

**UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST**

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CARTESIAN AND THE ADL  $\square$ -EVE**

**CONCEPTIONS OF HUMAN NATURE**

**ROSE XONAM ZANEY**

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UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

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CONCEPTIONS OF HUMAN NATURE

**BY**

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## DECLARATION

### Candidate's Declaration

*I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own original work and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.*

Candidate.....

Date.....

Name.....

### Supervisor's Declaration

*I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the dissertation were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of dissertations laid down by the University of Cape Coast.*

Supervisor's Signature.....

Date.....

Name .....

## **ABSTRACT**

When Descartes propounded his interactionist theory of mind, which falls under the theory of substance dualism, he also, in one way or the other, put forward a concept of human nature. But substance dualism, and not the interactionist theory, is the focus of attention of this dissertation. Substance dualism, the position that man is composed of two natures, the material and the immaterial, has met with many criticisms which tend to threaten the cogency of the theory. In spite of the many challenges that beset it, substance dualism cannot be said to have been totally refuted. Besides, other theories from the religious point of view and from other non-Western views of human nature, like the Akan of Ghana, the Igbo of Nigeria, the Chinese, and the Anlo-Ewe of Ghana (the comparative focus of this dissertation) seem to share the core tenets of the dualist conception of human nature canvassed by Descartes. The study compares and contrasts the Cartesian and the Anlo-Ewe conceptions of human nature and draws out the points of convergence and differences between the two worldviews. The work shows that even though metaphysical dualism is not fashionable in the scientific age, there is still widespread belief in the dual ontology of the human being. This is evidenced in both Western popular and religious conceptions, as articulated by Descartes, and the Anlo-Ewe conception, and represented in the worldview of many African societies. Over 50 respondents were targeted for mainly the study of the Anlo-Ewe conception of human nature since there does not seem to be much work done in that regard. The main instruments used were questionnaire and one-on-one interviews with the chiefs, elders of court, and elderly men and women in

the Aḡlɔ traditional area. The study reveals that Descartes and the Aḡlɔ-Eve are ontological dualists. It reveals also that the Aḡlɔ-Eve, and therefore African, dualism is properly called duality in thought and worldview. It also shows that the Aḡlɔ-Eve, in contrast, have founded their worldview on myths and beliefs and not on scientific knowledge as Descartes did. In consequence, the study emphasizes that, as cultural relativity taught, no one should downgrade any people's perception of life or the basis/bases for such perceptions. Besides, since knowledge cannot be acquired only through scientific means we ought to look to other avenues, such as through peoples' culture and language in finding answers to the world's problems. Also, there should be further philosophical studies of other disciplines of life. Finally, Africans and hence Ghanaians can undertake intra-African comparative studies of other disciplines and worldviews.

## **DEDICATION**

Dedicated to Scott and Trudy.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Content	Page
Title page	
Candidate's Declaration	
Supervisors' Declaration	
Dedication	i
Acknowledgement	ii
Table of Contents	iii
Abstract	vi
Chapter one: Background Study	1
Introduction	1
A Brief Description of Descartes' Conception of Human nature	12
The Anj□-Eve Conception of Human Nature	13
Other Theories of Human Nature	15
Statement of Problem	18
Objective of the Study	19
Significance of the Study	19
Delimitations	20
Limitations	21
Research Methodology	22
Organization of Chapters	25
Chapter Two –Review of Literature: On The Nature Of Man	26

Chapter Three: The Cartesian Conception of Human Nature	43
The Background of Rene Descartes (1596-11650AD)	43
Descartes' Conception of Human Nature	44
Arguments for Substance Dualism	46
The Problem with Cartesian Dualism	50
Conclusion of the chapter	51
Chapter Four: The Anj□-Eve Conception of Human Nature	54
The Origin of Humans	57
The Communal Life of a Person	60
The Philosophy of Life-Hereafter	62
What It Is To be Human	65
Implications of The Conception	71
Chapter Five: A Comparison of the Cartesian and	
The Anj□-Eve Conceptions of Human Nature	76
God, Creation and Reality	76
Substance Dualism, Immortality of the soul, and mental states	78
Acquisition of Knowledge	83
Causation, Free Will, Destiny And Determinism	86
Morality	90
Personality	94
Fulfillment	97
Summary and Conclusions	98
Recommendations	101

Appendix 1:

Map 1 – The map of Ghana showing the Ewe speaking area

Map 2 – A map of the Volta Region of Ghana showing especially

The Anlo-Ewe (spelt ANLO) area

Appendix 2:

Questionnaire titled:

Questionnaire to Determine the Traditional Beliefs of the

Anlo-Ewe Concerning the Nature of Man

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **BACKGROUND STUDY**

### **Introduction**

To someone, say an undergraduate or a post-graduate research student, who is being freshly introduced to issues in Philosophy, especially to the problem of philosophy of mind, Descartes' theory of Mind and his method of arriving at the 'Cogito' would seem insightful, grand and awesome. Such was the awe I felt (and still feel) for this theory about humankind and his/her mind. My religious background reinforced my support for and goaded me to defend and accept the Cartesian theory of Mind (an interactionist theory of human nature), founded in substance dualism.

