

**THE EXCLUSION OF THE AFRICAN CONTRIBUTION TO THE CONCEPTUAL
DEVELOPMENT OF REALITY, APPEARANCE AND KNOWLEDGE IN THE
HISTORY
OF PHILOSOPHY**

BY

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ABSTRACT

Few histories of philosophy have probed the contributions of Africans or people of African descent. A significant section of modern and contemporary intellectual historians, unlike their classical counterparts, regards civilization to have been transmitted only by white privileged males (Keita 1994, p. 147). This is what Cornell West coins “malestream” history (West 1990, p.94). The problem lies squarely on Eurocentrism, according to which the “Eurocentric west is trapped, even in its best intentions, by its concentration on itself, its selfishness, its inability to draw a wider picture” (Asante quoted in Akafor 1991, p. 253).

Undoubtedly, this has relegated significant other participants to the sidelines. Thus, the contribution of non- Europeans, of women, and children to global history has neither been fully scrutinized nor appreciated. Furthermore, the issue of race came to be used as an index of civility, much to the detriment on Africans who occupied the least place in the racial taxonomy. The net result, according to Keita, is that, "the voice of civilization elaborated over millennia has been stilled" (Keita 1994, p.147).

The work is a commitment to pluralism. Pluralism is the view that there are many possible mature human ways of thinking about the world, not just one privileged one. Pluralism allows several intellectual perspectives to feed into some kind of global history. In science, pluralistic methodology is the integration of the various methods and insights into the investigation of scientific phenomena (Barnes 1998, p. 31). Also when it comes to speaking about the knowledge of reality, numerous possibilities abound (Jackson 1999, 12.) The pluralistic vision encapsulated here is generally integrationist. It is the view that in the writing of history in general and history of

philosophy in particular other voices matter. As such, the work challenges the notion that “human reason best expresses itself within terms of Western male gender norms” (Sherry Turkle and Seymour Papert 1990, p.141)

The work pads through these less frequently chartered frontiers of knowledge. Does it mean that Africans are intellectually sterile to a point that they have made no intellectual achievements – no science, no technological innovation, no discoveries, no meaningful philosophy? While there are seemingly unending debates about whether or not African philosophy exists (Oyeshile 2008; Taiwo 1998), the present work focuses on how the records of African philosophy have been produced.

This thesis argues that this is not the case. A substantial amount of intellectual resources that belong to the Africa continent either went unnoticed appropriated without acknowledgement or simply discarded. This scenario was largely a result of the politics of knowledge. Powerful communities, with dominant ideologies, technologies and philosophies have ensured that the African and other voices either remained unheard or expropriated, but with no due recognition given to the authors of such knowledge. The net result was the existence of African philosophy under ‘erasure’. Thus, there is need to unlock this hegemonic intellectualism. A prospective interpretation of world history does not thrive on polarization and binary opposition. An integrative approach to human history allows for the celebration of the achievements of Africans, Europeans and other players in the processes of history making. This is what this thesis seeks to demonstrate from Chapter 1 through to Chapter 7.

The thesis also seeks to argue that Africans have some untapped worldviews, which when appropriated and utilized enrich our understanding of the world would provide alternative solutions to some of the world's burning problems. Western philosophy does not encompass universal knowledge (Taiwo 1998, p.4). There is need to glean through the cultural resources of various other communities of the world. This ensures a rich mosaic of perspectives of worldviews and sensibilities. In this way, the world is enriched with diverse perspectives and solutions to some of the fundamental problems of human history.

Thus it would be risky and unprofitable to reject wholesale, the cultural resources of other communities, as their contributions will not be brought to bear in combating global challenges. The best that the history of philosophy can do is to mine from the global cultural ore and work out how all these resources may be utilized in solving the problems of the contemporary world. This, in the end is the moral benefit of history – the promotion of human wellbeing.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is situated in the History of Ideas in general and the History of Philosophy in particular. History of ideas is an account of the various ideas which have shaped human civilization. History of philosophy is a selective treatment of the genesis, development and transformation of philosophical ideas. Although there are many streams feeding into the History of Ideas, Western culture has been paraded as the nexus of human civilization – a cultural universal towards which the other cultures of the world were supposed to develop. This has resulted in a very narrow and pretentious picture of the history of philosophy. Significant other perspectives from other cultures, particularly from Africa were dismissed, appropriated without acknowledgement or simply held in contempt. In the process, a lot of the intellectual resources belonging to the non-Western world were not maximally utilized for the benefit of human kind.

In light of this, the thesis attempts to unshackle the African intellectual past from an essentially European - centred conceptual framework. This imperative comes particularly due to the fact that Western philosophy has been regarded in history as universal philosophy¹. In the West, historical writings in general and the history of philosophy in particular, have been susceptible to the poverty of conceptualisation. By this the thesis is not insinuating that the Western philosophy is mistaken. Rather, the charge is that the resultant picture is not as comprehensive and rich as it would have been. Paul and Malone identify romance, filial piety and provincialism as some such problems affecting historical writing in the West (Paul and Malone 1985, p.27).

¹ Many writers have pointed out that the intellectual history is distorted in that one culture got privileged ahead of all others to become the harbinger of civilization and progress.

Much as Africa and the rest of the non-Western world believed that they were part of history, they lived as such. The Western world thought otherwise and embarked on a very cruel expedition to sideline, nay belittle their contributions to human civilization. Once out-manoeuvred this way Africa was annexed to the West and helped built its grand history and infrastructure. Though present in the West, blacks of African extraction, among others, pose a threat to the obtaining social. In Britain for example, "Black presence was viewed largely as cancerous and a threat to the "British way of life." (Christian 2005, p.328)

Thanks to the intellectual developments, which have occurred during the last few decades; practitioners of historical writings have been called upon to be open to alternatives viewpoints and write the story differently (Bann 1981, p.24). Since historiography is the study of how texts are produced, philosophy texts too have been produced in certain ways. Interrogating the manner in which historical texts are produced is what has been called 'critical historiography'².

History of philosophy should be as much interested in the ideas as in the manner in which these ideas have been produced and transmitted. As Bentley contends, the task of historiography must properly be understood not simply as the "act of writing specific histories but as the appropriate way in which to understand the historical process as a whole" (Bentley 2005, p.56).

The work has a modest proposal of appraising the African contributions to world intellectual history, especially the philosophical heritage.

² Critical historiography attends to regional and local historical action. In philosophy, it involves paying attention to the ideas of men and women who are considered local and how these ideas are produced, preserved and disseminated.

It establishes that the African views were largely ignored during the process of writing the history of Western philosophy even though such views had influenced the latter in one way or other. The historians of Western philosophy have always pretended that African worldviews are not important even though they utilized them. Another important interest of the work is to explore the internal dynamics of the development of Western thought in history. African intellectuals come to be connected to the West through colonization or through the works of some of their colleagues like Clement, Aurelius Augustinus, Hypatia and Franz Fanon who were absorbed into the mainstream Western history of philosophy. The works of these individuals tap into some deeply entrenched African worldviews and this needs to be recognized.

As McNeill contends, people's world-views are indispensable resources with which to navigate the turbulent brooks of human existence: "World-views do matter. As human beings, we insist on making sense of the world and our social cohesion depends, at least in part, on shared worldviews" (McNeil 2002, p. 13). Presumably, such an attitude is necessary to ensure an impartial appraisal of the competing worldviews under consideration. The challenge has always been how to arrange and rearrange these competing world-views and how to relate to them.

The work maintains that Africa had elaborate, indigenous world-views, part of which have been integrated into Western culture as part of that tradition. Substantial views got left out and constitute the 'missing component' of the story of human civilization. The missing component does not feature in standard books on intellectual history or the history of civilizations, yet it is very important aspect of our intellectual history.

The fragmentation of African intellectual resources by the West into the ‘acceptable’ and ‘unacceptable’ segments meant that the resources in question were never assessed as a total package and appreciated for what they really are.

The neglected component was in turn either condemned for lack of coherence with Western ideas or simply misunderstood. Thus, the study seeks to re-appraise them with the view of integrating them into a mosaic of the story of human civilizations. The thesis in part seeks to account for what was accepted and what was discarded. The work is also part of an elaborate story, seeking to demonstrate how Africans and peoples of African descent have made considerable contributions to world history. Regrettably, such contributions have not been fully acknowledged. Could this have been a deliberate ploy to erase the index of African humanity?

The work probes the historiography of philosophy by tracing the evolution of the concepts, ‘reality’, ‘appearance’ and ‘knowledge’ in both African and Western cultures. It borrows from Foucault’s insight that what is known about reality at any given point in history depends on an *episteme* corresponding to that era. At the same time the work seeks to uphold the principle of faithfulness to the historical materials available.

The minimum that needs to be established here is whether Western culture recognized and acknowledged Africa’s intellectual resources used in conceptualizing the world. In other words, can it be said, at any level, that Africa’s cognitive resources have fed into world intellectual history? Using philosophy as an example of the cognitive resources in question, the thesis is that Africa’s intellectual contribution to global history and to the understanding of reality has neither been fully acknowledged nor appreciated.

Hence this project is a unique way of “talking back” to the West³. It is an attempt to fill up this gap by highlighting Africa’s intellectual involvement in world history. In particular, the thesis will argue that Descartes, Marlebranche, Leibniz, Kant and all rationalists, thrived from the brand of neo-Platonism developed at Alexandria, North Africa.

In an Introduction to J.A. Rogers’ second volume of *The World’s Great men of Color* (1972), John H. Clarke intimates that Rogers calls attention to the fact that Europe did not emerge in the years before and after the establishment of Christianity independent unto itself (Clarke 1972, xi). A large number of people whose ethnic origin was not European made major contributions to European history and culture. Some of the most memorable of these non-European peoples were Africans or people of mixed African and European ancestry. These Africans or ‘men and women of colour’ as Rogers would put it, were major contributors to the making of the New World. They did not come culturally empty handed. Many of these, particularly Africans, brought to the New World such skills as iron working, leatherworking and carpentry (Clarke 1972, p. xvii).

Although what has just been mentioned form parts of the broader cultural or intellectual history, it does not directly constitute an African worldview, it brings into question the claim that the West single minded produced history of human civilization. If we grant that Africans brought practical skills into the West, and if we grant also that there are other areas of academic importance in which people of African extraction have made significant inroads, such as in technology, the arts and medicine, shouldn’t we grant

³. For more on the philosophy of talking back, read Martha J. Cutter’s work; “Multicultural and Multilingual Aesthetics of Resistance,” *Melus*, Vol. 33, No. 3, Multicultural and Multilingual Aesthetics of Resistance (Fall, 2008)

also that the interface was much more widespread than had been initially granted by the mainstream tradition of history writing?

The thesis is organized into seven chapters. The first chapter deals with the subject of history of philosophy. It explores the history of the discipline, in particular its current state and how it has been written and studied. The second examines the complex issue of the historiography of African philosophy. It seeks to uncover how, for such a long time, African philosophy has existed under erasure as a result of the prevailing modes of thinking, which characterized European modernity. It also demonstrates how the 20th century opened up new frontiers for African history and philosophy. Intellectual space became liberated through movements such as post modernism, feminism, post colonialism and subaltern studies, thereby giving room to the possibility of alternative voices and viewpoints. Thus, the prospect of writing about African contributions to epistemology, metaphysics and philosophy at large becomes promising.

The third chapter examines the Classical period with the object of deciphering African contribution to the worldviews of the period. The argument is that there was no room for the articulation of such contributions. The West sought to celebrate Greek genius and originality. The subsequently chapter explores the medieval period for the same reason. The argument advanced is that, although St. Augustine was an African, his views regarding reality and knowledge were appropriated by the West and made part of their intellectual heritage. The fifth and sixth chapters explore the modern and contemporary epochs of the history of Western philosophy. They delve into the conspicuous denial of the contribution of African views on reality, knowledge and appearance in the mainstream history of the West.

During this period, the West had entrenched itself as the hub of world history. There does not seem to be records in the historiography of the West, suggesting that the African continent had some contribution to the mosaic of knowledge about the world.

The last chapter argues that there are in fact African views regarding “reality”, “appearance” and “knowledge”. These, when harnessed, could contribute to global history, culture and philosophy. The chapter shall run down some of the salient features of this worldview. The work is a contribution to the global history of philosophy. It must be seen as a source of inspiration to the historians of African philosophy. As Gracia puts it:

“...the primary function of history of philosophy is as a source of inspiration for subsequent philosophers...The source of inspiration involved here is more of a ‘romantic’ sort. Past philosophers are seen as role models, whose lives, works and struggles serve as examples of what other philosophers should be and do” (Gracia 1992, p. 142).

It is also hoped that this thesis will show that Africans, like all other groups of people were concerned with the search for truth. Such a history provides us with a better understanding of issues, but also a window through which alternative solutions to global problems may be found (Gracia 1992, p.146).

CHAPTER ONE

HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY: A WATERSHED OF PERSPECTIVES

1.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates the rise of some insidious factors, which have affected the writing of the mainstream history of philosophy that has dominated the African continent. Admittedly, there are many sources of the history of philosophy which include the following cultures: Chinese, Indian, Western, African and Japanese to mention just a few. These various cultures constitute the ore out of which the story of philosophy needs to be told. Regrettably, Western philosophy imposed itself as the universal philosophy, picking what it wanted, ignoring some facets and disparaging others. According to Joseph Miller, the development of history as an academic discipline in the West, excluded Africa:

...the birth of the modern discipline of history at the end of the nineteenth century, torn as it was then between theological-philosophical speculation and faith in empirical data as evidence that would satisfy lingering cravings for certainties about the past, confirmed scientifically; both tendencies specifically excluded most of Africa from the human progress that they celebrated (Miller 1999, p. 2)

Following the leading intellectuals of the time, for instance Hegel, Africa's past was deemed morally unedifying and the approach to its study was considered scientifically unverifiable. As a result, Africans came to be regarded as "the peoples without history" (Miller, p. 3). Consequently, the whole intellectual spectrum was made external to them – no philosophy, no science, no arts – in short, no intellectual products. The net effect was a warped story of philosophy which undermines Africa's direct and indirect contributions. There is need to account for how this social forgetting has occurred, with the view of correcting the picture.

The scope of the chapter shall be limited to the Western and African cultures. This is mainly due to the researcher's personal interest and also due to lack of knowledge of cultures such as Chinese and Japanese.

The chapter explores the dynamics of that history and highlights the conspicuous absence of contributions by African intellectuals to that story. The main histories of philosophy, including those that dominate philosophy Departments in Africa, essentially do not include the ideas of Africans or people of African descent in the Diaspora. Leading universities in Africa, such as University of Cape Town, do not offer courses on African philosophy. Instead they have instituted a Centre for African Studies! Yet, the history of philosophy including African philosophy, is supposed to be a tributary of the History of Ideas or Intellectual History,⁴ which in turn is a bi-product of a much larger history of cultures and traditions of the peoples of the world. If this is granted, then the universal history of philosophy, especially that which is taught on the continent, must include the intellectual life of both continental and Diasporan Africans. What then do we make of such a history of philosophy that masquerades as inclusive but excludes contributions from the African continent?

The chapter seeks to define the discipline, examine the major approaches to the study and explain why Western philosophy has imposed itself as the History of Philosophy thereby marginalizing other histories of philosophy. While the marginalisation of non-Western histories of philosophy might have occurred on other continents, this research focuses on the African experience of the dominant presentation of universal history of philosophy.

⁴ Intellectual History is the broader stream out of which flows several ancillary courses; such as history of art, history of mathematics, history of science and similar branches of thought. See Maurice Mandelbaum and Arthur Lovejoy.

1.2 **Even African Philosophical Ideas are Part of the History of Ideas**

As we study history, we need to acknowledge two trajectories of history from the onset – making history and cognitively representing it. Intellectual history (also known as history of ideas) represents history. The history of ideas started off as an interdisciplinary field served by history but dominated by philosophy, which allowed ideas to act as currency across time and space, between languages and traditions, churches and heresies, classes and nations, natives and others. It studies the genesis and interprets ideas in history. However, there is need to realize that historical meaning stretches over many epochs and horizons. As such, it must be characterized by cultural alterity (Kelly 2005, p. 156).

Greek historians, for instance, considered themselves as witnesses whose job was to describe what they saw (Barrera 2001, p. 192). This classical view of history was gradually supplanted by others. History came to be regarded as the “memory of mankind” or “the record of human experience” (Hicks, 21, p.22). Collingwood reiterates the same view when he declares; “All history is history of ideas.”⁵ The suggestion here is that all history is open to intellection; whatever has happened in the realm of the normative, can be studied intellectually. In developing this view of history, Randall emphasizes on two levels of history; that of events and that of the awareness of those events at the level of intellect. Determining what events warrants intellectual scrutiny has always been tricky and laborious. Such a mammoth task requires selection, a point underscored also by Richard Popkin⁶.

⁵ R.G Collingwood is quoted here by Levine in an article entitled, “Intellectual History as History” (2005, pp 189-200).

⁶ Richard Popkin has pointed out that in doing the history of philosophy, historians must be guided by four cardinal principles – concentration, selectivity, context and texts. (see article “Philosophy and the History of Philosophy,” (1985)

However, the choices that historians make are subject to moral scrutiny and evaluation. Randall suggests further that historians explain the selected events by interpreting their causes and forecasting their consequences. Similar views are echoed by Dozer on the understanding of history:

History is the whole of human experience in time. It is the study of all that man has ever done, or thought, or felt. It is the biophysical record of his experience preserved and related in sequence... In history we travel backward in time to learn the interaction of men and events in the past that created our present world. Men and women long since dead who lived in a world that seemed modern to them acted or were acted upon in ways that vitally affect our lives today. If we know what they did we will be better able to understand our problems today and will not have to approach each problem as if it were unique. We shall also have a clearer vision of prospects and possibilities as we travel forward into an unknown future (Dozer 1965, p. 377).

The task of assessing historical possibilities is a formidable one. Historical details are overwhelmingly complex and would weigh down on the mind of the historian. Accomplishing such a task would require an omniscient mind to do a complete job. Accordingly the principle of selection is invoked. Inasmuch as history is various, it is also problematic in that new and diverse ideas are always produced. Regrettably, they cause so much dissonance and tension (Randall 1939, p. 471).

Given the volumes of materials studied, the scope of the discipline, and the insurmountable challenges, one wonders if doing history is worth the trouble. Historical studies are indispensable in the quest to understand the story of human civilization. According to Dozer's observation:

An appeal to history in moments of crisis is an appeal to reason - the accumulated reason of the past. When the citizens of a state are ignorant of history they will become victims of ambition and intrigue, they will accept illusions as reality, they will mistake license for liberty, and they will identify treachery with patriotism. They can easily be converted into a blind instrument of their own destruction. But on the other hand, if we absorb history and at the same time retain our critical faculties we shall

know better how to introduce reason into man's career as it unfolds in the future (1965, p. 377)

History wields important lessons for humanity in its belly. What people think and aspire for is not necessarily what they encounter in experience. There is need to amalgamate the two. Dozer admonishes that people listen to the bells of history or else they end up in the dungeons of chaos (Dozer 1965, p. 377).

Regrettably, historical scholarship during the eighteenth century followed a very narrow model – the orthodox model according to which political, military and diplomatic events were pursued at the expense of economic, social and other significant cultural events (Becker 1938, p. 22).

Inasmuch as this was the case, the model insisted that no history was possible without documents and stressed that the relevant documents were those generated by the European states (Iggers 2005, p. 470). There is need to distinguish between the total human experience and what was remembered about that history. Whatever was written was preserved, but most of that which was not, got lost.

This model assumed that immersion into these sources provided an intuitive insight into the forces shaping history, thus ideological biases surreptitiously crept into historical methodology. Incidentally, this approach to history proved too narrow. It excluded the broader aspects of social reality and failed to provide criteria by which any historical narrative could be tested (Iggers, p. 470). If the dominant model of history was narrow, then it is not surprising to see how other disciplines had little or no interest in their own past.

During the 20th century, however, a shift from state-oriented narrative history emerged, with emphasis on the economic aspects of society (Iggers, p. 472). Some scholars, for instance Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre, shifted focus from individuals, to the analysis of social structures (Iggers, p. 472). In France, the *Annales* shifted attention from French-centred history to Italian fascism, the Soviet Union, Latin America, the emerging conflicts in the colonies and the world economic crises (Iggers, p. 472). The journal shifted attention from a French-centred focus to one encompassing the whole world (Iggers, p. 472). After the WWII, the *Annales* avoided systematization and pointed to the possibility of multiplicity and diversity of historical studies. This coincides generally with the global shift towards pluralism (Mamdani 1992, p. 2228). Generally speaking, the period after 1900 saw scholars becoming increasingly critical of the dominant paradigm of historical studies. The basic charge was not only that historical theory was too narrow, but also that it was not as scientific as the proponents had wanted the world to believe (Iggers, p. 469).

The German model of historical studies was the first to be adopted internationally. Its application was extended to the non-Western world, to include the processes of decolonization in Africa. Yet, unlike in the natural sciences, where professionalization resulted in an international scientific community and in sciences that transcended national borders, the professionalization of history was originally bound to the nation-state (Iggers 2004, p. 471).

As a result of the scholarly developments mentioned above, African frontiers, which for a very long time were locked in an intellectual blockade, became open to historical scholarship.

Recall that the greatest fault of the dominant history of the 19th century was that, for the most part, it treated the colonized peoples as objects, unable to speak for themselves. This development was manifest, unfortunately, even in cases where indigenous records existed. As Iggers comments:

The rise of history in the 19th century as a scholarly professional discipline has to be seen in the context of colonial domination of non-Western peoples... the various post-modern critiques of traditional scholarship go further and challenge the methodological and epistemological presuppositions of the classical historical scholarship (Iggers 2004, p. 149).

Suggestions were made to include culture and society into the discipline of history thereby going beyond the history of politics. The critical question was whether history as a professional discipline was primarily intended to construct a narrative on the basis of the critical examination of the sources. Ancillary to this was the question whether the goal of history was to understand the uniqueness of every historical situation. Furthermore, it was inquired whether immersion into the sources intuitively revealed the broader connections or whether historical studies should aim to ‘explain’ their findings. The new critical orientations challenged the older paradigm not by rejecting the need for critical examination of sources, but rather that they called for a broader approach both in methodology and in content.

Notwithstanding the various controversies created in the process, historical studies are important. The study of history holds the key to emancipation from the dangers of the past. According to Keith Jenkins, historians must take up the cause of human emancipation in the way they write it (2004, p. 60).

The next section examines the extent to which the study of the history of philosophy also benefits from general historical studies. Can it be said also that the study is shrouded in controversy in much the same manner as that of history in general?

1.3. History Of Philosophy

Admittedly, there has always been an uneasy relationship between practising philosophers and historians of philosophy. Friedrich Nietzsche, for instance attacked history of philosophy on the basis of what he perceived as an inherent conflict between thought and action. This is corroborated by Popkin who contends that, philosophers are willing to eliminate the study of history of philosophy, since for them the story of philosophy in the past was just confusion and error (1985, p. 625).

One reason why the study of the history of philosophy is valuable for the philosopher derives from the fact that it opens a much greater variety of problems, and topics, solutions and insights than the currently prevalent schools of philosophy. The restriction to our philosophical horizon to current philosophy is a kind of provincialism, and it may best be overcome by travelling in time (Kristeller 1985, p. 618).

There is, however another more valid method of studying the history of philosophy, which has been gradually developed during the last two centuries. This method tries to separate interpretation and criticism; it is based on the mastery of the terms, problems and arguments of philosophy; and it also applies to the philosophical texts of the past the resources of modern historical and philological scholarship.

For a philosophical interpretation of the past thinker, we are not satisfied with schematic paraphrases, as they appear in secondary accounts or only in his major writings, but we try to analyze his thought, beyond the external structure of his system, into his basic insights and his basic assumptions, many of which may be hidden in isolated or scattered passages of his work. We also pay attention to the contradictions and inconsistencies found in the thoughts of that philosopher, and try to understand them as the consequence of his unsuccessful efforts to reconcile different insights and doctrines based on different problems, assumptions, and traditions.

If Collingwood is right to characterize history as having a lot to do with ideas, then the connection with the history of philosophy is obvious. This connection is well articulated by Jonathan Ree according to whom, “The history of philosophy is and always has been part of philosophy; and philosophy is much more concerned with its past than any other modern academic disciplines” (1978, p. 1). Granted this, the manner in which the present story of philosophy is told has a lot to do with how choices were made in the past. Thus, understanding this past leads to a better perspective of the current philosophical developments. Further down, Ree maintains that the history of philosophy is not just an annexure to philosophy but, “identifies the main theories and controversies of philosophy; it canonizes the great thinkers and the basic texts of the discipline and it defines the chief tendencies and periods of its development” (Ree 1978, 2). Interestingly, the Western philosophical canon largely reflects the dispositions of the canon makers. It appears that the articulations of the thinkers who have gone into the canon of Western philosophers are only similar in a very general sense – in so far as they disclose reflections on metaphysical, epistemological, moral and political matters – otherwise “there are no timeless, essential, thus definitive logical and epistemological

characteristics shared by any and all forms of thought called "philosophy" (Outlaw 1997, p. 78).

Apparently, there are many conceptions of the relationship between philosophy and its history as there are various competing schools or movements of philosophy. Conflicting attitudes are also tied to these varying perspectives. Analytic philosophers, tend to assume a positivist denial of the role of history in philosophy (Wilson 1992, p. 204).

The very meaning of philosophy, according to Paul Kristeller, has been shifting in history over the years and this has fed into the controversies surrounding the concept (Kristeller 1985, p. 618). Admittedly, just as there are many conceptualisations and perspectives of philosophy in history, there are also many explanations to these. Dianne Harris cites class, race and gender as traditional to this conception (1999, p. 438). Jorge Gracia thinks that the philosophical traditions in history are causative factors in the development of philosophy in history. Gracia identifies three major traditions influencing the development of Western philosophy – the poetic, the mainstream and the critical (Gracia 1992, 1). He contends further that it was the mainstream tradition⁷, which dominated the history of philosophy up to the time of Kant. Thereafter, the poetic tradition⁸ in continental Europe and the critical tradition⁹ became dominant in the Anglo-Saxon world (Gracia 1992, p. 1).

⁷ The mainstream tradition had the largest number of adherents as well as the most influential philosophers – Parmenides, Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Averroes, Aquinas, Suarez, Descartes, Leibniz, Locke, Berkeley, Hume and others. These philosophers maintained that the function of philosophy was to know and describe what there is. (see Jorge Gracia, 2)

⁸ The poetic tradition did not become a dominant movement. They did not believe that the human natural powers were adequate for a proper understanding of reality. For them the best way to know reality was the aesthetic and mystical approach.

⁹ This tradition is characterized by the belief that philosophers cannot yield knowledge of reality and that metaphysics therefore was impossible.

It was the articulations of the mainstream tradition that were chiefly responsible for marginalizing African philosophy, since in the end, what was considered as genuine philosophy was the enunciation of the thinking subject. Descartes' duality of mind and body led to the twin trajectories in the history of philosophy – the intellectualist and contextualist approaches. External history was regarded as the horizontal experience – the experience of culture. This outside perspective is widely considered to be inaccessible. The internalist approach place the subject at the centre of experience. The inside-outside approach to history is well summed by Ian Hacking:

External history is a matter of politics, economics, the funding of institutes, the circulation of journals, and all the social circumstances that are external to knowledge itself. Internal history is the history of individual items of knowledge, conjectures, experiments, refutations, perhaps (Hacking 1991, p. 191).

In the West, intellectual history came to be seen as the inside of cultural history while cultural history came to be regarded as the outside of intellectual history. The challenge for the historian was to collate the two (Kelly, 2005, pp.157-8). This inside-outside distinction came to characterize the histories of religion and philosophy. The external history of the church included such matters as government, secular education and major events while the internal history concentrated on spiritual issues such as church doctrine, ceremonies and heresy.

The history of philosophy since the seventeenth century displayed a similar approach. Diogenes Laertius' *Lives and Opinions of Philosophers*, appropriated the doxographical method of classical times. It focused on external history – what was said about the figures' parents, associates, siblings and to some extent, the personal circumstances of the philosophers.

After 1715, the old doxographical method was supplanted by a new one, represented by Heumann. Heumann maintained that a proper understanding of a figure's philosophy involved an appreciation not only of the figure's inward-looking speculations, but also the conditions surrounding the philosophy – such as psychological, environmental, climatic, racial, and nationality, and such related factors (Kelly 2005, p. 158).

By contrast Jakob Thomasius gave the insider's view of the history of philosophy. Thomasius tried to reveal, not the outer, but the inside perspective of the history of philosophy. The internalist view of the history of philosophy was carried forward by Hegel, according to whom, the history of philosophy had everything to do with the philosophizing subject. He actually says; "The course of history does not show us the Becoming of things foreign to us but the Becoming of ourselves and of our own knowledge (Hegel, 1995, p. 4). The tussle between the internalist and externalist approaches to the history of philosophy raged on. In the end however as Kelly puts it:

...the external history of philosophy was overshadowed by an internal, spiritual history which produced a rational, triumphalist, and "Whiggish" narrative of the progress of reason down to the present-or rather, the history of "our" reason down to "our" times (Kelly, 2005, p. 160).

While the importance of the historical study of philosophy cannot be overemphasized, Frederick Copleston underlines the role of perspective in its writing. The identity of the historian, the interests and similar factors guide the selection of any given writer (Copleston 1985, p. v). Marxist historians of philosophy have also added their perspective by insisting on the primacy of material conditions on the production of history (Kamenka 1965, p. 87). Thus in writing the history of philosophy, the historian is the philosopher. He or she is responsible for organizing the intellectual materials systematically (Randall 1939, pp. 472-3).

It is quite apparent that the development of the history of philosophy has been as turbulent as philosophy itself. Some philosophers, for instance, Immanuel Kant have been quite horrid to historians of philosophy accusing them of simply waiting to tell the world what philosophers have discovered (Passmore 1965, p. 1).

In other instances, however, the development of philosophy was affected by other insidious factors. Jorn Rusen points to the Enlightenment's increasing loss of conviction,¹⁰ while Leo Catana (2005, p. 75) hits at corrupt religious traditions and authorities, and Carlin Romano points out that the core of philosophy was also the hub of marginalization. Part of the problem was the belief by some modern thinkers that there was a regal lane to doing philosophy. This hope has caused so much tension and confusion. As noted by Lachs:

Minimal attention to the history of philosophy is enough to see that the hope for such a royal road is illusory. Platonic dialectic, Cartesian doubt, the geometrical method of Spinoza, Kant's transcendental method, Hegel's historical dialectic, and Nietzsche's genealogies, among countless other preferred ways of embarking on the philosophical enterprise, hold out hope for incontestable results for a short time only; soon, relentless critique wilts the promise and proponents of the great new invention find themselves as but another party in factional disputes. There is not a single proposition of philosophical substance on which professional thinkers agree, and it is highly unlikely that such a proposition will surface anytime soon (Lachs 2004, p. 6).

Of particular note is the fact that, the history of philosophy is rife with substantive disenfranchisement of other significant players in the making of the philosophy in question. This is one of the cardinal problems; the history of philosophy was responsible for closing out other epochs, individuals and cultures. Gender and racial biases were also rampant. These points need to be explained in some details.

¹⁰ This point is captured in Gossman's article, "Towards a Rational Historiography" (1989, pp 1-68).

In the first instance, it is quite evident that the history of philosophy particularly in the West had for a long time accepted only two philosophical epochs – the ancient and the modern, leaving out the medieval period (Copleston 1985, p. 2). Unfortunately, the practice of silencing other voices was allegedly initiated by medieval thinkers as they had initially rejected the “product of mere reason unchecked by revelation” (Longwell 1928, p.1). Unfortunately in doing so, Medieval thought had created a formula, which was later going to lead to its own rejection in turn as attested by Copleston’s words above. The problem with the mainstream tradition of the History of Philosophy in the West is not so much the selection but the representation of European modernity at the detriment of other cultures.

In addition to disparaging Medieval thought as only theological rather than philosophical, the Enlightenment thinkers had celebrated reason above all else. But much as we have the Enlightenment, we immediately encounter its critique. Paradoxically the critique of the Enlightenment is intricately woven into the very thought it sought to assail (Gray 1988, p.78). Linda Kirk even contends that there might have been many different currents of the Enlightenment (Kirk 2000, p. 1130). Thus, as early as the 18th century, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Charles-Louis Montesquieu, and Germaine de Stael had begun questioning the efficacy of the prominent aspects of Enlightenment thinking by exploring alternative voices.¹¹ Accordingly Cummings sums up this development; “It [the Enlightenment] has been blamed, in one form or another, for holding too limited a world-view and for doing so with arrogance” (Cummings 1986, pp. 2-3).

¹¹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Charles-Louis Montesquieu, and Germaine de Stael each tell stories about citizens and citizenship that challenge the most prominent aspects of Enlightenment reason particularly emphasis on the Archimedean point outside of time, space, particular experiences, interests, and familial loyalties.

The Enlightenment assertion that “All men are brothers” was meant to refer to all and only European men and to no other category of humanity. Mason sums up the Enlightenment values of truth and reason as the valorization of Western masculinity and legitimating of the subordination of the non-Western world including women and children (Mason, 1999, p. xix). The leaving behind of alternative voices suggests a certain configuration of the modern psyche, a certain appropriation of history and a certain intellectual posture of the period.

Gender inequality was also a ubiquitous aspect of Enlightenment reason (Buck-Morss 1988, 3). It is ironic that much as the Enlightenment¹² thinking in the 18th century Europe was the torchbearer of the ideas of freedom and equality among all, the same the period was one when slavery shot to its zenith! As Buck-Morss contends, it became paradoxical that the champions of the ideas of freedom, equality and fraternity were their arch violators (Buck-Morss 2000, p. 821). Over three million slave labourers were exploited at the recommendation of the very same enlightened thinkers. One wonders how an enlightened populace would do such heinous acts. Yet, it happened and this is the paradox of European modernity and thought.

Evidently, proponents of the mainstream history of philosophy have not been particularly kind to Africans and their descendents scattered all over the globe (Pabst 2008, 113). Scientific racism was the chief culprit. According to this view, black people were essentially sub-human and inferior to whites both in talent and intelligence¹³. This was asserted by number of influential scholars such as Hume, Kant, Hegel, Darwin,

¹² See Marc A. Christophe, “Changing Images of Blacks in Eighteenth Century French Literature *Phylon*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (3rd Qtr., 1987).

¹³ For more on race as a social construct, read Naomi Pabst (2008) *An Unexpected Blackness Transition*, No. 100 (2008).

Carl Von Linnaeus, Robert Dunn, Augustus H Keane, Louis Agassiz, Herbert Spenser, Edward Drinker, Charles S. Bacon and E. T. Brady to mention just a few¹⁴. If the blacks could be viewed as savages, bestial, sub-human or chattel or simply as playful or ignorant¹⁵, slavery or segregation could appear just or not unjust. Even where scientific racism failed, the scholars resorted to sociological arguments to buttress their views. Generally, blacks were presented as having developed pathological cultures, which glorified violence, ignorance, indolence, sexual depredation and related vices.

Women in general and women philosophers too were not spared. St Augustine was converted to Christianity as a result of his mother's devotion, yet when Christian philosophy is mentioned, there is no debt to his woman mentor! In the history of Western philosophy, one of the heinous scandals was the non-inclusion of women philosophers from the philosophical canon. Some prominent figures, for instance, Hypatia came from North Africa (Richeson 1940, p. 73).

For a very long time, the philosophical canon-makers who were predominantly male did not recognize the philosophical capabilities of members of the opposite sex or of non-European cultures. Arens contends that women have been left out in history precisely because they were not regarded as belonging to the institutions that preserved philosophy and to the club of canon makers (Arens 1995, p. 47). For her, the canon makers were the educated white adult males.

¹⁴ For more on this see an article entitled "The Victorian View of Blacks as Savages" in *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, No. 11, (Spring 1997) pp 26-26.

¹⁵ Adjei pursues the impact of colonial education which denies cognitive value of indigenous African knowledges. See "Decolonising Knowledge Production: The Pedagogic Relevance of Gandhian Satyagraha to Schooling and Education in Ghana", *Canadian Journal of Education / Revue Canadienne de l'éducation*, Vol. 30, No. 4, Coalition Work in Indigenous Educational Contexts (2007), pp.1047 -1064

As a result, apparently dubious criteria were used to select those who went into the philosophical canon. As Arens argues, the situation needs to be corrected:

“...that philosophy must address not only the authority and authorization of its practitioners, but also the unique textuality of its discourses: that philosophical truth depends not only on the credibility of those who generate it (depending on their epistemological authority and their sociological and political authorization), but also on the absolute position of the philosophical discourse in which those individuals operate “(1995, p. 49)

One also notes with concern the conspicuous absence of African philosophers from any canon. While the absence of a literary philosophic tradition in Africa may be conjured to explain this exclusion, can it justify the ready acceptance into the Western culture of figures such as Aurelius Augustinus, Frantz Fanon and others? Outside these few mentioned African thinkers, are significant other philosophers such as Ibn Khaldun of the fourteenth century, Zera Yacob of the seventeenth century and Anton Wilhelm Amo of the 18th century. Zera Yacob, for instance, needs to be portrayed as a “religious rationalist” (Sumner 1999, p. 166). Although their names are mentioned, they are neither considered important in the history of philosophy. If such thinkers were in existence, as the evidence suggests, yet African philosophy was only acknowledged in the 1960s, this does point to the difficulties associated with the representation of African thought in history.

Such were the limitations of the history of philosophy in the West. It never had a homogeneous understanding of itself; it had diverse perspectives based on the interests and identity of the writers. In the end we have a provincialized picture of the development on the discipline. What is surprising is that the modern period stands out as the period in history when African cultures and other non-Western cultures were denigrated.

This issue will be explored in detail in the chapters covering the ancient and medieval periods. The storyline of the history of Western philosophy has led to a sustained critique from wide range of scholars. These critiques point however to the need to revise or develop an alternative story of the history of philosophy altogether.

Notwithstanding all this, Mary Waithe finds the racial bias in the history of philosophy worrisome (Waithe, 1989, p. 135). Given the racial bias, it would appear very unlikely that the history of Western philosophy could have opened a crevice for African philosophers. The continent was considered as pre-historic or un-historic. Hegel for instance, maintained such a view. In the light of this it would have been too hasty to expect African philosophers to be recognized, when the entire continent's history was buried in the mud. Thanks to other forces in history that opened new frontiers for African history.

1. 4. **History of African Philosophy**

The history of African philosophy remains foggy as a result of the factors alluded to in the section above. However, the shift in global history¹⁶, the emergence of comparative historiography¹⁷, the rise of post modernism, post colonial theory and feminism have all helped to de-centre Europe and make other cultures worthy of serious study.

In the case of Africa, the turning point was the period soon after the Second World War when interest on the continent and its intellectual resources was rekindled. More sympathetic approaches were adopted in research and interpretation of historiographical

¹⁶ Global trends in history have opened the avenues for the study of cultural expressions and experiences outside the Western world.

¹⁷ Historiography was normally considered as confined to a given nation, but not the study broadened up to include a comparative study of the different nations of the world.

materials about Africa. The African and Africanist initiatives were encouraged, but as Roberts observes, lurking in the background were “external forces which set limits to the scope and success of that initiative” (1978, p. 153). Apparently scholars from powerful communities in the West overshadowed African scholars (Ali Iye 2003, p. 363). Thus, although academic frontiers were opened for sustained scholarship on sub-Saharan Africa, the role of Africans as subjects in the writing of their history remains heavily curtailed.

The disparaging of African intellectual resources in the wake of the rise of Modern thought is somewhat a strange phenomenon. Classical Greek and Roman civilizations had unique ways of accommodating difference. Thus, even though colonialists dominated the history of Mediterranean Africa, the local Africans got assimilated in the process (Cummings 1986, p. 3). A case in point is that of Hannibal, the African who tried to use his elephants to bring down Roman hegemony in the African Mediterranean. In Hannibal’s case, we encounter an assimilated African who identified so strongly with Phoenician culture that he decided to do battle against another imperial power that also was interested in establishing an African empire (Cummings 1986, 4).

In other cases, we note that the Roman Empire had a high presence of blacks also known as Moors. Some were military generals for example, Lusius Quietus. Others dominated the Roman intellectual life. St. Victor I, became the first African Pope of Rome (189-199 A.D). Emperor Lucius Septimius Severus (Chalmers, p. 1974), the most distinguished of the African emperors of Rome, reigned from 193 to 211, and was born at Leptis Magna on the North African coast. Marcus Opellius Macrinus, Emperor of Rome for fourteen months, "was a Moor by birth." St. Miltiades, a Black priest from Africa, was elected the thirty-seventh pope in 311 C.E.

Under Miltiades the Roman persecution of Christians ceased. The third African pope, St. Gelasius I, governed as pope from 492 to 496 C.E (Ziegler, p.1942).

It is regrettable that the modern period saw the image of Africans plummeting. Interestingly, this plunge was a result of the currents of thought developed during the Enlightenment period. The Enlightenment thinkers were guided by a distinct episteme (Lawhead 2002, p. 560). An episteme is defined as the dominant conceptual framework of a given historical period. Any episteme consists of discursive practices or linguistic patterns, which determine what counts as meaningful and what does not; what should be asked, and what should not. In short, an episteme creates the social realities by prescribing how the world should be understood. Accordingly Foucault contends that the whole intellectual history is nothing more than a display of the way in which the notion of truth has been used to mask the will to power. As he contends: “Each society has its own regime of truth, its general politics of truth, that is, the type of discourse, which it accepts and makes] function as true” (Foucault 1972, p. 13).

It is interesting to note that when Europeans first came into contact with Africa they were fascinated by the continent’s natural endowments and artistic productions. Travel reports are full of admiration for Africa’s flora and fauna. The Western mind has also been fascinated by African crafts. It was accosted by the desire to admire beauty in isolation from their makers (Marian Arnold 2002, p. 7). African artifacts were tucked away, but never were their origins acknowledged (Asante 1996, p. 2). While these travellers took the artefacts they pleased, they concealed the identity of the artists. In a number of cases, they vandalized or displaced artefacts in the process of selecting what they wanted (Asante, p. 2). Thus the historiography of Western culture reflects the greatest repression of ideas that has ever happened in history.

Repression, according to Anders Shinkel, constitutes a form of deliberate social forgetting (2004, p. 45). It would be curious to establish the principles that informed the selection of what went into intellectual history in general and history of philosophy in particular. This in turn will expose the dimensions of Western repression of Africa's intellectual productions.

Just as there were different conceptions of philosophy in the different epochs, there were also differing opinions concerning the philosophies of other cultures. Critical were the representations of women and of the cultures of colonized peoples, particularly of Asia and Africa. Given the turbulent history of Western philosophy and the prejudice against Africa, it is less surprising to see the latter's intellectual resources being ridiculed, distorted or repressed. According to Carlos Jacques:

Africa was framed by the Enlightenment philosophies within a body of knowledge that defined its place adjacent to the knowledge of Europe and that of other regions of the world. A "style of reasoning" about Africa and its peoples is discernible within this body of knowledge; a style of reasoning that controlled and circumscribed the kinds of things that could be said about Africa. (1997, p. 191)

What Jacques says is pertinent to our discussion. Although his chief interest in the article was to trace and account for the shift in the style of reasoning about Africa between the classical approach and modern approach, his observations are revelatory as a sequel to the denigration of Africa's intellectual productions. There is general consensus among African intellectuals that the criteria used to define what is and what is not philosophy in the world has been largely determined by Western culture (Hallen, p. 11).

Many scholars converge on the fact that Africa was largely a construction of the West¹⁸. Westerners regarded Africa as Europe's Other and subsequently represented the continent as a dark alley. In addition, Africa was never perceived as homogeneous. The northern part of the continent was regarded as "European Africa" by scholars such as Hegel while the north eastern was largely construed as Arab Africa (Mazrui 1998, p. 1), while Sub-Saharan part was considered "Black Africa" or Africa proper. While it is problematic to try and re-integrate North African cultures, including the Egyptian civilization into Africa's overall cultural heritage, it is equally difficult to negotiate a divorce (Cummings 1986, p. 2). Even in ancient times Africa did not develop in isolation. She was bound to be affected by other cultures with whom she came into contact. However, the interface was not one characterized by open hostility or chauvinism.

With the Roman occupation, North Africa became very important to late antiquity. The areas of importance were numerous and included human capital (Canter 1940, p.198). The success of Roman rule in Africa came with a heavy cost on the continent. Not only was there a destruction of the indigenous way of life, but there was loss of life. North Africa also made spiritual contributions. According to Canter (1940), Roman Africa's contributor to things of the spirit becomes evident at the mention of even a few of her representatives in rhetoric, oratory, and literature. Important personalities are mentioned Fronto of Cirta, Symmachus, Priscian, Apuleius of Madaura. Not only did she produce five of Rome's emperors, but most importantly, Roman Africa had an intellectual and spiritual place in Western civilization:

¹⁸ See W.V Mudimbe's *The Invention of Africa : Gnosis, Philosophy and the Order of Knowledge (African Systems of Thought)* Indiana University Press, 1988.

