothingness from his existence. The being by whom nothingness arrives in the world is a

being such that in its being the nothingness of its being is in question (1969: 21, 23, 28 & 35).

For Sartre, nothingness is the fundamental thing that demarcates human beings from other entities of the world which Sartre refers to as unconscious being or being-in-itself. "Human reality is being insofar as within its being it is the unique foundation of nothingness at the heart of being" (Ibid., 78 & 79). He also refers to this nothingness as emptiness. Because this nothingness or emptiness constitutes the being of human being, human being becomes the entity from whom and through whom nothingness enters into the world. It means also that it is only through human being that Being becomes manifest. This nothingness endows humans with the existentiality to surmount every existential condition, with the power to alter, negate situations for good or for bad. It follows that because of this nothingness, human nature is evolving and always forward looking. Because nothingness forms the core of human nature, it means that it is in human nature to seek for freedom. In essence, the power to transcend, to nullify, alter or negate is the ability to be free.

Freedom is conceived only as the nihilation of the given, and to that extent it is an internal negation. It is the perpetual escape from contingency; it is the interiorization, the nihilation and subjectivization of contingency (Ibid., 481).

Sartre's ontology of human nature is such that human being possesses the power to excel existentially. Human nature is therefore different from the nature of other creatures or other things on planet earth. It is for this reason that Sartre refers to other things in the world as unconscious being or being-in-itself. Because such beings do not have nothingness within it, they lack the power to nihilate, negate or alter, it has no reason for its being, it is identical with itself, it is a being just there (Ibid., viii).

### **3.3 The Ontic Nature of Humans and the Question of Human Existence**

The ontic nature of humans and the question of human existence refers to human existentialia in action. It refers to the actualization of human existentiality in our daily transaction concretely manifested in temporality, crisscrossing past, present and future (Heidegger, 1956: 95; 1973: 388; Unah, 1996: 70-72). In the perspective of Sartre, it refers to the projection of human nothingness into human authentic existence in the human quest for freedom.

In the second part of *Being and Time*, Heidegger identifies and discusses the existential attributes of human nature which are anxiety, conscience and destiny. Others include time, death and the authentic self. Anxiety is the same as dread. It is the uneasiness, distress or disorder of the mind caused by the realization of the awe human existential reality presents us with. First, we are thrown into the world without prior arrangement, then there is the problem of other persons whose activities we are never in control of, coupled with this is the problem of death which terminates our dreams and aspirations. All of these make us anxious. However,

anxiety merely motivates us to display the humanity within us which is called conscience. Conscience is the expression of care and empathy towards self and towards others. Conscience propels us towards transcendence, which in this instance, deals with the overcoming of vicissitudes (i.e. facticity), thereby, positioning us towards positive destiny. Destiny is the conscientious actualization or concretization of human freedom within temporality, which in turn defines our historicity. Temporality and historicity manifest in existential time. Existential time is about my finitude, my life span, which confronts me with the dread of how to achieve my ambitions within a life span. It is with conscience that I feel and realize the weight of my destiny which is called guilt. The realization of this guilt inspires me to strive to objectify myself historically through my ambitions, it motivates me to express freedom and to achieve, all of which define my historicity.

Obviously, for Heidegger, time and history are not objective mechanisms which human beings must conform to. For him, time and history are existential. Both are tied to human existence, that is to say, to my existence and to your existence. This realization prepares us to overcome the fear of death. Once we realize that death is part of the structure of the universe, that all things must come into being and go out of being, we cease to despair and overcome anxiety. It is such realization that enables authentic existence. Thus, contrary to Sartre who sees death as a termination of human boundless potentialities, Heidegger sees death as a catalyzing factor that inspires human beings to release their creative abilities towards the optimal transformation of human existence.

In his article “Man makes Himself”, Jean-Paul Sartre draws extensively from another of his work: *Existentialism is A Humanism*, where he speaks about “existential humanism” (<https://philosophy.lander.edu/intro/articles/sartre-a.pdf>, 20-21). By this expression, he rejects all manner of value systems that are *a priori* (including God, religion and secular morality). The implication of this is that there are no essences that precede human existence. The total rejection of essences or some prior existing illuminated heaven of values means the removal of all kinds of determinisms and the declaration of complete human freedom.