Even so, at the same time, studies of theories of human nature reveal to me that Descartes' concept of mind (or human nature), in other words substance dualism, is only one view of how an individual (or a community) conceives of the nature of humans. A study of other theories of human nature reveals that Descartes was only reformulating some existing ancient conceptions of humans, and that other communities and groups of people have also postulated similar theories about the nature of the human being. Theorists such as Pythagoras, Parmenides, Socrates, and Plato, discussed later in this dissertation, have earlier propounded the theory of substance dualism as a way of defining human nature

In the following paragraphs, I shall present the Cartesian, the Anlo-Ewe and some other conceptions of human nature, as background to this study. The focus

shall be on substance dualism though and not on (Descartes') interactionist theory.

But first, what does the term human nature designate? Should anything, and for that matter a human being, have a nature at all? Indeed, all objects, and hence humans, have some nature of a sort for which reason they are assigned names and placed in groups and categories with which that object, including humans, shares same characteristics. Invariably, the idea of 'nature' presupposes some extrinsic, intrinsic, and essential characteristics about an object, and hence humans, which distinguish that object from all other objects.

The assumption is that humans have a universal and unique nature which defines them as humans. Yet, it seems, there are as many varied conceptions of human nature as there are cultures, races, languages, groupings and even religions. As *Wikipedia*, an Internet dictionary, defines it, 'human nature is the fundamental nature and substance, as well as the range of human behaviour that is believed to be invariant over long periods of time and across very different cultural contexts'. *The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* (1989) defines nature as typical qualities or characteristics of a person or animal, material or non-material thing. It defines substance as 'the most essential or important part of something'. The definitions from the *Wikipedia* and *The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* (1989) imply that to speak of human nature is to articulate that which constitute(s) the most essential and peculiar qualities or characteristics of humans.

The following are the highlights of the Wikipedia definition.

- i. (Humans have) *a fundamental nature and substance*
- ii. (humans have) *a range of behaviour*
- iii. (A range of behaviour, nature and substance that are) *invariant over long periods of time and across cultures.*

In the above lies the crucial idea. Different cultures, and even races, have different conceptions or beliefs of what that fundamental and basic attribute of humankind should be. But one conclusion that can be made from the human nature theories is that there are three main views regarding the nature of humans, namely that:

- a. either the human being is fundamentally matter
- b. or the human being is fundamentally spirit
- c. or humankind is fundamentally spirit and matter

The *Wikipedia* definition notwithstanding, the question still remains: is there anything like ‘human nature’? To what purpose would anyone or any community engage in outlining the definitive nature of humans which sets humans apart from other objects in the universe? This persistence of either individuals or communities proposing their own views of what is the nature of humans seems to compel one to believe that humans do have a nature of a sort.

Besides, Science, particularly biology and zoology, concerned with the classification of living things and animals, categorizes or defines one living thing from the other. So, certain living things by their outward and inward constitutions (that is extrinsic and intrinsic constitutions), are classified as being either, for instance, trees, plants, crustaceans, reptiles, flies, insects, birds, endo-skeletal, or

exo-skeletal animals. It follows, therefore, that there must be, at least, some physical characteristics that put humans in a separate domain from other animals. Such features may include having a torso must bear a cranium at the top, eyes, nose and mouth, internal organs such as a lung, intestines, a heart, a spleen, a liver, kidney bladder, reproductive systems, etc. It must also have four limbs, two of which are hands with which to grasp, a thumb with which to manipulate, a straight backbone, capable of moving, breathing, feeding, excreting, and going through the process of metabolism, growing, reproducing and feeding its young by the breast, etc.

It can be seen from the foregoing that the criterion for categorizing objects has not attributed any supernatural traits to any objects of the universe. But basically and by necessity, this criterion of physical appearance has made the human being different from say a bird, an insect, a reptile, or a tree. In essence, humans do have a nature, even if the criterion for deriving that physical nature is by scientific or empirical observation.