It was through Africa that Christianity became a world religion. And in Africa Christianity found its most zealous confessors of the faith and its most gifted defenders. Of ecclesiastical writers this country produced a brilliant array, the greater number belonging to the second and third centuries. First in any mention of these comes Tertullian of Carthage, a fiery defender of Christianity against its opponents and oppressors, a writer of almost unique genius, of vigorous imagination, and truculent wit (Canter 1940, p. 205).

The intellectual significance of North Africa is beyond question. The challenge then is to establish the manner and extent of the two cultures' influence on each other. Could it be said that the cultural influence was mutual or that only Africa was influenced, and not the other way round? For a long time, the West has advanced the view that it has brought civilization to Africa, and by implication, it has had tremendous cultural impact on the continent in all spheres and not the other way round.

1.5 The Sponge - Effect of Early European Intellectuals in Africa

It goes without saying that African intellectual products were not recognized as African nor were they acknowledged as African contributions to Western civilizations. This is true of geographical knowledge where the indigenous informers were sidelined (Barnett 1998, 239). In their writings, Western explorers claimed that they discovered in Africa areas of geographical interest such as tall mountains and lakes and falls. Yet, the Africans had always lived with these natural phenomena. The net effect of this epistemological manoeuvre was the discursive dispossession of non-European subjects of their authority over knowledge (Barnett 1998, p. 240).

It is clear that Africans have made significant contributions to the knowledge of their respective local geographies. Not only were they sources of information, but also organized and presented it in their own ways.

Yet, in the writings of Western explorers, there is neither mention of hybridism or syncretism nor historical pluralism. Europe simply posed as a silent referent, where non-Europeans would refer to her history without a similar urge to reciprocate (Robinson 2003, p.274). This constitutes a form of repression of Africa's intellectual productions.

The fact that European writers ignored the contribution by non-Westerners as a matter of fact did affect the quality of the intellectual history they produced. The resultant Western accounts were hidebound. The net effect of the whole exercise was lack of balance and respect for sources and other organized forms of intellectual resources. At this point in history, we cannot afford to ignore how others have made an impact on our lives and cultures. In the writing of Western intellectual history, we notice the unequal relations of appropriation and exchange that underwrote the monopolization of the cognitive legitimacy by European geographical science and the simultaneous elision of subjugated knowledge (Barnett, p. 241). Barnett calls upon the need to deconstruct Western claims to geographical knowledge of Africa. It is necessary to show the role of Africans in the production of such knowledge. As things stand, the colonial archives are full of efforts to show the exploits of Europeans in Africa.

Apparently, the suppression of African contributions occurred with the very processes which produced Western history. The representation of Western exploits in Africa left no space for the others' own articulation. Thus Africa's cognition became fossilized as will be demonstrated in the next section.

1. 6. European Modernity and the Cognitive Erasure of Africans

The encounter between Europeans and Africans can be summarized as convoluted. The British for instance, were most familiar with the African coast, through a variety of sources – amateur travellers, professional adventurers, fastidious naturalists, evangelical reformers, slave traders, missionaries, soldiers, and civil servants. Most Westerners in Africa saw what they wanted to see and this reflected mostly, their social and emotional needs rather than a reflection of the African reality (Curtis: 1965, pp.388-9).

The rise of modern history ushered in an augury of misfortunes for Africa as this development jettisoned the stilling of Africa's intellectual throb. Miller's offered a radical reading of the situation and makes the declaration that Africa was virtually excluded from human. With that same stroke that ushered European modernity, Africans ceased to be subjects of history. Besides the models of the representations of the African "other" functioned not as windows into another world but as signs of imperial domination (Apter 1999, p. 579). Europeans generated conceptions about the continent, which subsequently shaped the history of the interaction between the respective peoples. The image formed by Europeans about Africa was generally contemptuous. The worst expression of this contemptuous gaze was scientific racism. In turn, scientific racism was a direct progeny of the Enlightenment episteme.

During the early phase of European modernity, Africa came to be regarded as the 'dark continent'. In cultural terms, the continent came to be perceived either as without culture or with a barbaric culture or savagery (Lalu 2000, p. 53). In the eyes of the late 18th century Westerners, there was every need to 'civilize the continent'. Europe was considered the cognitive centre of the world and the rest were either dark or dimly lit

intellectual terrains waiting to be traversed and mapped (Carlos T. Jacques 1999, pp.193-4).

Apparently, the representation of Africa as a *terra incognita* resulted in the marginalization of African intellectual productions. This included philosophy. Rationality was pegged as the index of civility. Unfortunately, such rationality was considered undistributed in Africa. Even Placide Temples, who had given concessions to African rationality in his *Bantu Philosophy*, was sceptical that it would supersede the bar of primitivism and measure up to Western standards. Though conceding that Africans had ideals to live by, he would not grant them a form of rationality comparable to that of the Westerners. It had to be subservient to European rationality (Kaulem 1999, p. 98). Temples, Gelfand, Levy-Bruhl and other Euro-centric anthropologists and philosophers such as Hume, Kant and Hegel never recognized the contributions of the African mind towards human civilization (Taiwo 1998, p.5). Instead, Africans were seen essentially as children who always needed guidance from their guardians.

1.7 Africa's Vain Intellectual Glory

The initial studies on African cultures and intellectual pursuits have been embarked largely from an anthropological perspective (Brown 2004, pp. 3-4). This observation is corroborated in a number of academic areas – geographical, medical and artistic knowledge. In music¹⁹ and dance, for instance, black performers have made immense contributions to the Western world. In cases where their contributions were acknowledged, Africans were seen to have made inroads in the lighter moments of life

¹⁹ Kubik (2005) suggests that the development of Jazz has a strong African influence.

– in humour, comic and entertainment (Bernth Lindfors, 1979, 9). However, Africans never gained credit for serious scientific investigations. Yet, they have made enormous inroads in science and technology²⁰. Anthropological studies conducted by renowned scholars such as Levy-Bruhl, Gelfand and Bourdillon have been pathfinders of efforts to demonstrate the deep-seated differences between Europeans and other peoples. Regrettably, the alleged differences were that the non-Western cultures were regarded as primitive and consequently intellectually sterile. One of the implications of privileging European ideas was that non-European cultures had no contribution to global culture. Yet this does not appear to be an accurate rendition of the state of affairs. In a number of areas, it is emerging that Africa has made significant contributions to global culture. In the area of art for instance, it has been argued that ‘African cultural goods’ have significantly influenced modern art (Fongue 2002, p. 1320). Marion Arnold emphasizes this point:

“African art sits uneasily in Western markets because it challenges most entrenched notions of what constitutes ‘art’. Pre-modernism, when verisimilitude dominated Western paintings and sculpture, it was accepted that the Dark Continent had little or no art. It produced anthropological artifacts, heathen idols, totems, fetishes and masks, all compelling evidence of primitive societies. Anthropological imperialism operated so efficiently that Europe became a repository of thousands of wooden and metal things, adorned with bits of cloth, shells and beads. These were the things ‘discovered’ by artists with relentless eyes and Western art moved out of the embrace of naturalism and ‘primitivism’ invested in modern art with renewed energy” (pp. 1320-1)

In much the same way as art, paintings, music, geographical knowledge and other intellectual productions have been under-valued. The same goes for African worldviews which have been heavily sidelined. Actually in most cases, the European scholars were incapable of empathizing with the African metaphysical and

²⁰ A significant number of scientists were Africans. Of note are – Benjamin Benneker (1731), Nobert Rellieux (1806), and Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver among others.

epistemological outlooks. Two reasons explicate this, first at the time of the convergence of the cultures; the anthropologists and missionaries had very little understanding of the African languages through which these world-views were articulated. Adopting, a descriptive methodology, Temples and other anthropologists hoped to uncover the African belief systems (Owolabi 2001, p. 149.) This was carried forward by the subsequent generation of black students in theology who were preoccupied with the desire to authenticate the ideas of their patrons. They dared not antagonize their benefactors, by suggesting views to the contrary – views which would challenge the received opinions about the continent.

A case in point is that of Alexis Kagame who was at great pains to validate the findings of Placide Temples. Secondly, racism prevented the Western scholars from attempting honest and objective research on African traditions particularly African philosophic thought, as they believed that their culture was superior and other cultures especially those of Sub-Saharan Africa were primitive and in need of social engineering (Allen 2001, p. 476). Racism both defined and rationalized the subordination of Africa right up to the present day (Saul 2006, p. 566). The West invented Africa through their biased representations mainly from anthropologists; however scientific racism – the biology and taxonomy of races- made them hate Africa the more!

These disparities, it was held, extended even to spiritual matters. African religions, allegedly, were based on superstitions and ontological fancies, while Western religions were considered in tune with the Creator (Brown, 2004, p. 4). Thus, in their representations, traditional African cultures had no value independent of the Western scholarly sanction.

Even in cases where people of African descent made scientific or technological breakthroughs, the Westerners were quick to dismiss it or to allege theft. A case in point was of Benjamin Benneker.²¹ What the Westerners conceded as valuable and emanating from Africa largely depended on its utility in the wake of their own interests. It is quite unfortunate that the perspectives churned by explorers, missionaries and traders became the received public opinion in the West. Regrettably respectable philosophers such as; Hume, Kant and Hegel, some of whom never travelled out of their hometowns, laboured to authenticate such lopsided views about Africans.

Consequently, the stereotypical characterization of blacks as a people with an essential disposition to flee from rationality meant that the African intellectual activities remained pseudo-rational. Sadly, labelling of Africans as non-rational threw the entire continent into the dungeons of slavery and colonization²². Population dispersal and a repressed way of life made Africans who remained behind and those in the Diaspora to have their eyes stay on freedom.

It was a combination of these and other factors that has made the relegation of African metaphysical and epistemological views into the tombs of oblivion more formidable. However, in a bid to correct the ill-fated steps of history, the attempt to reconstruct the African ontological and epistemological outlooks does not need any further justification. But as Stephen Howe cautions, this has to be balanced (1999, p. 220). I consider this to be a very important point in that, it would be preposterous to paint a rosy picture of the African past and denigrate the present or to fail to point out that traditional African cultures had their own contradictions and ambiguities.

²¹ One of the Western biographers Silvio Bedini alleged that Benneker could not possibly have invented anything but rather stole from some Western engineer. See Ron Eglash, "The African Heritage of Benjamin Benneker" (1997)

²² Bennett H.L (2005) vividly captures this in the article, 'Sons of Adam'

1. 8 **A Ray Of Light On The African Horizon**

With the coming of the 20th century pluralism was adopted as a value in cultural studies. As a result, a wide range of scholars in many countries embarked on the task of researching about Africa with the intention of integrating the continent back into the fold of world cultures. Due to Post-modern, feminist and post-colonial theories, efforts were directed at countering euro-centrism (McEwan 1998, p. 372). Post-colonial theorists were interested, among other things, with “exploring, the cultural borders that empire-building both induced and undermined” (Hogan 2004, p.15). In the wake of post-colonialism, “every metropolitan definition is dislodged” (Amselle 2006, p.186).

A revitalized interest in Africa was refreshing to the continent. In the words of Basil Davidson it was the task “... of recovering and reinstalling Africa within what may reasonably be called ‘the equalities of world ‘consciousness’ (1994, p. 4). Davidson’s statement highlights a watershed of research on Africa, and inspires the flow of many springs. If Africa’s consciousness is as good as any other, then it is imperative to gleam through it, reconstruct and enthrone it at par with the thinking of other peoples of the world.

Admittedly, the early researchers on Africa encountered insurmountable obstacles and hazards, as what they were saying about Africa was initially rejected. Their ideas were simply incredible’ in that what they were saying was new and contrary to received opinion. The new findings appeared to cut across the grain of previous teachings (Davidson 1994, p. 4).

For the first time, an attempt was made to remove conceptual barriers thereby enabling a linkage between Western and non-Western cultures. The misconceptions had largely emanated out of the slave trade and its consequences, out of colonial disposessions and their consequences, out of the industrial revolutions or the absence of such revolutions (Davidson 1994, p. 5). With the renewed interest in African studies, it became increasingly unavoidable in the face of growing historiographical materials (Davidson 1994, p. 7).

The foregoing has underlined the denial that Africa was part of world history and consequently that she contributed nothing to the intellectual heritage of humanity (Hallen 2002, p. 3). This denial also included philosophy. For some scholars in the West, for instance Hegel, Africa was a historical. For others she was pre-logical or simply primitive (Ochieng-Odhiambo 1997, p. 1). These pictures of Africa suggested that Africa contributed nothing or could not contribute anything to the intellectual history of humanity. Regrettably, this had grave implications for the continent at large across a vast spectrum of time. At a theoretical level, the result was a picture of reality minus the African contribution, as this was considered non-existent, impossible or useless. At a practical one, the recent social realities of racial discrimination, colonialism and slavery are direct results of adopting this negative perspective on Africa. One wonders whether this, indeed, was an accurate rendition of Africa's role in history. This view is held suspect throughout this work.

However, as the star of Euro-centrism waned, new paradigms of world history emerged thereby liberating space for studies on African culture. Most scholars who approached African cultures from without – anthropologists, missionaries, clerics and colonial

administrators – had serious prejudices and biases, which precluded them from accurately depicting what there was. However, as Bell cautions, the fact that approaching a culture from without is difficult does not make the insider's perspective naturally unassailable and accurate. Nonetheless, some space is created to carve the African story.

1.9 Conclusion

It is apparent from the foregoing that the story of philosophy presented in Western historiography has been riddled with severe internal conflicts. Essentially, there has been no convergence of opinion as to what the nature of philosophy was. In addition, the development of the discipline led to the exclusion of currents of thought, which might otherwise have enriched its development. We have seen how the mainstream tradition, for instance, has sidelined the poetic and the theological traditions. We have also seen how the theological tradition had tried to pour scorn on reason and how this in turn was subverted during the Enlightenment period. Philosophies had tended to be banded into sectarian movements with each trying to assert its supremacy over the others. We have seen also how women have been marginalized in the process. The contributions of non-European, particularly Africans, have not been well justly represented. Apparently, there are instances where such contributions have either not been fully recognized or had simply been discarded. Even in cases where African contributions were fortunate to be represented in Western intellectual spaces, they were taken in jest – never taken seriously. There is need to probe further the efficacy of the views left behind from the dominant picture of the story of philosophy.

Now, if it has happened that African intellectual resources had been surreptitiously absorbed into the mainstream of Western thought, then such a happenstance would constitute a siphon of African intellectual materials. However, if such resources were left out, where they could have been included to enrich the story of man's past, then, this constitutes the greatest repression of ideas in intellectual history. Either way, intellectual history in general and history of Western philosophy in particular has been unjust as it resulted in the impoverishment of the story of our civilization. Furthermore, it rendered the Africans and people of African descent impotent and stifled their own self-actualization. In the next chapter, attempts will be made to uncover historiographical materials, which substantiate this claim.

CHAPTER TWO

A LIMPING STALLION: THE TROUBLED HISTORIOGRAPHY OF AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the historiography of African philosophy. It seeks to investigate how documents by Africans as subjects were produced and preserved. In particular, it seeks to establish whether the said documents had a philosophical flare. The contention is that considerable intellectual productions by Africans existed but were expropriated by the so called victors. In the Classical and Medieval periods, African presence was registered but colonization caused these ideas to be appropriated and tucked away by the Greeks and subsequently by the Romans. Thus, the historiography of African philosophy was seriously flawed. These and ancillary issues will be discussed in the sections below.

2.2 The Nature Of African Historiography

African historiography in general aims to break with the tradition in which the indigenous peoples were regarded as objects (Mazrui 1966, 669). As Mudimbe and Jewsiewcki have observed, the history of Africa has been presented from the perspective of the European conquerors (Mudimbe 1993, p. 1). This practice dates back to ancient times first with Phoenicians and then the Romans. Under Roman occupation, it is suggested that the empire thrived particularly on what came to be known as “Romanization,” that is the spread of civilization to areas which Rome had colonized (Webster 2001, p. 209).

Basically, this was a process of acculturation intended to assimilate people in the various provinces to the Roman way of life. This included imbibing the Roman language and values. This is well captured by Webster:

“Romanization, was deemed to be an empire-wide process, moulding diverse peoples in the image of metropolitan Rome, and in the process creating new Romans: "One uniform fashion spread from the Mediterranean throughout central and Western Europe, driving out native art and substituting a conventional copy of Graeco-Roman or Italian art, which is characterized alike by technical finish and neatness, and by lack of originality and dependence on imitation" (Webster 2001, p. 211).

Attempts at assimilation or acculturation had become more pronounced during colonial times when indigenous knowledge systems and modes of transmission were censured and transmogrified into colonial knowledge (Hannoum 2003, p. 61). Fanon characterizes colonization as responsible for transforming Africa into closed cultures (Fontenot 1978, p. 93). Notwithstanding the problem of political repression, orality has contributed to the closure of African traditions thereby rendering their truth elusive (Vaughan 2000, p. 241). However, the more serious charge has been that these African traditions were products of uncultivated primitive minds and transmitted in languages incapable of expressing complex concepts and deep reflection (Sachs 2003, p. 127). The negative perceptions of African traditions hit across the whole intellectual spectrum, including theology and philosophy leaving behind deep cultural traumas.

However, contemporary scholarship on historiography has brought new insights to the fore. Historiography is generally defined as the study of the principles, theories, or methodology of scholarly historical research and presentation. It is the writing of history based on a critical analysis, evaluation, and selection of authentic source materials and composition of these materials into a narrative subject to scholarly

methods of criticism. Pocock points out that historiography originated in two ways; the construction of narratives and the exploration of archives (Pocock 2005, p. 7).

As Pocock correctly notes, the construction of narratives is a complex process. Sometimes stories are told in ways that radically differ from the way things actually happened. Schinkel adds that our perceptions of the past, just like those of the present are highly selective reinforces this point; some features of our perception will be highlighted, but others, remain hidden in the background (Schinkel 2004, p. 39).

The general problem with the history of African historiography has been the absence of the insiders' voices (Madondo 2008, p. 170). This was coupled by the apparent determination by the victors, to destroy alternative points of view regarding knowledge about the world. However, this trend has changed in light of global historiography (Tucker 2001; Pocock 2005). This intellectual shift, in part, calls for the inclusion of the so-called "peoples without history" who have been largely neglected in the 19th century. The history of historiography has largely been a history about written sources. Yet, apart from writing, there are many different forms of historical consciousness and memory, which conspicuously express themselves.

The historiographical materials we have about the early history of Africa are grossly inadequate, as the contributions by the indigenous Africans were not accounted for. Some were subjected to debarment. Others were snatched from the continent in the name of acculturation - a manoeuvre akin to embezzlement. With respect to the first trajectory, the exclusion in question was partly a result of the inability to empathize with the African worldviews and partly a well-orchestrated ploy to marginalize

Africans. With respect to the second, one wonders whether such Africans as Anton Amo and Abram Hannibal could become completely Westernised - one as a German and the other as a Russian respectively.

Generally, the manifold forms of marginalization faced by blacks of African extraction both within the continent and abroad have tended to guide the struggles of African intellectuals. Thus, to borrow Daniel Perlstein's phrase, the African "minds stayed on freedom"²³. They fought, among other things, to have the dignity denied them by history, be restored and for the acknowledgement of their contribution to human history (Mudimbe 1993, p. 1). Sadly, for considerable duration this was not to come. However from the 1960s, the historiography of African history could no longer be ignored and their viewpoints have suddenly become very important (Mudimbe 1993, p. 2).

As Pocock contends further that historiography is not just a narrative of politics but more importantly, a political phenomenon (Pocock 2005, p. 2). The Western scholars had represented African traditions in ways which made their own epistemological representations superior to those of the former, thereby maintaining hegemony and enhancing European superiority (Dubois 2005; Barnett 1998; Young: 1998). As Young puts it:

"Colonial hegemony became institutionalized, codified and professionalized in the interwar period, at a time when the European hold on much of Asia was already weakening. To a much greater degree than in earlier time periods, a notion of "scientific colonialism" came into play. A series of major international colonial congresses took place, bringing together senior administrators, and an emergent cadre of academic specialists on colonial affairs; in such settings, a veritable "epistemic community" of colonial professional emerged (1998, p. 105).

²³ Daniel Perlstein gave the title to his article, "Minds Stayed On freedom: Politics and Pedagogy in the African-American Freedom Struggle", American Educational Research Journal, Vol. 39, No. 2, Education and Democracy (Summer, 2002).

Western intellectual hegemony in African history was manifest in a number of ways. In the first instance, there was capitalization on the orality of African traditions. In the second, Africa was represented as shrouded in mystery. As MacGaffey puts it:

... history was predominantly an account of what Europeans had done in the continent, from the eighteenth century onwards. In this tradition, nearly everything that had happened before belonged in a vast obscurity best left to archeologists and physical anthropologists. The problem was not simply that there were no documentary archives for a historian to work on, but that Africans had not had any history. There had been no institutions substantial enough that their transformations could be regarded as significant; instead, only the monotonous random movement of entities both anonymous and trivial. In Trevor-Roper's notorious phrase, "the unrewarding gyrations of barbarous tribes in picturesque but irrelevant corners of the globe" (MacGaffey 1978, pp. 102-3).

The hegemonic nature of European control in Africa was widespread and profound. It was profound in the sense it regulated the production and distribution of ideas. It was widespread in the sense that it even regulated the number of cattle Africans could own and the expected etiquette between the colonizers and the colonized (Shutte 2002, p. 265).

In the end, most historiographical materials on Africa concentrated on how the Africans responded to the European initiatives. Incidentally, where Africans took initiatives of their own, these were received as 'reactions' to the Europeans ones (MacGaffey 1978, p. 103).

Thus when examining the factors leading to the general absence of the African contribution to the historiography of the intellectual history and the history of philosophy, one needs to be wary of the interlocking webs and opposing currents. In addition, one must always remember the injunction for good historians to get things straight (Vaughan 2000, p. 240).

It is tempting to appropriate the ‘alternate history’ model²⁴ to depict the thesis of this chapter. Authors throughout history, depending on their motives, have utilized the model in various modes to show the relationship between the past and the present (Rosenfeld 2002, 90). Rosenfeld acknowledges that the practice of asking counterfactual historical questions dates back to antiquity with historians such as Thucydides and Livy wondering what their respective societies were going to be like had Greece been defeated by Persia or had Alexander the Great attacked Rome! As a modern genre, alternate history finds expression in the mid-nineteenth century, in travel-short stories in science fictions magazines and later in science fiction and other cultural and political trends. The contemporary scene is littered with alternate theory and Rosenfeld sums it up all:

The rise of post-modernism, with its blurring of the boundaries between facts and fiction, its privileging of “other” or alternate voices and its playfully ironic reconfiguring of historical verities, has given rise to alternate history (2002, p. 92).

Employing alternate history paradigm, one might ask what the historiography of African culture was going to be had Europe not colonized the continent or had the African contribution been factored in the history of philosophy. This chapter probes the extent of repression of African intellectual productions from medical practice to theology, from science to the arts and so on. Beginning with Roman colonization to the Age of the Enlightenment in the West, there is abundant evidence pointing to the suppression of Africa’s intellectual contributions. On the one hand, the power to represent knowledge lay in the hands of the European conquerors as was the case during the Roman Empire and during the age of European imperialism.

²⁴ The Alternate history model gives a possible world scenario in which events may have occurred in ways different from what they actually did. Imagine Ian Smith having won the elections in 1980 or that Josiah Magama Tongogara had lived into Independence or that Professor Rudo Gaidzanwa was the vice-Chancellor of the University of Zimbabwe!

On the other hand, where the contributions in question were appropriated, they were neither properly acknowledged nor fully represented. The interests and ideologies of the time made it highly unlikely for European scholars to cast African intellectual resources in favourable light as this was tantamount to going against the grain. Apparently, on the other hand, some such contributions were integrated and appropriated by the West thereby fusing them into their own history. As Mudimbe observes:

Egypt was an African civilization... We know too that Saint Augustine, the theorist of the “Western city,” belonged to a mixed culture as did numerous people of letters and sciences after him (1978, p. 4).

Certainly the politics of representation has affected the historiography of Africa’s intellectual and philosophic past. Why Africa did not have an even-handed historiography and a sound historiography of its philosophy for that matter, occupies significant space in this investigation.

The chapter divides into three sections. The first accounts for the recent gush of scholarship on Africa. The section following examines the nature of colonial historiography on Africa. The last shall address the pre-colonial historiographical situation. As already hinted, the claim is that African philosophy and its historiography have been suppressed or existed ‘under erasure.’

2.3 Un-gagging the African Mouth

The history of Western philosophy would have been radically different had European intellectuals avoided provincialism – by not regarding themselves as the only dynamic factor in world history and by acknowledging the contributions of other cultures with

whom they interacted. Let us focus briefly on the classical world and how the dominant players, in this case the Greeks and Romans related with other cultures.

The history of Africa has been turbulent from ancient times. Not only was the continent regarded as the cradle of humanity, she was also subjected to wars and even to colonialism early in its history (Cummings 1986, pp. 2-3). That North Africa interfaced with other cultures is beyond question. What is intriguing is the relation Africa entered with the various other cultures. Cummings places emphasis on language and commerce; Dommelen underscores colonialism:

...Other colonial movements, both earlier and later, include the Phoenician colonization of the Western Mediterranean, the Hellenistic conquest of Western Asia and the Roman occupation of North Africa (1997, p. 305).

Recent studies of imperial Rome indicate that the empire thrived on a programme of transforming the colonized peoples in the provinces into full members of the metropolis. The process came to be known as "Romanization" i.e. the spread of civilization to areas which Rome had colonized (Webster 2001, p. 209). Basically, this was a process of acculturation intended to assimilate people in the various provinces to the Roman way of life including imbibing language and values. Thus, the African province too was supposed to imbibe Roman cultural values.

Romanization was deemed to be an empire-wide process, moulding diverse peoples in the image of metropolitan Rome, and in the process creating new Romans: "One uniform fashion spread from the Mediterranean throughout central and Western Europe, driving out native art and substituting a conventional copy of Graeco-Roman or Italian art, which is characterized alike by technical finish and neatness, and by lack of originality and dependence on imitation" (Webster 2001, p. 211).

Does this mean that only ideas from the Roman metropolis mattered? Regrettably, this is what the Romans believed. The central problem associated with this conception was the assumption that people in the various Roman provinces were culturally empty:

Romanization thus does not conceive of a two-way exchange of ideas: rather, it presupposes a linear transfer of ideas from the centre to the provinces, in the course of which provincial society becomes cumulatively more Roman in its ways. (Webster, p. 210)

Webster thinks that the process does not accurately capture what was happening on the ground particularly in Roman Britain. This point is further developed by Collingwood who contends that Roman culture was mixed with that of the natives of the conquered lands (Webster, p. 212). Webster suggests that the process should be properly understood as “creolization” rather than “Romanization.” It was enjoined that space be given to the various cultural expressions in the provinces. This is a very significant point, whose implication goes beyond Roman Britain.

When it comes to the early modern period, the relationship between Africa and the West was mainly commercial. Africa was of economic interest to Europe as a source of raw materials either as materials for manufacturing purposes or as labour in the plantations (Davidson 1994, pp. 42-78). The general demand for slaves made Africa an economic annexure of Europe. There was a sense in which the Enlightenment was pregnant with a sense of European mission and superiority. It represented the progress of European civilization over societies that represented the lowest stage of human development. One interesting aspect was the French attitude towards the Enlightenment and her role in it. With the revolution of 1789, the French began to regard themselves as the torch-bearers of civilization. Beginning with the Middle Ages, the Church in France was regarded as very important.

Referred to since the Middle Ages as "the elder daughter of the Church," France drew from its privileged relationship to the Church its founding reputation and mission as a disseminator of a Universalist creed. Indeed, in a paradoxical fashion, the very event of the French Revolution, which did so much to destroy the power of the Gallican Church, by the same gesture, enabled French universalism to perpetuate and propagate itself. The French Revolution, in this view, did not mark a rupture between a pre-universalist and a post-universalist France but rather drew on and gave new impetus to France's time honored civilizing mission. "It's especially after the revolutionary upheaval that France became the missionary nation par excellence," writes Rene Remond. The history of universalism in France is then a history of the transvaluation of a fundamental religious belief into the prime means of desacralizing society (Naomi Schor, 2001, p. 44).

This has led critics to ask whether the Enlightenment was indeed enlightened. The Enlightenment commitment to truth and reason has meant historically a single truth and a single rationality, which have conspired in practice to legitimate the subordination of black people, the non-Western world and women. None of these groups has any political interest in clinging to the values which have consistently undervalued them (Mason 1999, p. xxix). Furthermore, the Enlightenment's insistence on rational argument pointed to naivety about the nature of reason. It also suggested a refusal to assign any place to the affective self. Its claim that human beings can understand nature and make increasing sense of it has led only to brutal exploitation of the world, whether it results in the nuclear bomb, genetic engineering, or global warming (Mason 1999, p. xxx).

The Enlightenment though had its darker side as well. Much as it celebrated reason and autonomy of European males. The same was not the case for women and for the non-Europeans:

European modernity is set to prejudice truth-claims by the criterion of Enlightenment. While privileging and valorizing the authority and autonomy of reason for allegedly human (material) progress and emancipation, it marginalizes, disenfranchises, and denigrates the (reason's) Other whether it be (1) body, (2) woman, (3) nature, or (4) non-West which happen to be four central post-modern landmarks and subversive possibilities (Yung 2002, p. 298).

A subtle dimension of this period was racism. Europeans conceived themselves as superior to yellow peoples and blacks were in other cases regarded as semi-animals (Iggers, p. 148). This is in sharp contrast with the picture in ancient Rome:

There was no colour bar. The Roman, scientist and layman alike, thought in no terms of contempt or of "racial purity" in his observations on the Negro. Like the Syrian, the Greek, and others of slave origin, the Negro was brought to Rome; he worked in the household, or in the *thermae*, or for the municipality; he provided entertainment for the populace; he worshipped the same gods, at the same place of worship, together with the other slaves and freedmen; his blood was inter-fused with that of other peoples." Among the Romans as among the Greeks, there was apparently no trace of "colour-prejudice" (Snowden, 1947, p. 287).

The emergence of post-modernist, post-colonialist and feminist theories combined with subaltern studies in the last few decades has launched a sustained critique of the Enlightenment project of the 19th century. Enlightenment thought, which hoisted Europe to the pinnacle of human civilization, placed Africa and other non-Western societies at the fringes. Some scholars, for instance Sanders (1999) even suggests that the rise of Apartheid in South Africa is logically connected to the Enlightenment thinking of Europe.

Congenial perceptions about Africa began to emerge as a result of the paradigm shift initiated by post-modernity. In all these efforts, attention was directed at dissipating Western cultural hegemony. There was specific focus on promoting a humanistic view of Africa, to establish that Africans too were human. However, not much inroads were made in articulating the African conceptualizations of reality and knowledge. Rather, the focal point was to include Africans as subjects of history (Miller 1999, p. 2). Post-colonial, post-modern, subaltern and feminist thinkers have provided the conceptual framework with which to interrogate the Enlightenment. This interrogation has subsequently led to the un-gagging of the African mouth, as African and Africanist scholars began to articulate alternative ways of understanding the world. A brief explanation of each is helpful.

2.3.1 The Post-modern Critique of European Modernity.

The last five centuries, described as the age of modernity, have been defined by a number of historical processes including the Atlantic Slave Trade and attendant institutions of slavery, and European colonization of Africa Asia and Latin America. The idea of modernity evokes the development of capitalism, industrialization, establishment of nation states and the growth of regional disparities in the world systems. The period has witnessed a host of social and cultural transformations. Significantly, gender and racial categories emerged during this epoch, as two fundamental axes along which people were exploited and societies stratified.

A hallmark of the modern era is the expansion of Europe and the establishment of Euro/American cultural hegemony throughout the world. Nowhere is this more profound than in the production of knowledge about human behaviour, history,

societies, and cultures. As a result, interests, concerns, predilections, neuroses, prejudices, social institutions and social categories of Euro/Americans have dominated the writing of human history. One effect of this Euro-centrism is the racialization of knowledge: Europe came to be represented as the source of knowledge and Europeans as the only knowledgeable people. Towards the end of the 19th century however, the Enlightenment age began to be questioned internally by some eminent Western scholars. Surprisingly, this is what the African and other non-Western scholars have been saying since the days of slavery right through to the age of imperialism. It follows then that the West only listened to itself.

Kant's critique of reason, which started off as a sparkle rapidly developed into a formidable current of thought within the Western tradition. It gave preponderance to other thought patterns at a rate hitherto unknown to the West. Unprecedented efforts were made to challenge modernity's entrenched assumptions. According to Zygmunt Bauman:

“It became increasingly clear to the educated elite that the anticipated kingdom of Reason has been slow to materialize. More importantly, it was somewhat less clear that it ever would. The Kingdom of reason was always at bottom the rule of its spokesperson. Such a rule was now a remote and receding probability. Humanities failed to humanize i.e. the designs of social order and the strategies for their implementation were produced and administered by categories other than the humanizers themselves, and the unity between the growing power of the ‘civilized’ part of mankind and the growing centrality of its civilizers had been broken. Conceptualization has acquired a dramatic tinge; the images of historical progress became more and more reminiscent of a Greek tragedy, where nothing is ever achieved without sacrifice, and the sacrifice may be as painful as the achievement is enjoyable” (Bauman 1993, p. 130)

This then, was the setting in of an intellectual movement commonly referred to as “post-modernism”.

Admittedly, there are different conceptions of post-modernism. Some scholars, such as Anthony Giddens, would refer to this era as late modernism or late capitalism.²⁵ Others have dubbed it ‘reflexive modernism’ or radical modernism (Mirchandani 2005, p. 86). Defining post-modernism has always been a hazardous affair as post-modernists themselves have warned against efforts to “box a living, breathing, fragmented, ever newly constituted thinker” (Mirchandani, p. 87). Conceptually, “post-modernism” is a maze. Notwithstanding this problem, the general outlook is that the movement tended to provide a critique of the Enlightenment project. Even when taking heed of the caution against ‘boxing reality, there is however a general field in which post-modern concerns may be located. Therefore, it depicts a wide array of issues. Questions raised by the scholars covered a wide spectrum – epistemology, politics, science, history, medicine, architecture, art, gender and religion – in short the whole of modern culture. Ada Spitzer concurs with Giroux in underlining the general shift away from the modern paradigm in search of alternative conceptualizations of life in general and the corresponding intellectual posture (Giroux 1998, p. 164)

Let us just examine how the post-modern spirit worked in epistemology, science, and architecture. The early post-modern thinkers in the 1960s and 1970s were largely grounded in the area of epistemology. These thinkers focused on the state of knowledge in the society of their day. Inspiration for the epistemological post-modernists came from transformations in the field of arts. In architecture, for example, the assorted and populist styles were promoted over the formalism of the modernists such as Le Corbuiser (Mirchandani 2005, p. 89).

²⁵ Frederick Jameson for example, argues that the intellectual terrain commonly referred to as post-modernism is preeminently “late Capitalism”. (See “*Post-modernism or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*”, Durham; Duke University Press, 1991, 438)

In Literature and the arts, pop art, film culture, multi media light shows and rock music were used to counteract the formal aspects of modernism. Lyotard summarizes these effects on post-modernity:

Epistemological post-modernism was also activated by post-structuralism, which revolted against the foundationalism of modern philosophy. Thus most post-modernists share the epistemological critiques with the poststructuralists, though they radicalize them and extend them into other theoretical fields such as politics, society and history. One of the sharp observations by these post-modern epistemologists was the impact of technology. Lyotard tells us, “Our working hypothesis is that the status of knowledge is altered as societies enter into what is known as the post-industrial age and cultures enter what is known as the post-modern age (Lyotard 1979, p. 3).

The most important development for epistemological post-modernists was the realization that knowledge forms were only mental representations and not mirrors of truth. This was a step toward questioning the objectivity of science, which became complete when the scientists admitted that the discipline could not ground itself. Godel came up with a set of mathematical propositions whose truth could not be established within the mathematical system, thereby helping to establish that mathematics is not a self-justifying discipline. Kuhn and Feyerabend suggested that the condition of science, at any given juncture is simply a paradigm that has replaced it not necessarily invalidated the previous paradigms. However, it is also vulnerable to replacement (Mirchandani, p. 90).

To move from one theory to the next, one simply needed to replace the initial assumptions. Given this scenario in architecture, art, knowledge, representation and science, there was every need to question the pillars of modernism. The big question came to be; “ If knowledge is always representational and science is always paradigmatic, if universal, rationality founded knowledge is thereby distorting, then

how do we ensure knowledge that stresses, as does post-modern art, difference, perspective and pluralism, emotion and so on. If subject-centered knowledge is not good, then how do we de-centre it? (Mirchandani, p. 90)

This question became the preoccupation of Foucault, Lyotard and Baudrillard and others in the post-modern camp. Building on insights from Foucault, Lyotard popularized the concept of the post-modern in the English-speaking world with the publication of *The Post-modern Condition* (1979). In the book, Lyotard partakes in the debate revolving on questions of knowledge. Lyotard analyses the changing patterns of knowledge and appraises the role of science in establishing industrialized societies. Lyotard consistently attacked modern epistemologies as he promoted the post-modern ones (Mirchandani, p. 92).

The intellectual pillars of modernism evidently shaken by the respective counter movements mentioned above. More onslaughts were being mooted. It remained to be seen for how long the modern scaffolding withstood the pressure. One thing was clear, whatever buttressed modernity was in serious trouble. This call for alternatives was very positive in the direction of the possibility of other thought patterns.

2.3.2 **Feminist Critique of European Modernity**

Feminism is certainly an heir of the Enlightenment. It became visible with liberal thinkers such as John Stuart Mill and Mary Wollstonecraft. In its full force, it forged as a critique to modernism. Feminists critiqued gender understandings as conflicting with claims made for the modern human person and thus excluding women from those supposedly universal claims.

This criticism played such a large part in the critique of modernism that it should be understood as an important part of the foundation of post-modernism (Gudorf 2004, p. 521).

Feminism challenged the Enlightenment's epitomization of the rationality of the Western male. Conceptualizations of reality and knowledge thereof had always been male the preserve of males; women either had no contribution at all or theirs were vain intellectual outpourings feeding into the ephemeral and fantasy (Shapiro 1992, p. 2).

Feminist thought also explored the magnitude of the manifest marginalization in philosophical²⁶ and scientific thinking, including medical knowledge and practice (Moranz-Sanchez 1992, p. 51). In outlining the unfolding of medical science, for instance, Regina Moranz-Sanchez explains how the feminist scholars have broken new ground:

In the history of medicine this new work has allowed a group of scholars to better explain not only how women were marginalized in the profession but also the manner in which politics, male anxiety about shifts in power relations between the sexes, social and political upheaval, professional concerns, and changes in the family all had an impact on the production of knowledge regarding the female body, including the "discovery", definition, and treatment of a wide range of female ailments, from anorexia nervosa to fibroid tumors (1992, p. 52).

In a preface to *Sexual/Textual Politics*, Margaret Hall, contends, "The principal objective of feminist criticism has always been political: it seeks to expose, not to perpetuate, patriarchal practices" (1985, p. xiv). Patriarchy ranked the male higher than female and made the former the norm for humanity.

²⁶ For many feminist historians of philosophy, the history of the discipline has been incomplete and incorrect. Incomplete in that it left out the contributions of women to the development of philosophy and incorrect in that some women figures such as Hypatia of Alexandria and Hildegard of Bingen were not labeled properly. According to Mary Waithe, though they were both properly fit the description of "philosophers", Hypatia was characterized by male historians as a mathematician/astronomer and Hildegard as a theologian/medical theorist. (1989, p. 112)

Having occupied the centre stage, the male subject, naturally stifled the self-realization of the other category. Particularly significant was the intellectual blockade. For the feminists, there was every need to transcend patriarchy, if freedom was ever to be achieved. Drawing inspiration from Simon de Beauvoir's twin theses that 'woman' is a social construct and that woman is always seen as the Other, feminist scholars have moved in various directions against female subordination. Basically, the line of reasoning is that being the victims of the species enslaves women. Such enslavement is expressed most clearly and inescapably in their capacity for procreation (De Beauvoir in Moore and Bruder, p. 385).

Furthermore the women are dependent on husbands and fathers for economical support. The situation needed to be corrected. Women needed emancipation. Emancipation in this regard, presupposes control of procreation as well as economic independence. This became part of the agenda for women's liberation and call for equality.

Feminism managed to illuminate the social life at the margins and helped in the analysis of the dialectic between margin and 'centre'. Thus voices from the margins were brought to the centre. Some things that have been hidden for a long time became visible. According to Joan Anderson, this movement provided a new angle on the intersections of gender, race and class relations, and meshed well with work of post-colonial scholars (2004, p. 239).

From the foregoing, it is quite evident how feminism legitimately questioned the assumptions of the Enlightenment. To sum it all up:

“A hallmark of the modern era is the expansion of Europe and the establishment of Euro/American cultural hegemony throughout the

world. Nowhere is this more profound than in the production of knowledge about human behavior, history, societies, and cultures. As a result, interests, concerns, predilections, neuroses, prejudices, social institutions and social categories of Euro/Americans have dominated the writing of human history. One effect of this Eurocentrism is the racialization of knowledge: Europe is represented as the source of knowledge and Europeans as knowers. Indeed, male gender privilege as an essential part of European ethos is enshrined in the culture of modernity” (Oyewumi 2004, p.1).

From the foregoing then, it is evident that the Enlightenment thinking was condescending. It monopolized knowledge and restricted it to a minute portion of the human community. Reality was as represented and defined by the European male adults. Women, children and non-Europeans were virtually excluded. What they held was relegated to mere appearance and never supposed to be taken seriously.

2.3.3 Post-colonial Critiques of Modernity

Post-colonial scholars such as Said (1978), Bhabha (1994) and Hall (1996) demonstrated how historical positioning and racialized constructions structure our social space and determine the material conditions of daily life (Anderson, p 239). Post-colonial theories are relevant as there are no spaces that were not colonized; the racialized gaze is fixed upon everyone (Anderson, p. 239). This had meant that, unlike Europeans, non-Westerners had no access to reality and knowledge. All that could have happened to them intellectually was dancing with ‘appearances’. There has been colonization throughout the centuries. There is the ongoing neo-colonialism and there is the humiliation and suffering of those, who according to Homi Bhabha ‘have suffered the sentence’ of history’ (Bhabha 1994, p.172). Post-colonialism does not mark a particular time period i.e. a period in time after colonialism. Rather it refers to the notion of working both against and beyond colonialism.

In the words of Southard and Payne:

“Some of the goals of post colonial writing, whether expository or narrative, include a concern for subversion, that is, to render ineffective the dominant colonial cultural point of view, either through critique (including satire) or replacement. Further, there is a desire to expose colonial assumptions by “interrogating” the text for signs of bias, negative attitudes toward the colonized, voices which are given priority, and voices which are silenced or “put under erasure” (1988, p. 52)

Any post-colonial critic has the duty of publicizing, what Robinson qualifies as,

“the parochialism of much contemporary Western scholarship” (2003, p. 275).

Only afterwards, would one move towards creating conditions suitable for transnational scholarship which caters for diverse interests. As alluded to already, the initial challenge of African scholars was the defence of African humanity and rationality. However a lot more has to be done in promoting and publicizing African cultural endowments. This means there is need to uncover the non-Westerners’ hold on reality and the concomitant modes of cognition.

2.3.4. Subaltern Critique of Modernity

Focusing just on Said’s book *Orientalism* (1978), the author helped us to see how the “non-Western other” has been constructed through contrasting images of the West. However, it was not just that the orient was different from the occident in the eyes of the West but that through contrasting images, the orient was constructed as inferior. As Anderson observes, these constructions were not benign, but were the basis for extraordinary human suffering, by rendering ordinary and acceptable brutalizing and de-humanizing everyday practices for the colonized ‘Other’ who was seen as less human. The notion of the ‘Other’ – and the process of ‘Othering’ – reaches into the everyday, and can, unwittingly, structure human relationships (Anderson 2004. P. 240).

The image of Africa in particular was a battered one. In the words of Mbembe, the continent had been represented as, “the world par excellence of all that is incomplete, mutilated and unfinished.” (2001, p. 1). Given this scenario, Africa was at best depicted as emblematic of ‘silent voices’. The intellectual movements mentioned above were pivotal in their quest to dislodge Europe’s hegemony – the globalization of white supremacy (Allen 2001, p. 468). Thus post-modern theories including feminism, post-colonialism and subaltern studies have had a tremendous effect on Africa’s intellectual fortunes and this is reflected substantially in practice.

Though these theories developed out of different historical contexts, they offered new insights into the nature of history, progress, civilization and humanity. The most conspicuous transformation was the global shift from national histories towards a more global perspective. Concomitant to this were the twin processes of the decline of colonialism and Western-centred history. Resultantly, frontiers were opened for Africans and others who have been formerly called “people without history”²⁷. As a consequence, it became possible to speak of ‘African historiography’.