Recall that for Sartre humans have nothingness at the core of their beings, which endows humans with the power to nihilate, nullify or negate, which constantly propels humans towards the attainment of ecstatic freedom. But the realization of this total freedom triggers off the awareness that the human entity is thrown into a state of abandonment (i.e. a state of aloneness). This state of aloneness, by which humans realize that they are abandoned to face their own fate all by themselves, without any external helper, further triggers off a state of anguish. Anguish or angst is the same as agony, misery, sorrow or simply anxiety. Anguish is the realization of the guilt of human existence and this guilt of human existence comes about due to the awareness that human freedom puts on our fragile shoulders the heavy burden of **responsibility**. Let’s hear from Sartre on this matter.

When a man commits himself to anything, fully realizing that he is not only choosing what he will be, but is thereby at the same time a legislator deciding for the whole of mankind—in such a moment a man cannot escape from the sense of complete and profound responsibility (Ibid., 6).

Anguish further creates a state of despair, which according to Sartre “merely means that we limit ourselves to a reliance upon that which is within our wills, or within the sum of the probabilities which render our action feasible” (Ibid., 12). We despair because we realize that the world extends beyond every strand of our imaginations no matter how profound and holistic our projections may be. So, the fact that possibilities are always higher than actualities makes us to despair. At this point, Sartre says we have to resort to Rene Descartes’ mantra: *Conquer yourself rather than the world*. In essence, since there are no prior existing heaven of values, we have to take full responsibility of our lives by overcoming anguish and despair. Hence, we are the makers of our own destinies. This, exactly, is what Sartre means by the expression “existence precedes essence”.

By the constitution of human nature, the realization that the human condition is precarious jolts the authentic individual into a journey of subjectivity. Subjectivity is the adventure into self-interrogation which should result into self-purification and self-discovery. Needless to say, self-discovery opens the individual into the awareness of the existence of others through intersubjectivity. Intersubjectivity refers to the problem of **otherness** also called the problem of **alterity**. Intersubjectivity leads one to the realization that **I** alone is not the only conscious being (being-for-itself) in the world. There are also other conscious beings who like me are different from unconscious beings (beings-in-themselves). Thus, intersubjectivity propels us into the realization that we bear the responsibility of the mutuality of respect and dignity towards one another. We are therefore admonished not to be irresponsible in our moral decisions and choices. Hence, the expression of our freedom to achieve coordination as responsible individuals demarcates every one of us as either authentic or inauthentic being.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

Existentialism brought a new perspective to the study of human nature. This is to the effect that human nature is not fixed. Human nature is rather an on-going project which makes it radical, vibrant and flexible. For this reason, human destiny is not determined by any essence. Instead humans are free beings who through vigorous and authentic existence define their essences. Thus, in existentialism, all of our transcendent and immanent abilities existentially manifest in our everyday lives as we make decisions and choices towards self-discovery and self-actualization.

#### **5.0 Summary**

- Existentialist conception of human nature is premised on human existence.
- Existentialism states that by both ontological and ontic constitution, human nature is configured to be existential.

- As existential beings, human beings must first come into existence in order to acquire essence.
- Again, as existential beings, human beings are by nature configured to quest for freedom.
- In the quest for freedom on daily basis, human beings have to make decisions and choices.
- But the awe of human existence, which manifests as human facticity fills human entity with anguish or anxiety.
- To overcome anxiety or dread, the human entity has to pursue the path of authenticity or inauthenticity.
- Pursuing the path of authenticity means tapping into the inherent power of human existentiality.
- Fallenness refers to the pursuit of the inauthentic life, it refers to forfeiture.

### 6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

1. Discuss the existentialist conception of human nature.
2. Explain the ontological foundation of human existence by Heidegger and Sartre.
3. Discuss the ontic nature of human being that enables human existence.