But can there be a basis in attributing to humans a nature over and above the physical, which should set humans apart from other material objects of the universe? Is there any reason to believe that humans are higher order animals? Science seems to give justifications to the claim that man is a higher order animal. The *Wikipedia*, an Internet encyclopedia comments on the topic, 'Nature' that '... the subsequent advent of human life and the development of technology and agriculture and further civilization allowed humans to affect the Earth more

rapidly than any previous life form, affecting both the nature and quality of other organisms...’.

The implication of the foregoing, to me, is that it is only humans who are able to tame the world, including other animals and learn about them to humans’ advantage. It may be assumed, from human actions and their effects on other life forms that it is humans that dominate the world. As I see it, that is also a criterion for defining the nature of humans. Humans have a nature. They are higher order animals because they seem to have a dominion over other objects of the world.

Another argument for the recognition that humans do have a nature and are higher order animals can be supported by the observation by philosophers and scientists that it is only humans who have the ‘remarkable’ thumb. Some primates, like the gorillas, chimpanzees, lesser apes, old world monkeys, koala, opossums, and great pandas have the opposable thumb and so are capable of using tools or weapons. But such primates are yet to be capable of any significant use of sophisticated tools and weapons comparable to humans and their use of tools. Also, the thumb ensured that writing was and is possible. In other words, without the thumb humans would be the same as other animals. That humans have a thumb is also a defining nature that makes them higher order animals.

The third argument to support the position that humans are higher order animals is the traditional and classic one that it is only human beings who have a thinking capability; they are rational beings. To be rational means to have the ability of mind to be conscious or aware of some information, and processing such information (in the brain). It also means being aroused to be conscious of

certain functions including the ability to take decisions, execute duties, learn (especially languages), have memory, coordinate motor activities, perceive, plan, solve problems, prioritize choices, detect errors, control action, and to adapt. Indeed, other primates demonstrate some of the foregoing. However, such primates do not appear to be rational enough as to be capable of processing certain information regarding learning a language (particularly learning human language); nor are they capable of introspection. If the foregoing is true of humans then it is one basis for saying that humans do have a defining nature – they are higher order animals.

The descriptions and analyses above conclude that human nature can be deduced based on the following two criteria:

- i. the extrinsic qualities, and
- ii. the intrinsic qualities.

The extrinsic qualities include the physical and the biological characteristics of possessing a backbone, a torso etc as said above which have set apart humans from other living things including animals such as birds, four legged animals, reptiles, insects, and worms. However, all these qualities are also shared by the gorilla. The question again is what is the defining line between man and the gorilla, which gives man a characteristic feature? The answer is provided by the intrinsic qualities of man.

The intrinsic qualities include the higher order features such as human's possession of a highly developed brain that makes him intelligent and capable of

engaging in abstract thinking and introspection. These are qualities that separate humans from other objects of the world.

Besides the intellectual ability and the other higher order features, there are other intrinsic features. Investigations of physical and human sciences reveal that humans are capable of emotions. Such emotions include fear, love, hate, bravery, bravado, shyness, cowardice, anger, and pain. Though the expression of emotions is not characteristic of only humans it can be said to be an intrinsic defining feature since an unemotional human being can be described as a vegetable, in terms of medicine.

Even though it is not only humans who appreciate beauty, it is still another intrinsic feature of humans - to appreciate beauty, aided by their intellectual abilities. Such appreciation is translated into forms as arts, music, literature, pottery, basketry, beads, hats, and other clothing, from various materials. Incidentally, creation of literature, a higher order defining feature, is integral to only humans.

That is not all as far as the intrinsic features of man are concerned. Humans are also capable of communicating through both verbal and non-verbal means, but significantly through the medium of speech which no other animal is capable of. Other animals do communicate through non-verbal language such as singing and informative movements. But it is only humans who communicate through the use of signs, symbols, the written word and through speech.

Regardless of the fact that other animals, especially the lion and the gorilla, also live in groups, it is humans' intrinsic attribute to be social by nature. Humans

live in groups, not only as a family but also by scientific, economic, and religious associations, forming governments as a way of cooperating and ruling themselves - as a group.

Another characteristic feature about the human is that his intellectual ability enhances his sense of ethics and morality – of right or wrong behaviour or action. Since humankind, by nature, is social, he develops rules and moral codes that can make members of the society live responsibly. It is yet to be known whether animals too have codes of conduct. The conclusion, then, is that in all possible worlds it is only humans who would have ethical codes.