In the case of Africa, the once, ‘dark continent’ came to be cast in a different light. Lots of changes have taken place including in the realm of philosophy. In the last two decades, Westerners have become more aware than ever before of the diversity of African cultures and the complexities of its social and political institutions. A lot is owed to Africanist and Afrological scholars who have come down to the continent to find out more about Africa. Since around 1945, experts have indulged in a kind of scramble for Africa – anthropologists, ethnologists, sociologists, political scientists,

²⁷ In 19th century Europe, Africans, Indians and Australian Aborigines were among the peoples of the world considered to be without history. For more on this see Eric Wolf, *Europe and people without History*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983.

economists and historians have all found something to do in the business of finding more about the continent. Many inroads were made in the process of interrogating and re-evaluating the modern world-view. One positive result of this intellectual scramble for Africa was that nobody could generalize any longer with impunity about it²⁸. The initial image of the continent, which had for a long time been built on the basis of unreliable accounts needed to change in light of the newly acquired knowledge. However, it is crucial to make an excursion into how the colonial masters generated and utilized knowledge about Africa.

2. 4 **Colonial Historiography of Africa**

Interactions between the Europe and Africa stretches considerably back in time. However, Europe always projected skewed views about the latter. Particularly during the 17th and the early parts of the 18th centuries, Europeans utilized scanty knowledge they had gathered mostly on the coastal areas of West Africa and generalized about the whole continent. It was from these coastal areas that the Europeans got their vantage point, which enabled them, using their own cultural filters to peep into the ‘darkness’ of Africa. It was from this perspective that they were able to study the ‘character’ and ‘culture’ of the continent. The net result was that most of the information about Africa was speculative or distorted. The image of Africa for the West was largely of fantasy, stereotypes and disparities. This was also a reflection of the sources about Africa - amateur travellers, professional adventurers, fastidious naturalists, evangelical reformers, hard-bitten slave traders, missionaries, soldiers and civil servants. All of these sent back their accounts of their contact with ‘savage’ and ‘barbarous’ cultures.

²⁸ Curtis’ review of Curtin’s book makes this important observation.

Besides, these groups of scholars had first to come to terms with the continent's many languages!

According to Phillip Curtis (1965), what was common in the reports of these people was the set of assumptions about their culture and race, which gave a particular bias to all their reports. Most of the Europeans and in particular the British reported what they wanted to see and the subsequent image they formed reflected more accurately the emotional needs of their societies than it did the African reality. They developed what Hoffman coined, "Eurohistoriography" (1997, p. 149). Perhaps the most common pattern during this period was the vehement denial of everything African. This includes the intellectual capabilities of the African people. The vehemence of their denial pointed to a deep-seated conspiracy to denigrate, control and colonize Africans.

The earliest stage of African historiography was characterized by orality, which unfortunately was condemned by colonial masters, in preference to written records. The colonial archives transmogrified African historiography into ethnologies, thereby transforming the African people into objects. The Africans told stories about their past and culture and they held speech as a high and complicated art in which they infused innuendos, indirection, metaphors and poetry in the language of everyday life. Luise White (2000) observes that, the history of telling is a history of talking. Surprisingly, in the quest to represent African thought systems, the Europeans disregarded the orality of African traditions as they strove to develop their own written forms (White 2000, p.11). In her words, "We turned African arts, and the rich contradictions within and between oral forms, into linear forms of evidence, and we never looked back" (2000, p. 1). The manner in which this took place is well captured by Vansina.

During colonial times, when Europeans allowed Africans speak for themselves especially in the courts of law, the motives were dubious.

Allowing Africans to speak for themselves was a mode of colonial discipline, long before it was a clarion for scholars. It was a source of shame and ridicule. Most Africans had problems in articulating themselves before a European public. It took a lot of courage to do so. Either they accepted whatever the interpreters suggested. Even though oral evidence from Africans was captured and published raw, that it represented authentic African ideas remains dubious. Besides, while the Africans spoke before a foreign audience, they were conscious of that. Hence the possibility of lying was very high. One could not just open up to strangers. Thus when Africans spoke, it was to the Europeans' need for evidence, and not an expression of their own quest to publicize their world-views to the rest of the world.

One important thing about historians is that they always interpret, construct, and sometimes manipulate evidence to suite their projects. Luise White gives an insight into how historians ply their trade:

“We always privilege one thing and downplay another – that’s what we do. Whether we do so in a gross and obvious manner isn’t the issue; owning up to the fact that we always select what our evidence is. It consists of the writings and observations of people who had as many interests, and audiences, as we ourselves do. They weren’t cameras, neutrally recording events for posterity. Texts – oral or written – aren’t transparent. We can’t see through them to the past. What they wrote had already been selected, culled, and ordered for a very specific reading” (2000, p. 20).

Oral traditions, like literary ones, present mediated views of the past. When historians take that mediated version and re-interpret it, it simply adds another layer of interpretation, but it does not distort something called raw facts (White 2000, pp. 20-1).

When history and the uses of the past were primarily the concern of one class, one race, one gender, there was great latitude about the use of evidence. Most of the great 19th century historians never touched primary sources and they were concerned with telling a story with a moral than letting the archives dominate their analysis (White 2000, p. 21). The decline and fall of the Roman Empire is entirely a work of interpretation based on secondary materials; the method is perhaps less important than the fact that the book represents a worldview in which the decline and fall of the Roman Empire was thought to be a bad thing. In a profession of shared interests and values – and a pretty much shared way of looking at the past - a lot can be left out the same thing, no one complained. But in the last thirty years, history has lost so much of its common purpose that we can as well be wary not only that there are all these historians of various races, classes, and genders running around writing histories both for and against specific audiences, but that they have also expanded the base of source material quite remarkably. We can no longer read historians and assume they read sources the way we do for the reasons we read them.

As one delves into the colonial archives looking for African philosophy, one is fated not to find it. This was precisely because these archives were produced through dominant frames of intelligibility and without the full participation of the subjugated peoples. It would appear that these people, particularly traditional leaders kept deep secrets about their communities tucked away from the colonizers. Why would they give away their intellectual heritage to strangers just like that? Besides these strangers were a violent and patronizing lot! One was never sure what was to happen next. Accordingly, the subaltern remained an “unfathomable point of irreconcilability... One cannot hope to retrieve a silence (d) subject by way of the colonial archive.”

Consequently, what we “are treated to in colonial texts is not the presence of the subaltern but the mechanics of Europe producing itself as a sovereign subject through its other (Lalu 2000, p. 68). Thus the colonial archive is not telling subaltern pasts and will not do so. It only produces its own stories from its own interests.

The Westerners have always represented the history of the continent, to the outside world, through their own written records (Jewsiewicki and Mudimbe 1993, p. 2). Such records were variegated and included those of amateurs, professional adventurers, fastidious naturalists, evangelical reformers, hard-bitten slave traders, missionaries, soldiers, and civil servants²⁹. As a result, there are historiographical problems associated with how these Westerners have represented the continent. One dominant view maintained that Africa did not have a history, as she belonged to “primitive” societies. At their best, they mimicked Western rationality.

Supporting evidence for this radical thesis illustrates how implicit imperial/colonial logics and categories have been imposed on Africa and interpolated back into the pre-colonial past. This has occurred in two related registers that can be crudely labeled narrative and inventive. If evolutionism served as the dominant narrative paradigm in Victorian anthropology ... supporting imperial ideas of racial difference, destiny, and hierarchy, it also provided the working guidelines for colonial officers and government anthropologists following Lugard's "dual mandate" in Africa-the uplifting of native peoples according to their natural (i.e. racial) capabilities while benefitting commerce and industry at home (Apter 1999, p. 581)

Thus, it was inconceivable in Western eyes for Africans to be authors of history as they were not part of humanity³⁰. Besides, most African societies with the exception of ancient Egypt and Mali could not write. Consequently, the records that went into the colonial archives were predominantly Western. The African point of view was either distorted or neglected.

²⁹ This point is captured in Philip D.Curtin's book *The Image of Africa: British Ideas and Action, 1780-1850*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1964.

³⁰ Hegel's philosophy of history pushed the argument in this direction.

To demonstrate the point let us take the Dutch images of South Africa as reflected in travel diaries. According to Erik Van Den Bergh, the diaries were varied and poly-genetic (2000, p. 549). They also revealed a lot about their authors:

The diaries breathe the spirit of their time and are a portrayal of their authors. Their education, position in society and travel motives strongly determined the impressions they recorded. Often the documents are rather biased: in a lot of cases the expectations of commissioners such as the VOC (Verenigde Oost-indische Compagnie (Dutch East India Company)) have surely been kept in mind. Moreover, most of the diaries were written by whitemen, many of them with little education (Van de Bergh 2000, p. 459).

Generally, the European reports on Africa, which ultimately formed the corpus of the colonial archive were too general (Curtis 1965, p. 387) and superficial (Van de Bergh 2000, p. 459). The writers saw the continent through their cultural matrix and filters (Curtis 1965, p. 378). Resultantly, the tales were lopsided and biased. They celebrated European hegemony (Barnett, 1998, p. 242; Beyer 2003, p. 335) and entrenched white supremacy (Young 1998, p. 106; Demissie 2003, p. 403). The other problem affecting the colonial archive was that the reports were susceptible to misinformation either by the locals when asked to do so or by the Westerners as they wanted their reports to give credence to European representations of knowledge³¹. Barnett records a conspicuous case involving Dr. Andrew Smith's exploratory expeditions in central Africa and the locals. He was told about the existence of a lake but when he inquired about its whereabouts and how he could get to it, they became jittery:

The statements made in regard to the lake were vague and unsatisfactory on every point, except as to its existence – on that no discrepancy occurred – the appearances of the water during stormy weather were so naturally detailed, and the form of boats, and the method of making them 'walk,' so minutely and clearly described, as proved at once that all must have actually seen what they attempted to picture. On the subject of the direction and distance, little could be ascertained with

³¹ Since white supremacy was a result of social engineering, it would appear also that Westerners misinformed the world about the African systems of knowledge in a bid to entrench European hegemony. Also as a form of resistance, African informers were prone to falsify their reports, when interrogated by the Europeans.

certainty – some stated it bore n-w from us, others n-e: some that they could reach it in three weeks, others that it would require three months. If it be kept in view that almost no two of our informants reached it from the same place and perhaps not one without wandering and halting amongst the intermediate tribes, it will be evident that none of them were fitted to form a correct estimate either of the actual distance or direction (Barnett 1998, pp. 244-5).

Partial redemption for the African only came with the idea of the ‘noble savage’³². This was a fairly old literary invention, which became very popular in the period as writers turned away from the vices in their own societies and created heroes with virtues, strength and innate wisdom. Through creativity, the writers created the ideal Negro who lived in pristine nature to escape from the moral decadence of their own societies. The cult of the noble savage fostered the image of Africa as a land of mysteries, excitement and exotic forms of life. In this way, it presented the image of the crude and the fantastic, the pseudo – scientific and the mysterious. An interesting feature was the patronizing nature of the process. The savage had to remain one, lest he would lose his appeal.

The history of African philosophy, as is the case with the general history of Africa suffered the same fate of repression. In one sense, the African culture was considered a culture without an intellectual heritage (Molife Kete Asante 1996, p. xiii). In another, it was cast as a culture without philosophy (Ochieng-Odhiambo 1997, p. 1). This is partly a result of the manifest absence of historiographical material suggesting the abundance of these indexes for civilization. Without this data, the historiography of African philosophy was rendered problematic. Given the depravity of the colonial archives in as far as historiographical materials on African philosophy is concerned, it is tempting to conclude that there were no such materials.

³² This was a literary device in literature.

Such an admission would naturally lead to the supposition that Western scholars introduced philosophy to the African continent. Hence we need to fall back on Western historiography of philosophy for the methodological tools for the study of African philosophy. This has been an attractive route for a numbers of scholars of African philosophy. Auguste Shutte's *Philosophy for Africa* would be a good example. However such an approach would be vain and ridiculous. It would be vain in that it leads to the fabrication of African history and cultures and ridiculous in that it negates the historical truth that Westerners crafted the popular views about the continent. African historiographical materials, including the philosophical ones have been distorted and negated. Unless efforts are made to recover and reconstruct the missing dimensions, the African continent would stand impotent in relation to the other cultures of the world, yet its resources would have been actually harnessed unacknowledged by other cultures.

Pro-African scholars such as anthropologists have done a sterling job in publicizing African intellectual goods. However even these efforts are suspect. As Apter contends, they were part of the imperial culture (Apter 1999, p. 576).

The fervent rigor with which Afroecological scholars display when depicting their own perspectives of the world, perspectives that are deeply rooted in their own experiences, suggests that somehow history has preserved unspoilt, something in its belly about African world-views. It appears that there is something about Africa waiting for its unfoldment. The African worldviews do not necessarily coincide with those of the West. The modernizing processes such as slavery and colonization could not obliterate the urge for alternative viewpoints.

History failed to transmogrify Africa's intellectual resources into Western ones or obliterate them altogether. If one engages African leaders and intellectuals into discourse about the brunt of their culture, one detects mixed reactions. On the one hand, there is attraction towards old age traditions, but on the other, a lunge towards aspects of Western culture. This is what Matthias Rogrig Assuncao referred to as 'hybridism'.³³ This hybridism has varied manifestations. In some cases it heralds confusion, but in others it promises hope. Mahmood Mamdani has characterized the scenario as a 'paralysis of perspectives' (1996, p. 4). David Kaulem (1999) regards this intellectual impasse as a moral paradox:

"...the African societies have gone ahead to establish institutions and practices to help fulfill their moral goals. These institutions have in turn created their own demands on African individuals, demands that are not necessarily congruent with the moral goals they are supposed to fulfill. There is something about the African people's participation in modernity that seems to make them into beings incapable of realizing the ethico-political goals that modernity makes them cherish so dearly. They love modernity for it seems to provide the best encouragement for their authentic self realization and for their protection and the realization of their moral freedoms and rights. Yet, in claiming this protection and these rights, they seem to undermine the very conditions which produced the morality of authenticity" (1999, p. vi)

For both Mamdani and Kaulem, there is an apparent intellectual blockade in Africa, which results for the one, in distorted perspectives and for the other in practical impotency. One wonders whether this blockade was visceral or deliberate. If visceral then the blockade was a product of blind cultural and racial bias, if deliberate, then it means it was a product of design. It is extremely difficult to settle this matter with mathematical exactitude. Suffice to emphasize the un-towardness of the whole affair.

³³ Mathias R. Assuncao writes in " *Brazilian Popular Culture or the Curse and Blessings of Cultural Hybridism* (2005) of the ubiquitous manifestation of African deities in Afro-Brazilians indicating syncretism.

Temptation looms high to make the African intellectual blockade deliberate as the whole process of colonization was deliberate. So was marginalization on the basis of colour. Thus, there is a sense in which one can ascribe to the intellectual history of the West a certain deliberate ploy to systematically blockade African worldviews. This was necessary for two reasons; first to eliminate alternative viewpoints, which could challenge the much-coveted hegemony. Secondly, the African terrain was supposed to remain intellectually impotent so as to justify the humanizing mission. To what extent this gagging was successful is difficult to gauge with precision. One formidable position is that this carefully crafted manoeuvre subsequently prevented Africans from making a significant contribution to intellectual history, since the very possibility of such contribution was closed. Another equally important position is that despite the lack of recognition, the Africans went ahead and made their contribution. The earlier critique of slavery and later of colonialism on moral grounds indicate the extraordinarily resilience of African intellectual resources to the attacks. Africa somehow survived the onslaught, hence when space was opened for articulating African views; they were freely exchanged, even though their practical efficacy at the time remained questionable.

Indeed it sounds preposterous in history to talk of 'African civilization' outside the discourse of the processes, which gave birth to European modernity and to the interactions between the two cultures. The ideas of 'Africa' and 'African culture' are constructions of European modernity. As Kaulem puts it,

Strictly speaking, there are no traditional African cultures that existed as African cultures before colonialism. Africa is a modern artifact. The cultures that existed before colonialism in what is now referred to as Africa did not develop as African cultures. They are referred to as Africans only in retrospect. The people who developed these cultures did not see themselves as Africans neither

did they call themselves as such. And indeed no one called them African before colonialism (1999, p. 30).

The Westerners had commenced the use of these labels for their own purposes upon contact with the continent and its inhabitants. Curiously, the Europeans initiated the process of encouraging the development of the idea of Africa by denying it, then by debating the possibility of its existence (Kaulem, p. 9). Paradoxically these labels have survived as symbols of both frustration and pride. At the moments of encounter, the 'Africa' represented the wild, the vile and the gullible. However, during the period of African Nationalism, 'blackness' stood for beauty, civility and freedom. Africans find pride in the concepts as they have adopted and imbibed them as identity-bestowing concepts. Yet, the very concepts historically disparage African humanity. This denigration has assumed many forms in practice.

2.5 Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is reasonably credible to argue that African historiography including that of its philosophy has traversed a very rough terrain indeed. Though it is very hard to predict how it would have developed had historical processes not intercepted it, the fact that Westerners had ulterior motives with the continent meant that they did all they could to gain control. This meant destroying or discrediting the African intellectual foundation, first and foremost in order to superimpose their Intellectual hegemony.

It is quite apparent that, given the outsider's perspective from which the Western scholars approached African traditions in the early days of contact and the desire to control the Africans in the middle of the colonial period, the records about African

cultures were destined to be anything else but veracious. The fact that African cultures had an oral orientation does not diminish its worth. Those who reduced it to barbarism did so in a bid to relegate it. Even where writings by African scholars as suggested by Claude Sumner, dates back to the medieval period, the philosophical merit of these writings was never taken seriously. This is surely a scandal that point to the zenith of human treachery.

Thanks to the initiatives made during the last decades of the 20th century, which revived interest in Africa and its intellectual exploits. One observation is that African worldviews have not been fully represented hence they did not go into the mosaic of worldviews that make up the global culture. There is therefore the need to glean through the various African traditions for worthwhile ideas that may influence global history. Given the negativity associated with perceptions of African cultures in the modern period, one wonders whether these perceptions persisted in history. It is tempting to suspect that they did. Thus the historiography of African philosophy may be characterized as a limping stallion, which may never come to a full gallop. Let us explore this in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

THE NATURAL UNIVERSE IS DIVINE

3.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter highlighted the overall historiographical problems affecting African philosophy. Apparently, African philosophy was written under erasure by the colonial authorities as the latter defended certain insular interests. Could the same be said about the classical historiography of philosophy? This chapter investigates the interface between the Western Mediterranean (North African) and the eastern Mediterranean cultures in general. More specifically, it investigates whether the historiography of classical philosophy necessarily led to the marginalization of African thought. While we are interested in the inter-connections between the Greco-Roman civilizations and Africa, we mustn't forget that the Muslim world was forging its own cultural link (Cummings 1986, p.5).

The chapter however concentrates on the interface between Africa and the ancient near Eastern world. Since the ancient Greek cultures was antecedent to Western civilization, if the historiography of Western philosophy led to marginalization of the philosophies of the non-Western world, one wonders at what juncture in time this marginalization started manifesting and what factors led to it. The chapter also seeks to establish the extent, if any, of non-Western cultural influence, particularly Egypt on Classical philosophy. This exercise is significant in light of Western claims to originality and ingenuity of thought.

3.2 The Classical Civilization

The Classical world is usually delimited to include the Greek and Roman civilizations (Irvin 1999, 1). In addition, it referred to the cultures around the Mediterranean Sea. Inasmuch as Egypt represents the African civilization in ancient times, there is need to examine Egyptian influences, on the philosophy of the hinterland. Some scholars notably Thomas Jones contend that East Africa (lands of modern day Ethiopia, Eritrea, and the Sudan) too must be credited for contributing to the rise and development of ancient civilizations (Jones 1958, p. 50). As Classical civilization is antecedent to that of the West, examining the cultural influences of Egypt on the Greek or Roman world would somewhat point to some African influence on Western civilization. That the West regards itself as the heir of the Greek and Roman civilizations is well documented. Western scholars, particularly the British and French archaeologists highlighted the similarities between the colonial possessions of their respective countries and the Roman Empire. The French, in particular, drew a parallel between Roman imperial rule and their colonial authority in Africa (Cagnat 1997, p. 307). Similarly, Alfred Zimmern lays stress on antiquity's foundational role to Western culture (Zimmern 1961, p. 17)

Classical North Africa including Tunisia, Morocco, Libya and ancient Egypt was significantly influenced by the going-ons in the Mediterranean world. In this regard, the role of Mediterranean cultures, particularly the Phoenicians in shaping the history of Egypt cannot be underestimated (Cummings 1986, p. 3).

In the end we have an admixture of cultural influences making up the Mediterranean civilization. It would be very difficult to ascribe supremacy to one civilization at the expense of others, a point aptly stressed by George Saton:

It is wrong to say: "Oh, East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet." They have met many times, and they shall meet again, but we are a little too prone to forget our eastern origins and our eastern borrowings. Some elements of that civilization originated in Egypt, others in Mesopotamia, still others in Iran; but all of them were finally carried down to the Mediterranean regions, where they stimulated and fertilized one another and grew to maturity. It is thus quite correct to call it the Mediterranean civilization, for the Mediterranean world was, if not its cradle, at least its nursery. We could not call it Egyptian or Sumerian, Iranian, Babylonian, Greek, Roman or Arabic; we could not call it Aryan or Semitic; we could not call it Pagan, Jewish, Christian or Islamic; for though each and every one of these attributes might be justified, none is sufficient. The truest name is Mediterranean, which suggests and includes all others, and expresses the great geographical and historical reality..." (1936, pp. 407-9).

The cultural admixture, which became characteristic of the Mediterranean world, was very much a product of colonialism. However a study of the colonialism of the Mediterranean region unfortunately only took place during the late 19th century in conjunction with modern imperialism (van Dommelen 1997, p. 305). Under colonialism, the abilities of slaves and the knowledge of people of culture were at the service of the overlords. As Clarke succinctly remarks, "...all the results, and all the credit, accrued to the victors (Clarke 1986, p. 70). Thus, the presence of colonialism in any context suggests cultural syncretism, a point which needs to be explored greater detail. However, since the Egyptian culture was part of the Mediterranean civilization and also among those that were historically prior to that of Greece, the question raised is whether the former philosophically influenced the latter? The sections below explore this thread of thought.

3.3 The Historiography of Greek Philosophy

Historiographical materials on Greek philosophy are scant. Most of these materials simply did not survive save for a few doxographical resources. Some of the written records by Plato, Aristotle and a few others remain as the only sources of information

pertaining to the issue in question. A reconstruction of Ancient philosophy comes mostly with modern scholars. Initially, most of the historians were not concerned with philosophy but with accounts of heroes and their accomplishments. Here, as with all history, the accounts were highly selective. Herodotus, dubbed the 'father of history', never made pretensions to cover all events. However, Momigliano contends that, "the actions of Greeks and Barbarians he decided to put on record were great and wonderful" (Momigliano 1966, p.14). Nevertheless, as Leonard Clarke cautions, we need to carefully study the background which produced the first philosophers:

Greece itself was a group of small states, sometimes co-operating, sometimes at bitter enmity. The Near and Middle East, where civilizations reaching a very high level had been growing up for several thousand years, was reaching a period where domination by one or another was inevitable. Among the Egyptians, Babylonians and Greeks, the organization of society had long before reached a stage where there were plenty of people who need not concern themselves entirely with the elementary chores of a community farming and soldiering. Of the three races, the Greeks were the last to reach this stage. Greek civilization had begun at about the beginning of the second millennium B.C. around Mycenae in the north of the Peloponnese. Compared with other nations surrounding the eastern end of the Mediterranean, Greek power was not strong in its early existence. During the first 1,500 years of Helladism, natural calamities -earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tidal waves often destroyed great cities and whole areas.' Yet in parts of the widespread and politically divided Greek nation, intellects were developing of a kind which does not appear to have existed previously (Clarke 1962, p. 68).

Granted that this picture holds, then it follows that the scientific stage of Greece's development does not support independent growth. If anything, it was a product of cross-pollination of ideas, especially from surrounding cultures.

As Clarke further observes, the period characterized as the first millennium BC was one of interdependence:

It is not at all surprising that at least as early as the fifth century B.C. we find objects-boundary stones, vases, stone slabs and pillars inscribed in several languages. A fragment of an alabaster vase from Persia, of the reign of Xerxes, 485-465 B.C., bears the same inscription in Persian, Elamite, Babylonian and Egyptian. During this first millenium B.C. there

were always foreigners in any of the countries of this Middle East cradle of civilization (Clarke 1986, p. 70).

The people who converged to develop this civilization were wide-ranging – ambassadors, traders, tourists or even slaves. It is very interesting that beginning with Herodotus, historians are agreed that Greek civilization always must be understood in relation to the neighbouring aliens. According to Brumbaugh:

“The alien neighbours too, made the Greeks of the frontier aware of civilizations other than their own. In the east, the empires of Persia and Egypt carried on trade, occasional war, and cultural exchange; in the , Carthage stood as an unknown hostile power occupying the Western end of Sicily and preventing Greek ships from venturing too far in the Mediterranean” (1981, p. 9)

The Greeks referred to these neighbours as ‘barbarians’ in the sense that they were non-Greeks. Edward Hussey generates a list of these as follows: the Sythians, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Phoenicians and Egyptians (1972, p. 5). Edward Hussey suggests some of the outstanding influences of the Egyptians:

This peculiar country stimulated the Greek imagination, and there was a persistent belief among the Greeks themselves that Egypt above all the other lands was the repository of ancient wisdom... Egyptian influence was great, Mathematics and astronomy were in Egypt on a lower level than in Babylonia; medicine was much more highly developed and it is possible that medical knowledge was transmitted to Greece. As in Babylon, so in Egypt there were theological and cosmological speculations, which were clearly influenced by Babylonian ideas on the same subject (Hussey 1972, pp. 5-6)

Both Brumbaugh and Hussey accentuate the significance of the interaction between ancient Egypt and Greece in a number of key areas such as trade, wisdom, medical practice, science and theology. Invariably, Herodotus ascribes all major discoveries to the Orient, usually Egypt. These accomplishments covered practical matters, such as dividing the year into twelve parts or measuring the land. In the sphere of religion, for

example, the rite of Thesmophoria or the name of the gods had come from Egypt. (quoted in Copenhaver, 1978, p. 195).

With regards to the possibility of ancient Egypt's influence on the genesis of philosophy in antiquity there is mixed reaction from the philosophers. Terence Irwin suggests that classical philosophers came from different areas such as Asia Minor, Britain, and North Africa (Irwin 1999, pp. 3-4).

Focusing particularly on the initial phase of Classical philosophy, Copleston describes it as maturation of an earlier Ionian civilization, which in turn was the meeting point of the East and the West. He makes the following statement; "... the question may be asked whether or not Greek philosophy was due to Oriental influences - whether or not Greek philosophy was borrowed from Babylon or Egypt" (p. 14).

Both Copleston and Irwin highlight the prospects of intellectual synergy between ancient Egypt and Greece. In the case of Irwin, the constellation of thought was not affected by the geographical location of the figures. Particularly interesting is Irwin's observation of the presence of Africans in the cross-fertilization of philosophical ideas.

In addition Copleston makes the following concession:

"...Greek philosophy was closely bound up with mathematics, and it has been maintained that the Greeks derived their mathematics, and their astronomy from Babylonia. Now, that Greek mathematics were influenced by Egypt and Greek astronomy by Babylon is more than probable; for one thing, Greek science and philosophy began to develop in that very region where interchange with the East was most to be expected..." (Copleston 1993, p. 15).

The indecisiveness of pinning the origins of Greek philosophy on either Babylon or Egypt has led to the abandonment of the hypothesis suggesting the Oriental origins of Greek philosophy in the West.

According to the received view in the West, to suggest that Greeks derived their philosophy from Egyptians would be as preposterous as suggesting that 'Plato drew his wisdom from the Old Testament' (Copleston 1993, p.15).

In addition, proponents of the Oriental hypothesis have not been forthcoming in their attempts to explain the manner in which Egyptian thought could possibly have been transmitted to the Greeks. Copleston, for one, was quick to dismiss the possibility of traders embarking on philosophical reflection, as these were ill-adapted to transmit philosophical ideas and underlines Burnet's remarks suggesting the futility of any attempts to conjure the hypothesis that Greeks got philosophical ideas from any group of people, unless if it can first be ascertained that the people in question are renowned to possess philosophy (Copleston 1993, p. 15).

Furthermore, Copleston contends that if anyone was to suggest that Greek philosophy was influenced by other cultures, this would not be equivalent to saying that Greek philosophy was derived from those cultures. Greek mathematics for instance, uniquely consisted of empirical, rough and ready methods of obtaining a practical result, something which was not found in either Babylon or Egypt (Copleston 1993, p. 15).

So far, the evidence at hand points to the fact that there were fertile antecedents to the Greek revolution in philosophy. Among these antecedent factors was the role of foreign influence, which includes Egypt. If Egypt was among the then established civilizations with which the Greeks interacted through trade and cultural exchanges, doesn't it follow that she was so influenced in the process?

Notwithstanding the Western counter hypothesis, it appears that in one way or another, Egypt and other civilizations of the day influenced the Greek thinkers. Western scholars are justified in highlighting this difference. However, Western scholars appear to be denying any foreign influence at all in the development of Greek philosophy. The evidence at hand does not support this shift. Burnet, for example, uses the illustration of Plato and the Old Testament to show the impossibility of a cultural interface between Jews and Greeks. While there is no evidence that Plato travelled to the land of the Jews, thereby increasing the possibility of being influenced by them, the same cannot be said about Greeks and Egypt. Thales, Pythagoras, Aristotle and a host of others visited Egypt to learn something there. The attempt by Western scholars to abandon the position that Greek philosophy may have been influenced by ancient Egyptian culture among others is scandalous to say the least. It smacks of a boisterous attempt to create a sense of originality. As Copleston puts it, “The Greeks then, stand as the uncontested original thinkers and scientists of Europe” (1993, p. 16).

Given this intellectual posture, it does not matter whether or not Egypt can be classified as part of Africa. It does not matter that Babylon, Persia or Phoenicia existed. It wouldn't have mattered whether there was another civilization south of the Sahara, the bottom line is that according to the West, the intellectual revolution which ushered in ancient philosophy was a product of Greek ingenuity.

This intellectual posture has become the point of serious disagreement between Western scholars and their Africanist counterparts. This debate reaches a climax in the respective works by Martin Bernal (1987) and George James on the one hand and Mary Lefkowitz (1996) and the other edited by Mary Lefkowitz and Guy MacLean Rogers

(1996) on the other. Bernal and James' works sought to establish that Egypt was the cradle of philosophy. Greek philosophy is indeed a misnomer as it was derived from ancient Egyptian culture. Lefkowitz and Rogers' works were responses to the question: to what extent was ancient Greek philosophy influenced by or derived from the cultures of ancient Africa, above all Egypt?

Martin Bernal contends that Egypt and Phoenicia had contact with Greece for as early as the second millennium B.C through wars. The regular invasions by the two groups resulted in a mixture of "native Europeans" and colonizing Africans and Semites (McNeal 1992, p. 47). Though initially sealed off, Egypt became open through the twin invasion first by Persians and then by Alexander the Great. To our surprise, the biography of Aristotle is disturbingly silent regarding his contact with Egypt. This throws into question a number of his achievements. While these are legitimate concerns, the chapter however has a modest objective of showing the nature and extent of the contact between ancient Greece and cultures contemporaneous to it, including Egypt.

The above issue becomes contentious as it deals with the appropriation of classical scholarship in the light of divergent political agendas associated with knowledge. It would appear that some Africanist scholars are very extreme to the extent of claiming too much about black history (Konstan 1997, p. 261). It also appears that Western scholars are disingenuous by laying claims to unwarranted originality.

The bid to highlight Greek originality has resulted in the 'cognitive erasure' of those cultures that might probably have offered alternative voices.

The history of ancient philosophy becomes the story of how Western civilization came about like a shooting star into the horizon.

The story of Greek genius has been carefully orchestrated and presented by modern scholars who usually tell it backwards after careful reconstruction to exhibit novelty in Western intellectual foundations. However, some new evidence continues to be thrust forward suggesting the heavy presence of foreign influence. According to Clarke, Greek astronomical science owed a great deal to the Babylonians. This admission by no means is meant to pull the rag of Greek genius, but simply to pay debt to foreign contributors (Clarke 1962, p. 71).

The Babylonian contribution, if fully acknowledged facilitates a deeper appreciation of the manner in which the Greeks depended on intellectual resources from their neighbours in the quest to develop their worldviews. As Clarke puts it:

In Babylonia we have the only available example of the progress of a nation from complete fear of natural events to at least a beginning of scientific analysis of them; and as this process took place, so the religion and the public administration of the country developed in accordance with it and inextricably associated with it. Relics of Babylonian civilization dating back to at least 3000 B.C. have been found. The gods, throughout, were personifications of natural phenomena, although changes in the way they were regarded became evident with the progress of time. These changes themselves show a greater awareness of the 'nature' of things-the essential preliminary to a scientific understanding. In the later period it is more correct to say that the natural phenomena were regarded as observable manifestations of the gods (1962, pp.71).

Evidence such as this significantly challenges the tendency in Western circles to present the rise of Greek philosophy exclusively as a result of Greek ingenuity. The unbridled celebration of Greek genius is not only misplaced but also tends to undermine the role of African and other non-Greek players in the rise and subsequent development of ancient philosophy.

The Babylonians, the Egyptians and others (including Indians) seem to have played a significant role in this regard. This role needs to be fully acknowledged. With respect especially to the development of science Dubberstein contends that debt should go to Babylonians, its progenitors:

“Assuredly the ancient Babylonians deserve the title "Fathers of Science." Through 3,000 years of documented history we can trace their slow steps toward modern science. We today have no reason to feel smugly superior in our advanced knowledge. The really hard steps in progress are the first ones. Those were taken for us thousands of years” (Dubberstein 1937, p 148)

These Babylonians also excelled in the field of medicine as they had a long history of the practice of surgery. Dubberstein makes a telling observation:

Four thousand years ago, Babylonian surgeons set broken bones, made major and minor body incisions, and even attempted eye operations. A pictorial representation shows the physician with his inevitable case and bandages. Sickesses were known by specific names, and symptoms were recorded. Magical and religious elements of Babylonian medicine are easily overemphasized, while honest medical prescriptions are overlooked. There is a reasonable purpose in Babylonian magic. Once gods and demons had been accepted, then charms and incantations for their control were also necessary. Had magic been omitted, the patient would certainly have lacked confidence in his physician. It was part of his professional "bedside" technique. But scores of simple medical prescriptions have no magic in them. Some even have real medicinal value (1937, p.148).

In the area of mathematics for example, mathematicians accept that most of the ideas that the Greeks developed had been anticipated by the Egyptians and the Babylonians as far back as 4000 years ago! As Dubberstein contends, “ Even the theorems commonly ascribed to the Greek philosophers Pythagoras and Thales, who lived in the sixth century B. C., seem to have been known, empirically at least, in Babylonia 4,000 years ago” (Dubberstein 1937, p.148). This point is also complemented by Karpinski who observes that much of the materials of elementary algebra, was anticipated, to some extent, in the Orient:

In Egypt and India and probably in Babylon too, the numerical phases of mathematical problems received the greater attention; in Greece the geometrical phases were primarily studied. However, by these diverse

routes many of the same problems were studied. The first degree equation in one unknown quantity appeared in analytical garb in Egypt, but the same problem is solved geometrically in Greece; simultaneous quadratics (leading to pure quadratics) appear in old Egyptian papyri, solved numerically, while similar problems are given geometrical solutions by the ancient Greeks. Numerical application of the Pythagorean proposition appears before the time of Pythagoras in Egypt and probably in India, while the triumph of a logical, geometrical proof is reserved for the Hellenic people as part of their most noteworthy contribution to the development of human intelligence. The study of arithmetic and geometrical progressions took a somewhat analogous course, appearing on the Ganges, on the Nile, on the Tigris and Euphrates, and in most complete development, by the Aegean sea. The conclusion which is suggested by the concordant development of mathematics in ancient times among diverse civilizations, as well as by the dominant position of the subject in ancient systems of education, is that the human mind has an intrinsic interest in the subject, not conditioned by time or place, but dependent simply upon the development of the reasoning faculty.” (Karpinski 1917, p. 258)

The Egyptians are believed to have studied mathematics as early as 2000 BC and had attained a very high development in analytic mathematics. This line of progress was attained by priests who had a lot of leisure at their disposal. Contrary to received opinion, the Egyptians had not developed mathematical appreciation solely as a solution to their practical need of redistributing land necessitated by the periodic over flow of the Nile (Karpinski 1917, p. 258).

Granted all this, does this not point to the need for Western historians of philosophy to make more concessions? If the Greeks borrowed some astronomical as well as mathematical ideas from others shouldn't we allow that their philosophy too was so influenced by those others? The next section explores this aspect.

3.4 The Intellectual Revolution in Philosophy

Since ancient Greece is the antecedent culture to the Western civilization it is interesting to establish how they understood reality.

If the concepts “appearance”, “reality” and “knowledge” are some of the key terms used to describe their worldview, it is interesting to establish just what they meant by them. It also remains curious to establish how this perspective differs from the African worldview.

The story of Western philosophy normally begins with poets as these held a central position in Greek culture. The poets were the repositories of significant tales whose subject matter varied from history, science and religion. Some of the historical tales gave accounts of cultures and races of the world. Other tales attempted to answer cosmological questions of the origins, structure and regulation of the universe (Lawhead 2002, p. 4). In their relentless efforts to disclose the operations of nature, they went as far as explaining the hidden causes for thunderstorms, droughts, bumper harvests, sickness, health and death.

The Greeks believed that the poets had been inspired by the Muses and therefore served as messengers in religion and ethics. They told tales of great expeditions, exploits and misfortunes of heroes. They told these tales in myths. Myths were stories meant to explain the mysterious and the unfamiliar in terms of what is observable and well known. According to Lawhead, they are “symbolic expressions of the deepest and fundamental concerns of human life and how this fits into the wider cosmic order” (2002, p.4). The dominant paradigm was the anthropomorphic presenting the myths.

When the Greek-speaking Indo-Europeans moved into the area that later came to be known as Greece, they brought with them heroic patriarchal mythologies. The cumulative effect of which was the formation of the Olympian pantheon (Tarnas 1991,

p. 16). The accounts by Homer and Hesiod, the very foundation of Greek epic literature, are gorged with the feats of the gods. This point is well captured by Theodore Gompez who notes:

Homeric man believed himself to be constantly and universally surrounded by gods and dependent on them. He attributed his good luck and ill, his successful spear thrust or his enemy's escape, to the friendship or hostility of a demon. Every cunning plan, every sound device, was credited to divine inspiration, and every act of infatuated blindness was ascribed to the same cause. It was the aim of all his endeavours to win the favour of the immortals and to avert their wrath (Gompez 1901, p. 30)

As portrayed by Gompez, divine intervention in cosmic and human affairs was paramount. Celestial hosts regulated all events including human affairs. As regards human affairs, issues such as safety, fortunes, relationships, and knowledge of reality all fell within the portfolio of the gods. Interestingly, there is a rider to this cosmic picture for the gods; including Zeus did not appear to be in absolute control of the universe:

...Zeus is far from being the omnipotent deity that the Christians, for instance conceive of their God to be. He is thwarted and harassed by his wife, by his numerous progeny, and by his still more numerous relatives, in much the same way that a human father is often dominated by the members of the household (Jones 1970, p. 4)

The suggestion that the chief deity of the Greek Pantheon did not have total control of the universe points to peculiar uncertainties of such a world. The threat of the breakdown of order and the introduction of chaos always loomed in the background. Besides, humanity's deception by these crafty gods was always a realistic possibility. The precarious nature of the Homeric heaven was replicated at the level of the Homeric state even to suggest the possibility of the reign of anarchy (Jones 1970, p. 4).

It can be inferred from the fact that since Homer held the gods responsible for all affairs in the world; they also controlled what could be known, how it would be known, and

the extent of that knowledge. Accordingly, human affairs were at the mercy of these gods. Furthermore, Homer held the gods as impetuous, childish egoistically, lustful, selfish, vain and unscrupulous, and downright dishonest. It was impossible for one to predict any future events (Jones 1970, p. 5). The conception of reality painted here was one of a precarious universe – partly orderly but potentially chaotic. Orderly for as long as the chief god reigned in all the others and potentially chaotic if the other gods were to team up against him. Thus, as far as cosmic governance was concerned; divinities played a crucial role in the regulation, sustenance of the entire universe. Furthermore, man's understanding of the way the world worked was directly connected to realization of the place occupied by these gods. Just as the gods controlled the universe, they also controlled what could be known. Homer and Hesiod may be read as saying this more or less.

Hesiod's *Theogony* was an attempt to account for the origins of the gods and of the world. Everything found in the world was personified, from the gods to every other important aspect of nature (Hussey: 1972, p. 11). Not only was Hesiod's project aimed at tracing the genealogy of gods; it was also an attempt to explain how these gods regulated states of affairs in the universe. Events associated with human existence were perceived as inseparable from and controlled by the gods (Tarnas 1991, pp. 16-17). In such a model of cosmic governance, three important ideas of a causal nature were generated; namely, - sexual generation, the manipulative and the coercive (Matson 1987, p. 5). These ideas remained prevalent in early Greek thinking.

The religico-mythical view of the world meant that whatever happened was intricately connected to the plans of the gods.

Ultimately, the existence of humans, their perception and knowledge depended on divine sanctions since all reality was dependent of the said gods. This probably made epic poets to depict the cosmic arrangement as a universal drama in which the gods, nature and humans were characters. These gods controlled whatever man should know, be it the real or the ephemeral. They could manipulate man's intellectual faculties just as they had control over everything. It appears that the mythological and religious frames of reference largely determined and limited what could be discussed about that universe (Tarnas 1991, p. 17).

Regrettably, Greek myths of the origins of the gods and of the universe were presented as if there were no competing accounts from other cultures of a similar period. This is suspect since there were other accounts as early as the sixth century BC, from Babylon, the near Eastern neighbours of the Milesians and Kemet (the ancient name for Egypt). From Kemet and her North African neighbours also produced myths concerning the origins of the universe. From Kemet also came myths of a plurality of gods, who sometimes quarrelled for supremacy amongst themselves. Another myth from Kemet, which generates immense interest, is one entitled, "*The King lives because of the gods*" (Asante and Barry, p. 20).

It is striking how ancient Egyptian myths made the cosmos subject to gods. The gods were causally responsible for all beings in the cosmos either through sexual reproduction or through some mysterious acts. These gods sustained and controlled the entire universe. However they were unpredictable as they too were susceptible to jealousy, corruption and ill-temper. This anthropomorphic conception of the gods made the governance of the cosmos a pretty delicate affair.

Surprisingly these myths were not included in ancient intellectual history. Only a narrow selection belonging to Homer and Hesiod were considered. Thus in antiquity, the ideas of 'reality', 'appearance' and 'knowledge' were limited to what the Greeks thought. The West insisted that Greeks single-mindedly brought a revolution in philosophy as if to say the Western intellect had exclusive access to the entire universe. Yet, even with these myths, the possibility of foreign influence was very strong. As Hicks puts it:

Within the heterogeneous body of Greek mythology, incorporating myths, legends, and folk tales, there are elements which seem to be non-Greek. These are derived from Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Syria, or Egypt. In some cases a myth connected with oriental ritual has become attached to a Greek deity. Sometimes a god or goddess originating in one of the countries of the Near East has migrated to Greece where he (or she) has become Hellenized and changed in the new environment. A folk tale often traveled a long route before reaching the Aegean world. There was also migration of art motifs, often accompanied by a story but often merely serving as decoration on some object (Hicks 1962, p. 90).

The intellectual horizon of the early Greeks thinkers before Thales could not transcend the provincialism in the mythical and religious frames. Hence one may depict these frames of reference as setting the intellectual boundaries over which the Greek thought could not leap. In the Homeric period however, there is still a sense in which the world was considered as object of knowledge at least in the sense that the physical world was the amphitheatre of man's physical existence where he moved about when hunting, fleeing from the enemy's spear or cultivating crops. It was also the arena where man developed a certain consciousness of his physical and social environment. To a large extend, this world was perceived in certain ways by all who interacted with it. However, the intellectual frames mentioned earlier, namely the belief in the cosmic supremacy of the gods impinged on what one could see and how far this could go.

The intellect was considered an eye, which was involved in some kind of seeing either accurate or less. Where such a vision was certified as accurate the contents were labelled 'reality'; but and where it was not, this was called 'appearance'. According to Von Fritz, one usually gets a correct view after making a false start. This has to be corrected by a more accurate vision (Von Fritz 1946, pp.12-13). In Homeric times, for example, the goddess usually disguised herself as an old woman. It required one with a clear vision to decipher accurately the manifestation of the gods. This vision was basically an act of the intellect, which clearly grasped the unmistakable reality before it. Apart from the determination by the gods, if one was to engross oneself in externalities, ones' vision always remained ignorant of the real state of affairs (Von Fritz 1946, p.13).

The "nous" i.e. the mind, was the instrument that penetrated through the manifold of experiences, which tended to produce appearances. It penetrated through the surface of experiences and brought about the true picture of the nature of things (Fritz 1946, p.15). Democritus and Leucippus had maintained the "nous" discovered the causative processes in the universe (Greene 1936, p. 126). However, for Anaxagoras, the "nous" was the immaterial source of motion (Boas 1926, p. 88). The early Greeks realized that the senses are our paths in interacting with and accessing the phenomenal world, but they could not be relied on since at times they erred. Even in the Homeric times, the "*nous*" could even refer to one's imaginative abilities. It had not yet dawned to the early Greeks that the "*nous*" could refer to reason, although there were indications in that direction in the form of intuitions.