### 7.0 Tutor-Marked Assignment

1. The existentialist conception of human nature is primarily about
  - (a) Human existence
  - (b) Human transcendence
  - (c) Human immanence
  - (d) Human culture
2. Two prominent existential phenomenologist are
  - (a) Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger
  - (b) Martin Heidegger and Jean-Paul Sartre
  - (c) Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau- Ponty
  - (d) Karl Jaspers and Emmanuel Levinas
3. Which of these existentialists makes the analysis of human being as a medium to the understanding of Being?
  - (a) Sartre
  - (b) Husserl
  - (c) Heidegger
  - (d) Descartes
4. The term *Dasein* is associated with
  - (a) Sartre
  - (b) Kant
  - (c) Husserl
  - (d) Heidegger
5. \_\_\_\_\_ made distinction between **existenz** and **existentia**
  - (a) Heidegger
  - (b) Husserl
  - (c) Russell
  - (d) Sartre

6. \_\_\_\_\_ made the analysis of human being and human existence the core of his existentialism
  - (a) Heidegger
  - (b) Sartre
  - (c) Gabriel Marcel
  - (d) Martin Buber
7. The distinction between **conscious being** and **unconscious being** is associated with
  - (a) Gabriel Marcel
  - (b) Martin Buber
  - (c) Jean-Paul Sartre
  - (d) Martin Heidegger
8. **Conscious being** means \_\_\_\_\_ while **unconscious being** means \_\_\_\_\_
  - (a) Being-by-itself/Being-for-itself
  - (b) Being-for-itself/Being-against-itself
  - (c) Being-against-itself/Being-from-itself
  - (d) Being-for-itself/Being-in-itself
9. The statement *The being that exists is man. Man alone exists* is associated with
  - (a) Martin Heidegger
  - (b) Martin Buber
  - (c) Karl Jaspers
  - (d) Gabriel Marcel
10. The expression *The being that exists is man, Man alone exists* existentially interprets as
  - (a) Man is the only metaphysical being
  - (b) Man is the being whose Being is distinguished by the open-standing standing-in in the unconcealedness of Being, from Being, in Being
  - (c) Man is the only spiritual being
  - (d) Man is the only original being, all other beings gather meaning due to the intervention of man
11. The three existential attributes identified by Martin Heidegger are
  - (a) Transcendence, Immanence and Forlornness
  - (b) Facticity, Immanence and Fallenness
  - (c) Facticity, Existentiality and Fallenness
  - (d) Fallenness, Transcendence and Existentialia
12. The term facticity means
  - (a) Factual thrownness
  - (b) The already given
  - (c) None of the above
  - (d) (a) and (b) above
13. Another name for existentiality is
  - (a) Transcendence
  - (b) Immanence
  - (c) Overcoming of self
  - (d) Overcoming of materialism
14. The term fallenness simply means
  - (a) Inactivity

- (b) Inauthenticity or forfeiture
  - (c) Lack of originality
  - (d) Incompetence
15. The term existentialia means
- (a) Human condition
  - (b) Human nature
  - (c) The animus of authentic existence which are also known as the basic categories of human existence
  - (d) Unlimited human circumstances
16. The existentialia consists of
- (a) Mode, Thought and Speech
  - (b) Speech, Gratitude and Appreciation
  - (c) Understanding, Benevolence and Speech
  - (d) Mood, Understanding and Speech
17. One of these is not an existential trait of human nature
- (a) Rhetoric
  - (b) Conscience
  - (c) Anxiety
  - (d) Time
18. For Jean-Paul Sartre \_\_\_\_\_ constitutes the core of human nature
- (a) Existentiality
  - (b) Nothingness
  - (c) Forfeiture
  - (d) Subjectivity
19. By the term anguish Sartre means
- (a) Sorrowful life
  - (b) Life of regret
  - (c) The realization of the guilt of human existence and this guilt of human existence comes about due to the awareness that human freedom puts on our fragile shoulders the heavy burden of responsibility
  - (d) Dangerous existence
20. Within Sartre's existential phenomenology intersubjectivity refers to
- (a) Self-interrogation
  - (b) The problem of self
  - (c) Self-purification
  - (d) The problem of otherness or alterity

**Solution:** 1. a, 2. b, 3. c, 4. d, 5. a, 6. b, 7. c, 8. d, 9. a, 10. b, 11. c, 12. d, 13. a, 14. b, 15. c, 16. d, 17. a, 18. b, 19. c, 20. d

### 8.0 References/Further Reading

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