One final defining attribute of humankind is that humankind develops a culture due to his social attribute. Once a group of people lives and coheres together, the natural tendency is to develop a certain way of life, i.e. a culture, which gives that group an identity. That culture may include traditions, rituals for certain occasions such as rites of passage, and general lifestyle.

Necessarily, therefore, humans have a definite physical structure, an intellect, speech capabilities, a sense of ethics and morality, and culture which identify them as humans and separate them from all other objects of the world. In other words, no other entity can be qualified with these attributes all at once, apart from humans.

With the aid of science, we have established from the above that humans do have certain characteristics that set them apart from other creatures. Those are both the extrinsic and intrinsic features. But much more significantly is the

intrinsic feature, the ability to think, which really gives humans a nature. Humans are higher order animals, per their thinking ability.

But here lies the problem. If, in spite of the higher order or intrinsic features, humans meet the same fate of death as other animals do, then what is it that truly separates them from other animals? Is the thinking ability, also referred to as the mind/soul, a spiritual thing or a physical thing? Philosophers of diverse backgrounds have over the years been contending this issue.

Philosophers such as materialists, physicalists, and naturalists believe that all of existence is composed of nothing else but matter. The crucial argument against the materialists' position is that though the brain may indicate that thought processes are going on in a person whose heart and lungs stop functioning, what really is the thought process is not known through the functioning of the brain. This seemingly irrefutable challenge to materialism introduces the next theory under which I have classified human nature definitions – Idealism.

Idealists, such as Berkeley and Bradley, propose, contrary to materialists, that fundamental reality is wholly non-physical and that the physical world is logically created by the organization of human sense experience. This proposition attempts to emphasize that even as far as human beings are concerned, the most essential thing about them is the spirit aspect. Idealism does not pose as much threat to dualism as materialism does so, for now, discussion of its limitations will be postponed; there will be further discussions on it in chapter two of this thesis.

Apart from the materialists and the idealists there are the dualists. They include property dualists and substance dualists. This dissertation, however,

focuses on substance dualism, championed by Descartes in his interactionist theory mind which has its roots from substance dualism. (Substance dualism is further explained in chapter three of this work.) The doctrine of substance dualism is founded on the belief in the existence of an immaterial entity. Substance dualists believe that the thinking ability of man gives him a dual existence because the mind or the thinking faculty (and in certain circles referred to as the soul) is a non-physical thing which is capable of existing on its own.

Many cultures of the world, since ancient or pre-historic eras, including cultures of Africa, India, China, South America, through their social and religious behaviours, project the belief that it is a supernatural being or force that created the universe. In some cultures, the spiritual is more fundamental than the physical. Also, it was 'natural' at that time for some religions such as Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Confucianism Taoism, to teach that humans 'partake' in some attributes of God and hence God made humans to be in control of the universe. According to such religion, therefore, by partaking in the attributes of God humankind is at once a physical and a spiritual being. Most religious faiths also subscribe to the conception that God made the universe including human beings and made humans to be in control of the universe or at least of the world. Humans have control of the universe because they partake in some of the attributes of God. This assertion immediately connotes a dual aspect of humans, as substance dualists propose.

However, over the years, there has been a shift in the paradigm by which humans arrive at knowledge. The evolution of science in our modern age and era

creates the urgency to produce a rational and empirical evidence for our assertions and claims. Of course, appeal to intuition and feelings and revelation as proof of a claim is thrown overboard. Naturally, there now seems to be no empirical proof for the assertion that there is a spiritual world. By scientific criterion, then, we cannot conceive of human nature as being of a dual component. But the dualist project humans as having a dual nature, where the mind, a physical component of humans is construed as having a spiritual attribute.

So the question we began with still remains: besides the physical characteristics of man is there anything else to say of man as having a particular nature? The dualists' response is in the affirmative. The defence for substance dualism is succinctly articulated in chapter three of this dissertation.

From the foregoing, it is established that human beings have a nature seen from the point of view of science and religious cultures of the world. But the significant question that may arise is this: in the face of truth, acceptance and cultural relativity, whose conception of human is the truth about the nature of humans? Which of the worldviews of humankind is most plausible? What is the basis upon which one worldview is more plausible over the other? Cultural relativism, (the principle that an individual human's beliefs and activities make sense in terms of his/her own culture - F. Boas [1911]) may allow us to gloss over these questions. Notwithstanding arguments from cultural relativism, those are philosophical questions that would require long debates in another dissertation. This dissertation, however, will work with Descartes' substance dualism.