Thus from the very beginning of Greek intellectual history, a distinction was made between the real and the ephemeral appearances.

Even at these initial stages of concept formation, appearances were treated with suspicion partly as tending to be deceptive and partly because of the manipulative machinations of the gods' (Von Fritz 1946, p. 19)

At this point in the discussion, one may make a provisional observation that; the earliest stages of Greek thought prior to philosophy was marked by a conception of the world in terms of 'reality', appearance' and 'knowledge'. The reality was that the world emanated from the gods and these were in charge of the events and processes taking place within it. Humans too were subject to the rules set by these gods. Although they had intellectual powers to form opinions about that world, this only went as far as the gods allowed.

Thus human knowledge when properly constituted was a kind of seeing. But as with all seeing, it was as strong as the mind could sift through the manifold flow of experiences. Nothing was guaranteed, nothing was permanent except what was allowed. At any rate the poets were describing the world, not as the scientists would do but merely stretching their imagination in a creative way. There was no real knowledge being transmitted by the poets since what they were professing was in the realm of myths. It would be quite in order to argue that Homer and Hesiod, made allusions to "reality" and "knowledge". But one may further argue that theirs were excursions into the realm of appearance – the world of seeming. Their metaphysical conception had a skewed structure with certain implications for the concepts in question. Although these thinkers are on record as using concepts of reality while referring to the universe and well as knowledge, these were fictitious conceptions that may only be treated with suspicion. This point is probably well captured by Onias, who traces in detail the Homeric notions of

consciousness. For him Homer uses the concept 'know' to refer to a very wide cognitive process (Onias 1954, p. 14). Discourse on imagined entities, the understanding of reality and even moral judgements all fell in the realm of knowledge. As Onias puts it, "Homer thinks that men and women act rightly or otherwise accordingly as they understand rightly or otherwise whether something is becoming or not, although we know in so many cases that they do not so act" (Onias 1954, p. 15).

Unless a prospective interpretation of the Homeric picture on the cognitive role of poetic pieces is envisioned, it remains problematic to link the objects of Homer and Hesiod's deliberations to the external world, nature or the universe – in short to reality. The role of poetic language is a haven of controversy as there has always been no unanimity on its cognitive functions. Such controversies were even encountered in the views of Plato and Aristotle, during later Antiquity. Some thinkers especially Platonists maintained that poets were engrossed in adventitious creativity, whereas others notably Aristotle, insist that these authors were painting a picture of reality from their own vantage points.

Thus it is tempting to conclude that the Homeric and Hesiodic conception of the world and the knowledge generated about that world were not reliable presentations of the actual states of affairs. If one adopts a Platonic view on the language of poetry, it may be argued that the authors in question contributed to some form of conceptual confusion. Their contributions were not really about genuine knowledge of the world, but with the imaginary world located inescapably in the poet's mind. However, if one was to adopt an Aristotelian view of poetic language, the opposite conclusion will ensure.

Historical and philosophical interpretation has unfortunately converged in support of the view that the Homeric and Hesiodic conceptions of the world was largely religious and mythological thus tending to impose fancy and streams of imagination as genuine knowledge of reality. Scholarly consensus thus maintains that a genuinely philosophical attempt to understand the universe and everything in it begins with the Pre - Socratics. It is to these that we shall divert our attention.

3.5 The Few Who Made Revolutionary Strides in Philosophy

The general trend in the writing of ancient philosophy in the West was to celebrate Greek genius. Early Greek philosophers apparently made revolutionary strides when they broke away from the antecedent religious-mythical conception of the universe (Grube 1954, p.123). A number of factors might be brought to bear in explaining this dramatic change. At the religious front, the polytheistic conception of the universe was changing towards a monotheistic model. At a scientific level the need for more and more knowledge of the processes and constitution of nature was required. According to Gompez, 'Cosmogony began to free itself from theogony, the problem of matter emerged in the foreground of men's thoughts' (Gompez 1901, p. 44). Wedberg complements Gompez's view and cited a dissatisfaction at a theoretical level prompted scientific investigations (Wedberg 1982, p. 10) However, all this was happening at the exclusion on the non-Greek players.

This revolutionary break occurred in Miletus, a colony of Greece in Asia Minor. Why this happened in this manner is often explained variously. Mayer cited intellectual and political instability (Mayer 1950, p. 16). Wedberg suggests other causative factors to the free reign of thought; the existence at the time of a

favourable political situation, particularly the presence of a healthy constitution; the absence in Greek religion of centralized organization and a doctrinal system (Wedberg 1982, p. 11). It is Copleston who paints the picture of Greek genius more lucidly:

The Greeks, then, stand as the uncontested original thinkers and scientists of Europe. They first sought knowledge for its own sake, and pursued knowledge in a scientific, free and unprejudiced spirit. Moreover owing to the character of Greek religion, they were free from any priestly class that might have had strong traditions and unreasoned traditions of their own, tenaciously held and imparted only to a few, which might hamper the development of free science (Copleston 1993, p. 16).

What comes out of this passage is that the intellectual environment of the time in question favoured free-thinking. In the absence of fetters, the fertile minds became very productive. Hence it is little surprise that philosophical speculation found its genesis at this juncture of Greek civilization. Konstantin Kolenda has describes the Greek intellectual breakthrough as a result of a deliberate move away from the religico-mythical explanation of phenomena towards a more open minded approach (Kolenda 1974, p. 4).

The early Greek thinkers began to display a marked interest in natural science. This science, according to Guthrie, was man's attempt to explain the universe in which he lived (Guthrie 1967, p. 16). Also according to Windelband, the Greek philosopher wanted to elevate knowledge to the plane of a systematic process – a science (1906, pp. 4-5). Even at the speculative level of science, ideas of the nature of the universe and man's knowledge of it were always emerging. Thus George Boas depict this colourfully when he says:

From its very beginning, Greek philosophy made a distinction between appearance and reality – the world as it appears to man and as it really is. Philosophers differed about what was appearance and what was

reality and about how one knew which was which – but as soon as they began to write, they turned their critical faculties upon the uncontrolled experience of their fellows and said that it was not as it appeared (Boas 1961, p. 1).

Admittedly, from the beginning controversy surrounded the knowledge of what was real and what was merely apparent. The idea of appearance came to be associated with falsehood and consequently castigated. It is important to find out how this happened.

The Pre-Socratic worldview was one in which nature i.e. some form of matter in various modes became very important. This nature was permeated into by the mind which organized it and made science possible (Collingwood 1945, pp. 3-4). In this respect, the real was explored in nature and elsewhere. Milesian thinkers sought to establish the primary matter out of which the different modes of things emanated. They sought to establish what it was that survived what appeared to be a threatening chaos of change. They came to believe that what whatever is ‘arises from, and will return to the primary substance’. With Thales, the revolution in philosophy is alleged to have begun. Yet, the life of the figure is shrouded in mystery (Cherniss 1951, p. 323).

It is quite strange, nay paradoxical for philosophy in the West to have begun with Thales, yet nothing is certain about the man and his ideas. It is curious that even some scholars insinuate that he was influenced by contact with foreign cultures such as classical Egypt. Problems aside, Thales is said to have intimated that genuine knowledge about the world was possible. He moves away from the private fantasies of the poets into the public realm where theories are propounded, open for others to inspect and pass their judgments on (Jones 1970, p. 9). Thales and the other Milesian philosophers believed that there was a primary stuff that was the cause of all else.

Their only difference lay in identifying what that one thing was. Succeeding generations of scholars continued to analyze the world in terms of 'stuff' as the ultimate 'thing.' According to Jones, 'this conception has in fact survived extraordinary philosophical vicissitudes in one form or another is still with us" (Jones 1970, p. 10).

A significant trace of a recognition and usage of the two concepts of 'reality' and 'appearance' is found in Anaximander who is reported to have been the first to write a full treatise about nature among other interests. Anaximander produced a cosmogony, a history of the earth and the heavenly bodies, the development of living organism, descriptions of natural phenomena, astronomy, meteorology and biology (Barnes 1979, p. 19). Nature, for Anaximander embraces all objects of experience and rational inquiry. Anaximander who, whilst impressed by the processes of change which were apparently disorderly, contended that it required one to go beneath the surface to realize that there was, underlying all this seemingly chaos, some regularity which could be formulated in the form of a law (Boas 1961, p.5).

Whereas the Ionians were looking at their philosophical pursuits as access to an understanding of the universe, the Pythagoreans viewed philosophy as a way of life and the philosophic brotherhood of a religious order. This philosophic movement provides the other side of the development of early Greek philosophy. The Pythagoreans believed that the chief goal of life was the purification of the soul to enable a reunification with the universal spirit to which it naturally belonged. If man was part of the universe, there was a sense in which he shared a kinship with it. However it was central to understand the organization of that cosmos.

It the cosmos was an ordered whole and objects in it constituent parts, there is a sense in which these two were microcosms and thus bore the principles of the macrocosm (Guthrie 1967, p. 36).

Pythagoras was a mathematician and naturally his studies about the cosmos were inspired by the mathematical method. Not only were the Pythagoreans interested in pure mathematics, but also in its application to physical phenomena. In their deliberations, they believed that mathematical principles permeated into all things. This obviously stood in stark contrast with the Milesians who thought that there was some primary stuff out of which all things were made. The Pythagoreans held that ‘Things consisted of number.’ The importance of the Pythagoreans lies in the fact that whatever was discovered by the natural philosophers, they complemented with a mathematical formulation. According to Heidel, the Pythagoreans held everything including the heavenly hosts to be a number:

They thought numbers, as the first principles of mathematics, were the principles of all things. Because they saw in numbers resemblances to things about them, and because the attributes and ratios of the musical scales could be expressed in numbers, and all other things were modeled after numbers, they thought the elements of numbers were the elements of all things and that the whole heaven was a musical scale and a number (1940, p. 12).

This geometric method, the early mathematicians thought, led to the discovery of axioms and theorems, which provided without, question the self-evidence of certain truths. Thus in this approach, reason was given unparalleled function (Boas 1961, p.40). The net effect of this development was that attempts to explain the configuration of the cosmos in terms of myths was discarded. Also, the new approach set reason and experience on a collision course. Effort was directed at the formulation of efficient theorems.

Mathematics, so it was believed, proved that numbers properly explained the arrangement of the universe. They were also, to a considerable extent instrumental in correcting the picture of the world created by the senses – namely that the world was made up of changing entities which were in constant motion. In this respect mathematics had a therapeutic function. It corrected the faulty picture painted by the senses.

The universe thus was construed geometrically and time did not matter the truths contained therein were immutable and eternal. Thus a theory of reality, which placed emphasis on order, proportion and changeless truths, was clearly established and this picture sharply contrasted with that of the appearance of the senses. The story continues as more players came onto the stage.

Xenophanes is said to have been skeptical of the human capacity to true insight. He also maintained that opinion and guesswork is all that is granted us. According to Cavendish, Xenophanes wrote in his poem that humans were incapable of knowledge about the gods and about reality hence they are condemned only to appearances (Cavendish 1964, pp. 7-8).

By the same stroke, Xenophanes may be said to have refuted the anthropomorphic conceptions of the gods as presented by Hesiod and Homer. In addition, Xenophanes may also have been saying that our minds are closely connected to sense perception. Other ancient scholars, in particular Plutarch presented Xenophanes as having maintained also that, the senses are false witnesses (Barnes 1979, p.137). However according to Patricia Curd, all Xenophanes is saying is that the gateway to knowledge of anything is inquiry.

In her own words she says, “In his epistemological fragments, Xenophanes claims both that inquiry is the proper method of research and also that there is a limit to what a human being can know” (Curd 1966, p. 7)

Following Curd, part of what Xenophanes is claiming is that investigation is the way to an understanding of the way things are. Thus there is no need for divine intervention or interference in the process. In addition, the search for these truths is limited to the tools available for use by the intellect. Our knowledge of anything both its nature and scope, is limited to what we can experience. Xenophanes’ contentions are very important in that they set the whole philosophy of the ancient world into what might be characterized as a perpetual tug-of-war. If the knowledge of the ‘real’ is confined to the realm of experience, then it may be futile to try and transcend this limit. If true insights elude us, then all we have are appearances. So our reality collapses to mere appearances. Obviously not all ancient philosophers agreed with him – certainly not Heraclitus.

However, what he held was an interesting insight in that it seems to equate reality with appearance a claim, which was going to raise immense controversy in the history of philosophy. Xenophanes’ utterances, divide the course of the history of philosophy into two. One group of thinkers were to give priority to ‘reason’ while the other sense experience. With Xenophanes, the stage was set for the contest between the conflicting conceptions of reality. The one movement emphasized on ‘reality’ as a set of transcendental truths beyond the world of multifarious experiences and the other confining it to sense perception.

Heraclitus, who came later, did not seem to accept Xenophanes' insights. While granting the importance of inquiry, Heraclitus would go further and argue that understanding is required to complete the process. True, all lovers of wisdom inquire into many things, but in order to have genuine knowledge, they must also have insights obtained through grasping the 'Logos'. This might suggest that: "there are certain truths which, are grasped through an acquaintance with the 'Logos'" (fr. B1)

Heraclitus may be interpreted as making the Logos indispensable to an understanding of the nature of anything. For him, it is crucial for people to understand that reality is 'One' and that the seemingly multifarious natures are but aspects of that single reality. He appeared very hostile to those he considered ignorant of the mechanics of the Logos including Xenophanes.

At least one thing is clear for Heraclitus; that reality can be accessed in certain primary ways. In the first instance, it is clear that he was willing to accept the evidence of the senses as evidence of the flux. He estimates the eyes as better witnesses to the truth than the ears (fr. B101a) and again, "of whatsoever things I can see, hear, and learn, these are what I prefer" (fr. B55) and many of his paradoxes are simple perceptual observations (Barnes 1979, p. 26). There is nothing mysterious in his saying that cold things become warm and warm things cold, that the moist becomes dries and the dry become moist [fr. 126]. These opposing properties are clear statements of what goes on in one's experiences.

Similarly, the relativity of perceptual qualities, expressed in such sayings as; that asses prefer straw to gold [fr.9], that swine wash in mud and barnyard fowls in the dust

[fr.37], that fish can drink sea water whereas men would die from it [fr. B61], that all things are beautiful and good and right to God whereas men make a distinction between right and wrong [frag. B102], are all grounded on experience. The conclusions derived thereof, must come from ordinary perception and its implications. That qualities vary with the perceiver becomes the main proofs of skepticism in later times, and one form of skepticism was attributed to the followers of Heraclitus. Does this imply that no knowledge was attainable?

Most commentators of Heraclitus do not interpret him thus. As Boas notes, Heraclitus tends to castigate those who appeal to their senses, for they would not come to grips with a fundamental universal law (Boas 1961, p. 8). The law in question is an intellectual one, stating that the same matter persists all the transformations that may occur. Thus we may appear to experience constancy – a feeling of stability behind the restless change in the world. The other idea Heraclitus seems to be expounding is that every apparent moment of change is a temporary manifestation of the primary substance, which would soon be discarded. Heraclitus would not refer to any matter but a universal law, which meets the description of fate or necessity.

It appears that for Heraclitus, knowledge is still possible irrespective of the flux. It was still possible to permeate through the flux and discovering the universal law, which is behind all these multifarious changes. He actually says, ‘The sun will not overstep its measure, if he did. The avenging furies would discover him, and whip him back into line’ (Boas 1961, p. 27).

The senses may tell us that the world is nothing but an array of interpenetrating and confusing entities, but reason tells us that reality is One. Heraclitus symbolizes reality by the analogy of the ever-living fire. Elsewhere, Heraclitus also talks of the Logos [fr. B1]

The primary meaning of Logos is 'word', but it can mean reason, theory or definition. The Stoics later were to use it as if it were the name of the voice of God, and in Philo Judaeus, it was to be called the Son of God, as it was of course called in the Gospel according to St. John. However, Boas chooses to use 'universal law' to refer to the Logos, for he doubts whether Heraclitus, if correctly quoted by Sextus Empiricus, would use it in other unfamiliar ways.

If the Logos is the universal law which governs the flux, then whether men had heard of it or not, they might be expected to know of it by instinct, as the law of their own nature. Heraclitus may be vague and elusive, but it is the duty of the historian to illuminate such authors as far as possible. I have interpreted Heraclitus' Logos as that which can be known to lie behind the flux. The flux is apparent to the senses and the Logos is incorporated in sensory perception thus underpinning the hidden constancy. The problem the other men have not solved, according to Heraclitus, is the extraction of the Logos from the heterogeneous flow of perception. For, though eyes are better witnesses to the truth, than ears,, "both eyes and ears are bad witnesses to men if they have barbarous souls" [fr. B107]. Barbarous souls are souls which do not speak or understand one's language, and in this sense one has to interpret one's language as the language of the senses. It tells us both about the flux and about its regularity.

When we move to Parmenides, we see him making explicit mention of the distinction between truth and opinion. For him, truth was something, which was arrived at through the use of the dialectic and not by any form of observation. He castigates and condemns all forms of sensory observation for they were in the realm of opinion. There is no explanation in the poem as to why sense evidence is rejected.

One may guess that this has to do with the relegation of such evidence to the realm of 'appearances' and since they present the nature of things as multifarious. Parmenides maintains on the contrary that reality is One. It is a changeless, immutable, and everlasting entity. Although he does not use these terms, this is implied when he talks of what there is, that "it is" (Boas 1961, p. 13).

For Parmenides then, being is all-inclusive and all predicates attributed to it turn out to involve negations. Also, reality must be rational and describable in non-contradictory terms. Hence if we see things changing from one state into another, this is illusory. Zeno and Melissus after Parmenides laboured to show why perception ultimately leads us away from the truth (Barnes 1979, p. 308).

Corporeal objects found in the world are a result of combination and dissolution of the four material elements. These elements were considered changeless and eternal. Empedocles held that our senses were equal witnesses of reality but it was the intellect, which processed this evidence in an orderly and clear manner. The Atomists led by Democritus and Leucippus advanced Empedocles' view and asserted that the universe was made up of atoms or seeds of reality.

Democritus' view allowed for the possibility of all kinds of atoms to account for the different species of things. He also allowed atoms to have different shapes. This conception of the universe and everything in it culminated in the materialistic view of reality (Wedberg 1982, p. 30).

From the foregoing, several aspects may be noticeable about Pre-Socratic philosophers. First, the fragments we discussed do not constitute the whole corpus of their works. The situation would have been significantly different if we had all the details. Secondly, what has come out was mainly what doxographers and later commentators preserved for their own purposes (Cherniss 1951, p. 319).

However out of all this, one may make some interesting observations. First, the story of ancient Greek philosophy is silent about how the surrounding cultures might have contributed to its genesis, growth and progression. Of particular interest is the manner in which the contributions of ancient civilizations such as Egypt and Babylon were sidelined. The residual impression created was that the Greeks single handed brought about a philosophical revolution out of their mythical and religious traditions. This cannot be any further from the truth. Secondly, one also observes that even among the ancient Greeks themselves the ideas of "reality," "knowledge" and "appearance" remain variously understood – some were material monists, others pluralists; some were spiritual monists. Whereas some prized senses as the gateway to reality, others placed emphasis on reason. Whereas some views gained currency, others were sidelined.

3.6 From Socrates To Aristotle

Generally, Socrates arose in the context of the rise of the democratic spirit in Athens and the disillusionment with the philosophy of nature. The Sophists were the first to move away from the study of nature and concentrated on opportunities for personal power and success (Johnson 1998, p.201). They promised to offer youths special skills in practically all areas, particularly in rhetoric, which they considered indispensable to the conduct of public affairs. Sophists emphasised practical skills (Johnson 1998, p. 202). In matters of knowledge, they adopted skepticism (D'Arcy 1927, p. 183). However, Barbara Cassin introduces an interesting dimension that the sophistry was artificially produced. In her words:

...sophistic doctrine, which is a historical reality, is at the same time artificially produced by philosophy. The essence of this artefact is simply to construct the Sophist as the negative alter ego of the philosopher: his bad Other. They have resembled each other ever since the Stranger's comment in the *Sophist* that the sophist resembles the philosopher "as the wolf does the dog, as the most savage resembles the most tame (Cassin 2000, p.105)

Most philosophers of the period, particularly Socrates, were up in arms against the Sophists. However, in the case of Socrates, he was not any different from the Sophists - as his own practice of intellectual midwifery through refutation of his interlocutor's views - came to be regarded as the other side of sophistry (Cassin 2000, p. 106).

Protagoras, Gorgias and Antiphon were the key representatives. Taking their cue most probably from the Atomists, Sophists held that nothing existed nor was known nor could be communicable even if known (Lawhead 2002, pp. 30 –32). In such a world, they believed that language played a crucial role in persuasion and manipulation. Unlike the Sophists, Socrates was interested in investigating the reality of human nature and the extent of the knowledge about it.

Conceptual analysis became the medium of investigating about the nature and constitution of the universe. Socrates was revolutionary in this respect. He went about asking questions about the meanings of terms such as 'justice', 'knowledge' and 'piety'. This development must have been motivated by a certain philosophical point of view.

Obviously, Socrates was disillusioned by the failure by his predecessors to find a unified and non-conflicting picture of the universe (Stumpf 1983, p. 71). Developing on Socrates' project, Plato added a more mathematical and Pythagorean character to his philosophy. He sought to transcend Pythagorean relativity. For Pythagoras, sense perception was relative to the perceivers. By adopting the Socratic conceptual method, he tried to arrive at a universally valid science of the true essence of things (Timaeus 27d-26a)

Timaeus elaborates his views and went on to argue that since the Creator must have selected a beautiful model for his work and only Reality is beautiful, it must be that eternal Reality is the pattern, of which the material world is but the imperfect image. The place of the Creator in the scheme of things Plato admits is difficult to determine, but it is clear that he is to be included in eternal Reality, for it is later stated that God supplies not only the energy but also the pattern of creation, so that the world can be described as "the image of the Creator, a god which can be perceived, the greatest and most excellent and most beautiful and most perfect (Timaeus, 92c). A more or less similar distinction between being and non-being is made in the Sophist, where he argues:

Some drag everything to earth from heaven and the unseen, clumsily seizing rocks and oaks with their hands. For they lay hold of all such things and insist that only that exists which can be perceived and touched, and they define reality

and body as identical. But if any of their opponents shall say that something exists that has no body, they altogether despise him and will not listen to anything else (246-7).

Thus Plato outlined his views about the whole cosmos and, like Socrates; he was looking for the breakthrough from the confusions raised by his predecessors. Part of what Plato does was to establish the distinction between knowledge and opinion (Matson 1987, p. 89). Knowledge must not be for particular changing entities but of the eternal and changeless forms. Ideas are intelligible – only accessible by the mind's eye. They are timeless, changeless, birthless and deathless. They constitute the real world. All the other manifest entities in nature are temporal and unreliable, as such; they cannot be part of the real.

With Aristotle, conceptual analysis was still fundamental and he believed that knowledge of the forms i.e. the real constituents of the universe was possible. However unlike Plato who posited the existence of transcendent and absolute of forms, Aristotle adopted a common-sense approach to the issue. For him, the empirical world had a reality of its own and need not be construed only in terms of the Platonic forms. If at all the transcendental entities exist, they must be located in some accessible world.

From his logic, he developed the doctrine of the categories in a bid to demonstrate that whatever is belongs to a certain class of some sort. Logic was an instrument used to formulate language properly for proper analysis of anything. The categories were considered the starting point of thinking for one cannot discuss anything without identifying the subject. These categories of things constitute reality. Since this reality is constituted by individual existents – this 'man', this 'horse', the task then is to understand the internal structure of these things. The next task, for Aristotle, would be to look around and abstract the principles that would combine with the outside matter to

constitute the object in question. Aristotle contends that ‘things’ are compounds out of simple natures. They are called concrete simply because they are stuck together (Guthrie 1967, 127).

Aristotle was led into an investigation of the substratum that underlay all the things recognized as existing. The analysis of categories made Aristotle recognize that there are numerous ways of classifying ‘things’ – quantity, quality, relation, motion.... and substance. The category of substance was deemed the most important one in so far as the investigation of being was concerned. If there was no substance in existence, then there was nothing that was and no subject to speak about.

In his analysis of the world using the ideas of change and motion, Aristotle admits that there is matter and form Aristotle believed that the world in which we live could be known and different people had access to different kinds of knowledge. Some of the people were confined only to the evidence of their senses. He dismissed this way of knowing from being conceived as wisdom as it was confined to the ‘what’ of things; never did it attempt to answer the ‘why’ of things (Stump 1983, p. 83). Wisdom, for Aristotle is wider and richer than just what the senses provided.

It can be noted that with the Sophists onwards up to the time of Aristotle, Greek philosophy presumably had been established firmly as a system of thought considered peculiarly Greek. No efforts were made to acknowledge the contributions of non-Greeks to this meteoritic rise. This was unfortunate as it led to biases in the reporting of the rise of philosophy in the West. However the view of reality, knowledge and appearance coming out of these thinkers becomes convoluted. For Plato, reality is in the Forms located somewhere up there in the world of Forms. Intuition is the path to such genuine knowledge.

The senses only give us mere belief or opinion since they are confined to the world of appearances or the world of the visible objects. By contrast, Aristotle lays emphasis on concrete objects as the basis of reality, with the forms only inherent in these particulars. Stress was laid on sense observation. Thus there appears to have developed two conflicting ways of looking at reality and knowledge. Does the same problem arise in the philosophies after Aristotle?

3.7 Greek Philosophy after Aristotle

Although a significant number of philosophers came after Aristotle, this section highlights only the metaphysical and epistemological views of Pyrrho and Plotinus. The other philosophers don't take us anywhere new - Epicureanism and Stoicism were mostly significant in ethics. In addition their metaphysical views are atomism and material monism respectively. Stoics reached the peak of its classical development with Chrysippus. Stoicism identified reality with body and had an elaborate epistemology which buttressed a materialistic philosophy. The Stoics despised anyone who posited the existence of disembodied reality (Casey 1925, p. 41).

Stoic epistemology was anchored by two main arms sensation and comprehension. Sensation provided the materials for thought and comprehension arranged the materials in proper order and made knowledge possible. In this way, the mind made a direct and secure contact with the material reality. Sense certainties associated with some ideas in conjunction with the common assent given to some notions were taken as the determinants of Truth. Thus the problem of error was eliminated.

Concerning Epicurus, Professor A. Long says, "The foundation of Epicurus' theory of knowledge is sense-perception" (1986, p. 21).

Epicurus maintained that the senses were crucial in attaining knowledge of the world. For Epicurus, all sensations are true, even “visions seen by madmen or in dreams... for they stir the mind and that which is not real does not do so” (Matson 1987, p. 163). Epicurean and Stoic thought faced stiff challenge from the sceptics.

Much happened within the skeptic camp. Finally they reduced their arguments to two theses. One was: “nothing is self-evident”, and ‘nothing can be proved”. As was the case with their contemporaries, Skeptics wanted to develop personal peace. If we cannot know anything, then we cease to worry about whether or not we have the truth. We are free from the struggle to distinguish truth from falsehoods, the good from the bad. We can just accept what appears to be the case.

Skepticism was very significant in that it made philosophy self-critical and keeping itself free from dogmatism. They set a new agenda for philosophy. The successor had either to accept their position or work out new epistemologies free from skeptical attacks. Thus they inspired a lot of work in epistemology. Even St Augustine wrote against the skeptics of the Academy.

One of the philosophic movements which arose to counter scepticism was Neoplatonism. Neoplatonism has been traditionally regarded as having two centres; one at Athens and the other at Alexandria (Blumenthal 1986, p. 314). Alexandria was also very important for the dissemination of Platonic ideas just like Athens. It also produced figures that taught at Athens. Some such luminaries were - Hypatia and Hierocles, Hermias and his son Ammonius, Olympiodorus, Philoponus, Elias and David (Blumenthal 1986, p.314).

Initially, following Praetecher, it was believed that the Alexandrian school tended to concentrate on simpler metaphysical issues, which did not include the super – essential One (Blumenthal, p. 314). However, this view has changed following the works by Hadot, who argue that there was closer connection between the two centers than had been granted. Some of the facts that have emerged are that; Plutarch taught Hierocles as well as Syrianus and Proclus at Athens, and Syrianus taught Proclus and Hermias, whose son Ammonius attended Proclus' lectures. Ammonius in due course became head of the 'school' in Alexandria and taught Damascius and Simplicius, who made their careers at Athens, as well as members of the 'Alexandrian school', Philoponus, Olympiodorus and Asclepius (Blumenthal, p. 315).

Alexandrian thought was a rich synergy from a variety of scholars one of which was Clement, a contemporary of Plotinus (Witt 1931, p. 195). Although he is usually characterized as a theologian, he contributed significantly to the development of philosophy in late antiquity (Witt, p.195). Interestingly, Clement held with disdain the ideas of all other Greek philosophers except Plato. Thus from the very onset, there was an inherent conflict in Greek thought (Casey 1925, p. 40).

From Plato, Clement works out the idea of the God who transcends His creation. He also held that the idea of the Good was incapable of expression either in speech or writing, but comprehended only by a flash of intuition (Witt 1931, p.195). Witt suggests further that Clement probably borrowed other significant ideas from Posidonius, namely that, ' God is one, and He is not, as some suppose, outside this world-system but immanent therein, the whole of Him in the whole of its sphere, surveying all creation, the complete blend of the ages, the author of all His own powers

and works, the giver of light in heaven, Mind, the source of life for the whole sphere and of motion for all things' (Witt, p.196). Also important was the presence of the Logos in the world. With these ideas we see Clement interfacing with Ammonius and Plotinus.

Clement criticizes other philosophers, especially Stoics, for hylotheism. But seeks to preserve God's perfect goodness from contamination with the material world, yet he affirms the immanence of God. What is intriguing is that Greek philosophy ends where it begun – with religion (Witt 1931, p.102).

Plotinus who came after Clement claimed that, things with greatest reality are those with Unity. Accordingly to him, the greatest being is the One, which is wholly transcendent and incomprehensible (Dillon 1992, p. 192). To think of it requires ascribing properties to it. This in turn would entail that it has parts. However, the source of all properties is beyond any one of them and totally without plurality. Plotinus refers to the One by way of numerous names, such as God, the Good, First Existent, the Absolute, the Infinite, and the Father. The One is full and overflowing and all things emanate from it. However, the One remains the same.

The significance of Plotinus does not rest only on the fact that he advocated neo-Platonism, but in that he provided the connection between Ancient and Christian philosophy. Interestingly, Plotinus came from the least expected place - North Africa! Ammonius of Saccas in turn taught him at Alexandria. Not only was Plotinus' North African origin disputed by some Western scholars, his studies in Alexandria were downgraded (Langerbeck 1957, p. 67).

The question of Plotinus' African origins has been a centre of controversy. His disciple Porphyry had dodged that question in his *Life of Plotinus* (MacCoull 1999, p. 330). However according to the earliest account by Eunapius, Plotinus hailed from Lykopolis in Egypt (MacCoull, p. 330). Yet, other scholars had disputed this, admitting only that he was born in Lykopolis, Egypt in 205, but might as well be Greek. However MacCoull argues that a closer look of Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus*, particularly his manner of writing, puts to rest the issue of Plotinus' origins. (MacCoull, p. 330). A closer examination of his style of writing suggests that he was a member of the Hellenised African family (MacCoull, p. 330). In another issue examining the relationship between Plotinus, Ammonius and Origen, it was argued that it was improbable that Plotinus had studied the works of Origen, the reason being that he had studied in Africa under Ammonius (Langerbeck 1957, p. 67).

Plotinus maintained that the universe was One, which may be seen variously as; a collection of physical objects, the workings of the Soul, a system of Forms or as Absolute Unity (Dillon, 1992, p. 193). He also held that the universe was configured as hierarchical. However he also allowed a concentric model. The One or Absolute Unity is ranked highest, followed by Intellect and Soul. Accordingly, the various levels of reality were mediated by twin processes of procession or emanation and reversion (Dillon, 1992, p. 192). One wonders if the One in Plotinus' thought is the same as that of Heraclitus.

For Plotinus, the first emanation from the One is "nous". "Nous" can be translated as the intellect. "Nous" may also be referred as Intellectual Principle, Divine Mind, or Spirit (Armstrong 1937, 60).

As with the One, the intellect is indivisible in the sense that it cannot be dissolved into parts. However, unlike the One, it has distinguished aspects. These aspects are the knower and the objects of its knowledge. Accordingly, the intellect intuitively knows two objects—the One and itself (Armstrong 1937, p. 61).

Also emanating from Intellect is another reality called the Soul. Like it too is eternal and non-physical. It functions as a mediator between the spiritual realm and the world of senses and transforms the cosmos into one, living organism. The individual human souls are aspects of the World Soul (Rees 1952, p. 82).

Of the three primary realities emanating from the One, the Soul is restless and desires to exercise power. Hence it comes into the final emanation, which is the realm of matter. The whole of matter is just a privation of the real and the good. Although known primarily as dogmatic, Plotinus is also responsible for originating a strategy in philosophy traceable up to Descartes that of using sceptical doubt to counter scepticism (O'Meara 2000, p. 240)

Plotinus meant to explain what he considered to be the correct understanding of certain Platonic truths perversely interpreted by gnostics. Plotinus finds the gnostic idea that the world is the work of a demiurge who is ignorant, forgetful, mistaken; a world, therefore, that is the product of ignorance and error repulsive (O'Meara 2000, 243). Plotinus believes, however, that it is correct Platonism, in particular a correct interpretation of the *Timaeus*, to maintain that the world is the expression of comprehensive knowledge by a transcendent intellect, the “*nous*” (O'Meara 2000, 244).

Plotinus invests a lot of energy in a bid to show that transcendent Intellect possesses full knowledge and absolute truth. He contends that this can only obtain if, thought and its object are joined in this Intellect, in such a way that no mediation or externality separates them.

A conclusion that emerges from the sceptical arguments applied here by Plotinus has to be that no knowledge based on sense-perception can be claimed as immune from sceptical doubt. Plotinus follows the sceptical arguments to an extent that he sees the possibility of knowledge and truth in transcendent Intellect. Only if the conditions which the sceptical critique can exploit are removed, then mediation and externality separating subject and object of knowledge will also wither away (O'Meara 2000, p. 245). Thus knowledge in Intellect requires that subject and object of knowledge be unified, without externality and mediation. This requirement is satisfied by Plotinus' interpretation of transcendent Intellect as united with the Forms.

For Plato as for Plotinus, forms are the true objects of thought. Thus, the intellect and the forms, mesh into a kind of totally transparent mutual self-presence (O'Meara 2000, 245). Resultantly, Plotinus employs scepticism in order to isolate and discard all dogmatism grounded on externality and mediation in sense-perception. However, he maintained pure thought as infallible knowledge. Thus Plotinus employs scepticism to support the theory of Forms - a Platonic belief in the objects of pure intellection. One wonders whether this switch is not in itself another kind of dogmatism in which knowledge is grounded in a transcendent Intellect which thinks its objects of thought unmediated by the senses.

A rider needs to be observed here. Plotinus does not consider the knowledge obtained by the pure intellect as divorced entirely from the world of everyday life (O'Meara, p. 247). The transcendental intellect cannot err when it speaks about itself as it is also self-conscious. Hence, it can parry skeptical attacks unperturbed. Plotinus also used scepticism to argue about the Ineffable One. For him, speaking about the one is similar to speaking about ourselves. Since we cannot err while speaking about ourselves, the same is true when we speak about the One (O'Meara 2000, pp. 247-8)

We sometimes speak of the One as first cause but when we do, we would basically be expressing our own emotions, our own sense of limitation and dependence. This inadequacy spurs us to look for a firm foundation, which we are not. We cannot say what the One is in itself but we speak of our affection as they relate to the One. The sceptic too cannot claim to know external objects as they really are, but merely expresses his/her emotions. Thus Plotinus takes sense data not as corresponding to things-in-themselves but to personal affections (O'Meara 2000, p. 248). Thus, skepticism is employed to counter the force of skeptical arguments.

3.8 Conclusion

The conception of reality, appearance and knowledge among ancient Greek thinkers was perplexing to say the least. On the one hand, the missing acknowledgement of foreign influences implies that Greek culture was to be considered the only lighthouse guiding the navigation of humanity's dark intellectual terrain. Although older civilizations surrounding Greece existed, such as Egypt, Babylon, Phoenicia and Persia, the historiographical information on these thought patterns does not underscore the preponderance of foreign influences to the rise of this philosophy. Even if the ancient Egyptian culture, Babylon, Persia or Phoenicia interfaced with Greece, or even if there

might have been any other civilization with whom Greece interacted, it seems unlikely that such affect was going to be acknowledged. That most texts became extant is unfortunate but that Aristotle remained quiet about his visits to Egypt and other places is regrettable to say the least. Thus, the rise of ancient Greek philosophy is presented as an intellectual revolution within Greece itself unaided by external influences. Greek culture becomes the pinnacle of unparalleled originality. All the other ancient civilizations were no match to Greek genius.

On the other hand, however, even within the Greek culture there were varied and competing conceptions of reality and knowledge. Starting with the poets in the earliest phase of Greek thought, it can be argued that the religious-mythical conception made the divine factor paramount. The gods controlled everything in the world. In a world so described, it was impossible for knowledge of reality to be guaranteed. Furthermore, no poet could be trusted as a harbinger of truth. There was every need to supplant their views with dependable modes of knowledge. The conception of the supremacy of heavenly hosts began to wane as the Milesian thinkers, approached the subject from a proto-scientific perspective. Reality was no longer explained in terms of mythical terms, but from the perspective of experience or reason or both. Although conflicting conceptions of the same reality abound, at least one thing is clear - that the conception of the world and what was real changed. Generally two opposed camps arose: the monists and the pluralists. The monists saw reality as one indivisible and ordered universe – a continuum. By contrast, the pluralists saw the universe as constituted of a variety of natures coming out of the multiple distributions of atoms. With respect to knowledge; there were those who venerated reason as the sure access to reality, for example Parmenides and Plato. But there were also those who prided in the evidence of

the senses, for example Empedocles and Aristotle. These different conceptions have often led to despair since; it is the intellectual conflicts that arose out of the different conceptions of the same reality that seemed to lead to an impasse. The resultant despair was remarkably manifest in skepticism. However the rise of Plotinus rekindled the rationalism of Plato into the new era. Yet in that era too, the empiricism of Aristotle refused to be stifled. The same struggles between reason and experience continued to manifest in the medieval period as we shall see in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

GOD AS THE ONTOLOGICAL REALITY AND AUTHOR OF KNOWLEDGE

4.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter sought to establish how the history of ancient Greek philosophy has been represented. Apparently Greek philosophy was presented as a beacon of originality. This manner of representation shovelled North African civilizations, out of the limelight and declared them virtually impotent as progenitors of philosophy. As a result, Ancient philosophy came to be seen as having grown spontaneously from within Greek culture. This representation was meant to scoff the possibility of foreign influence on the rise of philosophy. However, as it has turned out these claims to ingenuity are significantly embellished as there appears to be a preponderance of foreign influences. It has also emerged that even within this single culture, competing conceptions of reality and knowledge have emerged. The world-views of the poets, which put everything in the hands of the gods, were discarded in favour of those of the natural philosophers. The philosophers in turn were at odds as to what constituted this reality. For some reality was One and the intellect directly apprehended this fact. However, for others, reality had many hues and figures and our senses had a torrid time as they tried to access to this manifold.

This chapter focuses on the historiography of medieval philosophy and the effect this had on the African contribution to the story of philosophy. This will be done by focusing on how medieval thinkers understood reality, knowledge and appearance. The chapter seeks also to show that since Western civilization is a direct progeny of the

antecedent civilizations namely, Greek and Roman, some of the conspicuous Western practices were inherited from these antecedent civilizations.

4.2. Africa Interfaces with Rome

Much of medieval thought occurred during the time of Roman rule. North Africa too came to be involved in a significant way. According to Hague there is at least a Roman flavour in everything almost the world over – law, politics, economics, norms and even spirituality (Hague 1925, p. 264). The celebration of Roman prowess and ingenuity has profound implications as it appears to overshadow African cultures among others.

The prominence of Rome seems unparalleled. As Fulford observes, “Rome was the first and only polity to control the Mediterranean ... In addition to its Mediterranean empire, Rome gained supremacy over a large part of continental Europe” (Fulford 1992, p. 294). In North Africa as in other parts of the world, Romans conquered and transformed those communities along their own lines. This was called ‘Romanization’.

Traditional accounts of Roman imperialism and its cultural consequences in the West told the story of the expansion of one civilization at the expense of its neighbours. Roman conquerors and rulers were credited with disseminating styles of art, technologies, cults and customs which were imagined to be already widespread within the Greco-Roman Mediterranean, replacing or marginalizing pre-Roman forms in the process. This pattern of cultural change was referred to as Romanization, (a term now used in various senses), but then understood in its simplest form as the spread of what was Roman at the expense of what was not (Woolf, 1997, p. 339).

It goes without saying then, that through Romanization, local cultures were exterminated. The non-Roman world had to be destroyed in order to create room for the later. North African cultures were not spared. Yet, the salient feature was the contribution of North Africa to medieval thought.

During the period in question, the Romans had taken possession of the territory initially controlled by the Carthaginians, and ruled it (Fentress 2006, p. 22) The occupation by the Romans of the territory formerly occupied by Carthaginians was inimitable in that the Romans wanted to make sure that all potential threats were eliminated before any development projects were initiated.

Yet, much as the Romans had subjugated a large chunk of North Africa, the threat of Africa to Roman interests real or imaginary was always lurking in the background. The relationship between the Romans and their new found province was characterized by a deep fear and suspicion. There was always the danger that North Africa could be filched away by others.

In generally however, the Romans saw themselves as naturally superior to the Africans whom they were supposed to rule. They celebrated their ingenuity and superiority:

Roman discourse rehearses attitudes of superiority over Africa and Africans. When Romans looked upon the literature produced about Rome they saw the familiar, traditional, stable visions of their own, known community. By contrast, their literature told them that Africa was an unfamiliar, chaotic land where, in the words of Gerald Bonner, "there was a spiritual void, a dark world peopled with demons and hostile powers, always waiting to seize their victim ... They were haunted by fear of magic and the Evil Eye ... " This Northern Mediterranean attitude would persist in literature for centuries after Augustine's death. Isidore of Seville reports in his *Etymologies* (Part II, XI.3.17) that in Libya [his name for Numidia] there are monsters called "Blemmyes...believed to be headless trunks, having mouth and eyes in the breast; others are born without necks." (Troup 1995, p. 98)

North Africa was very important to Rome even though the Romans despised the local cultures. The importance could be seen in a number of respects – agriculturally, politically and intellectually (Quinn 2003, pp.5-6). North Africa also produced prominent figures in intellectual circles.

Of note are Fronto of Cirta, Symmachus from Carthage and Apuleius to mention just a few. These figures were prominent in literature and philosophy. Furthermore, Africa contributed to the spread of Christianity in the West, through luminaries such as Tertullian and Cyprian.

It was in this great tradition of Roman Africa that St. Augustine arose. Saint Augustine was among the greatest in intellectual power and one of the most voluminous of all Christian writers. Yet, very few writers have ever noticed that he was critical of the Roman political and cultural hegemony. Canter sums it all up in this observation: "It is quite certain that from both sides alike he derived the embarrassment of belonging to a conquered people racially different from their conquerors" (p. 98). The Romans attempted to Latinize the African provinces. Their success in this regard was judged by the remark that Africa became the "nurse of pleaders", due to the quality and reputation of the schools of rhetoric (Canter, p. 99). Although Augustine became so cultured in Latin to a point where his Numidian origins became obscure, some of his biographers maintain that he remained loyal to the continent:

Even the fully Latinized African of the fourth century remained somewhat alien. In the days of their swaggering affluence in the second and third centuries, Roman culture had taken a significantly different turn in their hands. They strike us as 'Baroque' rather than classical men. The gifted African, for instance, delighted in the sheer play of words, in puns, rhymes and riddles; as a bishop, Augustine will be hugely admired by his congregation, for being superbly able to provide a display of verbal firework (Peter Brown, Quoted in Canter, p. 99).

A clear sense remains that even at the use of language; Africans were not amiable to Roman colonization. Sometimes they tended to depict their own local cultures. Thus in the case of Augustine, he was not quite Roman (Canter, p.99).

Consequently, Augustine could be considered an “African elite” cultivated by Rome. The biographers judge him as an African after all. Augustine also identified himself as such:

Augustine himself reveals his identification with Africa and Africans by implication and also explicitly. In the Confessions his best friends in Italy Alypius, Nebridius, Victorinus, and Poticianus - are all Africans. And in the letter which Frend judged to be an empty parade of African patriotism, Augustine "told a correspondent ... that he should remember how he was 'an African, writing for Africans, both of us living in Africa" (Brown 1967, p.127).

Thus ambivalence surrounds Augustine's identity – African and nearly Roman. When biographers discover that Augustine is African, they tend to disown him and force him back to Africa. According to Rebecca West:

But the Romans had imposed a standard of values which set their values above African values. When the Africans bent Latin to their own purposes, it was taken for granted that they were spoiling it ... Whenever African and Roman practice differed, it was taken for granted that the Africans were wrong (West, p. 20).

Rebecca West concludes by the observation that Augustine was aware of his inferior status compared to the other Roman notables:

At the thought of that polished and clannish society any provincial would feel himself clumsy and isolated, even if he knew that he had power within him such as none of these metropolitans could possibly claim. Such was the case with Augustine. . .[he] lived with barbarism at his back, on the fringe of a civilization which stood to him for a refinement and self-possession which he at once hated and envied; and... .was ashamed of his envy because of his consciousness that the crude strength he drew from his barbaric soil was worth infinitely more than any refinement and self-possession (Rebecca West 1982, pp.23-4).

Canter contends that Rebecca West and the other biographers of Augustine do not seem to be open to the possibility that Augustine was very positive about his homeland and not see it as lying at the fringes of human civilization.

Further he contends that perhaps Augustine had no envy for Roman culture, much the same way the African Catholic Church developed detached from Rome. Thus it was Roman prejudice to regard the African culture as marginal and barbarous (Quinn, 2003)

The rise of Christian philosophy was an important marker in the history of philosophy. Picking from ancient Greek philosophy, it interfaces with some of its ideas and becomes a formidable force in the history of the West. As Lawhead puts it:

The rise of Christianity is an important turning point in the story of philosophy, for it overlapped with the decline of the Roman Empire and of Greco-Roman or Hellenistic philosophy. From very tenuous beginnings, it went on to dominate the intellectual life of Western Europe. (2002, p. 111)

Thus the rise of medieval philosophic and Christian thought in the West was punctuated by the heavy presence of Hebraic and African factors. Few histories produced in the West acknowledge this point. Instead, Clement, Philo, Plotinus, and a host others are just sucked and appropriated by the West to feed into their heritage unqualified. The story of the African contribution to intellectual history and to philosophy needs to be duly emphasized.

Visibly manifest in medieval thought, particularly the thought of St. Augustine, was the determination to develop a unitary and coherent world-view. This hankering overrode all other considerations, and tended to camouflage potential inconsistencies. According to Louis Dupre, the Medieval thinkers were not primarily concerned with trying to resolve the conflicts generated by the various ideas about the world emanating especially in Greek thought but simply adopted the idea of nature within the doctrine of creation (1993, p. 29).

In Medieval culture, however, it can be discerned that the idea of ‘reality’ was held with great esteem simply because the said reality was able to establish order and harmony in thought. Even though there appeared to be opposition in the thinking of its Greek antecedent as to what the real was, as opposed to mere appearances and how one was to attain real knowledge of the true nature of reality, the middle Ages managed successfully to harmonize the divergent views into a somewhat coherent vision. It was impossible to conceive of the all-inclusive concept of the *kosmos* to exist in Israel. The world was created out of nothing and sustained by Yahweh. This creation story from Israel was apparently less integrated and unified unlike the Greek *kosmos* and naturally bound to clash with the divine nature of the Greek *kosmos*. Christian thinkers insisted that creation originated from God’s free act. Yet for the Greeks, the free creating act would have destroyed nature.

4.3 Each Individual is Endowed With Self- Knowledge

Augustine made metaphysics a central concern of his philosophical quest. This may not be surprising, given that he was a theologian. However, some commentators notably, W. T. Jones suggest that, there was more to Augustine’s intellectual disposition than the demands of his ecclesiastical office. Jones argues: “Anyone with a philosophical mind, even one who is deeply religious, is primarily concerned with the nature of reality” (Jones 1969, p. 84). Jones’ contention is that metaphysical inquiries are primarily man’s ultimate concern. This is quite a perfectly legitimate claim, since from time immemorial and from different angles; man has been baffled by the idea of reality.

Augustine’s concern with metaphysics makes him part of a long tradition of philosophers interested in the nature of the universe.

He joins, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Plato, Aristotle and Democritus, among others. This tradition of philosophy has been coined the ‘mainstream tradition’ because the philosophers in general held the view that the “primary function of philosophy is to know and describe what there is” (Gracia 1992, p. 2).

Attention to Augustine would disclose interesting insights into his idea of reality and people’s knowledge of it. Since Augustine has been classified as belonging to the mainstream tradition, he inherited and in turn bequeathed a certain view of reality. In particular, he adopted the Platonic conception of reality. The only substantial difference between Augustine and his predecessors in the tradition was his theological orientation, whereas the others were secular. In the words of Jones,

[His] was not the desire to solve the problem of knowledge that led him to investigate the nature of reality, nor was it the hope of providing a firm basis for social ethics. His motive was the will to find a satisfactory object of religious faith. What he found therefore was a different kind of reality from theirs. Whereas Plato or Democritus employed either a relatively neutral term like “form” or “atom”, or an ethically coloured term, like “the Good,” to designate what they held to be ultimate reality, Augustine used a purely religious term - “God” (Jones 1970, p. 84).

Instantaneously, one can notice that Augustine’s view of reality was influenced by his most profound intellectual disposition – worship. This theological axle directed his views and made him carve a significant tint to the conception of the same, made by his predecessors. He baptized the secular conception of reality.

Even if his main interest were in metaphysics, the epistemological reflections were illuminating. Augustine’s focus on theological ideas such as ‘God’ need not make his metaphysical contributions baser compared to those of his non-theological predecessors.

As a matter of fact, F. H. Bradley warns against the temptation of taking differences between secular metaphysics and theology to extremes. For Bradley, metaphysics and religion interface:

All of us, I presume, more or less, are led beyond the region of ordinary facts. Some in one way and some in others, we seem to touch and have communion with what is beyond the visible world. In various manners, we find something higher, which both supports and humbles, both chastens and transports us. And, with certain persons, the intellectual effort to understand the universe is a principal way of thus experiencing the Deity. No one, probably, who has not felt this, however differently he might describe it, has ever cared much for metaphysics. And, wherever it has been felt strongly, it has been its own justification (Quoted in Jones: *Medieval Mind*, pp. 84-5).

In Augustine's conceptual schema, God equals reality. A similar point is made by Origen who compares the whole universe to God's temple (Davies 1988, p. 740). This view would have been acceptable to Plato since for him, as Jones puts it, "... the intellectual effort to understand the universe is a principal way of experiencing a Deity" (Jones 1970, p. 85). God or reality had very important and inalienable qualities as Augustine saw it – not only was He immutable, but was also creative, eternal and all good. It is also important to discern that although Augustine regarded God as the perfect source of all things that are unlike the neo-Platonists who chose to explain this idea through the doctrine of emanation, he chose creation. For Augustine, God was not like a fountain. There was a deep sense in which he could not be identified with his creatures. More seriously, God was incomprehensible and ineffable. At best he is described by negatives; best known by nascence; best adored in silence (Inge 1900, p. 335). Thus, according to Inge, Augustine follows Plotinus in asserting that God, the One, is beyond everything (p.336). Accordingly, God is absolutely immutable. In addition, Augustine presented reality as having three natures, which stood in a hierarchy of God, Souls and bodies in an ascending scale. In the first instance, there is corporeal nature which changes.

There is however another nature, namely the spiritual, which does not change. Thirdly, there is God. In one of the letters, Augustine has this to say:

The natures of which I have said that they are mutable in some respect are called creatures; the Nature, which is immutable, is called Creator. Seeing, however, that we affirm the existence of anything only in so far as it continues and is one (in consequence of which, unity is essential to beauty in every form), you cannot fail to distinguish, in this classification of natures, which exist in the highest possible manner, and which occupies the low place, yet within the range of existence, and which occupies the middle, greater than the low, but coming short of the highest. That highest is essential blessedness; the low, that which cannot be either blessed or wretched; and the immediate nature lives in wretchedness when it stoops towards that which is low and in blessedness when it turns towards that which is highest. He who believes in Christ does not sink his affections in that which is low, is not proudly self-sufficient in that which is intermediate, and thus he is qualified for union and fellowship with that which is highest; and this is the sum of the active life to which we are commanded, admonished, and by holy zeal impelled to aspire (Letter 18, 2).

With respect to these natures Augustine contends that the lowest level of nature is characterized by all the things that are subject to alteration. There is change, growth, reproduction and other biological activities and physical events are infinitesimal ‘seeds’ (*rationes seminales*), created by God in the nature of matter. Seminal reasons are hidden principles in things which make given species of things behave in particular ways, for instance man begets man, beans beget beans, flies beget flies and so on. All these changes take place in time, which is the duration characteristic of creature in question. No mosquito lasts for twenty years!

In his epistemological excursions, Augustine struggled with the question of how the human intellect had access to the reality in question. Augustine wrestled with twin problems of knowledge - whether we know the truth and or if we do how we know the truth and the extent of this knowledge. His response to the first is clear and severe critique of skepticism.

His response to the second was the doctrine of illumination, which replaced Plato's doctrine of the reminiscence and Aristotle's doctrine of abstraction (Mondi 1991, p. 88). It was after all, possible to know reality through the process of internality. Part of what he did was to identify and discard sensitive ideas. For him, man had a whole range of ideas, complete and independent of the senses, such as number, the good, the true, the beautiful, equality, wisdom and such other concepts. He does not accept that such ideas could come from the senses neither does he concede that they are innate. Rather he contends that they come about through the process of divine illumination.

For Augustine, there are certain minimal truths, which cannot be doubted. Among them are the indubitable truths of mathematics and logic, for these were in possession of complete universality, necessity, and immutability. These characteristics argues Augustine, cannot belong to sense knowledge. Knowledge derives from experience cannot account for our holding of certain mathematical propositions such as $A^2 + B^2 = C^2$ to be true and others to be false. On the contrary, we use mathematics in our interpretation of experience as regulative. Neither number nor mathematical operations are of empirical origin, and under no circumstance should we regard any empirical state of affairs as capable of producing evidence against their validity.

The notion of unity, which Augustine holds is involved in the conception of number. This is a clear example of what might be called "categorical" nature of mathematical concepts. Augustine contends that unity is never an empirical datum: objects we meet in experience are always made up of parts, and endlessly divisible into parts.

Augustine has stretched the analogy of mathematical and similar types of knowledge with empirical knowledge to limits.

He had no conception of the radical distinction between empirical knowledge and what later philosophers like Kant called *a priori*. Augustine made knowledge of 'eternal truths' a kind of empirical knowledge, superior to that derived from sense – experience only in that it is accessible to the mind without the intermediary of the body, and not subject to the uncertainties and relativities to which sense-experience is subject.

Augustine thought of the nature of experience as analogous to bodily sight. He often treats it simply as a kind of seeing; "Understanding is the same thing for the mind as seeing is for the bodily senses"; reason is the mind's sight, whereby it perceives truth through itself, without the intermediary of the body [De ord. ii. 3. 10; De Immortalitate Animae 6.10]

Markus suspects Augustine's view that knowledge was a kind of seeing had led him to develop the theory that mathematics and logical knowledge have to have objects just as sight has to have something to see or that, the theory of 'eternal truths' existed in their own right as independent objects of intellectual knowledge suggested that the way they are known is somehow analogous to the way that the independently existing objects of sight are seen. According to Markus, the question is difficult to resolve because there are hints in Augustine's work for both approaches (Markus 1964, p. 87). Markus (1964) further suggests that under the influence of Plato, the two views took shape in his mind together and were developed by him into a characteristically Augustinian view of knowledge founded on the theory of illumination. According to this theory thinking and reasoning discover their objects - never do they create them.

Accordingly, Augustine held mathematical, logical and moral truths are all equally clear and inescapable in his eyes. On the basis of this, he sought to develop a set of these indubitable truths into “wisdom” – all that is contained in the object we seek to know through philosophizing. It should not escape the reader that Augustine combined mathematical propositions with moral judgements into a class of certain truths. Thus, he widened the class of ‘eternal truths’ which become the intelligible reality, wholly transparent to understanding and, at any rate, wholly certain and completely real. Augustine identifies this intelligible world with the divine mind known to itself timelessly and in its own rich fullness, and containing the archetypal ideas of all created things. He further identifies this with God’s creative wisdom – the Word of God or Logos.

Augustine speaks of the intelligible world as a mental vision. This analogy of seeing and understanding is deeply rooted in his thought as are all thoughts cast in the Platonic form. Plato had used the analogy of light extensively in his works in demonstrating the relationship between knowledge and opinion, and of the respective objects – the forms and the material world. Intellectual light emanates from the supreme form of goodness and illuminates even the inferior forms thereby rendering them intelligible. The mind that understands these objects - like the sun, which illuminates other objects – makes other objects visible by illuminating over them. For Augustine, the forms are within the divine mind and the intellectual light, which renders them intelligible, is a divine illumination within the human mind. Augustine speaks of these in different ways – as the mind’s participation in the Word of God, as God’s interior presence to the mind, as Christ’s dwelling in the human soul and teaching the mind from within.

For Augustine, as for Plato, knowledge of the intelligible world was acquired independently of experience. Plato had accounted for the knowledge of the forms, of mathematical truths in terms of 'reminiscence. This theory represents *a priori* knowledge as left in the form of memory of another pre- and supra mundane life when it was at home among the forms and beheld them directly. Augustine seems to have been initially attracted by this theory but dumped it, since the presumption of a pre-existent human soul presented one with insurmountable theological difficulties. According to Augustine, the intellectual soul is inserted in someone by the Creator - into the natural order of intelligible realities. In addition the forms - divine ideals and eternal truths – are not produced by the mind remembering something deposited in it some time ago, but it continually discovers the light perpetually present in the mind. However the precise manner in which the divine light produces knowledge in the human mind is not clear.

The importance of Augustine in Western thought is beyond question. Michael Loriaux, observes that Augustine's thought resonates into the twentieth century (1992, p. 401) Other scholars notably Niebuhr (1953) refer to Augustine as the "first great realist in Western history (quoted in Loriaux 1992, p. 401). Augustine was also very influential in spiritual matters (Hazelton 1947, p. 91). In philosophy, the inwardness which is characteristic of modern philosophy can be traced back to Augustine. According to Spencer,

"It is most probable that this inward turning in philosophy, which was accomplished during the period of transition called the Middle Ages was brought about by the predominant influence of that age, namely religion or specifically the Christian religion. If this is true, the alteration in attitude should reveal itself as taking place in the great transition figures of the Middle Ages. Perhaps more than anyone else, St Augustine is the philosopher who stands at the turning point between ancient and modern thought. He lives his life through, things his thoughts, and writes his philosophy in the midst of the most turbulent epoch of

change to be found anywhere in the ages between Greek illumination and the modern rebirth of philosophy. St. Augustine exerted a formative influence upon the philosophy of the Middle Ages, including what is called Scholastic philosophy” (1931, p. 462).

Augustine is well received in the West. His ideas have made tremendous impact on the intellectual landscape of the West. He is appropriated by the West to a point where even in some of his portraits; he is indistinguishable from the Westerners. A case in point is the portrait by the French painter Carle Van Loo (1705-65) depicting the young priest delivering a sermon (Asher 1988, p. 228). The fact that Augustine was African did not matter to them, but that he was a Roman did.

4.4 Everything Flows From God And Back To Him

Augustine influenced thinkers immediately after him in profound ways. His theory of knowledge had tremendous impact on his successors who interpreted it in a variety of ways. Gregory of Nyssa, and Pseudo-Dionysius may be selected as immediate heirs of Augustinian Neo-Platonism (Peroli 1997, p. 126).

Some of the most significant ideas of Pseudo-Dionysius are borrowed either from Proclus or Plotinus and Augustine. Dionysius held that the world emanates from God, but more radically, that we cannot comprehend God. The only way forward in our quest to approach Him is through what he calls *positive* or *the negative way*. The positive way begins from a universal notion and progresses to accord God a particular title. Thus titles such as Goodness, Life, Wisdom, Power are applicable to God in the transcendental manner and that they only apply to creatures in so far as these are derived from God and the various degrees at which they participate in those qualities which are found in God in substantial oneness (Copleston 1994, p. 93).

Though there are many attributes ascribed to God, Pseudo- Dionysius contends, we must always realize that His Divine Nature is incomprehensible in the sense that his remoteness from the world makes all efforts by those in the world to describe him fruitless. Inevitably, we adopt a *negative theology*, which denies the *affirmative theology*. We must therefore hold that God is not any of the predicates ascribed to Him and that we only approach Him through our ignorance. We know him most by admitting that we are ignorant of His Nature. We reconcile this with the adoption of a third way, i.e. *symbolic or superlative theology* by which God is called Super – (x) (Copleston 1994, p. 94). This class of attributes includes all the “super-goods”. This is justifiable in that, since God is the source of everything in the world, then He must be superlatively everything. So the universe is a symbolic manifestation of God and falls short of its source, without losing touch of it. Copleston interprets Pseudo-Dionysius as saying God is distinct from the world. He exists indivisibly and without multiplication of Himself in all individual, separate and multiple things. Though the things participate in the goodness, which springs from Him, God is not himself involved in their multiplication.

Pseudo-Dionysius conceives the world as proceeding from God in a ranking fashion through to inorganic constituents of the world. Corresponding to the celestial hierarchy is also the ecclesiastical one of sacraments - baptism, Eucharist and anointment. Those who administer them were the bishops, priests, Deacons. Things flow from Super-substance down to the ordinary in that order. Just as they flow downwards, there is also a flow upwards as these various natures, as it were, return to the source. They have a strong craving to be re-united with the Source. One cannot escape the parallel with the Neoplatonists.

The journey back to the Source by the various things is a kind of self-knowledge. In the case of people, faith and prayer of contemplation, which is the yearning after re-union, elevates the soul to higher stages towards the Source.

4.5 Truth Lies Hidden Within the Soul

As with Augustine, Boethius considers philosophical reasoning to be very important. Augustine's *Confessions* are simultaneously a story of Augustine's conversion and a search for the whole through dialogic encounter with the self and with God. In the *Consolation*, Lady Philosophy questions, confutes, and leads Boethius from a short-sighted view of his depressing condition as a prisoner to a more comprehensive, rational understanding of his place in a providentially ordered, totally beneficent reality (Olmsted 1989, p.15). In both Augustine and Boethius' cases, reasoning plays a central role in checking the authenticity of beliefs, in correction distorted perceptions and fantasies, and in the rejection of the claims of partial truths to be adequate to the whole (Olmsted, p. 16). In short, philosophy is not only important for the acquisition of knowledge, but also for the regulation of life.

Boethius also made a significant contribution to the conceptualization of reality. For him, God is subsistent Wisdom, which caused all other things to exist, and illuminating men's minds with truth and drawing them to him by Love. He followed Augustine in trying to combine reason with faith and making philosophy the pursuit and love of God.

Boethius adopts Plato's notion of the 'pre-existence of the souls and their fall into bodies. He compares the soul to a tender plant forcibly bent down to earth. When released, it springs back towards heaven.

The truth must be sought within oneself by the interior light (soul) and by deep meditation. For one to get the 'true treasure' of oneself, one must repress the tendency to turn his gaze to the sensible world. Truth lies hidden within the soul, but its light has been darkened by contact with the sensible world, especially the body. However, it has not been extinguished. Learning consists of recovering the lost treasure by the reflexive activity on itself. Boethius considers the mind to be active, rather than passive in the process of knowing. He admits that the soul also receives knowledge from the sensible world. Thus he worked against the Stoics who had considered the mind to be a *tabula rasa* – a blank page or window on which sense experience writes certain characters. The mind, for Boethius has active powers of combining, dividing, grasping each item presented by the senses and analyzing these items into parts. Thus Boethius was against the Stoic view that the mind simply mirrored the external world. For Boethius, the senses have a role in knowledge. The body, through the senses stirs the souls' intelligence. Thus he says in one of the passages; "The qualities of external objects affect the sense-organs, and the activity of the mind is preceded by a bodily movement that calls forth the mind's action upon itself and stimulates the forms until then lying inactive within"(Miller 2009, pp.2-3). The mind is thus hidden with hidden ideas that need only stimulation of the senses to become objects of knowledge. Ideas are not abstracted from the sense world; rather we are born with them as memories of a previous experience.

In this life however, our highest cognitive power is marked by reason. Below it are other less powerful cognitive faculties of sense and imagination. Above reason is the intelligence, which is basically a divine faculty. Sensible objects are nothing but figures clothed with matter – e.g. the shape of a man in the human substance.

Imagination pictures the human figure alone without matter (Miller, p.3). Reason transcends this figure and contemplates the universal nature contained in the individual e.g. humanity in individual men. The eye of intelligence sees beyond all these powers. Transcending the whole universe, it beholds simple forms in themselves unmediated by the senses. The human soul, which was once capable of direct intellectual intuitions, is now confined to reason because of its location in the human body and the senses. Occasionally however, it receives glimpses of its true home and has a burning yearning to return to it (Aguas, 2009).

Boethius' treatment of the matter is quite comprehensive since he used more Aristotle than did Augustine. In the *Consolation*, he founds his ideas on Plato and Aristotle and adapts their ideas to explain a personal God, the Creator and providential Governor of his creatures governed the universe.

In the main, Boethius' philosophy of knowledge is Platonic. For him, universal ideas are inborn. These are impressions of the pure forms as seen by the divine mind in the previous life. For Boethius, the central problem concerning universals is whether they are real or simply conceptions of the mind. The two seem to be the only alternative answers yet they appear impossible. If the species 'man' or the genus 'animal' were a reality, it would be a Single Reality because everything real is One in number. However, 'man' and 'animal' are common to many at one and the same time. Man is common to many individual men and 'animal'; common to many species.

If universals are mere concepts, then they either correspond to some reality or they do not. They cannot correspond to reality since there cannot be a universal reality. In the second sense, since if no reality corresponds to our universal concept, then that concept

does not represent reality, and hence it becomes a false concept. Boethius is thus in a dilemma. He turns to one of Aristotle's commentators Alexander of Aphrodisias, who tells us that in order for our concepts to be true, they need not represent things as they are in reality. For him, we can form a true concept of a line without extension, although a line cannot exist without a body. Falsity, according to Alexander, only occurs when we combine in our minds what cannot be combined in reality. For example, when we combine man and horse in our imagination and construct a centaur. Our senses present things to us in a state of mixture and confusion. They transmit, apart from bodies themselves, other realities such as lines, surfaces and three-dimensional objects. Our minds have the power to abstract these incorporeal realities from bodies and to consider them in themselves (Sirkel, 2011). Genera and species are realities of this sort. They are in corporeal in nature, but they exist in sensible bodies, but they can be understood apart from them. The process is simple. When we look at things, we notice likeness in these several individuals. When this likeness is conceived by the intellect, it becomes a species.

Species is the concept formed from substantial likeness of individuals numerically distinct. We may, for example, observe individual men and see that they are alike in being human. It is this likeness that the mind conceives in the species 'man'. A genus in turn is a concepts gathered from the likeness of species. The likenesses in question as found in individual things, are sensible but they become intelligible as they are conceived by the intellect. Thus universals are two modes of being – in reality and in thought. In reality they exist in sensible bodies but in the mind, they can be thought of independent of bodies.

This is how Alexander comments on Aristotle's problem of universals. The Aristotelian conception of universals as is evident differs from that of Plato. Boethius refuses to point who between the two is correct.

In the *De Trinitate*, Boethius asserts that everything owes its being (*esse*) to form. For example a statue is not one by virtue of the materials that make it up, but on account of its likeness to a living thing, which is its Form. Form determines a thing to be the kind of thing it is, and in so doing, gives the thing its being (*esse*). God is pure form without matter. He lacks all the compositions and thus is absolutely one. Creatures on the other hand are composed of parts. A human being for instance, is made up of body and soul. He is neither of the constituent parts separately.

Strictly speaking, Boethius holds that form cannot exist in matter but only their images or reflections. Pure Forms are ideas in the Divine mind; the forms we see in the sensible world are participating in the divine Ideas. Thus for Boethius, universals are subsistent Realities. They do not require matter; they do not reside in individual things except as Ideas in God's mind.

4.6. Nature Is the Sum of Reality

John Scotus Eriugena follows in the great tradition opened by the likes of St. Augustine. He exhibits a unique way of conceptualising reality even if like Augustine he draws from the Platonic reservoir. Eriugena's starting point was the nature of reality. According to him, reason creates its own truth. This means God is the creator of the external manifestation of Himself. This is his understanding of God's creation "ex nihilo" (Moran 1978, p. 100).

This process of creation is also the initial phase of God's self-definition. As such, it is incomplete in that God is yet to know Himself fully. Moran advances the process of creation further as he adds:

This outward procession from God must be matched by a similar return to Him, by the very circle of Nature, on which Eriugena depends. This procession and return of the world, is of course talking at a metaphysical level, abstracting from temporal history (Moran 1978, p. 100).

Thus for Eriugena, rationality is not just one of man's inherited gifts, but is also a divine quality - an openness to experience - is actually writing its own scenes. Accordingly, the mind is responsible for the very fact of the visible and sensible world. We are prone to accept the reality of "things" because they are caused by us (Moran 1978, p. 100).

John Scotus Eriugena maintains that everything could be classified as, either "things that are" or "things that are not" (Jones 1969, p. 173). Taken together, the "things that are" and the "things that are not" are called "nature." Eriugena considered Nature to be the sum of reality. Apparently, John Scotus Eriugena does not make the distinction between what scholars came to identify as 'being' and 'nothingness'. For Eriugena, the category of 'things that are not' is not empty, that is, inhabited by nothing. In fact the category of 'things that are not' that is 'non-being' has several modes of being. It includes the class of sinful people, who through their depravation have lost their integral nature. It also includes the changing particulars since what becomes cannot be strictly speaking categorized as either 'being' or 'non-being'. The third mode is that of potential nature since what is potential is not yet actualized, neither is it completely ruled out. The last mode involves natures of superior reality, those that are 'beyond the human intellect.'

John Scotus makes the submission that true reality is made up of only those nature that are exclusively apprehended directly by the intellect without mediation or assistance (Jones 1969, p. 174). Reality in general was divided into two, true reality and facade reality.

These aspects had to be synthesized to produce a richer and more complete picture of nature. In addition, John Scotus regarded the 'Good' to be beyond knowledge and 'being' and classified it under the category of 'things that were not' because just like the particulars which were inferior to the proper objects of knowledge, it was too superior to be apprehended by the intellect. This line of thought Scotus adopted from the neo-Platonists. His only innovation was to identify the 'Good' with God (Jones, 1969, p. 174). Thus for John Scotus, God was a nature 'beyond being' and hence fitting to be classified under 'things that are not'.

In a bid to address problems such an explication roused for Christianity, John Scotus contends that, there were two ways of approaching God by finite minds, the affirmative and the negative. The affirmative consisted of asserting for instance that God is being, that He is good, although such assertions were not wholly true, neither would they be wholly false. They were potentially misleading unless supplemented by the corresponding negative assertions. For him, if it were to be said that, 'God is Being', it was also required to say, 'He is Non-being too'. The same was true for any other additional predications. Both the affirmative and the negative assertions independently, would be misleading. Were it to be said that 'God is not being', surely this would not mean that, 'He is nothing'. God would be 'non-being', not because he is less being, but because he is more than being.

He would be labelled 'bad', simply because he is more than good. Thus all claims made in the affirmative must be supplemented by assertions in the negative and vice versa. Instead of making a pair of assertions every time, John combined the affirmative and the negative into a single assertion that 'God is supra Good':

God then, is called essence, but properly he is not essence, to whom nothing is opposed; therefore he is ...super-essential. Likewise he is called goodness, but properly he is not goodness for evil is opposed to goodness; therefore [he is] super-good, more than good... We are obliged to understand in the same way concerning...truth. For falsity is opposed to truth, and for this reason properly he is not truth, therefore he is....more than true, and more than truth. He is not properly called eternity, since temporality is opposed to eternity; therefore he is... more than eternal and, more than eternity.... He is called essence, truth, wisdom and many other things of this kind not properly but transitively (Jones 1969, p. 174).

John Scotus Eriugena subdivided nature in his analysis of all there was. This was only methodical since nature was truly speaking - One and 'beyond being'. The division in question was conceived for pragmatic purposes of an analysis of nature. First, was the Nature that creates and is uncreated (God), second, the nature that creates and is created (Platonic archetypes), third, the nature that is created and does not create (The physical world) and lastly, the nature that neither creates nor is created (God, who issues into the world and returns from it to himself) (Jones 1969, p. 179).

Eriugena outlined that the progression of nature begins only when God creates his mind – when i.e. He becomes conscious that he thinks the archetypes. The archetypes are not, of course independent existents; they are merely ideas in the divine mind, or more precisely, they are the divine mind. Hence they differ from Plato's forms, which were independent from the demiurge and which therefore limited the demiurge's creativity.

The archetypes or primordial causes form the second division of nature. They are created (by God's thinking of them) and creative (because as primordial causes they are

the sources of the various particular objects in the world. The primordial causes are goodness, being, life, wisdom, truth, intelligence, reason, virtue, justice, health, greatness, omnipotence, eternity and peace. Though we distinguish them as a plurality, our knowledge of them is derived from the experience in the sense world. And in the sense world, the concentrated essences are scattered into a diversity of objects. A healthy thing can be also good and virtuous.

So to say for instance, that a UBA (University Bachelors' Association) member is healthy and virtuous is to say that he partakes to a finite degree, in the archetypes, that these characteristics have been produced in him by the action of these primordial causes. Just as the unity of the room gets broken up into numerous reflections in the mirror, so the unity of the archetypes gets broken into particulars of sense perception that participate in the essences in question. It will be seen that the primordial causes are both the ways in which we characterize God and the exemplars of such goodness, justice, and truth as we encounter here on earth. It is because of these ideas of God that we characterize Him truly (though inadequately) when we call Him good, just and true; it is because they are the causes of sense experiences that we become acquainted with these ideas and so can use them to characterize Him.

The physical world then, as Eriugena conceived of it, has its being through participation in the primordial causes. They, in turn, have their being through God's thinking of them. According to Scotus Eriugena, this third division of nature, created and not creative, longs to return to the "beyond being" source from which they have issued. And so we come, at last, to the nature that neither creates nor is created i.e. we come back to God, conceived of now, not as the creative source from which the progression ensues, but as the goal for which it longs and toward which it moves.

Thus it can be said that God is “the beginning, the middle and the end. He is the beginning because all things which participate in essence are from Him; but the middle, because they subsist and are moved in Him through Him, the end, indeed because they are moved to Him seeking the quiet of their motion and the stability of their perfection” (Jones 1969, p. 174).

We know all these things, John Scotus Eriugena contends, through illumination. For if everything that exists is an aspect of divine nature reflected from some perspective or other, then in knowing the things around us we know God –not of course God as he is in His super-essential nature, but God insofar as he has externalized Himself. Whatever analysis philosophers and psychologists may make of sense perception and intellection as temporal processes going on in us and dependent on physical changes in our sense organs and in the cortex of our brain, Scotus Eriugena as a Christian held that all knowledge is fundamentally and basically an act of grace by means of which God illuminates our minds.

The conception of nature by the Christians, as Dupre contends, had serious internal contradictions, which were not identified until much later. One such problem was the reconciliation of the idea of the suffering servant in the person of Christ with the Greek idea of form. Dupre puts the idea thus:

“How could a cosmic symbolism prefigured in and centred around one individual –the Christ –conform to the universal Greek idea of form? Moreover, if God had definitely revealed himself in the “man of sorrows”, how could one continue to regard the splendour of the universe as the image of God who had appeared “in the form of a slave”? (Dupre 1993, pp. 32-3).

When the full magnitude of this problem was realized, it caused a stir in the minds of the theologians of the East and those of the West, who in turn reacted differently to the problem. In the West, skepticism intensified concerning the aptitude of 'fallen nature' to integrate divine attributes. St Augustine himself, it may be recalled, was not able to connect God intrinsically to the creatures. He failed to intimately link the image to the archetype, instead, he emphasized on analogy. For the, redemption was just a restoration of the corrupt human nature. The human soul grows divine simulations by knowing and loving its divine archetype. The soul can only be connected to the divine mind through knowledge of the latter. Medieval thinkers, just as the Ancients, held that knowledge consisted in participation in the known. By contrast, the Eastern theologians placed emphasis on deification. The goal of a believer was to be reunited with God. The differences between the Easterners and the Westerners intensified. Westerners' emphasis on healing gave rise to moral pessimism. It was conceived impossible to redeem corrupt and fallen human nature. Human nature remained incapable, through its own initiative, to achieve its natural end or even receive God's grace. The result was the complete despair over the capacity of human nature to rise above its slumber

It was only in the eleventh century when the realization that incarnation was a cosmically transforming process that a certain sense of optimism developed (Dupre 1993, 33). The realization brought a renewed confidence in the conceptualization of nature resulting in a genuinely Christian naturalism. A new openness to nature was envisioned. In the twelfth century nature was accorded immense creative powers akin to those once reserved to the Creator. Ancient astronomy was resuscitated. Numerous studies were carried out even of the stars. The heavens were populated by stars, which predestined all events.

The human microcosms, however, were the centre of the macrocosmic configurations and thus a drive towards fatalism was averted. Human knowledge of the natural processes, especially the foreknowledge of the stars allowed man to escape determinism wrought by nature (Dupre 1993, p. 34).

In the high Middle Ages, Alain de Lille compares reason to the fixed stars, sensibility to the planets and the human soul to God. Later, St. Bonaventure linked the whole universe to its cosmic centre. For him, the warm heart and the cool, moist brain above it corresponds to the radiating sun and the stars below the cool and crystalline heaven. Bonaventure, however held that all things of various grades and in various ways were an imitation of God. In light of such conceptions, Christians again began to trust the impulses of nature and began to pay attention to the subtler and feelings and emotions of the human soul. The work of Aberlard heralded the dawn of a new age in this respect.

Dupre ascribes the change in the intellectual disposition of the twelfth century to provincial poetry. Poets of the thirteenth century pretended to capture the feelings of an era that no longer existed. Realist paintings and sculptors emulated the poets in conveying a new sense of nature – both cosmic and human. The rich naturalism also fed into the theology. This new conception of nature also enhanced its sacramental function. The sacramental attitude strengthened interest in the countryside, plants, animals as well as emotions and feelings. Only the observant eye could read nature.

Symbolism in the medieval frame of conception envisioned the word of God as its primary analogue.

God revealed himself as Word - both in person and in the Scripture. Nature appears as yet a much later stage in the process of revelation, that of physically instantiating what the Word communicates to the mind. Nature confronts us with the task of decoding a revelatory text.

Love also assumed a new role. It came to be regarded as synonymous to knowledge. Abelard took love onto a mystical plane. He applied erotic power to the relation between God and the soul, “No sweeter names can be found to embody that sweet interflow of affections between the Word and the soul, than bridegroom and bride” (Dupre 1993, p. 36). Abelard ends up referring to God as love. For him, “the bridegroom does not only love, he is love”. Through the divine nature of love, human love assumed a divine quality “because our hearts are attracted most toward the humanity of Christ and what he did or commanded while in the flesh” (Dupre 1993, p. 36). As we look at Saint Bernard, we detect a shift from the rationalistic orientation of a majority of thinkers in the medieval period. For him, the rationalist attitude was not appropriate to the advancement of Christian faith. Though he reveres the reality of God, he was adamant that access to this reality was not through ratiocination. Obviously, this is a manifestly different epistemological attitude and thus helps to confirm the thesis that the conception of ‘reality’, ‘appearance’ and ‘knowledge’ was different from one epoch to the next and from one individual to the other within the same milieu.

Metaphysically though, St. Bonaventure held a hylomorphic perspective, where there were a plurality of entities created in space and time. He gave individuality of entities priority in his conception. Individuality came about when matter was mixed with form. This principle of individuality gave rise to the multiplicity of entities.

For scholars like Francis of Assisi, Jesus' individual nature became the object of devotion. In this regard, Dupre sees Western Christianity putting form in their expression of God. God was incarnated in the human individual nature and this facilitated the representation of the physical constitution of Jesus and those whose lives had been touched by him. This led to giant leaps in cosmic symbolism where facets of nature were expressed. Symbolic naturalism gave birth to new aesthetic expressions.

A nagging problem still persisted in Christian thinking in that there was primacy of the universal over the particular. In the doctrine of the incarnation, God had assumed human nature in one single individual. Francis of Assisi' devotion to Jesus of Nazareth, an individual opened a new perspective on particularity. If the Image of all images is an individual, then the primary significance of the individual form no longer consists in disclosing a universal reality beyond itself. The ontological primacy of the universal was overthrown in the process (Dupre 1993, p. 36). Bonaventure and later John Duns Scotus developed the Franciscan views and established the primacy of the individual. Thus the neo-Platonic hold on Western thought was broken.

4.7. God: The very Nature of Being

Another luminary in medieval thought was Saint Aquinas. Aquinas's epistemology reflects an Aristotelian bias as he placed emphasis on the role of the senses in the acquisition of knowledge. Aquinas contends that knowledge is never innate; not even the idea of God (Lawhead, 2001, p.171). Sense experience furnishes the intellect with the content for cognition. The passive and the active faculties of the intellect are responsible for cognition. The active intellect does much more than process sensory data; it also discovers the forms or universals embedded in things.

Aquinas follows closely the metaphysical views of Aristotle. For him, the universe is populated by the concrete individual substances that God has created. Every such substance is a composite of form and matter, which in turn is depended on prime matter i.e. the primordial potential matter. Resultantly we have a hierarchy of substances - potential and actualized. Potential matter is capable of combining with any substantial form. The forms belong to the realm of the actualized. They create the concrete substances. God is fully actualized. He alone is fixed while the rest of creation is dynamic i.e. shuttling between potentiality and actuality. For Aquinas, the entire universe is a continuous hierarchy of being ranging from inorganic substances at the bottom but moving up in rank towards God who rests at the pinnacle of this “great chain of being” (Lawhead 2001, p.173). Interestingly all creation is an expression of God’s fullness.

Interestingly some scholars have suggested that Aquinas’ metaphysics was a bit at a tangent from that his predecessors namely Plotinus and Saint Augustine. Etienne Gilson, for one, contrasts the views of Plotinus and Aquinas with respect to the first principle regulating all. Gilson contends that Plotinus held the One or Absolute Unity to be the first principle; while for Aquinas, it was *Esse* (Being) itself (Taylor 1998, p. 221). In addition, Aquinas made a distinction between the natural and the supernatural (Lonergan 1975, p.165). For Aquinas, God is the very nature of Being. He is the unparticipated efficient cause of being for all things that participate in being. However, Aquinas’ metaphysical views did not go unchallenged as we see his successors going against them.

4.8. **Everything Is Fraught With Inconsistencies**

With Ockham, the entire onto-theological synthesis began to disintegrate. The Franciscan thinker pointed at the inconsistencies between the new philosophy of the individual and the epistemic principles inherited from Plato and Aristotle. According to those principles, knowledge rested on the assumption that the real is intrinsically intelligible and that the mind merely actualises what is potentially cognisable. Ockham no longer maintained such a neatly packed harmony between the mind and nature, which subjects God's creativity to human norms. Also the assumption that in knowledge, the mind shares a universal form with the real, no matter how strong is abandoned. Ockham concedes that universals are important in cognition, but they don't have to exist independent of the mind, as Plato had maintained or even inside the singular reality as Aristotle had maintained. Our access to the real consists in an intuition normally conveyed through the senses. We know by means of contact with the physical reality and this is a process of efficient causality, wherein no form is transferred from that reality to the mind.

A successfully wrenched the relation between the mind and reality is found in the nominalist rejection of the so-called impressed species. For Aquinas and the other realist metaphysicians, the species had constituted the link between the intellect and reality. Aquinas builds his metaphysical system on the perfection of being, and his system is based on the three solid pillars: the real distinction between essence and the act of being in beings; the subsistence of being in God; and the participation of beings in the act of being (and in all other perfections) because of creation. While studying being, St. Thomas observes that none of them is pure being. The perfection they have is never all the perfection of being, a complete, absolute, total and infinite perfection

belonging to the nature itself of being. It is always a restricted, limited and a fallen perfection (McInnery: 1979, pp. 317-20).

Through the intellect, the mind gains access to the rational core of its object by abstracting the intelligible element from the phenomena. In the words of Haldane:

[Aquinas] maintains that the actuality of the agent intellect consists in the universal content of its acts, and it is this which confers generality upon the thoughts (*species expressa*) of the passive mind. Without the work of the former no concepts would be available; and without these cognition could not take place, for the sensuous presentation of the environment could not be ordered. The active intellect is thus not something separate and external to the subject-neither a common storehouse of ideas nor a metaphysical 'starting-handle' pushing forms into the mind or jerking it into action. Rather it is a power of deriving intelligible forms from experience as presented by phantasms (1991, p. 205).

The mind was also able to illuminate this phantasm with its own light. St. Thomas Aquinas had intimated in the *Summa Theologiae*, “[The active intellect] throws light on these phantasms... by the power of the active intellect, the phantasm are made fit for abstraction there from of intelligible intentions” (I, 85)

In the species, the real is inter-fused with the mind. The real turns its potential intelligibility into actual understanding. Being the very union of the mind with its objects, it is neither a copy nor a representative of the known object. Indeed it is not known in itself at all, since no independent reality mediates between knower and object. Again, Aquinas contends, “The intelligible species is not what is actually understood, but that by which the intellect understands...because the things we understand are the objects of science; therefore if what we understand is merely the intelligible species in the soul, it would follow that every science would not be concerned with objects outside the soul, it would follow that every science would not be concerned with

objects outside the soul, but only with intelligible species within the soul” (*Summa Theologiae* I, 85, p. 2)

An argument was proffered against the theory of the species, first by the Dominican Durandus and later adopted by Ockham and the nominalists, has within it a different assumption that underlies the modern conception of knowledge. The objection raised by Durandus was, “How could the species mediate between the knower and the unknown when it remains itself unknown? Wouldn’t this require another species to mediate between the two and another and another ad infinitum? Durandus makes the presupposition that the species was a separate reality and functioned as such and mediates between two wholly opposite elements. For Thomas, on, the contrary, the species actually identifies what is already potentially united. No new bridge was required; the species only enables the mind to walk across the existing one.

Traditional epistemology had been supported by the rational quality of nature, but now it had collapsed. Henceforth, ideality belongs only to the mind. Also the transcendent factor ceases to function as an active constituent of the onto-theological synthesis. Since it was precisely through the form that the finite participated in the infinite, Christian theologians had always succeeded in maintaining a link between the forms and the realm of the divine through God’s eternal image, the divine archetype of all created reality. In late nominalist theology, the form lost this function and the link with the divine became a more external one. Modern thought became increasingly defined the relation between the finite and the infinite being in terms of efficient causality. If form was no more than the creation of the human mind, it could no longer secure the intrinsic union between the finite and the infinite.

The subversion of the ancient meaning of form did not mark the end of its use in Western thought. When it was stripped of its divinity, it was ready to function in a different way. Both in the humanism and the Renaissance, form developed into the very essence of expression. This development had been partly prepared for by nominalist philosophy in some way. As meaning became detached from the given structure of the real world, words and forms became independent symbols of expression. This cleared the road for creativity for the humanists and in the Renaissance. Nominalism anticipated the scientific revolution. By maintaining that concepts and terms had only mental status, it allowed the mind to build them into systems of bare signs. As signs, they served as flexible tools for the empirical study of nature. In this way, form, the central concept of Greco-Christian thought was poised to start a new task in defining the nature of the real. It was now versatile than ever as it was unhampered by a priori restrictions, and so form became the mind' expressive independence.

4. 9. **Conclusion**

This chapter admits that there is a considerable presence of foreigners, including Africans within Christian philosophy. Philosophers from Africa notably Plotinus, Origen, Augustine and others have provided an indispensable bridge for the development of Western philosophy. Again, it has become apparent that conceptualisation of reality as opposed to the mere apparent, was varied. The reality of God was variously conceived and the knowledge thereof ranged from clear intuitions to dark incomprehensibility. Reality was plural, although God remained at the centre of the vision. It has been demonstrated that the early conception of the triad of concepts was different from that of the late period and also that the conception of the said

concepts was bound to be different between Eastern and Western thinkers. However, unlike in the previous era, attempts were made to synthesize these apparently diverging views. Particularly manifest, was the separation of the Divine properties from the natural ones, a development that was to have profound impact on the modern era as we shall see in the next chapter. The manner in which philosophy was articulated in the medieval period had sombre ramifications on Africans. On the one hand, the African contribution to the said same was never acknowledged. All credit went to the Romans. In this regard the politics of knowledge and representation went in the favour of the metropolis. Africa's intellectual resources were just sucked, as it were, without trace into Roman culture leaving no credit to the affected continent. On the other hand, the manner in which the West through Rome appropriated ideas from Plotinus, Origen, Clement, Augustine and others to build their own intellectual heritage led to the marginalization of the African continent in that no credit was bestowed on the continent and its illustrious intellectuals. Thus far, the story of medieval philosophy is an account of the achievements of the Romans. However, this story omits the contributions of the medieval Ethiopian thinkers (Presbey 1999, p. 165). This omission of the African contribution continues in the modern period as we shall see in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

KNOWLEDGE OF THE NATURE, A MATTER OF IMPERSONAL SCIENTIFIC INVESTIGATION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to show how the conceptualization of ‘reality’, ‘appearance’ and ‘knowledge’ in the early modern period of Western philosophy was, in one sense, a development from the antecedent views and in another, a radical transformation of the ancient and medieval views. The chapter also seeks to argue that the modern era was a period in which the contributions of Africans and other non-Western peoples to the history of philosophy received unprecedented repression in history. In addition, the chapter seeks to demonstrate that tensions and contradictions also marked the formation of the modern world-view, which tensions also heighten the marginalization of the African views.

The argument to be advanced is that, the humanistic culture in the West in general and the development of science, in particular, gave the modern Western man a revitalized and dynamic way of looking at reality compared with the medieval period. Western modernity created what came to be referred to as “the rationalist discourse of cosmopolitan human development” (Whitton 1988 , p.147). However, that same stroke wrought the marginalization of non-Western cultures with respect to the same. This period saw the intellectual contributions of Africa facing their most fierce repression. Africa came to be seen as a useless appendage of the West. It became increasingly difficult if not impossible to regard Africa in positive terms (Segato 1996, pp. 129-30).

During the inception of European modernity, Africa and her intellectual productions were intensely strained to exist under erasure. The processes leading to the rise of European modernity were directly connected to those, which led to the suppression of African voices. The period was characterized by despair, hostility and racial prejudice (Henricksen 1975, p. 280). The celebration of the modern Western mind as the only one capable of ratiocination (Taiwo 1998), meant the denigration and marginalization of non-European cultures and subsequently, the suppression of their intellectual capabilities and in a sense, stifling their potentials. Roberts makes a stunning observation that, no matter what the African initiative was, external forces set limits to the scope and success of that initiative (Roberts 1978, p. 153).

5.2 The historiography of Modern philosophy

Characterizing the modern in the West is a mammoth task. Certainly there is a problem of dating. Some scholars peg the rise of the modern period on the year 1436, with Gutenberg's invention of the printing press; others consider 1520, with Luther's rebellion against the Church authority; others 1648, with the end of the Thirty Years War (Toulmin 1990, p. 5). Most historians of philosophy regard the death of William of Ockham around 1349 as signalling the end of medieval philosophy and the publishing by Francis Bacon around the early 1600s as heralding the birth of a new era. The period in-between called the 'Renaissance' was one of preparation (Lawhead 2002, p. 201).

The project of modernity was a complex interplay of events, processes and ideas. As Tarnas asserts:

The modern world-view was the outcome of an extraordinary convergence of ideas and figures which, for all their conflicting variety, engendered a profoundly compelling vision of the universe and of the human being's place in it – a vision radically novel in character and paradoxical in

consequences. Those same factors also reflected, and wrought, a fundamental change in the Western character (Tarnas 1991, p. 223).

A full comprehension of modernity requires that the philosophic, scientific, social and historic assumptions on which it rested and the unfolding of events be accounted for. Though the current preoccupation is with the development of philosophical ideas which under-girded modernity, this cannot be dealt with in isolation from the general intellectual climate of the time.

The modern era commenced with the decline of scholastic philosophy. Characteristic of scholasticism was pluralism. The scholastic thinkers not only assumed the plurality of reality but also maintained that there existed different beings and levels of being. Secondly, Scholastic thought acknowledging the pre-eminent value of the human person. It also maintained an organic conception of reality. And finally, it upheld a theo-centric attitude. God the creator was at the centre directing all events and regulating all processes.

By contrast modern philosophy opposed these tenets. The fundamental principles of modernism are mechanism from which eliminated the conception of being as integral and hierarchical, and characterized by subjectivism. This subjectivism apparently diverted man from his previous concentration upon God and substituted the subject as the centre of attraction (Bochenski 1965, p. 2)

Thus modern philosophy lumbers onto the scene in style, exhibiting preponderance for rejecting tradition. It distanced itself from its immediate medieval past. As a consequence, the medieval period came to be regarded as a dark period of Western history, where theology and not philosophy, reigned supreme. Thus there was a need to reclaim the Greek heritage and chart a new course into the future.

The quest for novelty, spurred European thinkers into an unsullied search for knowledge about reality. Associated with this, and in different intellectual spectrum, was the establishment of the modern world-view. Regrettably the modern intellectual framework, with its air of superiority and universality, sowed the seeds of its own demise in the process, as will be argued in the next chapter. If the Western mind was capable of renewal devoid of its immediate antecedent culture, then it was independent of external influences. The proponents believed this to be the case. This modern attitude contributed profoundly towards the generation of master narratives, when dealing with the outside cultures (David 2005, p. 252).

From the times of Bacon and Descartes, philosophers were busy grappling with the principles of modernity. Descartes' work is hinged on the *cogito* – a certain form logocentrism which displays the attributes of disembodiment, monologic and ocular-centric (Jung, p. 298) Descartes assumed that we have innate ideas – that the laws of thought and that of being run parallel. The *cogito* guaranteed him access to reality. Mind was thought to exert a causal influence on matter. Descartes' *cogito* and the incessant search for clear and distinct ideas were enlightening indeed. This epistemological model had profound influence even on scientists of nature such as Galileo. The model of scientific knowledge was hinged on objective legitimation (Whitton 1988, p. 148). Modern scientific knowledge presupposed the human capacity for objective truth. It maintained that the truth of scientific propositions could be ascertained by rigorous methods of verification. In the end modern science admitted as scientific only those exchanges that were validated by the principle of verification as appropriate for knowledge, for the method of verification of a proposition became the criteria of acceptability. The logical positivists and logical empiricists were largely responsible for this view (Wallace 1996, p. 211).

Scientific knowledge so presented, was certainly hegemonic in that it accepted some disciplines as scientific but by the same stroke excluded others from being regarded as such. The upshot of this taxonomy was that, even in the West, traditional forms of knowledge which failed to satisfy the principle of verification would not be considered to be scientific. African and other non-Western knowledge systems fell by the wayside, since they could not meet the Western standards of what constituted scientific knowledge. In the end the prospect of a plurality of cultural knowledge systems was severely curtailed.

Empiricists such as Francis Bacon too were under the spell of Descartes' logocentric thought. Jeremy Bentham's architectural design of the prison house – the Panopticon, strongly points to how Descartes' thought exacted on other minds of the modern period. The empiricists proceeded more logically by acknowledging the full consequences of mechanism, extending its application to mind itself and combining it with subjectivism and radical nominalism. This position can be traced in the works of F. Bacon (1561-1626), J. Locke (1632-1704), G. Berkeley (1685 – 1753) and D. Hume (1711- 1776). Hume for instance, regarded the soul as nothing but a bundle of images, so called ideas (The mind is a bundle of ideas). Ideas alone are directly knowable; universal laws are merely the result of repeated association. They cannot claim any objective validity, and even the existence of an external world is reduced to a matter of faith, without which everything would have been in doubt – mind, reality and especially knowledge.

The 17th century philosophers certainly bragged about their advanced mode of thought. According to Copleston:

...the seventeenth-century philosophers were certainly convinced that there was a sharp division between the old philosophical traditions and what they themselves were trying to do. Men like Francis Bacon and

Descartes were thoroughly persuaded that they were making a new start. If for a long time the views of Renaissance and post-Renaissance philosophers were accepted at their face value, this was partly due to a conviction that in the Middle Ages there were really nothing which merited the name of philosophy. The flame of independent and creative philosophical reflection which had burned so brightly in ancient was practically extinguished until it was revived at Renaissance and rose in splendour in the seventeenth century (1960, p.1).

As Walter Kaufmann and Baird assert that Francis Bacon and Rene Descartes encouraged their readers to make a clean sweep of the past and alleged that these thinkers had been deluded by 'idols' or mistakes in thinking or had relied too heavily on authority (1997, p.ix). It was this jerking away from tradition and the air of novelty that ushered in modern philosophy and set the agenda for the whole epoch. This movement of thought which celebrated the exploits of Western reason came to be known as the "Enlightenment". This movement was a complex convergence of thought with no single core. There were no hard and fast dogmas to circumscribe the movement – Anglicans, Lutherans, anti-Christians and materialists all belonged to it (Mason 1999, xxxiv). In the words of Mason the mind was capable of discerning the hidden reality:

The Enlightenment was less a body of doctrine than a general outlook, which derived its basic view from the premise that the natural order is capable of being known and understood by the human mind, whereas ontological first principles will be for ever unintelligible to us. So, for example, we need no longer fear the appearance of comets in the heavens, since they obey fixed laws that can be elucidated by mathematical calculation. On a larger scale, Newton's discovery of the principle of gravitation underpins the cosmic assurance of Voltaire (Masson 1999, p. xxxv).

It is actually proper to suggest the existence of many different kinds of enlightenments in varying contexts (Kirk 2000, pp. 1130-1). Generally it was a multi-faceted effort by "traditional scientific, social, and political disciplines to construct general theoretical programs as guides to the practical actualization of a rational order within human society" (Whitton, 1988, p. 146). The key assumptions of the Enlightenment were: the possibility and goodness of rational discourse dispelling darkness and mystery from

human life. Thus, the struggle against dogmatism, superstition and ignorance was corollary to the Enlightenment project (Linker 2000, p. 337). Furthermore, it was also a project which sought to “strip away the limitations of the senses in order to reveal the eternal and unchanging Reality” (Stempel 1975, p. 65). Unfortunately, the Enlightenment thinking was narrow and arrogant (Mason 199, p. xxix). The narrowness of Enlightenment thought is exhibited in the sense that the truth about reality it set out to discover was singular in nature and in the mode of disclosure. This point is clearly articulated by both Mason and Jung. Mason focuses on the Enlightenment emphasis on the solitary nature of human rationality and the ensuing truth. Mason captures his point in these words:

The Enlightenment commitment to truth and reason, we can now recognize, has meant historically a single truth and a single rationality, which have conspired in practice to legitimate the subordination of black people, the non-Western world, women [. . .]. None of these groups has any political interest in clinging to the values which have consistently undervalued them (Mason 1999, p. xxix).

Jung stresses on the enthronement and celebration of Western reason thereby bestowing power and freedom to the rational faculties. Accordingly, this form of rationality is deemed essential for mental as well as material prosperity. In his words Jung says:

European modernity is set to prejudge truth-claims by the criterion of Enlightenment. While privileging and valorizing the authority and autonomy of reason for allegedly human (material) progress and emancipation, it marginalizes, disenfranchises, and denigrates the (reason's) Other whether it be (1) body, (2) woman, (3) nature, or (4) non-West which happen to be four central postmodern landmarks and subversive possibilities (Hwa Yol Jung 2002, p. 298).

The new era and its ideas gave birth to an innovative and influential philosophical way of looking at the world. This philosophical outlook was considered completely alien to the philosophical orientations of ancient and medieval thought, and had tremendous impact on the conceptualization of reality (Brendan 1999, p.1).

At its mature stage, it produced what came to be known as the modern epistemological meta-narratives. As Jacques Pouchepadass observes:

As everyone knows, modernity, the eighteenth century philosopher's critique of the Ancients, has degenerated into this Eurocentric meta-narratives of modernization through the subsequent theorizing of progress by nineteenth century historicism (2002, p. 382).

The Enlightenment build-up from Descartes culminated in Kant's famous assertion that the autonomy of reason portends to rescue and emancipate humanity, perhaps more accurately European humanity from the dark cave of self-incurred tutelage or immaturity (Jung 2002, p. 297). This suggests that even within the Western intellectual circles, currents of thought opposed to the manner in which the Enlightenment had unfolded began to brew. However, while all this was happening, the impact on the non-Western other was devastating. This point is aptly captured by Damon Linker who gives the general characterization of the "other" in Enlightenment thought "as the non-rational, unusual, different, or abnormal dimensions of human life and experience" (Linker 2000, p. 338). The African 'other' came to be regarded as un-enlightened, pre-scientific, pre-philosophical and irrational. Thus we turn our attention to what was going on in science and other intellectual spheres.

European modernity prized autonomous reason and the disembodiment of reality. Beginning with Descartes, the mind came to be qualified as *res cogitans* and the body as *res extensa*. According to the Cartesian schema, both body and mind were made objects. They came to be regarded as separate and distinct substantial things. However, the body came to be viewed as of little importance. The Platonic legacy seems to have been animated to unprecedented levels.

The body is heavily marginalized; no longer taken as an independent living subject. It is no longer regarded as a separate source of knowledge about reality. This, situation is aptly captured in the words of Jung:

...the Cartesian plot is oblivious to the body as living subject and thus renders impossible sociality-both inter-human conviviality and inter-speciesistic connaturality. Sociality as a multiple web of relationships is untenable without the lived body as its root or anchor. Soma is not the sema (tomb or death) of the psyche. Rather, the former enfleshes and enlivens the latter. There is and can be no "disembodied reason" insofar as perception is a nascent concept or Logos (Jung 2002, p. 299).

This modern plot came to identify the real as rational and the rational as real. It is also unfortunate that modern thought privileged masculinity. Thus the Western modernity had a well defined gender, which when taken seriously, led to severe implications:

By privileging the masculine, European modernity commits the "phallacy" of identity in that its univocity or universality fails and refuses to acknowledge or recognize feminine difference which engenders care and jouissance by embracing the "pariah" senses of touch and hearing (jouissance also spelled y 'ous sens) as opposed to rights and domination and the hegemonic sense of sight (Jung 2002, p. 299).

The phallic monism also meant the homogenization of identity in which man became the measure of all things and woman became a less significant category. Human nature came to be conceptualized in essentialist terms and had a tendency to marginalize others particularly women, who came to be regarded not only as different from, but also less than men (Jung 2002, p.300)

Allegedly, Descartes, Francis Bacon and Galileo Galilei are responsible for the anthropocentric aspect of logo-centric modernity. Galileo had mathematized nature. He contended that we must understand nature as geometric configurations of triangles, squares and circles.

For Galileo, we must speak the language of geometry in order to have a full understanding and adequate control of nature (Jung 2002, p. 300). Descartes coming after him had enthroned man as the owner and controller of 'dump' nature. Bacon is usually regarded as the forerunner and designer of the modern age in science, technology and quantitative economy. He properly set and promotes the image of man as the avaricious consumer of nature. He combined theory and practice in technology to effect a union between 'knowledge and utility and of knowing and making' (Jung 2002, p. 301)

Bacon puts forth most forcefully the modern Promethean principles of Herrschaftswissen in which knowledge and power intersect the crossroads of utility for the sake of philanthropia. Philanthropia, which is the centerfold of his anthropocentrism, is the maximization of profits from man's investment in nature by way of science and technology (Jung 2002, 301).

Locke too lumbered onto the philosophical scene armed with the suggestion that; if scientific laws could be laid bare, as Newton had done, are there no laws for the mind? Thus in the *Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1690), Locke sets out to discover the laws of the mind. Granted this, then too man in society can be an object of scientific inquiry. Thus Montesquieu ventured into sociology and Rousseau into anthropology and linguistics (Mason 1999, p. xxxiv). Thus according to the modern thinkers, it was possible to open up frontiers of knowledge in every conceivable direction.

The non-Western world was not spared. It led to the generation of a certain set of ideas – a 'geophilosophy' - about nature. The rest of nature needed to be studied and understood. This has come to be regarded as the "enframing ethos of modernization" (Jung 2002, 301). It was quite unfortunate that the non-Western geo-philosophical ideas were left out. But as Jung cautions, this was dangerous indeed:

To ignore or denigrate the non-West, therefore, is to say the least, to abandon the treasure chest of many geo-philosophical ideas and thus jeopardize the survival of humanity and the sustainability of the earth in the future. The European flight from ancient Asian ideas before "modernization," for example, may spell an ecological disaster (Jung 2002, p. 301).

As with the East, African geo-philosophical ideas were left out. Certainly, this drives us towards the poverty of perspectives regarding nature. Along with the idea of nature came that of the colour of reason. Regrettably, reason came to be regarded as white as well. Thus the non-Western world was seen as non-rational:

Reason is not color-blind. It belongs to the intellectual property of the white West. Therefore, it is identified with "white mythology." From Hume and Kant to Hegel and Marx, it is unquestionably Eurocentric or "Orientalist." Indeed, it has an unenlightened, dim and immature view of the non-West (Jung 2002, p. 302).

Some Western scholars notably Lorenz Oken went on to give a racial taxonomy according to the hierarchy of the senses. According to him, the white European is characterized as the "eye-man", the Asian as the "ear-man", and the black African as the "skin-man" (Jung 2002, p. 302). Thus, according to the dominant metaphysics of the senses, the sense of touch is the most primitive and occupies the lowest tread in the ladder of human sensibility. It is a pariah sense and is downright un-aesthetic. On the contrary, the eye is the organ of sight – a European and aristocratic sense – which epitomizes the height of aesthetic sensibility (Jung 2002, p. 302). For Kant and Hegel, the sense of sight is a rational sense and the bright sense of the intellect.

According to Jung, there was an intellectual predisposition by Western modernity, in the name of reason, to declare itself as the privileged epicenter of world affairs. In the eyes of Hegel, what is rational is real and what is real is rational. This motto privileges the Western mind as the guardian of philosophy. Thus the pre-eminence of reason was not limited to scientific knowledge but extended to history.

According to the Enlightenment thinkers such as Condorcet and Turgot, human history followed a linear model from primitivism towards inevitable rational perfection. Humanity was supposed to progress in the direction of enlightenment based on the principles of reason (Whitton 1988, p. 149). However, as Brian Whitton observes:

A logical corollary of this rationalist conception of history as the inexorable progression of humankind to a cosmopolitan condition of rational perfectibility was the tendency of Enlightenment philosophers to demean or deride those cultures, past and present, which lacked consciousness of the principles of enlightened reason. Such cultures tended to be seen as lesser stages in the development towards this enlightened perfect end (Whitton 1988, p. 150).

Condorcet, for one, maintained that the non-Western cultures (i.e. the un-enlightened peoples) could indirectly come to discover the much coveted principles of reason through association with the former cultures. Hegel, for another held the view that, the other non-Western cultures in the East especially China and India live in perpetual infancy as they are incapable of articulating any philosophy. Before him, Hume and Kant had expressed similar white supremacist attitudes. Hume, the empiricist regards all the other races of men, particularly the blacks, as "naturally inferior" to the whites. As such, the non-whites do not produce any civilization comparable to the West.

Kant, widely regarded as the shining example of the "enlightened" age of invincible Western modernity advocated for a vision of humanity's emancipation from its self-imposed immaturity and championed human dignity, categorical imperatives and even world federalism in the name of perpetual peace (Kant 1929, p.111). Regrettably, he kept Hume's racial beliefs when he wrote that being black is 'a clear proof that the man was stupid.'

It is prudent at this juncture to do an in-depth analysis of the development of the modern world view so as to uncover the pillars of the era which tended to be simultaneously revolutionary and marginalizing.

5.3 The Revolution in Science

It would be prudent to begin by tracing how the scientific world-view impacted on the people's understanding of the 'knowledge' and its relationship to 'reality' and 'appearance'. The new world-view was anchored on mathematics and scientific principles. It was based in part on a new method of inquiry, forcefully advocated by Bacon, which involved the mathematical description of nature and the analytic method of reasoning advocated by Descartes. Indeed, Isaac Newton and later Charles Darwin, deserve special mention in this regard. The one was famous for his studies of the physical nature and the other for organic nature.

Newton harnessed and exploited the labours of his predecessors, Galileo, Kepler and Copernicus to make significant strides in science. Newton's achievements "consisted in developing a single, comprehensive theory from which he could derive both Galileo's laws describing the motion of falling bodies and Kepler's laws of planetary motion" (Lawhead 2002, p. 273). Thus Newton united the individual contributions of the two predecessors into a unitary system. The laws of nature for Newton did not rest on his insights, rather he integrated the discoveries by other scholars into a "grand synthesis." Thus Newton embarked on collaborative research. Newton's integrative research revolutionized the manner in which the world was conceptualized. Actually it replaced the organic world-view of the medieval period, which rested on two authorities - Aristotle and the Church.

Aristotle had divided the cosmos into two, namely the physical world (nature) and the celestial sphere and the two spheres were governed by a separate set of laws. In the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas had combined Aristotle's comprehensive system of nature with Christian theology and ethics thereby producing a conceptual framework that remained intact throughout the middle ages. Newton rejected all this and stressed that the same laws governed the heavens and the earth (Cohen 1985, p. 29).

Thus the universe became less mysterious and more open to the human understanding, prediction and even control. Following the Boylean analogy of the clock, Newton substantiated on this model through the use of mathematics. Thus mathematical and experimental science gained a central place in the understanding of the universe and all the other disciplines, including philosophy submitted to scientific findings (Lawhead 202, p. 274).

Johannes Kepler and Galileo Galilei were instrumental to the elevation of Newton to an intellectual giant. It was Kepler who made planetary astronomy a genuine scientific discipline. Through the application of mathematics on planetary motions, Kepler not only demonstrated that planets moved, but also that mathematics was a genuine science with a physical relevance in that it was capable of disclosing the actual nature of physical motion (Tarnas 1991, p. 257). Thus Kepler expanded on Nicholas Copernicus' insights about the heliocentric theory of planetary movements. Also, by impressing on mathematics, Kepler vindicated the Pythagorean claim that everything was a number.

Galileo had taken the Copernican insights to greater heights in a direction different from Kepler's.

Through the use of the telescope, Galileo made a number of observations, namely that, there were craters and mountains on the moon's surface, that the sun had moving spots, that there were four moons revolving around Jupiter, that Venus had phases and such phenomena (Tarnas 1991, p. 257). His observations helped demonstrate the fact that the universe was much more cumbersome than had been acknowledged. These scientific discoveries revolutionized the way in which the world was perceived, for they were backed by rigorous proofs and precise mathematical measurements. These scientific advances had a bearing on the intellectual terrain of the modern period. With the scientific revolution, philosophy was transformed. The philosophical revolution of the 17th and 18th centuries was bonded to the advances in science (Tarnas 1991, p. 272). If Tarnas' perspective is anything to go by then philosophy not only provided the framework in which the scientific progress took place but also identified itself with science.

5.4 European Modernity and the Condemnation of Africans

Modern European thought, particularly the Enlightenment, was characteristically marked by the denigration and marginalization of Africans at a scale hitherto unheard of in the past. This is explained in part, by the Enlightenment desire and determination to universalize reason (Gray 1988, p. 91). This universal reason was founded on the assumption that Man by nature had it, yet confined it only to the European male adult (Jung 2002, p. 300). The Enlightenment thinkers strongly believed in the public use and autonomous nature of reason. However, as Brian Whitton would say the Enlightenment produced a "universal narratives as the legitimizing form of a particular, hegemonic cultural discourse which obstructs the free expression of alternative cultural discourses" (Whitton 1988, p.149).

It exhibited a fervent desire by the competing European nations to make their religion, language or culture universal. The French were in the forefront in this regard. In an article entitled; “*The Crisis of French Universalism*,” Naomi, Schor gives a telling account of this elusive movement. For her, the French regarded themselves either as the capital of universalism or that universalism was characteristically French (Schor 2001, p. 43). The dominant picture of French universalism is intimately connected to the universalism of the revolution of 1789. It was the French appropriation of universalism, which went into the Enlightenment thinking of Rousseau and Voltaire (Schor 2001, p. 43).

Thus the French continued to promote their version of linguistic universalism and warded off the encroachment of English. Thus through institutions such as Alliance Francaise, France continued to spread the ideal of the 1789 revolution and the universality of the French language (Schor 2001, p. 46). The embodiment of universalism found full expression in the Enlightenment ideals. Interestingly, most modern philosophers in Europe aligned themselves with the Enlightenment with its self-proclaimed struggle against dogma, superstition, and ignorance (Linker 2000, p. 337). The core assumptions of the Enlightenment were; the possibility and efficacy of rational discourse in dispelling darkness and mystery in human life (Linker, p. 338). It was offered as the standard for human civility and progress. As Schor puts it:

Universalism, and never more so than in its Enlightenment incarnation, was grounded in the belief that human nature, that is rational human nature, was a universal impervious to cultural and historical differences. Trans-cultural, trans-historical human nature was posited as identical, beyond particularisms, just as the universal French language... (2001, p. 46).

Interestingly, natural philosophy and natural religion, rooted in the new philosophy of the seventeenth century and sharing the ideal of a universal simple order, leaned on

each other for mutual support (Stempel 1975, p. 63). Evidently, with this universalism came colonialism and the subjection of the non-Europeans to these universal ideals. In the words of Linker:

...what might superficially appear to be examples of disinterested argument and rational impartiality in those texts and practices are, instead, attempts at violating, marginalizing, delegitimizing, and dominating the "other"? With the "other" defined as the non-rational, unusual, different, or abnormal dimensions of human life and experience (2000, p. 338).

Enlightenment scientists even classified people according to certain natural kinds. Scientists such as Linnaeus, Lorenz Oken, Buffon, and Blumenbach and others used their authority as naturalists to underwrite their claims as anthropologists (Scott Juengel 2001, p. 901). Just like specimens of flora and fauna extracted from foreign locales and reorganized according to certain classificatory systems, exotic men and women were studied according to natural types. Juengel asserts that it was during the eighteenth century that a comparative racial physiology was developed (Juengel 2001, p. 901). Nicholas Hudson sums it all:

...the concept of race "gradually mutated from its original sense of a people or single nation, linked by origin, to its later sense of a biological subdivision of the human species," or more specifically, to "an innate and fixed disparity in the physical and intellectual makeup of different peoples." (Quoted in Juengel 2001, p. 901)

Generally, this is how the grammar of Otherness developed. Monogeny and polygeny were the two hypotheses conjured to explain the differences in racial variations (Juengel, p. 902).

In the end, we find the valorization of the Europeans and vilification of the non-Europeans, particularly the Africans. Charles White's *Account of the Regular Gradation in Man* (1799), says it all.

White's schema is typical of the polygenist hypothesis, which, undergirded by the emerging geometry of the human head that calibrated everything from the width of the brow to the texture of the hair, sought to construct a graduated hierarchy of human variation from European to “Hottentot to orang-utan” (Juengel, p. 902). Generally the problem between Europe and Africa on the onset of the age of the Enlightenment was one of perspective – a problem of difference and of cross cultural interpretation (Esonwanne 1990, p. 109).

The above observations most probably culminated in the French policy of assimilation and the association by the Britons. African intellectual resources suffered the most under the universality of the West. Their language, ideals and philosophies literary had no space. They had either to be obliterated or exist under erasure.

Enlightenment thinking gave rise to two philosophic movements; each attempting to offer a comprehensive and unifying worldview. The one was rationalism and the other empiricism. It would be interesting to trace how the respective movements looked at the world in general and at the triadic concepts in particular. However, it must be remembered that the model for human progress was largely designed by the Europeans. The Africans had either to be assimilated or associated with the European ideal.

5.5. Modern Philosophy and the New World Order

Modern philosophy, particularly the early phase arose initially as a critique of the theological speculations of the medieval period. This was aided by the advances in science. Thus thinkers of the likes of Descartes, Bacon, Hobbes, Spinoza, Bayle, and Locke came to the conclusion that the problem with pre-modern philosophy had been

its preoccupation with metaphysics. Metaphysics was now seen as a dark alley in the quest for knowledge, but also as hazardous. The untenability of metaphysics could be seen as soon as we ceased to accept the simple incorrigibility of the common sense experience of the world and reasoning based uncritically upon it to examine the considerable contribution that human subjectivity plays in constituting that experience. According to these thinkers, once blind faith in the evidence of common sense stops, one begins to see clearly how the metaphysical doctrines had been a constant source of error. Interestingly, people do not want to let go of certain metaphysical ideas and are bound to hold onto them tenaciously even if they lead to self-deception. For example, Hobbes claimed that polytheism arises from a combination of men's fear of the future and their ignorance of the true causes of events within the world, while monotheism or the metaphysical belief in a first cause of the world comes about as a result of the work of natural scientists who, following the chain of efficient causes back as far as they can, postulate that there must be a first cause at which point their investigation could reach a conclusion (Linker 2000, p 343). In both cases, these views tell us more about the human beings that hold them than they do about the world itself. An interesting dimension is the secularism of modern thought. For them,

We do not exist because some metaphysical entity wishes it; rather, a metaphysical entity is posited to exist because human beings wish it. We want to find an ultimate answer to the question of why, and we trick ourselves into believing we can and even have found one. But once we become aware of our predisposition to self-deception, our tendency to accept the truth of illusions of transcendence. We also discover that it is within our power to live in the light of the knowledge of our own ignorance of metaphysical truths (Linker 2000, p. 343).

The scientists of nature and philosophers during the early modern period began to look for knowledge and truth about the world outside the realm of metaphysics. The denial of metaphysical truths meant freedom from unwarranted esoteric postulates as was

common among the clergy. These theologians used these postulates to gain power and influence in spiritual matters, yet, as a matter of fact, no such knowledge was possible.

Rene Descartes is considered pivotal in the transition from classical to modern philosophy not so much for the doctrines he held, but for developing a method for pursuing philosophy (Cottingham 1984, p. 36). The time in which he lived, was one characterized by a crumbling world-view of the preceding epoch. It was Descartes who established the philosophical foundation of the modern period and made certain propositions definitive of the epoch in question. A lot of things were happening in Europe of the time.

Just how did Descartes revolutionize philosophy? Descartes was reacting to scepticism. Scepticism heralded growing epistemological uncertainty, which threatened claims to genuine knowledge. The uncertainty was deepened by the influx of competing ancient philosophical stimuli to which the Western mind had turned to in the wake of the threatening intellectual blackout. Of particular significance was the resuscitation and defence of the classical scepticism of Sextus Empiricus. The French essayist Michel de Montaigne was especially sensitive to the new mood, and he in turn gave modern voice to the ancient epistemological doubts. If human belief was determined by cultural custom; if the senses could be deceptive, if the structure of nature did not necessarily match the process of the mind, if reason's relativity and fallibility precluded knowledge of God or absolute moral standards, then nothing was certain (Tarnas 1991, 276).

In the face of modern scepticism, Descartes found relativism repulsive. For Descartes, this lack of certainty seemed responsible for the collapse of order and peace in Europe. Descartes' vision was to found human knowledge on strictly unshakeable basis. For Descartes, human knowledge was supposed to be instituted on foundations that were clear, distinct and certain. Descartes postulates the *cogito* - the mind's I which was also the mind's eye – as the basis of knowledge (Jung 2002, p. 298). The *cogito* is essentially disembodied, rational and capable of discovering clear and distinct ideas. Accordingly for Descartes, the call for clear and distinct ideas became the conditions for human knowledge and consequently, the point of departure for modern rationalism. Interestingly, the Cartesian manoeuvre makes the mind the subject of knowledge but the body is instantaneously turned into an object.

In the *Meditations*, Descartes calls all beliefs into doubt until the discovery of the *cogito*. He employs the *cogito* to refute the sceptical arguments of Montaigne. But as Toulmin contends, this was just a tiny fraction of his goal. The search for certainty was meant to construct a solid foundation for metaphysics and the theory of knowledge.

The *cogito*, for Descartes was the first principle and framework of all other subsequent knowledge. It provided the basis for ensuing deductions. It also served as the blueprint for all other self-evident rational insights. With the reality of the thinking subject affirmed through internal mechanics of self-verifying propositions, Descartes hopes to be able to discover more truths about the world. However he was aware that human subjects had limitations with respect to what they could know. He was also aware that human beings lacked perfection. Descartes had to argue for the necessary existence of a perfect infinite being, God, who was to take care of the limitations in human beings.

For Descartes, the thought of God was of immense magnitude and perfection. It had to be self-evident. Consequently, this state of affairs is only fitting to be derived from a reality beyond the finite and contingent thinker. Hence, Descartes postulates the certainty of an objective omnipotent God. Only through the supposition of God could the reliability of the natural light of human reason, or the objective reality of phenomenal world, be assured.

For Descartes, another important consequence was that, the *cogito* is also revealed as an essential part of the hierarchy and division in the world. The rational man knows his own awareness to be certain, and entirely distinct from the external world of material substance, which is epistemologically less certain and perceptible only as object. Thus *res cogitans* is the thinking substance. Put differently, it is the subjective experience, spirit or consciousness, that by which man perceives as within. It was understood as fundamentally different and separate from *res extensa* is the extended substance. It is also understood as the objective world of matter. Thus physical bodies such as rocks, plants and animals were included. So were celestial bodies such as, stars, the moon and the other planets. In a more general sense, the objective world was everything that human beings perceive outside their minds.

Only in man did the two realities of thought and extension coalesce as mind and body. However both the cognitive and the objective realities had their source in and were considered as aspects of God. In Descartes' dualism, soul is understood as mind. The senses are bad sources of information because they are subject to flux and error. The imagination too is a bad informant for it is susceptible to distortion.

The emotions have no room in knowledge since they stand always in contrast to certain rational comprehension.

On the other side of the dualism, are all objects of the external world. These objects do not have consciousness. This is how the physical world is constituted. The physical universe is entirely devoid of human qualities. As material objects, all physical phenomena can in essence be comprehended in mechanistic terms. This became the dominant model of conceptualizing the world adopted by the 17th century scientists (Lawhead 2002, p. 218).

Descartes maintained that God created the universe and determined its mechanical laws, but after its first movement the system moved on its own. The supreme machine was constructed by supreme intelligence. The universe was therefore not a living organism as Aristotle and the Scholastics had suggested, endowed with forms and motivated by teleological purpose. If such preconceived suppositions were cast aside and reason alone be employed to intuit the simplest, most self-evident description of nature, then it was apparent that the universe was composed of non-vital atomistic matter. Such a substance was best understood in mechanistic terms, reductively analyzed into its simplest parts, and exactly comprehended in terms of those parts' arrangements and movements. It was held that the laws of mechanics are identical with those of nature. For a man to claim to see the immanent forms and purposes in nature was to assert a metaphysical impiety – claiming direct access to God's mind. Yet, because the physical world was entirely objective, solidly and unambiguously material, it was therefore measurable. Therefore man's most powerful tool for the understanding of the universe was mathematics – available to man's natural light of human reason.

To buttress his metaphysics and epistemology, Descartes utilized Galileo's distinction between primary and measurable properties of objects and secondary, more objective properties. The quest for an understanding of the universe was guided by a methodological principle, the scientists must not focus on those qualities merely apparent to sense perception, which are liable to misjudgement and human distortion, but should instead attend only to objective qualities that can be perceived clearly and distinctly and analyzed in quantitative terms – shape, extension, number, duration, specific gravity, and relative position. Upon the basis of experiment and hypothesis, it was believed that science would proceed.

For Descartes, mechanics was a species of a “universal mathematics” by which the physical universe could be fully analyzed and effectively manipulated to serve the health and comfort of mankind. With quantitative mechanics ruling the world, an absolute faith in human reason was justified. Here then, was the basis for a practical philosophy – one granting man direct understanding of the forces of nature so they could be turned to its own purposes (Tarnas 1991, p. 279).

For Descartes, it was by the sheer power of human reason that establishes both its own existence out of experiential necessity and also that of God out of pure logic. By this manoeuvre Descartes enthroned human reason as the supreme authority in matters of knowledge, capable of distinguishing certain metaphysical truth and achieving certain scientific understanding of the material world. He also made God the guarantor of the reality of the objective world and its rational order. The faculty of sensing is rendered passive. More importantly, Descartes failed to see or was afraid to underline the full

implication of the authority and autonomy of reason. A point Hume was later to make with unmatched buoyancy.

This is how Descartes also started a Copernican revolution in theology; for his mode of reasoning suggested that the existence of God was established by human reason but not the other way round. The self-evident certainty of God's existence was made possible by God's own benevolent veracity in creating reliable human reason. Until Descartes, revealed truth had maintained an objective authority outside of human judgement. Descartes managed to make the prototypical declaration of the modern self, established as a fully separate, self-defining entity, for whom its own rational self awareness was absolutely primary – doubting everything except itself, setting itself in opposition not only to traditional authorities but to the world, as subject against object, as thinking, observing, measuring, manipulating being, fully distinct from an objective God and an external nature.

The outcome of the dualism between rational subject and the material world was science, including science's capacity for rendering certain knowledge of that world, and for making man master and "possessor of nature. In Descartes' vision, science, progress, reason, epistemological certainty, and human identity were all intricately connected with each other and with the conception of an objective, mechanistic universe; and upon this synthesis was founded the paradigmatic character of the modern mind (Tarnas 1991, p. 280).

The chain of rationalists after Descartes and before Kant generally towed his line of thought.

Leibniz for instance, venerated reason and focused on the need to discover a universal language to safeguard humanity from sliding into perpetual conflict as has happened during the religious wars in Europe. Leibniz was fascinated by the prospect of universal rationality which in turn would produce a language through which one would express all thoughts and be understood by all people. The envisaged language was going to be artificial and its role was to win over speakers from different cultures and allow them to talk together and share the same understanding of the world. The same language was going to be employed in argumentation so that different people could reason clearly and put their viewpoints clearly without committing errors or ambiguities.

Leibniz envisioned such a language as the greatest instrument for reasoning. Due to its purported utility, Leibniz worked towards the realization of this goal. He meant to guarantee meanings and common understanding amongst the different peoples of the world.

Leibniz's project of constructing a universal language assumes that the modes of life and concepts of people in all cultures are similar enough to yield the same "ideal language" as the end product. Leibniz was grappling with a much more complex matter – that of the conceptualisation of reality. What had made nations and religious groups clash was their preoccupation with the ephemeral appearance. Thus Leibniz was preoccupied with the construction of the rational bridges to link together all communities which prized rational deliberation.

How did Leibniz conceptualize reality into which he wanted to weave a universal language? It appears that Leibniz regarded language as an aspect intricately connected

to a complex world-view. Thus he sought also to develop a body of knowledge about reality which was going to appeal to all intellectuals of different nations and religions would accept and express it in the universal language for the easy access of all (Toulmin 1999, p.103).

The primary objective, however, was the creation of a shared world-view about nature, the cosmos and humanity. The central aspect of his account of reality was 'rational conceivability'. Just like Descartes, Leibniz maintained that our ideas about reality must be clear for them to count as knowledge. However, he did not delve into physics of nature, for he regarded such studies as attempting to limit God's power since by limiting the subdivisions of matter into atoms of a given minimum size, it would amount to limiting the possibilities of creation needlessly, arbitrarily and irrationally.

Empiricists also contributed to the Enlightenment and the early modern world-view. Francis Bacon, Locke and David Hume and a host of others were all instrumental towards developing the anthropocentric view which characterized Western modernity. Beginning with Francis Bacon whom most historians regard as the harbinger and architect of the modern age, we see how the powers of human reason are celebrated. He epitomized the role of reason in exploiting and harnessing nature. Jung sums up the technological thrust of Bacon in the following words:

He is indeed the philosopher who designs and engineers the technomorphic and industrial ethos of modernity. Bacon upholds the convergence of theory and practical operations, of knowledge and utility, and of knowing and making. He knows neither Goethean "soft empiricism" (*zarte Empirie*) nor genuflection of the earth. His hard experimentalism not only captures the essence of the modern sciences but also discovers the secret "feminine" bosom of nature. Bacon puts forth most forcefully the modern Promethean principles of *Herrschaftswissen* in which knowledge and power intersect the crossroads of utility for the sake of *philanthropia*. Philanthropia, which

is the centerfold of his anthropocentrism, is the maximization of profits from man's investment in nature by way of science and technology (Jung 2002, p. 300).

John Locke did not write a separate work on metaphysics but all was infused in and out of his theory of knowledge. Locke generally was interested in the reality of what we know. He always assumed the existence of the external world of objects. He emphasized that knowledge comes to us through sense experience. The ideas of sense are the first ideas we have. Our minds start off blank and experience writes on it. Once the mind begins to be populated with them, it can operate upon them. This operation is the source of a second kind of idea, the idea of reflection. Unlike many ideas of sense, which force themselves upon us, so that we cannot help but be aware of them, all ideas of reflection require that attention be paid to the workings of the mind.

Locke's epistemology is commonly referred to as 'representative realism' claims that the mind is directly acquainted with its own ideas, but these ideas are caused by and represent objects external to it. As a result, of existence is divided among the various degrees - Chipso knows herself through the direct inspection of ideas; there is demonstration of God's existence, and there is sensitive knowledge of objects which present themselves to my senses. Consequently, we know very little sensitively, since what we perceive at any time is very limited.

Locke understood knowledge as the agreement or disagreement of the various ideas in the mind. When this happens, we are left generally with three types of knowledge in rank. The lowest degree of knowledge proper is sensitive knowledge, which is based on sense experience rather than merely on ideas. Demonstrative knowledge comes next. This form of knowledge according to Locke is mediated knowledge. One has to move through steps from one form of truth to the next.

The presence of intermediaries in demonstrative knowledge introduces an element of slight uncertainty not present with intuitive knowledge. It transcends the senses as it is an immediate and intuitive grasp of the truth. Hence, considers intuitive knowledge to be the highest form of knowledge. Here, the mind arrives at truth unmediated.

Locke places special emphasis on the distinction between intuition and demonstration. In the former case, the agreement or disagreement is immediately perceived; in the latter, it is perceived through the mediation of a third idea, but each step in the demonstration is itself an intuition, the agreement or disagreement between the two ideas compared being immediately perceived. He believes that mathematics and ethics are demonstrable. When ideas are together in the mind, we can discover their relation to one another; so long as they are not taken to represent archetypes outside the mind, there is no obstacle to certainty of knowledge. "All relation terminates in, and is ultimately founded on, those simple ideas we have got from sensation or reflection" (Essay 2 28:18). However for Locke, "general and certain truths are only founded in the habitudes and relations of abstract ideas" (Essay 4. 12:7). Thus, Locke vindicates the certainty of mathematics: although instructive, the science is merely ideas in the mind, and its propositions do not hold of things outside the mind.

For Locke, knowledge of mathematics and ethics may be firmly established, particularly as these subjects involve relations between ideas, and thus make no claims about matters of real existence. When it comes to knowledge of real existence, though, ultimately there are only two certainties: our own existence and that of God.

Furthermore Locke notes that we intend for some of our ideas to refer beyond themselves to an external reality, and that the title of knowledge must be reserved for

those ideas, which correspond to it. But this raises the problem of the criterion for distinguishing which ideas conform to reality and which do not.

Thus Locke also followed Descartes in elevating reason to be the adjudicator in matter of cognition, although he carved room for the role of the senses in the cognitive processes. He leaves all his faculties in the natural state, to enable him to judge of his inspirations, whether they be of *divine* original or no.... Reason must be our last judge and guide in everything" (Essay 4:19:14).

Yet reason clearly limits the field of its own insight; it is only reasonable to believe where we cannot know and yet must act. However, as morality and religion cannot be compassed by reason, such knowledge must be supplemented by faith if we are to fulfil our divine destiny.

Empiricists after Locke especially David Hume, worked very hard to discredit the efficacy of metaphysics in the search of knowledge about the world. Hume sought to develop more fully the consequences of Locke's cautious empiricism by applying the scientific methods of observation to a study of human nature itself. For Hume, humans cannot rely on the common-sense pronouncements of popular superstition, which illustrate human conduct without offering any illumination. Nor can we achieve any genuine progress by means of abstract metaphysical speculation, which imposes a spurious clarity upon profound issues. The alternative is to reject all easy answers, employing the negative results of philosophical scepticism as a legitimate place to start.

Stated more positively, Hume's position is that since human beings do in fact live and function in the world, we should try to observe how they do so. The key principle to be applied to any investigation of our cognitive capacities is, then, an attempt to discover the

causes of human belief. This attempt is neither the popular project of noticing and cataloguing human beliefs nor the metaphysical effort to provide them with an infallible rational justification.

Hume's analysis of human belief begins with a careful distinction among our mental contents. He concedes that the mind holds only either impressions or ideas. Impressions are the direct, vivid, and forceful products of immediate experience for instance *kana ndichikambura rupiza* (when one is licking roasted been porridge) Impressions are the prior aspects of experience and ideas are the consequences of the former. Ideas are mere copies of the impressions. Thus, for example, the colour of the University logo I was looking at a while ago on the internet is an idea because they are less vivid than the first impressions.

Since every idea must be derived from an antecedent impression, Hume supposed, it always makes sense to inquire into the origins of our ideas by asking from which impressions they are derived. Hume maintained that each of our ideas and impressions is entirely separable from every other. The apparent connection of one idea to another is invariably the result of an association that we manufacture ourselves. Our minds according to Hume are responsible for the operations that link ideas to each other by resemblance, contiguity, or cause and effect. Experience provides us with both the ideas themselves and our awareness of their association. All human beliefs including what we take for cases of knowledge, result from repeated applications of these simple associations.

Hume further distinguished between two sorts of belief. Relations of ideas are beliefs grounded wholly on associations formed within the mind; they are capable of demonstration because they have no external referent. Matters of fact are beliefs that claim to report the nature of existing things; they are always contingent.

Mathematical and logical knowledge relies upon relations of ideas; it is uncontroversial but uninformative. The interesting but problematic propositions of natural science depend upon matters of fact. Abstract metaphysics mistakenly tries to achieve the certainty of the former with the content of the latter.

Since genuine information rests upon our belief in matters of fact, Hume was particularly concerned to explain their origin. Such beliefs can reach beyond the content of present sense-impressions and memory, Hume held, only by appealing to presumed connections of cause and effect. But since each idea is distinct and separable from every other, there is no self-evident relation; these connections can only be derived from our experience of similar cases. So the crucial question in epistemology is to ask exactly how it is possible for us to learn from experience.

In order to learn anything, we must suppose that our past experiences bear some relevance to present and future cases. But although we do indeed believe that the future will be like the past, the truth of that belief is not self-evident. In fact, it is always possible for nature to change, so inferences from past to future are never rationally certain. Thus, on Hume's view, all beliefs in matters of fact are fundamentally non-rational.

Hume forbade humans to speculate beyond the content of their present experience and memory, even though the temptation to do so is great! We find it entirely natural to believe much more than what our sensory evidence can support. Hume held that these unjustifiable beliefs can be explained by reference to custom or habit. That's how we learn from experience. When one observes the constant conjunction of events in my experience, one grows accustomed to associating them with each other. Although many past cases of sunset do not guarantee the future of nature. However, one's experience of them does get one used to the idea and produces in one an expectation that the sun will set again today.

This association of ideas is a powerful natural process in which separate ideas come to be joined together in the mind. The association of ideas also occurs by rational means, as they are in the relations of ideas that constitute mathematical knowledge. But even where this is possible, Hume argued, reason is a slow and inefficient guide, while the habits acquired by much repetition can produce a powerful conviction independently of reason. What we call relative probability is, on Hume's view, nothing more than a measure of the strength of conviction produced in us by our experience of regularity.

Our belief in matters of fact, then, arises from sentiment or feeling rather than from reason. For Hume, imagination and belief differ only in the degree of conviction with which their objects are anticipated. Although this positive answer may seem disappointing, Hume maintained that custom or habit is the great guide of life and the foundation of the science of nature.

According to Hume then, our belief that events are causally related is also a result of custom or habit acquired by experience. In most cases, after observing the regularity with which events occur together, we form the association of ideas that produces the habit of expecting the effect whenever we experience the cause. We tend to believe that the cause somehow produces the effect. Even if this belief has no adequate justification, Hume needed to explain why we hold this feeble belief anyway. His approach was to search for the original impression from which our idea of the necessary connection between cause and effect is copied.

Another feature of human cognition is our belief in the reality of the external world. Hume noted that humans have prior belief, that they actually sense physical objects directly. However, he cautions that modern philosophy and science have persuaded us that this is not literally true.

Representationalists, had contended humans are directly aware of ideas, which must in turn be causally produced in our minds by external objects. The problem is that on this view we can never know that there really are physical objects that produce our sensory ideas.

We cannot rely on causal reasoning to convince us that there are external objects, Hume argued, since such reasoning arises from our observation of a constant conjunction between causes and effects. But according to the representationalist philosophy, we have no direct experience of the presumed cause! If we know objects only by means of ideas, then we cannot use those ideas to establish a causal connection between the things and the objects they are supposed to represent.

Hume supposed that, our belief in the reality of an external world is entirely non-rational. It cannot be supported either as a relation of ideas or even as a matter of fact. Although it is utterly unjustifiable, however, belief in the external world is natural and unavoidable. We are in the habit of supposing that our ideas have external referents, even though we can have no real evidence for doing so.

According to him, knowledge of pure mathematics is secure because it rests only on the relations of ideas, without presuming anything about the world. Experimental observations permit us to use our experience in forming useful habits. Any other epistemological effort, especially if it involves the pretence of achieving useful abstract knowledge, is meaningless and unreliable. It can be observed that David Hume trudged along the Enlightenment path of venerating human reason in the search for knowledge, but he nursed sceptical considerations concerning the extent of this knowledge.

Notwithstanding Hume's brilliance, there was a dark patch to his thoughts which tainted the whole of Enlightenment thought: his racial bias. He plugged into the "white mythology" which praised the superiority of European races (Prakash 1992, p. 11). He believed that the non-Western races, particularly blacks were naturally inferior to whites (Jung 2002, p. 302). Accordingly, these non-whites produced no civilization worth attention. In one of his publications, Hume asserts categorically that the difference of "mental capacity" between the whites and the blacks is as great as in the color of their skin³⁴. Thus the pronouncement of human rationality by Enlightenment thinkers was confined to the Westerners. So, the modern project tended to be a movement venerating Western reason as Kant, Hegel, Marx and others also joined in the fray.

5.6 Kant at the Summit of Enlightenment Thought

Immanuel Kant is considered a revolutionary figure and the greatest child of the Enlightenment (Lawhead, 2002, pp. 321-324). Kant lumbers onto the philosophical scene very critical of his predecessors for failing to critically assess the powers of human reason before they launched into their grandiose speculations.

Kant was convinced that humans do have knowledge, which is to be found in Mathematics and Newtonian physics and believed that the fundamental propositions of this knowledge were universal and necessary and that no future discoveries would ever shake our conviction of their truth. Thus there was a need to get clear on the foundations of scientific knowledge. Kant agreed with the rationalists that knowledge must be universal, necessary and certain.

³⁴ David Hume wrote and published an essay in 1763 entitled; "Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime", in which his opinion on the relation in mental capacities between blacks and whites was articulated.

The rationalist however, had very little use for perception, which Kant knew was essential in conducting the sciences. Kant agreed with Hume that logical propositions alone do not give us knowledge of the world of experience but only of the relations of our ideas. Accordingly, the rationalist's account cannot be the whole story. Consequently, he agreed with the empiricists that all knowledge begins with experience. But empiricism too had its own weaknesses. As Hume had already pointed out, experience alone cannot get us universal, necessary and certain knowledge that Kant required. Although Kant had learnt from Hume, he was disappointed with his scepticism (Lawhead 2002, p. 327)

Kant was also determined to resolve the tensions between the mechanistic science on the one hand, and religion, morality and human freedom on the other. He raised several important questions. Where in the world of particles in motion is the place of God? If scientific knowledge only gives us information about the physical facts, how do we arrive at values and moral norms? If the world presented by science is thoroughly mechanistic and deterministic, would this call for the abandonment of notions of freedom and moral responsibility? In order to find answers to these questions, Kant tells us that 'he had to deny knowledge in order to give room to faith (Kant 1929, p.30). By this he meant that the domain of scientific knowledge was limited and that our deepest human concerns must be based on something other than empirical data.

Kant also set out to deal with the crisis of metaphysics (Bowman 1916, p. 2). Traditional metaphysics and theology, had assumed that reason could tell us about the realities that transcend experience. He noted that the results of metaphysical speculation have been disappointing.

There is no agreement or progress in metaphysics such as there was in the sciences. Metaphysics according to Kant was “a dark ocean without coasts without lighthouses”. Kant thought that metaphysical concerns were unavoidable and expressed something deep and significant in the human spirit. For him, it is no more possible to give up metaphysics just because of some of its nonsense, than it would be to stop breathing just because some air is impure.

Kant proposes a ‘Copernican revolution’ in epistemology³⁵. The empiricists thought that the mind is passive when confronting the world and simply records impressions. In this picture, knowledge conforms to its objects. Can we know that our ideas conform to external reality? Hume says there is no way we can find out. For him, we can never get outside of ourselves and link directly with the outside world. To avoid Hume’s scepticism, Kant (like Copernicus) reverses this common sense picture. He invites us to consider the possibility that the objects conform to our knowledge (Kant 1929, p. bxwi). In other words, for sense data to be experienced as objects by us, the mind must impose a certain rational structure on them.

Kant simply is saying that the way in which reality appears to us depends on both the contribution of both the senses and the intellect. The mind imposes its own form of on the material of experience, and through this activity, we have objects to be known. Think of eyesight. Some people cannot see distant objects; but when the person puts on spectacles, he begins to see clearly. This tells us a person’s visual experience is a product of both the sensory data and the way in which the lenses process this input.

³⁵ There is however a raging debate between those scholars who hold that Kant was responsible for instituting the Copernican revolution in philosophy (see for instance J. E. Creighton: 1913) and for those who oppose this (see N. R. Hanson: 1959).

Kant believed that our experience is a product of both what comes from the external world and the particular structure that the mind imposes on it. We jump outside of our experience to compare reality as it appears to us with reality as it is in itself before the mind processes it. However, if all human minds are structured in the same way, then within the bounds of experience, it is possible to have knowledge that is universal and objective.

For a complete account of knowledge, Kant says that we must realize that: “There are two stems of human knowledge, namely sensibility and understanding, which perhaps spring from a common, but to us unknown, root. Through the former, objects are given to us; through the latter, they are brought” (Kant, A15, B29). Thus far, he has explained the aspect of human knowledge that he calls ‘sensibility’ in his explanation of how sense perception is structured by the forms of intuition of space and time.

Sensations and the forms of intuition alone, do not explain how we are able to know the objects of ordinary experience such as dogs, chairs and baboons. If the mechanism of perception constituted the whole of our cognitive apparatus, we would have only spatially and temporally located sensations (bits of colours, sounds, smells, tastes, textures) but not knowledge. To have full-blown knowledge, there needs to be a further set of organizing principles. These principles are found in the faculty of understanding. Just as the cookie is the product of dough being pressed into a certain form (the cookie press), so knowledge is a product of sensibility and understanding working together:

Now we find, what is especially noteworthy, that even into our experiences there must enter modes of knowledge which must have their origin *a priori*, and which perhaps serve only to give coherence to our sense-representations. For if we eliminate from our experiences everything which belongs to the senses, there still remain certain original concepts and certain judgements derived from them, which

must have arisen completely *a priori*, independently of experience, in as much as they enable us to say, or at least lead us to believe that we can say, in regard to the objects which appear to the senses, more than what experience would teach – giving to assertions true universality and strict necessity, such as mere empirical knowledge cannot supply (Kant A2)

For Kant, knowledge is more than sense data – it takes the form of judgements that can be expressed in propositions. Perceiving someone striking a gong, followed by the experience of a sound is not the same as ‘knowing that striking a gong causes the sound’. Understanding organizes the experiences by means of pure concepts because they are *a priori* and are not derived from sense experience.

In dreams anything can happen and any experience can be followed by any other experience. However, we label these experiences as “subjective” because we can contrast them with the realm of objective experiences. For example the successive appearances of the clock that we see on our dresser are the same from moment to moment. For this reason we say, “There is a clock”. Rarely do we say, “I am experiencing sensory images that have the appearance of a clock.” Thus, for Kant when sensations appear together in more or less consistent and permanent clusters, and when they are similar to what is experienced by others, we experience these collections of sensations as objects within the objective world. We are able to form empirical concepts such as ‘frog’, ‘star’, ‘apple’ by means of the category substance. By means of this category, we can for instance, we can, for instance, organize the sensations of redness, roundness, sweetness, and crunchiness into a unity called an ‘apple’. Kant agrees with Hume that substance is not a category acquired through sensation. At the same time it is not some metaphysical reality beneath the appearances.

Kant contends that we are burdened by our own finitude, so to try to seek for knowledge of reality that transcends these human forms is like trying to lift ourselves up by our own bootstraps or like trying to jump out of our own skins. For this reason Kant calls traditional metaphysics, “transcendental illusions” (Kant, A295/B352). The only world we can make sense of is the world of objects that appear within experience. He refers to them as things-as-they-appear to us (phenomena). In a practical sense, the phenomenal world is the real world and the notion of such a world corresponding to anything ‘outside’ of it is unintelligible. However we cannot help talking of the other side of the boundaries of sense and intelligibility. These things-in-themselves which are not structured by the mind’s categories are what Kant calls noumena. We cannot assign any positive content to the concept of the noumena. The concept is only a limiting one – a way of pointing to what lies beyond any possible experience.

It may even be improper to talk about the *noumena* at all if they are essentially unknowable. However Kant refused to let go of this notion of some sort of reality out there that was independent of what happens within experience. After all we do not manufacture the contents of our knowledge, we only provide them with a particular form. It must follow then, that the contents of sensation must be the product out there that causes them. Thus when Kant refers to the phenomena as ‘appearances’, he suggests that they are related to the noumena in some way. Here Kant shows some inconsistency by his critiques for using the concept of ‘cause’ outside experience. Remember, Kant has identified ‘causality’ as one of the categories by which our minds structure experience. At the same time he denies that we can employ the concept of causality to make metaphysical judgements about reality-in-itself.

Causal judgements can apply only to what is found in experience! One is left wondering if at all we can employ the concept of cause.

Generally, we see Immanuel Kant raising Enlightenment thought to soaring heights by celebrating the autonomy of reason. However, in the process he denigrated the non-Western cultures. Kant followed Hume in maintaining the racial superiority of Europeans. This bias was so entrenched in Kant's mind that he even failed to be critical enough of sense experience when he observed that blacks were evidently stupid. Accordingly Demetri Gutas summarizes the major problem with Western Enlightenment, as holding other cultures to be: "mystical, sensual, otherworldly, non-rational and intensely interested in religion" (Gutas, 2002, p. 8). Reason came to belong to the white West as its highly prized and exclusive intellectual property. Thus embracing European enlightenment drives us into the thicket of racism (Jung 2002, p. 302).

5.7 Philosophy And Science In Alliance?

For more scientifically inclined modern thinkers, the speculations of the idealist metaphysicians could not command widespread philosophical acceptance, especially after the 19th century, for they were not empirically testable, nor for many did they appear to represent adequately the tenor of the scientific knowledge or the modern experience of an objective and ontologically distinct material universe. Materialism (opposite of idealism) seemed better to reflect the quality of contemporary scientific evidence. Yet, it too assumed an ultimate untestable substance – matter as opposed to spirit – and seemingly failed to account for the subjective phenomenology of the human consciousness and man's sense of being a personal volitional entity differing in

character from the unconscious impersonal world. Due to the fact that materialism, at least naturalism – the position holding that all phenomena could ultimately be explained by natural causes – appeared most congruent with the scientific account of the world and constituted a more compelling conceptual framework than did idealism. Yet for one reason or other this position was not acceptable to the modern sensibilities.

The other available metaphysical option was therefore some form of dualism reflecting the Cartesian and Kantian positions – one that more adequately represented the common modern experience of disjunction between the objective physical universe and the subjective human awareness. With an increasing reluctance of the modern mind to postulate any transcended dimension, the nature of the Cartesian-Kantian position was such as to prevent, or at least make highly problematic, any coherent metaphysical conception. Given both the discontinuity of the modern experience (the dualism between man and the world, mind and matter), and the epistemological quandary entailed by that discontinuity. It was ambitious for humans to try and know a reality beyond their reach. In this regard therefore, metaphysics necessarily lost its traditional pre-eminence and lustre in the philosophical enterprise (Lawhead 2002, pp. 352-3).

One could now investigate the world as a scientist, or human experience as an introspective analyst; or one could avoid the dichotomy by admitting the human world's irresolvable ambiguity and contingency, arguing instead for its existential or pragmatic transformation through the act of the will. But a universal order rationally intelligible to the contemplative observer was now generally precluded.

Modern philosophy progressed according to the principles established by Descartes and Locke. Eventually it undercut its own existence. While from one perspective the problematic entity for the modern human being was the external physical world in its dehumanized objectification, from another perspective, the human mind itself and its inscrutable cognitive mechanisms had become that which could not command full trust and endorsement. Man could no longer assume his mind's interpretation of the world to be a mirror-like reflection of things as they actually are.

The mind itself might be the alienating principle. Moreover the insights of Freud and the depths of psychologists radically increased the sense that man's thinking about the world was governed by non-rational factors that he could neither control nor be fully conscious of. For Hume to Kant through Darwin, Marx, Freud and beyond, an unsettling conclusion was becoming inescapable: human thought was determined, structured and very probably distorted by a multitude of overlapping factors – innate but non absolute mental categories, habit, history, culture, social class, biology, language, imagination, emotion, the personal unconscious, the collective unconscious.

In the end, the human mind could not be relied upon as an accurate judge of reality. The original Cartesian certainty that which served as foundation for the modern confidence in human reason was no longer defensible. Henceforth philosophy concerned itself largely with the clarification of epistemological problems, with the analysis of language, with the philosophy of science, or with phenomenological and existentialist analyses of human experience. Despite the incongruence of aims and predispositions among the various schools of the 20th century philosophy, there was the general agreement on one crucial point: the impossibility of apprehending an objective cosmic

order with the human intelligence. That point of agreement was approached from the various positions as developed by philosophers as diverse as Bertrand Russell, Martin Heidegger, and Ludwig Wittgenstein. Since empirical science alone could not render verifiable, or at least provisionally corroborated, knowledge and such knowledge concerned the contingent natural world of sense experience only, unverifiable and untestable metaphysical propositions concerning the world as a whole were without genuine meaning.

Due to the fact that human experience is finite, conditioned, problematic, individual – was all man could know, human subjectivity and the very nature of human being necessarily permeated, negated or made inauthentic any attempts at an impartial objective world conception. This is because the meaning of any term could be found only in specific use and context, and because human experience was fundamentally structured by language, and yet no direct relation existed between language and the independent deeper structure in the world could be presumed, philosophy could concern itself only with a therapeutic clarification of language in its many concrete uses without any commitment to a particular abstract conception of reality.

On the basis of these several insights, the belief that the human mind could attain or should attempt an objective metaphysical overview as traditionally understood was virtually relinquished. With only a few exceptions, the philosophical enterprise was directed into the analysis of linguistic problems, scientific and logical propositions, or raw data of human experience, all without metaphysical entailments in a classical sense. If metaphysics still had a vital function, apart from being a handmaid of “scientific cosmology”, it could only involve the analysis of those various factors that

structured human cognition – i.e. to continue Kant’s work with an approach at once more relativistic and more sensitive to the multiplicity of factors that can influence and permeate human experience: historical, social, cultural, linguistic, existential, psychological. However cosmic syntheses could no longer be taken seriously.

As philosophy became more and more technical, more concerned with methodology, and more academic, and as philosophers increasingly wrote not for the public but for each other, the discipline of philosophy lost much of its former relevance and importance for the intelligent lay person and thus much of its former cultural power. Semantics was now more germane to philosophical clarity than were universal speculations, but for most non- professionals, semantics held little interest. In any case, philosophy’s tradition mandate and status had been obviated by its own development: There was no all encompassing or transcendent or intrinsic “deeper” order in the universe to which the human mind could legitimately lay claim.

5.8 Conclusion

This chapter attempted to establish that the early phase of modernity was a complicated affair. On the one end of the spectrum was the craving for novelty – of breaking away from tradition and unleashing humanity’s unbridled potential into practice. In philosophy, the clamour for novelty translated into a deliberate undercut of past achievements of medieval thinkers. It also pushed away contributions from other cultures especially those from Africa.

If the West regarded its Christian philosophers as un-philosophic, could it have applauded the achievements of the non-Westerners? Yet, much as the modern thinkers asserted their freedom, they were irrevocably connected to the past, to both the

medieval and classical antecedents. This is paradoxical indeed. Thus Bacon and Descartes who are considered prophets of a scientific civilization attempted to rebel against what they considered an ignorant past! The duo became the zealous students of nature who proclaimed the twin epistemological bases of the modern mind. In their respective manifestos of empiricism and rationalism they placed central importance on the natural world and the human reason. In this respect, the celebration of reason which had been initiated by the Greeks and recovered by the scholastics, achieved a definitive modern expression.

The modern understanding was that humans (Westerners) had the rational intelligence to comprehend the world's natural order. It was believed that this had been made possible not by divine intervention but solely virtue of humans' own reason which has enabled them to grasped nature's underlying logic. As a result, these humans achieved dominion over the natural forces. The new philosophy was not just a mirror of the new sense of human power and progress. The philosophy was corroborated by science and technology.

Unfortunately, the writing of this story of European modernity translated into the marginalization of women and the non-Western cultures, whose views concerning reality were censured. The age of the Enlightenment was striking in its efforts to malign the other races and by implication deny or even exclude the contributions of these non-Westerners cultures. This development is singularly strange as it marks a pronounced odium towards the role played by other cultures in human progress – a phenomenon marking significant departure from the attitudes of the antecedent Greek and Roman civilizations towards cultures with whom then interfaced.

It is difficult to explain why Enlightenment thinkers were so hostile to non-Western modes of existence. Was it just the desire for novelty or were Enlightenment thinkers initiating a power game over knowledge? These questions are worth exploring, but they lie outside the scope of this research.

From the foregoing, one can draw the conclusion that Enlightenment thought - the foundation of Western modernity- was paradoxical indeed. It promised freedom and progress to all, but it turned out that this was a promise restricted to 'club members.' Women, children and non-Westerners were denied it. After being classified as non-rational, Africans could not freely contribute to knowledge, world-views and values. Ultimately it was the views of male Westerners which were universalized as if to speak of all people. A lot of cultural resources has been sidelined and forms part of a wider post-modern effort by different cultures to fight for recognition.

However, even this picture of the modern worldview is somewhat oversimplified. As a matter of fact, other important intellectual tendencies often ran counter to Enlightenment thought – namely the post-modernity and post-colonialism. This will be investigated in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

“THE SHIP WITH MULTIPLE RUDDERS AND NUMEROUS NAVIGATORS”,³⁶

6.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter unveiled some of the effects on Enlightenment thought on Africa and her intellectual productions. This chapter seeks to examine the facets of the concepts ‘reality’, ‘appearance’ and ‘knowledge’ in contemporary Western philosophy and how this impacted on the non-Western conceptualization of the same. Notwithstanding the problem of dating, the twentieth century and beyond shall herein be considered contemporaneous. On the whole, numerous movements made their mark onto the philosophical landscape in the West, giving rise to an avalanche of perspectives about the world. This was also the juncture where the intellectual terrain was inundated with post-modern inflections which tended to challenge unbridled faith in reason. Turbulent currents against Enlightenment thought were multifarious and reflected the growing discontent with certain threads of modern thought.

Apart from the main post-modern thought, ancillary intellectual movements such as feminism, subaltern and post-colonial theories also re-emerged in a relentless fashion. These movements were associated with the twin struggles in Europe and Africa. On one front, critics in Europe hauled scathing attacks against the darker side of Enlightenment thought which had spearheaded imperialism, sexism and racism among others. Of particular note was the representation of Africa as the dark or lost continent and sometimes as the “white man’s grave”. In the words of Jarosz, “This metaphor identifies and incorporates an entire continent as Other, and as a negatively valued foil

³⁶ This idea is found in the introduction to Chapter Twenty-nine of the book *Voyages of Discovery*, by William F. Lawhead (Wardsworth), 2002.

for Western notions of superiority and enlightenment” (Jarosz 1992, p. 105). This metaphor was importunate and insidious in extent and wrecked havoc on African intellectual productions. On the other hand, African nationalists irked by oppression, waged struggles for independence in their respective communities. These struggles, also known as ‘liberation struggles, marked the process of decolonization in Africa (Ahluwaliah 2001, p. 34).

The critics of the Enlightenment appealed to a variety of ideas to launch their attacks.

As Jennifer Pitts says:

They drew on a strikingly wide range of ideas to argue against empire: among others, the rights of man and the imperative of popular self-determination, the economic wisdom of free trade and foolishness of conquest, the corruption of natural man by a degenerate civilization, the hypocrisy required for self-governing republics to rule despotically over powerless subjects, and the impossibility of sustaining freedom at home while practicing despotism abroad (Pitts 2000, p. 295).

Apparently, these movements were all under-girded by conflicts and tension culminating in cracks on the pod. As with the previous epochs, these conflicts and ambiguities had a bearing on the development of the concepts on the spotlight as they developed in an environment characterized by so much turbulence.

The divergent currents in contemporary philosophy can best be understood if we cast a glance at the climax in modern philosophy. This means, recasting our gaze on how Kant spurred the development of present dimensions of philosophy. Contemporary philosophy, in one way or the other dealt with themes and problems introduced by Kant. Kant had drawn the limits of knowledge. Kant’s philosophy was a synthesis of modern philosophy’s constituent elements, mechanism and subjectivism. Essentially, Kant’s philosophy was derived from radical conceptualism.

For Kant, the transcendental subject is a formative principle shaping the intelligible content of the world, which content can be reduced to simple relationships. So reality is split into two worlds – the one empirical and phenomenal, which is invariably subject to the laws of mechanics and, the other a world of things-in-themselves, of ‘*noumena*’ to which reason cannot attain. Kant gave modern philosophy its most plausible form and its most perfect expression; but he also initiated its own tumble. This indeed was an epochal paradox – just as Kant produced a synthesis of the respective contributions by the rationalists and empiricists - his critique of pure reason opened avenues for the subsequent backlash on rationality.

The effect of Kant upon the subsequent course of philosophy cannot easily be appraised. He dominated the 19th century and has retained a considerable number of philosophical disciplines until our own day. He is the source of the main currents of thought of the 19th century and beyond, although he also critiqued the thought of his time. Kant had contested the possibility of rational metaphysics and only allowed two types of knowing (a) reality may be explored by scientific methods – in which case philosophy would be a synthesis of the results of the special sciences (b) one might study the processes by which reality is formed by the mind, in which case philosophy would be an analysis of the generation of ideas³⁷.

After Kant, and particularly in the 20th century, the philosophical waters of the West became very tumultuous. There was evidence of profound philosophical crisis at the turn of the century.

³⁷ For a discussion on the revolutionary nature of Kant’s philosophy see Lewis Beck’s introduction to the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* 1950, (pp vii-xx) Or *The Copernican Revolution in Philosophy* by J. E. Creighton, 1913, (pp. 133- 150) and See also N. R. Hanson’s “Copernicus’ Role In Kant’s Revolution”, 1959, (pp 274-281)

Its symptoms became manifest in the rise of counter-movements to the two strongest forces in modern philosophy namely, materialist mechanism and subjectivism. The revolt extended far beyond the field of philosophy and may be compared to the general crisis, which gave birth to modern culture at the time of the Renaissance. It is extraordinarily difficult to give a complete picture of it with its many contributory causes.

Taking recourse to history, it can be noted that, Europe at the end of the 19th century was undergoing noticeable changes of direction in social thought and was facing violent economic disturbances. There were remarkable alterations in religious opinion and drastic innovations in art. Hence one may refer to the age as a “ship with multiple rudders and numerous navigators.”³⁸

The changes mentioned above, were closely associated with a radical shift in intellectual life which was in turn intimately connected with changes in social relationships partly conditioned by them. It would be interesting to explore how the various intellectual crises affected the timbre on contemporary philosophy.

6.2 Crises in Newtonian Physics

Most 19th century philosophers regarded Newtonian physics as an absolutely true picture of nature. These philosophers saw in it a clear description of reality in which everything could be reduced to the position and impulse of a material atom. If one knew the present position and the forces acting on material particles, the whole subsequent future development of the world was believed to be precisely calculable by

³⁸ This idea is suggested by William F. Lawhead in the book, *Voyages of Discovery*, chapter twenty-nine.

mechanical laws. The principles, in fact the theories of physics, were taken to be absolutely true. Matter appeared as simply given and everything was to be reduced to this simple material given in nature. Moreover, physics was the oldest of natural sciences and had proved its value in technology. Other branches of knowledge, which were destined, to flourish later in the 19th century, above all history, had not yet achieved prominence.

At the turn of the 20th century, the physical picture of nature was subjected to widespread doubt. Much that has counted as absolutely certain heretofore now seemed questionable. Even matter was no longer regarded as something simple anymore. Rather, it was taken as something highly complex whose full understanding was met with great obstacles. For instance, it was now impossible to try to calculate the position and force of a material particle (Bochenski 1956, p. 13).

Even determinism came to be regarded as untenable. Eddington, one of the most outstanding astrophysicists confessed that he was an indeterminist (Elitzur 1992, p. 335). At the very least, mechanism came to assume a new form. In addition, the relativity theory, the quantum theory and other discoveries in physics rendered doubtful much else that was once regarded as quite valid.

These reversals of thought in the domain of physics exerted influence upon philosophy in two directions. Physicists themselves were no longer agreed whether, and in what degree, mechanism and determinism could still be maintained. Furthermore, they were concerned as to how one could scientifically formulate matter, now regarded as much more complex than before. Kant after realizing that Newton's atom was mass, hard and impenetrable, suggested replacing it with physical monad (MacKinnon 1978, p. 19)

These scientists were forced to acknowledge the relativistic character of their theories. These factors made it impossible to ground mechanism and determinism upon the authority of physics and conceded that it was highly questionable to attempt to explain being in terms of matter.

The net effect of all this was that some leading exponents of natural science drew far-reaching conclusions from all these facts. They thought they could establish immaterialism, idealism or even theism upon the basis of the recent discoveries in biology and physics (Bochenski 1956, p. 14).

Another crucial result of the crisis in physics also emerged, namely that physical concepts and propositions could not be taken over from philosophy without analysis and that the method of reaching conclusions about physical nature from the standpoint of philosophy could not be regarded as valid *a priori*. Apparently Descartes and Kant, in this connection, had not done adequate analysis (MacKinnon 1978, p. 19). From all this evidence, one can make a further inference that the crisis of physics rekindled the so-called analytic mode of thought which was destined to be typical of the philosophy of the 20th century.

6.3 The Critique of Science

The situation just described was not a result of purely technical scientific developments. Thinkers in various other fields had also contributed to it when they analyzed and, at times, questioned the procedures of natural science long before the crisis broke out. The leaders in the so-called critique of science were French philosophers, notably Emile Boutroux (1845-1921), Henri Poincare (1853-1912) and Pierre Duhem (1861-1916).

Henri Poincare, for instance, was convinced that science had no absolute epistemic value, particularly viewed from its utility in prediction. He believed that scientific explanations are usually interim and naturally gave way to better ones as they come. Poincare maintained the relativity of scientific hypotheses as opposed to the fixity of scientific ideas. Though scientists speak of their theories as true, he maintained that the same theories are not actually true, but simply convenient – i.e. they simplify the work of a scientist and provide her with an aesthetic picture of the universe (Wallace 1996, p. 208).

Poincare was opposed to the thoroughgoing empiricism of some of his predecessors as well as the extremes of rationalism and scientism opting for an integration of the two approaches to science. He proposed a distinction between sciences that exclusively sought the truths of reason and those that combined empirical and rational truths. The *merely rational* sciences had mathematics as their model. He qualified them as constructions of the mind. In the study of these sciences, the role of experience was excluded completely. Experience merely suggested possibilities to them and provided instances for their application. The objects of such sciences are *entia rationis* (beings of reason). The relationship that obtained amongst these entities was expressed in axioms i.e. they freely postulated and implicitly define the objects and their properties (Wallace, 1996, p. 208). The consolation was that, these postulates were not completely arbitrary. The scientists had to avoid internal contradictions and were enjoined to make these entities convenient, that is, simple and adapted to the properties of the entities with which they deal.

According to Poincare, the *empirico-rational* sciences were concerned with the objects of experience – with entities in the external world.

Experience provided singular facts, which the mind used to ascend to the universal order by constructing hypotheses. Such hypotheses in Poincare's view were not just arbitrary: they were supposed to conform to both experience and experimental laws. However, they were selected by a "free convention" In this respect, Poincare was a thoroughbred conventionalist. This conventionalism was fuelled in part by the discoveries in mathematics of alternative geometries to that of Euclid thereby bringing into question the dominant Kantian belief that geometry was a priori knowledge (Musgrave 2000, p. 432). Convention was the common practice in science in so far as a great number of different possibilities was envisaged purporting to explain the same facts. Thus hypotheses, like laws, could not be true or false but were qualified as more or less "suited" to describe phenomena.

Pierre Duhem assimilated Poincare's teachings with some modifications and established a convenient philosophy of science. He even limited the aspiring authority of science to give room to religious authority (Wettersten 2005, p. 128). Basic to his critique of science was the distinction he made between two orders of knowledge – philosophy and science. For him, philosophy was essentially metaphysics, which sought the explanations, causes and essences of things. The knowledge provided by metaphysics was merely symbolic: it did not explain phenomena, but simply represented or symbolized it. By contrast, the judgements of science were regarded as something different. Scientific rules for, Duhem were based on experiments (Wallace 1996, p. 209). They were symbolic relations whose meanings were unintelligible to anyone who did not know the theories on which the experiments were based. Due to the fact that they were symbolic they could not be taken as true, neither could they be regarded as false. Like the experiments on which they were based, they were just approximations.

For Duhem, the degree of the approximation of a law was relative to the experiments on whose basis it was formulated (Musgrave 2000, pp.152-3). Scientific laws could satisfy researchers now, but progress in experimental methods may render them insufficient in the future. Thus a law of physics is both relative and provisional, to the extent that it is open to revision or even correction. Situations could develop where the symbol no longer corresponded to reality. In the end, it was held that scientific laws could only be maintained by constant retouching and modification (Wallace 1996, p.209).

Other critics of science included the German pair - Richard Avenarius (1843-1896) and Ernst Mach (1838- 1916). Both wrote works, which furnished an extra-ordinary criticism of the theory that science had an absolute value. They argued that on the contrary, science was based more on pure experience (Currie, 2000, p. 54). The critique of science was applied so much to the value of concepts as it was to scientific systems. Penetrating analyses and historical investigations proved that both were largely subjective to nature because the man of science does not only make an arbitrary dissection of reality, but also continually employs concepts which originate in his mind (Bochenski 1956, p. 15).

Ernst Mach, a figure in the movement wished to develop an epistemology that could be used by scientists in their work of criticism. He studied carefully the methods employed and the conclusions to which classical mechanics had come and intended to show the limitations of both. He employed positivist principles in his critique. He was convinced that there is no profound truth beyond empirical data and consequently denied the possibility of metaphysics (Musgrave, 2000, p. 331).

For March, just as for Avenarius, the object of any science is experience, particularly sensation (Wallace 1996, p. 207). Accordingly, science does not attain to any object distinct from subjective impressions. However, sensations are not disconnected but organized into constant groupings that are designated as things. Contrary to realists who take sensations to refer to things, Mach's empiricism proposed that things are merely symbols of sensations. For him, the task of science is the analysis of sensations and their relationships, so as to organize them into some type of synthesis. The goal of synthesis in Mach's view is not theoretical i.e. not to inquire into the causes and meanings of phenomena or to supply explanations for them: rather it is simply practical. The end of science is to enable man to adapt himself, with a maximum economy of thought and effort, to the conditions that produce the sensations he experiences (Musgrave 2000, p. 331).

Mach regarded hypotheses as a temporary but useful tool in science whose chief function was to organize experimental data and to suggest new experiments. Granted the efficacy of this view, the implication is that it would be preposterous for scientists to ask whether a hypothesis is true or false (Wallace 1999, p. 207). Furthermore, Mach contended that scientific laws are rules that can be used economically to replace a series of data. Thus he suggested the 'principle of economy of thought' (Musgrave 2000, p. 331). Whenever possible, they are to be expressed in mathematical formulas. On Mach's account, it is impossible to know the laws of nature as extra-mental regulators of phenomena (Wallace 1996, p. 207).

Thus these German empirio-critics subscribed to a form of relativism, which was close to skepticism.

They challenged the metaphysical assumptions of modern science – a belief in entities which were not experienced directly. Consequently, they challenged Newton's idea that space and time were absolute. They even challenged the existence of sub-atomic particles. The general effect was that science lost much of its authority in philosophers' minds, thus aggravating still more what the crisis within physics has set in motion. Henceforth, one could not uphold a Newtonian view of Nature such as one finds at the roots of Kantianism and of all the previous European thought. This crisis in the physical sciences was replicated in mathematics.

6.4 Crisis in Mathematics

Towards the end of the 19th century, the evolution of mathematics led to another equally profound crisis as was found in physics. New theories developed in mathematics. Most influential of these were non-Euclidean geometry and set theory. Both fields of mathematics had the singular effect of showing that many things once taken without question as presuppositions of mathematics were in fact not certain at all (Bochenski 1956, p. 15). The certitude and precision of mathematics as envisioned from Descartes to Kant which characterized truths of reason was seriously brought into question. In the field of set theory, for example some telling 'paradoxes' were discovered. These mathematical paradoxes helped dismantle the belief in the unshakeable underpinnings of mathematical truths. With this, the very foundations of mathematics seemed to be wobbly.

In close conjunction with these development stood the renaissance of formal logic. The development of modern philosophy had allowed logic to fall into neglect and indeed into a state of serious decline. Leibniz alone among the modern philosophers was an eminent logician.

The rest including Descartes and Kant scarcely knew the elements of formal logic. However, from about 1847 there appeared significant works on logic from two English mathematicians, Augustus de Morgan (1806-1878) and George Boole (1815-1864). This effort was carried forward by Ernst Shroder (1841-1902), Giuseppe Peano (1858-1932) and above all Gottlob Frege (1848-1925). The turning point in mathematical logic became visibly manifest at the beginning of the 20th century, with the publication of Bertrand Russell's *Principles of Mathematics* in 1903. Then after, Whitehead and others developed the discipline further.

Before the crisis, mathematical logic has always had a profound influence on philosophy. In the first instance, it had proved to be the most precise instrument for the analysis of concepts and proofs. Secondly, it held the promise of application everywhere even in non-mathematical fields. Due to the revived mathematical-logical investigations, many old philosophical problems have become serious issues again e.g. the problem of the “excluded middle” of the truth of axioms, of philosophical grammar (semiotic) and above all the problem of universals. Thus the proficiency of mathematical reasoning could no longer be taken for granted as in the past (Bochenski 1956, p. 17). The impact of these new developments in mathematical and logical reasoning on philosophy cannot be over emphasized.

6.5. Implications of the New Science on Philosophy

The fore-mentioned developments in physics and mathematical logic had serious repercussion on philosophy. The supposition that mathematics and logic, held fixed, changeless and eternal truths began to wane, giving rise to an avalanche of alternative pictures. The crisis in Newtonian physics, as we have seen also had similar effects. The

view that reality was not composed of particles of matter was no longer held as sacrosanct. For many contemporary philosophers, the mind modifies the objects of consciousness, which are known in experience and reflection. Thus any knowledge must be of phenomena – of things as they appear to viewers. This admission in contemporary philosophy led to the ascendancy in many disciplines of the view that all knowledge is contextual. This view had appeared as a suppressed variant strand of thought modern philosophy. The view was first suggested by Galileo, and then Locke through the distinction between primary and secondary qualities. It reached its fullest expression in Kant's distinction between *noumena* and *phenomena*.

Whereas Locke had argued that at least the primary qualities were exempt from the modifications of the knowing mind, it followed for him that objective knowledge of the primary qualities was possible. His general distinction between primary and secondary qualities has evolved today into the view that, "It is language, culture and tradition, perhaps even race and gender, which modify the objects of consciousness. The result of this approach was the abolition of the search for the so-called objective knowledge. Accordingly, belief in transcendental, trans-historical essences and truths, is an illusion, for there are no such truths" (Brendan 1999, p. 3).

It is reasonable therefore to suggest that, post-modernism, defined as the movement whose central theme is the critique of objective rationality and identity, and the working out of implications of this critique for the central questions of philosophy, literature and culture. This post-modern perspective is certainly more radical than modernism. Locke and Kant still believed that these objects were modified the same way for everyone hence objectively known by the human mind. This position appears to have been embraced also by Quine who argues that, "the totality of our so-called

knowledge or beliefs, from the most casual matters of geography and history to the profoundest laws of atomic physics or even pure mathematics and logic, is man-made fabric which impinges on experience only along the edges” (quoted in Brendan, 1999, p. 3-4). Similarly, Jacques Derrida and Jean–Francois Lyotard had maintained the view that there are no identities beyond culture and language, that the mind is imprisoned in language, and that we need to continually express our “incredulity towards meta-narratives” This epistemic situation makes us plummet into relativism.

Relativism and anti-realism are prominent themes in contemporary thought. They are intricately related to other themes of the period now bent on subversion of the meta-narratives of the West (Scott 2003, p. 101). These other themes include naturalism, anti-religious, anti-tradition and moral relativism (Brendan 1999, p. 4). Thus in the 20th century we begin to see in the West a significant gush of thought patterned as the counter-enlightenment. Post-Enlightenment thinkers, for instance Schelling, became very critical of Enlightenment thought. The basic charge was that the enlightened understanding of the world was itself grounded on something pre-reflective or pre-enlightened which was presupposed, yet not at all grasped. Accordingly, the counter-Enlightenment was bent on demonstrating that far from what it professed to be – that is to say, “the clear-sighted attempt to cast the light of human reason into all the dark corners of the world - the Enlightenment was and is willfully oblivious to the ineradicability of darkness and mystery at the basis of human existence” (Linker 2000, p. 339). Other intellectuals were simply bitter that philosophers had monopolized the cultural establishment (McMahon 1998, p. 102). Ironically, these post-Enlightenment critics were not novel as their attacks on truth, knowledge and meaning has been an ongoing affair since Protagoras (Priest 2003, p. 97).

Interestingly, they added impetus to the non- Western efforts to interrogate Western representations of language and thought as will be shown in the next chapter.

6.6 Does Philosophy Mirror Nature?

Richard Rorty has caused a stir in recent philosophy. For over three decades, Rorty has been attacking the concept of philosophy that has been responsible for both the remoteness and increasing professionalization (Gaita 1981, p. 427). In the book entitled *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Rorty problematized a metaphor he saw as central to modern philosophy: that of the mind as a mirror whose representations reflect external nature with greater or lesser accuracy (Rorty 1980, p. 12). The most influential user of this metaphor, according to Rorty, was Kant, who, seeking to identify a privileged class of representations very much compelling to the extent that their accuracy was taken as indubitable. As a consequence, it became the foundation for all knowledge claims in an understanding of knowledge itself. Generally it took the position that the mind is split between 'simple ideas' or 'passively received intuitions' on the one hand and a range of complex ideas on the other (Gross 2003, p. 98).

The various representations were capable of being studied by pure non-empirical methods. It was envisaged that philosophy's task was to use its special methods in order to secure a relationship between the mind's representations and the world represented. On this view, philosophy is the basis of culture as it is the tribunal for reason. All other areas of inquiry are to be judged by it.

Rorty criticized the attempt to justify knowledge claims by tracing them to a set of foundations; more broadly, he criticized the claim of philosophy to function

foundationally within a culture (Gossman 1989, p. 17). He believed that philosophy has detached itself from the rest of culture due to its privileged and special self-understanding. It has become the cultural overseer, who knows everyone's common ground - who knows what everyone else is really doing whether they know it or not, because philosophy knows about the ultimate context within which they are doing it (Fuller 1982, p. 373). Rorty has sought to dispel the image of the mirror of nature and the view of philosophy proper to it. In its place, he has championed the view of philosophy as the "informed dilettante, the poly-pragmatic, Socratic intermediary" – between various forms of inquiry (Gaita 1980, p. 428).

Rorty sought to trivialize the then current debates over correspondence and coherence theories and scientific realism in order to undermine the very notion of a world independent of thought (Guignon 1982, p. 360). For him, "if we can come to see both the coherence and correspondence theories as non-competing trivialities, then we may finally move beyond realism and idealism and to the point at which Wittgenstein's words, "we are capable of stopping doing philosophy when we want to" (Rorty 1982, p. 17)

Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature challenges the conception of philosophy that was almost universally accepted among mainstream Anglo-American philosophers in the 1970s. This conception of philosophy was inherited from Descartes and was given its clearest formulation by Kant. In its simplest formulation, it holds that before philosophers begin to speculate about what is and what ought to be, they should first get clear about the scope of knowledge and the limits of human understanding. For this standard conception, of philosophy, the theory of knowledge is the 'first philosophy'

and all the other areas of philosophy should accede to its judgements about the limits of knowledge. At the heart of the traditional epistemology is “representationalism,” the view that we are at the most basic level, minds containing beliefs of various sorts and that our first task is to make sure our beliefs accurately represent reality as it is in itself.

According to Rorty, philosophy aims to be a ‘general theory of representation: a theory, which will divide culture up into areas, which represent reality well and those, which do not represent it at all (Rorty 1980, p. 13). It is due to its claim as the final court of appeal for any knowledge claims whatsoever that philosophy can see itself as foundational in respect to the rest of culture.

Epistemology-centred philosophy assumes that our primary goal as philosophers is to find a set of representations that are known in such a way as to go beyond a pale of doubt. Once such privileged representations are identified, they can serve as the basis for the foundationalist project of justifying beliefs that make a claim to being knowledge. The representations that have been taken to be inherently and automatically accurate have been of two sorts: (i) beliefs based solely on the meanings of the terms they contain – analytic sentences. (ii) beliefs that immediately register the deliverances of sensory experiences such as; “Ouch! Pain! The ideal of foundationalism is to ground our entire system of beliefs on the basis of such bedrock representations (Gaita 1980, p. 13).

Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature spells out some of the core assumptions about foundationalism and representationalism widely accepted by the philosophical mainstream tradition.

The dominant outlook in Anglo-American philosophy assumed that the world consists of natural kind of items and that our task is to achieve a correct mapping of these types. In other words the task was to have a grasp of how the world is carved up at its joints. This approach assumes a sharp distinction between the world of facts, on the one hand, and our minds and their representations, on the other. It assumed that natural science alone is equipped to know reality as it is in itself. Besides, there was the belief that science alone succeeds in identifying facts about the world and as such, it alone is the form of inquiry that achieves true knowledge. All the other purported forms of knowledge –moral reflection, literary criticism - can only hope to approximate the ideal of knowledge achieved by natural science (Yenor 2002, p. 330).

Rorty thinks that the entire conception of our epistemic situation is shot through with conceptual logjams and insoluble puzzles. The prime offender is the uncritical assumption that representationalism gives us the right picture of our basic predicament. To circumvent these puzzles, Rorty suggests that we need to replace the ‘notion of knowledge as an assemblage of representations, with a pragmatist conception of knowledge, that focuses on what humans do in coping with the world rather on what they find through theorizing (Steele 1993, p. 145).

Rorty gives it the name “epistemological behaviourism” to this pragmatic conception of knowledge (Gross 2003, p. 97). His alternative approach is called behaviourism because it rejects the idea that experiences play a crucial role in making sense of our claims to knowledge and proposes instead that we see knowledge as based on social practices. Epistemological behaviourism is said to be the common denominator in three philosophers, which Rorty takes as role models – Wittgenstein, Dewey and Heidegger.

Apparently the key arguments he uses to support his views are taken from Quine and Sellars. From Quine, Rorty takes the critique of the analytic-synthetic divide—the distinction between sentences that are true solely by virtue of the meanings of the words they contain and others that are known through experience. The upshot of this argument is that any statement can be revised if it is found to be inconsistent with a large enough batch of our beliefs (Putnam 1995, p. 301). For Quine, the apparent infallibility of analytic statements results more from their central positioning in the web of our beliefs than from anything having to do with the meaning of concepts. Given sufficient pressure from other areas of our web of beliefs, we would be willing to abandon any belief. The implication here is that no beliefs have the status of being privileged representations solely because they are analytic or conceptually true. Instead, our beliefs form a holistic web in which the truth of any particular belief is established on the basis of its coherence with the whole set of beliefs. The idea that some sentences are true solely by virtue of the meaning of their terms, led Quine to question the usefulness of the very idea of meaning in determining reference or the correctness of a belief. Quine's rejection of the idea that ideas mediate between things and us, is one key building block in Rorty's attempt to show that the mental has no crucial role to play in making sense of our capacities as knowers.

The second building block of Rorty's epistemological behaviourism is Wilfred Sellars' attack of the "myth of the given" in his essay "*Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*". Sellars calls into question the traditional empiricist assumption that the human ability to use language and our knowledge of the world, must be grounded in immediate sensory experiences that is, in raw feelings and pre-conceptual sensations that are just given, in the course of transactions with objects.

Sellars claims that all “awareness is a linguistic affair” (Strong 1985, p.166). To support this, he draws up a distinction between two forms of consciousness (i) awareness as discriminative behaviour, that is, the raw ability by sentient creatures to register inputs from the environment (Stevenson 2000, p. 301). and (2) awareness that involves the ability to notice the sort of thing something is, that is, the ability of sapient beings to perceive something as such and such. Apparently, the first type of awareness is a matter of causal interaction between man and the world (Byerly 1979, p. 59). For instance, what happens when one experiences pain. Sellars concedes that such episodes and states occur, but insists that they have no role to play in grounding knowledge. The reason being that knowledge always has a propositional structure i.e. the belief that such and such is the case. Furthermore, the only way a proposition can be justified is by means of inferences from other propositions. Accordingly Rorty developed the view that, “there is no such thing as justification which is not a relation between propositions (Rorty 1979, p. 183). It follows then, that only the second type of awareness can justify knowledge claims. It is not the raw stimulus in the perceptual field that is relevant to knowledge, but the awareness that, “this is red” which contributes to the formation of a justified true belief.

While empiricism tried to show how all concepts arise from particular instances of sensory experience, Sellars like Wittgenstein before him, had argued that one must possess a fairly wide range of concepts before one can have sensory experience in an epistemically relevant sense (Stevenson 2000, p. 301). To be aware of something in a way that can serve as a basis for knowledge, one must know what sort of thing it is that means, being able to experience the thing under a description and differentiate it from others.

People have the ability to notice the sort of thing if they already have the concept of the sort of thing. On Sellars' account, having a concept involves being a participant in a linguistic community in which justified claims are carried out. Awareness in the relevant sense always presupposes the ability to abide by the norms that govern the shared space of reasons of a linguistic community. Justification is therefore a matter of social practice (Rorty 1991, p. 186).

According to Rorty, Sellars was asserting that justifying knowledge is a matter of conversation and social practice. Formulating beliefs, determining what we know and defending our claims are all matters of interacting with others in a linguistic community where the members exchange justifications and assertions with one another. There is no basis for deciding what counts as knowledge and truth other than what one's peers will let one get away with in an open exchange of claims and counter claims and reasons. This means that justification reaches a bed-rock when it has reached the actual practices of a particular community. As Rorty suggests, "reference to the practices of real live people is all the philosophical justification anybody would want for anything" (Rorty 1991, p. 157).

From the Quinean holism, and Sellarsian anti-foundationalism Rorty reaches at the conclusion that, "nothing counts as justification unless by reference to what we already accept, and there is no way to get outside our beliefs and our language so as to find some test other than coherence" (Rorty 1991, pp.178- 179).

Rorty is among the first to admit that this conception of the public space of reasons entails a thoroughgoing ethnocentrism that is, the claim that the project of grounding

knowledge claims is circumscribed by the practices of a particular cultural group at a particular point in history. For him, we can find no higher tribunal to use than our current practices in trying to ground those practices (Gross 2003, p. 101). Rorty is making reference to the Westerners as the fountains of meaning (Rorty 1998, p. 52). Accordingly, to say *p* is a warranted assertion is to say that we can “feel solidarity with a community that views *p* as warranted” (Rorty 1998, p.53).

Rorty adopts a ‘neo-Darwinian’ approach to belief, analogizing a culture adopting particle physics right to elephants coming to have a trunk (Rorty 1998, p. 152). With respect to the justification of belief we have nothing to go by besides the actual practices as a community of inquirers. Certainly, causal factors enter into this domain, but such causal factors are always processed by programmes we have already devised for ourselves in becoming the kinds of people we now are. “We humans program ourselves to respond to causal transactions between the higher brain centres and the sense organs with dispositions to make assertions” says Rorty. “There is no epistemologically interesting difference between a (computer’s) programme state and our dispositions” (Rorty 1998, p. 141). What is distinctive about our case is that we have no way to step outside ourselves to look at the unprocessed causal inputs as they are prior to processing in order to compare them to the way they came out after they had been processed. There is simply no way of gaining access to reality in itself in order to ground our way of talking in the “things themselves” no way to “distinguish the role of our describing activity, our use of words, and the role of the rest of the universe in accounting for the truth of our beliefs” (Rorty 1998, p. 87).

If there was no independent test for the accuracy of our beliefs, if there was no way of comparing belief and object to see if they corresponded, people would have nowhere to turn for justification than the ongoing practice of reason-giving and deliberation. Objects and their causal powers drop out as explanatorily useless. Rorty suggests that saying, “our talk of atoms is right because of the way atoms really are” is like saying, “Opium puts people to sleep because of its dormitive powers” It seems that objects and their causal powers can play no role in justifying belief. Justification is achieved in the space of reason in which beliefs are played off against another according to social norms. Rorty says, “Only belief can justify belief” (Rorty 1999, p.xxv)

The pragmatic picture of our situation as knowers leads to the radical overhaul of our ordinary ways of thinking about the truth (Rorty 1980, p. 721). Traditionally, truth has been conceived as a matter of correspondence between beliefs in our minds and facts out there in the world, between a sentence and a “chunk of reality which is somehow isomorphic to that sentence” (Rorty 1990, p. 137). The problem with this conception of truth as a relation between something in us and facts “out there” is that it assumes that we can pick out and identify worldly items called facts, items that have objective existence independent of us and our beliefs in order to establish that there is a relationship between them and our beliefs. Yet, the only way to pick out and identify a fact is by means of the vocabulary in which we formulate our beliefs (Guigon 2003, p. 13).

In this sense, facts are artifacts of our language. They are not things that have an independent existence distinct from our beliefs and us. Of course, this is not to deny the existence of objects with causal powers in the world. But it would be preposterous to suggest that these objects can coagulate into sentence- shaped facts except through our

uses of language to describe and talk about them. For Rorty, the very idea of facts as truth makers is absurd (Guignon and Hiley 2003, pp. 14-18).

For Rorty, once we grant that there is no way to make sense of the idea of non – linguistic entities then our traditional ways of speaking about the world and about knowledge, truths and related notions fall apart. Beliefs begin to be seen as intentional relations to reality. Rorty was inclined to describe truth as “warranted assertability” and to see the concept of truth as inseparable from that of justification (Rorty 1980, p. 176).

Later, Rorty came to hold that it always made sense for any belief (p), that (p) be regarded as fully justified by a speech community, yet (p) would actually be false. As a result he adopted the ‘minimalist’ or ‘deflationist’ approach to truth. There is no way of giving a definition or analysis of truth (Guignon and Hiley 2003).

In *Consequences of Pragmatism*, Rorty sums up the strand of philosophy he finds in Sellars, Quine and others as leading to the idea of the “ubiquity of language.” A pivotal concept in Rorty’s version of pragmatism is that of a “vocabulary” or ‘language’ – a concept he draws partly from Wittgenstein and partly from Quine and Davidson (1982, p. 14).

Rorty undoubtedly stands on the shoulders of great thinkers within the pragmatic tradition. Peirce, James and Dewey are important if one needs to understand the genesis of Rorty’s rebuttal of the mainstream view of knowledge and reality. For Peirce, beliefs of our inquiry will only be meaningful and useful when they are clear.

He thus designed a technique of making them clear by making clear the terms by which they are expressed. For Peirce, meaning must be expressed in terms of our interaction with the world and the way the observable ways in which the world responds but not by intuition.

6.7 Conclusion

It is interesting, nay ironic that Richard Rorty, the last to recognize the hazards associated with the modern view of philosophy as the mirror of nature is, venerated in Western circles as having made unparalleled insights into the nature of philosophy. Was not this what the feminists were lamenting about? Was not this what the Africans and other colonized peoples of the world were fighting against? It would appear that they took a little too longer to realize that their success stories were resting on the normative discomfiture of the oppressed masses of the world simply on the basis of such skewed types of thinking.

Just as it took Rorty so long to realize that philosophy does not necessarily mirror reality, it took also Western society to realize that knowledge of reality was not their coveted gem. Rorty was not a pragmatist from the outset, rather he was turned into one as he matured in his personal development. According to Neil Gross (2003), Rorty's interest in pragmatism was born of sociological as well as biographical experiences. More specifically, it was the result of a special kind of immersion. As Gross puts it:

"Rorty's interest in the pragmatist tradition arose because he acquired, as a result of his immersion in various intellectual-historical, cultural, institutional, and familial contexts, two "intellectual self-concepts" that would predispose him toward an affiliation with and an idiosyncratic reading of Dewey: the self-concept of a leftist American patriot, and that of a philosopher attuned to the ways in which philosophical inquiry is shaped by the social and historical settings where it occurs... [After]

Rorty had "fallen in love" with pragmatism for these reasons, he then poured a great deal of energy into championing the pragmatist cause not only because he was a true believer, but also because he became energized by the fame his pragmatist identity brought him in the intellectual fields where a more general revival of interest in pragmatism was, for reasons I identify, taking place around him" (Gross 2003, p. 94).

If it is true that historical factors shape the philosophy of an individual, then it is also the case that historical movements, such as the anti-slave trade, feminism, and anti-colonialism have been instrumental in Western culture's understanding of itself. Regrettably, Africans are not herein represented among the navigators of the twentieth century history of Western philosophy.

It is quite apparent that traditional Western philosophy thus became beleaguered. In part, it was believed that the development of Western philosophy was responsible for a lot of suffering both at home and abroad. The rise of feminism, post-colonial thought and post-modernism all attest to this. Even some of its illustrious children like Sellars, Quine and Rorty became some of its formidable critics. The foundations of Western philosophy as laid by Descartes through to Kant and others had elevated Western consciousness to the pinnacle of human consciousness thereby making it a form of universal knowledge. However, this was done at the expense of women and non-Western peoples. The respective contributions by women and non-Westerners came to naught, nay, were denied expression. The formation of currents of thought challenging the privileged position of Western intellectualism heralds a form of intellectual revolution. This revolution was triggered by dissatisfaction with the manner in which human knowledge was theorized and explained. This was characteristically a search for alternative theories with greater explanatory powers i.e. explanations which factored in the most details.

One does not need to over-emphasize the fact that, in this epoch of Western philosophy, just as in those, that have gone before it, the African views were muzzled. Only in the context of anti-colonial struggles and such protests after World War II, do we see the real prospects of the unlocking for intellectual space for African modes of thought. We shall be examining this in the next Chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CAN ANYTHING VALUABLE COME OUT OF AFRICA?

7.1 Introduction

This chapter continues to probe whether African contributions to the knowledge of reality were harnessed and utilized in the construction of universal human knowledge. Africa is various. However, in this context, following Lucius Outlaw, the African contribution refers to the ‘articulations and traditions of African people and peoples of African descent’ (Outlaw 1997, p. 267). The previous chapter has established how the post-Enlightenment thinkers became critical of the efforts by the preceding epoch to venerate Western reason above all else. This has meant relegating the non-Westerners to the level of children (Smith 1957, p. 7). But, is this really the case? Don’t Africans have a contribution to make to world philosophies?

The chapter generally challenges the European intellectual and civilizational hegemony as captured by Smith above by counter-posing the African views on knowledge. However, more directly, it offers to present As Du Bois maintained, European thought is just one way among many approaches to knowledge but does not in any way make it any superior (Monteiro 2000, 222). Granted that this view is acceptable, the challenge then is to present the sanguine African views of knowledge about reality. Such views not only e intrinsically valuable, but would also feed into the knowledge systems of the world.

7.2 African Presence in Intellectual Circles

The publication in France of *Presence Africaine* in 1947, largely a work initiated by Alioune Diop with the hope of opening debate between Africa and the West, marked a

revolutionary step in African intellectual circles and beyond. The periodical created intellectual space for the serious articulation of African views apart from responding to Placide Temples' views in his *Philosophie Bantoue* (Howlett 1958, 141). Here too began efforts to challenge European thought, particularly the universalization of European humanity under the guise of civilization. This had the unfortunate consequence of colonizing the Africans and other non-Westerners (Howlett, p. 141). These thinkers were convinced that Western modernity had effectively been plunged into moral decadence and ultimately needed rescue. Thus the African thinkers suggested offering alternative values to redeem the West. In one of the editorials of *The new Series of Presence Africaine* of 1956, it was remarked that, "All articles will be published, provided they are concerned with Africa, and are faithful to our anti-racialist and anti-colonialist policy, and to the solidarity of colonized peoples" (Howlett 1958, p. 145).

It is noticeable that the African voice was a united front by all and sundry – poets, artists, Christians, Muslims, atheists, nationalists and others. They thus forged unity against what they perceived as a common foe. Evidently, professional philosophers were not distributed in this initiative, but the thrust was on African beauty, spirituality and national consciousness. Other important forums for the articulation of African views was the Bandung Conference of 1955 (Moore 1999; Aidi 2005) and the first World Congress of Negro Intellectuals.

Yet, this chapter is not preoccupied with the debate whether or not Sub-Saharan Africa has a philosophy, as this has been finally settled (Ochieng-Odhiambo 1997, p. 1). Rather, it proceeds on the assumption that there is philosophy in Africa and that there are certain epistemological and metaphysical perspectives, which reflect the

worldviews of the African people in their respective communities or cultural blocks. These need to be highlighted and articulated. However in presenting these views as African, it is important to remember how the colonial legacy has imposed foreign categories of thought on African thought systems through the discursive projects in anthropology, mission work and political domination (Masolo 2004, p. 84). Apparently, Masolo would like to see a very careful sifting of what would in the final analysis qualify as genuinely African material as certain perceptual categories have been smuggled into the African psyche through unorthodox means.

7.3 The African Philosophical Contribution

Most contemporary African philosophers (Diop 1980; Asante 1980; Karenga 1986 and Keto 1990) regard Afrocentricism as the most authentic approach to African experience and thought. There are several versions of this movement. Although they offer varied definitions, they however converge on the view that Afrocentricity offers an alternative worldview grounded on the African experience (Dei 1994, p. 5). These contemporary African thinkers, tend to emphasize different aspects Diop for example, inspired by James, digs in for the Egyptian origins of human civilizations. Thus he criticized Eurocentric scholars for emphasizing the Greek origins of civilization thereby misreading African histories (Verharen 2002, p. 202).

7.3.1 A Pilgrimage to Freedom

Cheik Anta Diop is one of the pioneers of an African centred philosophy. He believed that a correction of history gives the Africans a genuine foundation of self-knowledge. Until African history gives a firm foundation of self knowledge, they will always be objects manipulated and marginalized by the West. However, if they get a correct history, the Africans would become subjects ready to carve a better future (Verharen

2002, p. 202). Patterson and Fanon, for instance, would not accept Diop's optimism on the role played by history in human civilizations. Fanon rejected the idea that the facticity of history had a bearing on the future. He writes; "The discovery of the existence of a Negro civilization in the fifteenth century confers no patent of humanity on me. Like it or not, the past can in no way guide me in the present moment" (Fanon 1967, p. 225). Rather, as humans, Africans have the primary objective to be creative: "I should constantly remind myself that the real leap consists in introducing invention into existence. In the world through which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself. I am a part of Being to the degree that I go beyond it" (Fanon 1967, p. 229).

Both Diop and Fanon had each a point to make; For Diop, self-knowledge without history is vacuous, for Fanon we must admit that a civilization determined by its past comes to naught (Verharen, 2002, p. 203). In this regard therefore, the contemporary African challenge is ethical - primarily a search for freedom. Thus, in their quest for freedom, Africans must carve genuine emancipatory possibilities.

Diop's project of fostering the development of an African person, as subject capable of carrying out an extraordinary mission "to build a planetary civilization instead of sinking down to barbarism," was followed up by Asante. Molefi Asante came to regard Afrocentricity as:

... the most complete philosophical totalization of the African being-at-the-center of his or her existence. It is not merely an artistic or literary movement. Not only is it an individual or collective quest for authenticity, but it is above all the total use of method to affect [sic] psychological, political, social, cultural, and economic change (Asante 1987, p. 125).

For Asante therefore, Afrocentricity is central to the African way of life. It is an approach which informs on all aspects of life – not just epistemological but also metaphysical and ethical. The Afrocentric perspective allows Africans to be subjects of history rather than objects on the fringes of Western modernity (Scheurich and Young 1997, p. 10). Again Asante elaborates on the Afrocentric approach to philosophy:

The Afrocentrist seeks to uncover and use codes, paradigms, symbols, motifs, myths, and circles of discussion that reinforce the centrality of African ideals and values as a valid frame of reference for acquiring and examining data. Such a method appears to go beyond Western history in order to re-value the African place in the interpretation of Africans, continental and diasporan (Asante 1990, p. 6).

Whereas some scholars considers Afrocentricity as an epistemological perspective, others take it as a package – the chief interest of Afrocentricity being to “move or bring, all peoples of African descent from the margins to the center of postmodern history” (Dei 1994, p. 5). Essentially, it has to be taken as the anchor of the whole gamut of African experiences - be it historical or cultural- as they apply to continental Africans or their Diasporan counterparts. Consequently scholars, depending on their various persuasions and calling, treat it from their own perspectives – historians, educationists, moralists, politicians and the like. As Mambo Mazama maintains, “Afrocentricity is a perspective on the African experience that posits Africans as subjects and agents, and which therefore demands grounding in African culture and the worldview on which it rests” (Mazama 2002, p. 219).

Afrocentricity also carries an ideological dimension- that of inspiring liberation movements. It represents, among other things, the African struggles for freedom and creativity (Mazama 2002, p. 218). As initially suggested by Asante (1998), the Africans are on a pilgrimage to their freedom.

As such Afrocentricity is the vehicle, by which the "self knows itself as not enslaved, but free; not repulsive, but desirable; not helpless, but licensed and powerful; not history-less, but historical; not damned, but innocent; not a blind accident of evolution, but a progressive fulfillment of destiny" (Morrison 1992, p. 52)

From the perspectives above, one gets the impression that the various Africana scholars have developed a multifaceted theoretical tool with which to handle their being in the world. It is an epistemological perspective, a metaphysic, an ethic and an ideology. However one must guard from the temptation to speak for all Africans and also against universalizing particular African experiences – a point emphasized by Dei. Rather the approach seeks, as far as scholarship on Africa is concerned, to replace the dominant Eurocentric model with a dominant Afrocentric model (Morrison 1992, pp.7-8). One hopes that the Afrocentric idea is not as limiting and self-centred as the very idea that had initially driven African traditions to the fringes of civilization (Masolo 2000, p. 167).

Similar caution is offered by Conyers against taking Afrocentrism in bad light: "...this is not a monolithic module for measuring African phenomena, but it is an alternative model (Conyers 2004, p. 648). The notion of Afrocentricity adopted here is one, following Dei which, "in part confronts the problem of excluding the varied marginalized voices within African contexts and at the same time put forth a particular way of knowing" (Dei 1994, p. 6).

7.3.2 Afrocentrism Drawing From the Metaphysical Spring

Mambo Mazama widens the perspective on Afrocentrism by suggesting its connection with African spirituality. For Mazama, any quest to try and understand African freedom without linking it to spirituality would be futile as the former was as a matter of fact inspired by the latter:

Indeed, spirituality has always historically played an important role in our many struggles for liberation, from Nanny in Jamaica to the Haitian revolutionary war and Nat Turner. Why, after all, should Afrocentricity differ? (Mazama 2002, p. 219).

. As a result, African spirituality ought to be studied as an important resource for the understanding Afrocentricity. Most importantly, this spirituality which pervades Afrocentrism, is deeply metaphysical. Mogobe Ramose (1999) had suggested ontological monism in African metaphysics by emphasizing *Ubuntu* as the spring of all being. Mazama underlines the idea that unity of being is central to the African world view:

Indeed, the major articulation of African metaphysics is the energy of cosmic origin that permeates and lives within all that is-human beings, animals, plants, minerals, and objects, as well as events. This common energy shared by all confers a common essence to everything in the world, and thus ensures the fundamental unity of all that exists (Mazama, 2002, p. 219).

This ontological monism, has its roots in traditional African thought running back to ancient Egypt. Along the way, Tempels had also placed emphasis on the concept of ‘vital force’, which was perceived as at the core of Bantu ontology (Tempels 1959, pp. 44 - 49). Though Tempels’ work is fraught with criticism, he did a remarkable job of giving a sympathetic gaze at the necessity of knowledge of a framework of African world views (Okafor 1985, p. 90).

According to ancient African cosmology, everything was integrated into one reality – the physical and the spiritual aspects all were bundled into a closely knit web. In the words of Plumey (1975):

The whole universe was a living unity. Even those parts of the physical world which we are accustomed to think of as inanimate, e.g., stones, minerals, water, fire, air, etc, partook of a common life in which men and women and animals and birds and fishes and insects and plants and even the gods themselves shared (quoted in Mazama 2002, p. 219)

African cosmologies hinge on the understanding of the world in light of the concept of ‘life’, contrary to Tempels’ suggestion of ‘vital force’ (Okafor 1982, p. 91). This was considered an all-embracing framework for conceptualizing, interpreting and ordering the world and was subdivided into two sub-frameworks – (i) dealing with the social ideology of commensality (ii) dealing with the metaphysical aspect, referred to here as phenomenon-aura (Okafor 1982, p. 91). The concept of life pervades African thought and action - in social and religious life as well as in the interpretation of the world. An in-depth study of the African notion of life according to Okafor reveals three significant aspects. First, there is a persistent the conviction that the meaning of the universe is life itself. Secondly, there is the belief that the value of life is revealed in society through the principle of commensality. Finally, there is the belief that every phenomena emits an aura particular to it and has effect on the quality of life. These aspects of life need elaboration.

Life is a cardinal concept in African cosmology. It is the dominant interpretative framework in the sense that it makes the universe meaningful. Thus the entire universe is assessed from that point of view. Accordingly, the concept of life is not just religious or spiritual, but stretches to encompass other phenomena. The pervasiveness of the concept of life in Africa is clearly manifest when one considers the fact that the force of

the concept dates as far back as ancient Egypt, where it was held to inform and regulate the affairs of the living and the dying. This has probably led Okafor to say:

... African cosmology, then as now, the ancestor ideology is, in the final analysis, a dogmatic affirmation of this concept of life. This affirmation of life implicit in the affirmation of ancestorship is such a strong feature of African cosmology that some writers and commentators were misled by it into thinking that African traditional religion could be defined as 'ancestor worship' (Okafor 1982, p. 91).

Commensality properly speaking is associated social organization – with social relationships- both moral and political. As Okafor puts it, commensality suggests sharing and peaceful co-existence:

Commensality in practice means, 'the act of eating together or sharing in a common meal'. However, from what has been said above it becomes necessary to note its primary and secondary senses. In its primary sense it is the philosophical or ideological criterion for all forms of social or political relationships; a mechanism which militates against social excommunications and tension ridden rivalries.' It makes for peace and social harmony. In its secondary sense it is the possibility and practice of sharing in all forms of common and covenantal meals on family, communal or national levels; or between individuals, between the living and the living-dead, between the community and their divinities or Supreme Being (Okafor 1982, p. 91).

It is tempting to locate commensality with dinner parties. A proper reading is to see it as an outward manifestation of a salient ideology – that of community and togetherness. The Shona of Southern Africa would substantiate this phenomenon with the adage, “*Kugara Hunzwana*” (peaceful and mutual co-existence) (Chimuka 2009, p.2).

The third aspect of the African cosmology is a bit challenging, as it is difficult to capture the precise meaning. Generally, phenomenon may be defined as: "anything appearing or observed, especially if having scientific interests". Aura may also be defined as, “a subtle invisible essence or fluid said to emanate from human and animal bodies, and even from things.”

Traditional Africa holds it as axiomatic that every existent, be it animate or in- animate matter, emits a certain essence peculiar to it .African traditional speculations have also gone on to postulate that there are also invisible or non-physical existents which equally emit particular essences. Okafor insists that these are the underlying aspects of the traditional African world view (Okafor 1982, pp. 94-95).

The other perspective of ancient African cosmology is the view that the universe was a unity – that reality is one complex phenomenon pervades African cosmology from very ancient times to the present. From Plumey we get the idea that there is no demarcation between the animate and inanimate nature. This point is re-emphasized by Okwu who declares:

The foundation of most African value systems, thought patterns, and general attitudes to events and phenomena such as life, disease, and death is the belief in the unity of creation, in other words, the absence of any mental demarcation between the spiritual and the human, animate and inanimate. Thus, the notion of reality is not limited to that which one sees and touches. Consequently, the members of the supernatural world are regarded as an integral part of the material world. This implies that in important human social functions, such as marriages, birth and naming ceremonies, initiation, and healing, the opinions and/or approval of the members of the spirit plane are not merely invoked and observed; their participation and benediction are also requested (Okwu 1979, p. 19).

From this general metaphysical outlook, one can decipher elements of order and harmony. In the first instance, the spiritual and the material realms are not presented as antagonistic; rather, they have a commendable rapport. Although there is hierarchical configuration of the forces, there is a perceived accord between members of the spirit world and the physical world (Okafar 1982, p. 84). This point is reinforced by Okwu who has this to say:

The African sees the accord in the interaction between the members of the spiritual and physical worlds as dependent on the members' mutual respect for the respective roles of the two planes and the members' strict observance of the protocols associated with the roles and relationships. This implies, therefore, that, while man should neither play "god" by assuming the role of the supernatural, or by treating the latter irreverently, the members of the spirit plane should also not be improvident and insensitive to man's total well-being (Okwu, p. 19).

An aspect of the unity of being is also the unity of life. The temporal aspect is not an entity existing on its own, rather it is relational. It owes its existence in relation to human action or important events such as life and death. The past, the present and the future are all aspects of a cyclical continuum.

However, not all contemporary African philosophers subscribe to the Afrocentrism of Diop and Asante. Mudimbe, for one is very alarmed of Afrocentric pretensions. He considers Afrocentricity as a manoeuvre to construct fictitious African realities, as Stephen Howe once cautioned (Howe 1999; Van Binsbergen 2005). Mudimbe dismisses Afrocentrism for its perceived attack against transculturalism, which he subscribes to (van Binsbergen 2005, p. 29).

7.3.3 African Conceptual Schema

One of the intellectual blockages on Africa's intellectual contribution was the denial of the utility of African languages. However renewed interest in African languages has promised to unlock this conundrum. Brown argues that the conceptual language of any group of people provides them with a format that structures how and what these people come to understand as real, as necessary, possible or true (Brown 2004, p. 5). The development of new perspectives on the world effectively means that the older ones dissipate and give room to the new ones and language is deeply involved.

The submission made here is that, varied conceptualizations of the world have been happening within African traditions. Hence there is the need to dig into African languages to decipher the conceptual schemes to show the conflicts, the contradictions and ambiguities in the manner in which the conceptual languages have been forming. Yet, the legion of African languages often militates against a study of the various shades of concepts about ‘appearance’, ‘reality’ and ‘knowledge’. There is need for more research in this area, but this is beyond the scope of the work. A representative sample will serve just fine.

7.3.3.1 Menkiti on the African View of Reality

Contemporary African world views are depicted variously. Menkiti contends that, metaphysical understanding in African thought dovetailed with their general view of nature as found in the various sub-cultures (Menkiti 2004, p. 108). Thus, in their understanding, there was always a thread connecting the metaphysical realm and the natural world. The understanding of the human person is an instance of such a connection, for a person is but an aspect of the wider universe. This understanding had an empirical persuasion grounded in that metaphysics and consequently this informed the ethical and religious understanding (Menkiti 2004, p. 108)

Menkiti turns to an analysis of causation to demonstrate that the metaphysical views of Africans were by and large physical and grounded in the idea of nature. Borrowing from Donald Davidson who says that, “Cause is the cement of the universe; the concept of cause is what holds together our picture of the universe, a picture that would otherwise disintegrate into the a diptych of the mental and the physical” (1994, p. 116) Thus, for Menkiti, to talk of causation is to talk considerably of physicalism – the claim

that for each fact in the world, there is ultimately a dependence of one sort or another on a prior physical explanation. However it goes beyond into the realm of the spiritual. According to Menkiti, African communities were configured around the model of 'village'. The immediate concern of the village was the direct explanation of the things immediately observed in the physical and social world of living people (Menkiti, p. 122). Menkiti contends that the village was a significant window for apprehending reality. It provided authentic perspectives into the nature of things simply because the village society was a matter of down-to-earth empirical persuasion (Menkiti, p. 124). This village society was inclined to make a distinction between what is seen to be there and what was imagined about what was there (ibid.). The bottom line is that according to the African traditional view, the world was neither exclusively material nor immaterial, but a single reality (Menkiti, p. 125)

7.3.3.2 Ramose on the African View of 'Reality'

Mogobe B. Ramose (1999) has also presented a certain picture of the African view of reality. According to this view, reality is accessed through the notion of being. For him '*Ubuntu*' is the equivalent concept for being in sub-Saharan Africa (p. 49). It is out of *ubuntu* that everything flows – ontology, epistemology, morality, religion, law and all the intellectual expressions of the African people. As a composite term, '*ubuntu*' captures everything there is before parcelling them into particular modes of being. It expresses the idea that being is one indivisible whole (Ramose, p. 50). Although being is one, this reality is capable of motion. The African notion of reality is directly felt in the concretization of being into particular objects that we find in nature. This is when it potentially becomes an infinite instantiation of being. However it has a special expression in the existence of '*umuntu*', the human being, which being is capable of

intellectual ratiocination and consciously expressing these exploits. Thus a human being, according to this view, develops fully in a social set up where she is socialized in the values of humanity. However, these values are bound to vary as the expression of humanness is subject to historical processes such as specific events and time. The moral realities of the African people are circumscribed by the evolution of the cultural practices of a given people in history.

To illustrate the wholeness of being, Ramose opts for the idea of human existence. For him, the being of the human person can be understood in three dimensions – the living, the living-dead and the yet-to-be-born (Ramose 1999, p. 62). This three-tier level of being helps us understand that being is not just physical and tangible. It can still be in the invisible mode. Thus the picture of reality is very broad as it encompasses the unseen and even the unknown. Ramose calls this the “ontology of invisible beings” (Ramose, p. 63).

Ramose would consider knowledge of reality in such a situation as severely restricted. Reality necessarily involves entities in the visible mode of being, entities that used to be visible, and the strictly invisible and unknown. Now since the African cognitive faculties extremely rely on observation of nature, it follows that the knowledge of reality by these people will remain partial, since a lot of what is remain concealed. Thus knowledge of reality will remain scanty, the wider picture is anticipated. If one focuses on the levels of being for humans, what prevents one from fully accessing the other two modes of being are the frames that demarcate the respective modes of being. One simply gets a glimpse at them by looking at the emergence of babies and the stories about those who once lived.

Finally, Ramose holds that all reality is united at the point of the originator who is '*Unkulu-nkulu*'. This is the greatest of them all, the ineffable one. Loosely this is God. But according to the Africans, He is undefinable. He is not describable (Ramose, p. 63). Thus the basis of all reality remains hidden and no human cognitive faculties can fathom Him. The fact that ultimate reality was spiritual explains why the African worldviews are predominantly spiritual and religious.

7.3.3.3 Brown on the African View of Reality

Brown presents another insightful view on traditional African metaphysics from the diasporan perspective. According to him, traditional African culture maintained that there is more to reality than what meets the eye. As a matter of fact, the real is cumbersomely broader than what we can experience by means of our senses and that which we can investigate empirically (Brown 2004, p. 159). Furthermore, one can reach out for this reality by means of experiences, which are not empirically verifiable, yet they are warranted. And this warrant is rooted in a felt sense that there are spiritual dimensions of nature that influences those experiences (Brown, p.159). Thus underlying this belief is the commitment to the existence of certain unobservable entities in nature that can act as agents for action.

As Brown contends further that, central to traditional African thought is the belief that the intentions of ancestral spirits can be known. Ancestral spirits are individuals that were once alive, but are nonetheless still capable of agency. Having agency is to be understood as having a capacity to initiate, on one's own accord, actions that have intended consequences for oneself or for others. (Brown 2004, p. 158).

An awareness of the intentions of ancestral spirits provides ground for understanding physical occurrences. Those having access to ancestral spirits possess knowledge about the world that is not had by those who lack access to these ancestral spirits. Those who have such access are viewed as important members of their communities and as such have honorific positions within their communities. It is also believed that ancestral spirits are recognized as capable of understanding physical occurrences.

Ancestral spirits are purported to be quasi-material, in the sense that they are capable of manifesting themselves in physical objects that have no obviously recognizable characteristics belonging to their prior human counter-parts. They can reside, for example, in artifacts such masks or in living creatures such as cattle. Such beliefs raise profound questions about the ontological commitments within traditional African cultures. As Brown there is need to address whether there is something of significance that can be learned from such commitments about the nature of human understanding – about the apparent human propensity to posit unobservables to explain the experiential world (Brown 2004, pp. 158-59).

A fundamental tenet of traditional African culture is that there is more to reality and to the realm of experience than that which is readily accessible through empirical inquiry, and that one can acquire an understanding of natural phenomena by appealing to experiences whose characterizations are not empirically confirmable but are nonetheless warrantably assertible. The warrant is rooted in a felt sense that there are spiritual components of nature that influence experiences and perceptions. It is also rooted in the belief that phenomena that are not readily explainable via empirical means can best be explained by appealing to the causal efficacy of the spiritual components of

nature. The spiritual component of nature is the incorporeal component that has consciousness, in the sense that it has an awareness of nature much as do humans, and it has a capacity to initiate responses to its perceptions (Brown, p. 159). Underlying this perspective is a commitment to the existence of unobservable entities that can act as causal agents. “Unobservable” refers to purported objects, theoretical posits, that cannot be accessed through the senses.

Traditionally, African culture has been placed in contradistinction to Western culture. A fundamental tenet of modern Western culture has been that science is the primary arbiter of what is real and that which cannot be confirmed or otherwise supported by science is metaphysical fantasy or mere superstition. Western religion is not entirely supported by empirical inquiry; nonetheless it has not been viewed as grounded in metaphysical fantasy or mere superstition. It has been viewed instead as grounded in the literature, doctrine, dogmas, reports of revelations, and historical traditions that have shaped civil and political policies and norms. It gives meaning and purpose to its faithful and motivates both scientific inquiry and aesthetics (Brown, p. 160). It is from such grounding that Westerners typically view traditional African culture as rooted in mere myth, metaphysical fantasy, or religious superstition.

Nevertheless, unless one is intimately familiar with the ontological commitments of a given culture, it is very difficult if not impossible, to appreciate or otherwise understand those commitments. Perhaps through comparing the salient aspects of Western and African conceptions of personhood, we can realize a more informed perspective on the associated ontological commitments within traditional African culture.

7.4 Reflections on African Worldviews

Africa has worldviews. However, their expressions vary from one scholar to the next. It also depends on whether the scholar is an insider or outsider and whether one is authentic or otherwise. The sample of viewpoints from Menkiti, Brown and Ramose unveil quite intricate viewpoints, seemingly at variance with each other in some respects and complimentary in others. Menkiti, one may recall, has laboured to establish the proneness of African worldview to an empirical persuasion to a point where it identifies with their view of nature. However it would be misleading to restrict the African worldviews physicalist conceptions of nature. The conception of personhood has successfully defied this oversimplification. Although a person is part of nature, she is not entirely physical. There is a spiritual dimension to this. This is a point was splendidly developed by Brown. Africans are committed to the existence of invisible and spiritual entities, which act. Thus for Brown, the metaphysical views of the Africans involves transcending empirical verifiability into attempts to explain even the intentions of the invisible beings. These ontological commitments made so far present the African worldview as much more colossal than has been acknowledged nor appreciated. Finally Ramose's emphasis on the indivisibility and wholeness of being underlies a tendency in African metaphysical thought to unite aspects of reality into an indivisible oneness. There is no more need to underscore physical nature at the expense of the spiritual dimensions of reality. Every bit comes together somehow, to produce a grand picture of reality.

7.5 Conclusion

For Okafor, Brown, Menkiti and Ramose, the Africans generally held reality to be cumbersome and at times overwhelmingly impassable. As we have seen, some aspects

of reality are accessible by means of our senses but, others defy such a simple approach as they reside in the spiritual realm. The concept of knowledge developed out of this scheme of things is profoundly empirical at a common sense and superficial level. However, it would be complex and even mystical as we move into the spiritual realm. Fewer and fewer people had access to this realm as and when the spiritual entities revealed themselves.

From the discussion made so far we need to arrive at some conclusion or other. Either the Africans had metaphysical worldviews or they did not. It would be preposterous to deny Africans metaphysical views. How else would one explain their profound spirituality, which is well documented by missionaries, anthropologists and other cultural scholars? Thus, there is need to acknowledge the existence of African worldviews. Secondly we discover that these views had varying degrees of sophistication ranging from banal emphasis on commonsense realism to spiritualism and then finally to the view that reality was a united and integrated whole. However as we make these observations, we must always be conscious of the cultural interface between the West and Africa. Obviously there is the sense in which the development of the African world-view was at some point in history significantly influenced by contact with the other culture. The net result is some kind of hybridism of perspectives. This is probably what Fanon meant when he admonishes:

Each culture must make its contribution to the creativity of a global community, but it can only make its contribution unique if it is permitted to retain its distinctive nature. Its uniqueness is in fact completely dependent on its faithfulness to its history (Verharen 2002, p. 204).

The future of global history is most probably one of convergence of perspectives. The various cultures of the world, like mighty rivers leading to the sea, are likely to feed

towards a global culture. Although the various cultures of the world affect each other, the contribution of each needs to be recognized. This, affect is something no one can just wish away. There is need to acknowledge the matrix of influence among the various cultures of the globe.

The Future of African World-views

The dissertation has attempted to do several things. First, it has attempted to paint a picture depicting the manner in which the mainstream tradition of writing general history and history of philosophy has marginalized the contributions of Africans to world history and to human civilization. The work did not argue that African cultures were the only ones whose philosophic ideas were marginalized. Indian, Chinese, Indonesian and other so called minor philosophic traditions may have had similar marginalization, the difference however, was that with these other histories of philosophy, there is some mention of their existence in the history of philosophy texts, but this has not been the case with African philosophy (Taiwo 1998, p. 3).

As a result, African intellectual productions, particularly philosophy, have been pushed to the side lines. Part of the story is that the first Greek thinkers, most likely exploited ideas from older civilizations, such as Egypt, Babylon, Phoenicia, Persia and other eastern civilizations. However, they could not bear having to acknowledge having borrowed from cultures they had labelled “barbaric” (*‘barbarian’* is a term which initially simply referred to non-Greeks, but later came to be emotively charged). According to the narrative of the victors, the Greeks were presented as men of unparalleled ingenuity and hard work. Thus, even if as suspected, there was cultural synergy with the civilizations around them, this largely went unacknowledged.

However, the work has shown that even among themselves, the various Greek philosophers generated diverse and competing views about reality and knowledge. For some, though reality appeared to be overwhelmingly cumbersome, but was singular.

Reason was the only key to unlock the manifold of experiences leading to the realization of this important fact. Such was the attitude of Heraclitus, Parmenides, Zeno and Plato. However, for others experience was the only gate to the manifold of reality. Such was the position by Empedocles, Democritus, Protagoras and Aristotle. Thus the concepts 'reality', 'appearance' and 'knowledge' got initial attention, but nothing was resolved. It was a tale of competing perspectives.

The Medieval period took up a new twist as a result of the spread of Christianity. Everyone was called up, as it were, to reflect on the reality. God was identified as the source and end of all things; here again, divergence of views rocks the boat. What is so interesting is that there was a marked visibility of thinkers from different cultures - Plotinus and Augustine from North Africa; Averroes and Avicenna from the Arab world and Maimonides from the Jewish culture. Thus unlike Ancient philosophy, the medieval period brings in all to contribute to philosophy. However, all these figures feed into the mainstream tradition – into the grand narrative of the Western victors!

The call for novelty during the modern period drives philosophy again into a restricted path. Modern philosophers not only attacked their immediate predecessors, but allowed only themselves to be the torch bearers of the new era. In the process, they failed to appreciate that the medieval antecedent had contributed far more to the history of philosophy than they were prepared to accept. Their entire endeavour was not exceptionally novel after all! However, in the process of establishing the modern episteme, the enlightened thinkers repressed ideas from other intellectual quarters and non-Western cultures. If such ideas had been integrated, the history of philosophy might have been all-encompassing and rich as the post Enlightenment thinkers later

discovered. This is the point African intellectuals were making all along, as they struggled; first against slavery, then slave trade and colonialism.

The enlightened philosophy of the modern period had put reason ahead of everything else in matters of human cognition. It was reason, which regulated human relations, science, and knowledge. It was reason, which ultimately had unhindered access to reality. This gave an incomplete picture, as it emphasized just part of the story.

Post-modernists ushered in a new era. They attacked most of the pillars of modernity and effectively dethroned reason. But they did not go it alone. Africans and other oppressed peoples of the world, reeling under difficulties associated with the enlightenment view of the world have always been fighting for the recognition of their own history and contributions to civilization. It was only fortunate that the post-modern critique in conjunction with such historical factors as the aftermath of the Second World War, led to an ideological and theoretical shift in the West. The West began to celebrate the difference, plurality and to acknowledge relativism. Thus, as we have noted in some of the chapters of the project, this change of perspective was necessitated partly by prominence of the relativity theory in science, by the various movements in philosophy and partly by political considerations.

The politics of representation has always ensured that those in control decide how and when to free intellectual or political space. And as we have already noted, the period after 1945 heralds the liberation of intellectual space for Africans among other considerations. It is in this context that African views about the world find relatively authentic expression. But the scepter of Western philosophy still haunts, and at times,

gags the African voices. Can the Africans possess any truth about the world? This remains a nagging question for African philosophers and the leading research question for the future of African philosophy.

For African scholars, the concept of knowledge developed is profoundly empirical at a common sense and superficial level. However, it becomes complex and even mystical as we move into the spiritual realm. It would be preposterous to deny to Africans metaphysical views. How else would one explain their profound spirituality, which was well documented by missionaries, anthropologists and other cultural scholars? How else can one explain the struggles for independence that Africans waged? Thus, there is need to acknowledge the existence of African worldviews. However, one of the basic challenges to African freedom and responsibility is the problem of individuation (Kochalumchuvattil 2010, p. 108).

As we make these observations, we must always be conscious of the cultural interface between the West and Africa in the production of global history. The challenge is for the world to recognize Africans as having made and continue to make contributions to human civilization and not to muzzle such splendid efforts. African intellectuals, both continental and Diasporan have the responsibility of continuing to advance the African agenda – the continued search for freedom and self-definition – through articulating and re-presenting the African perspectives on reality and knowledge to posterity. If the course of history leads to a global community, then, as Alain Locke would argue, the principal aim of human history is tolerance and the celebration of difference (Locke 1992, pp. 94-101). Obviously there is the sense in which the development of the African world-view was at some point in history significantly influenced by contact

with the other cultures. The net result is some kind of hybridization of perspectives. This, no one can just wish away. There is need to select and bring out these aspects. On the basis of these, the future of African philosophy rests.

THE END

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