Having established that humans have a nature, the focus of this dissertation is to describe and analyze the Anlo-Eve and Descartes' conceptions of human nature. The essence of that is to find out the similarities and the differences in these conceptions of human nature, bearing in mind that both of them are concluded to be dualist conceptions during the analyses.

Earlier, I postponed the discussion of Descartes', the Anlo-Eve, and other views of human nature as background to the study. That effort was to enable us to first define what human nature is. Having done that, let me return to present briefly those views

### A Brief Description of Descartes' Theory of Human Nature

In the 17th century AD, the French Physicist and Philosopher, René Descartes (1596-1650) adopted the method of systematic doubt (i.e. skepticism) to arrive at the 'indubitable' knowledge, 'Cogito ergo sum'- 'I think therefore I exist'. With this conclusion, Descartes 'established' the ontology of the Mind. Indeed, Descartes began his cogitations by saying that he had reason to doubt the existence of corporeal things as well as the existence of his mind. In his *Meditation IV*, Descartes attempted to establish through his systematic rationalist method that [God and] material things exist. He then concluded that both mind and body exist, and that the mind and the body are the basic substances constituting a person.

The Mind, for Descartes, contrasts with the body (Sutcliff, 1998). The mind is distinct from the body because the mind has the following attributes: it is private, incorrigible, has no shape or size therefore cannot be located in space; the

mind is an indivisible thinking thing. The mind has no extension, shape, or size. But the body, on the other hand, has those attributes that the mind does not have.

In essence, Descartes gave both the Mind and the Body separate and independent fundamental attributes. He construes the Mind as a single, continuing, non-extended substance or entity that in some way relates to the body. And the Body is an extended non-thinking substance located in space; yet Mind and Body interact. The Mind, as Descartes implicitly postulates, survives the death of the body, and has disembodied existence.

Notwithstanding the popularity that dualism has attained across cultures, there are serious philosophical problems with that conception of human nature. They include: i) problems associated with psychophysical interaction, ii) the problems of why and how a particular mind is associated with a particular body, and iii) successes of psychology and neuroscience which give scientific account of (some) mental states and human behaviour, and human nature generally.

The above challenges to Descartes' substance dualism, and the so-called solutions notwithstanding (which will be given a fuller discussion in chapter three of this thesis), the dualist conception of human nature has its attractions, and some aspects which, for the moment, seem irrefutable.

### The Aᅇlɔ-Eve Conception of human nature

In the same vein, the Aᅇlɔ-Eve of the Volta region of Ghana (the focus of comparison of this essay) have a cultural, non-Western and mythical view of human nature, a view which is both religious and secular in nature as shall be seen in chapter four of this thesis. The Aᅇlɔ-Eve believe that man has a dual nature: a

corporeal body and a (an immaterial) soul. They believe also that the soul survives the body after death and returns to a world created for souls, the ancestral world. The Anlo-Eve believe, like Plato and Aristotle, that the soul is the controlling centre of man. This is the view that would attract a critical consideration in chapter four and five of this work but I shall attempt to briefly describe the Anlo-Eve worldview of human beings here.

P. Wiegrabbe (1938), for instance, presents the Anlo-Eve as a people who believe that the Supreme Being, through *Bomenɔ*, creates human beings. The human beings are born naturally into the world through (natural) pregnancy. The human being comes into the world with a purpose which he/she has declared to *Bomenɔ* in *Bofe* (*Bofe* is a supernatural abode of souls which become human beings in the physical world). And as he inhabits this world *Kodzogbe*, the human being lives out his purpose on earth *Kodzogbe* with the aid of *Dzogbese* (Destiny) and *Aklama* (Luck) – they are guardian angels - before passing on, through death, to the ancestral world, the astral world of the departed souls. From there, he may reincarnate into a human being to continue the cycle of life and death.

With this conception, the Anlo- Eve considers the human being as both a soul and a body, a conception which appears to agree with Descartes dualist conception of human nature, but properly referred to by African philosophers as duality. The concept of ‘duality’ is further explained in chapter four of this dissertation

## Other Theories of Human Nature

Apart from Descartes and the Anl̄b–Eve’s theories, there are other varied theories of human nature, some of which I would explain presently to emphasize the point. But the rest shall be discussed in chapter two of this thesis. The Scientific view, as indicated earlier, for instance, refuses to see anything immaterial about man. This view accepts that human beings have the same nature as any other observable being or thing has in this corporeal world. Science, therefore, reduces humans into an observable psychochemical organism, like all other things on earth. The human being is therefore nothing more than matter.

The Materialist view does not differ much from the scientific view. Materialists believe that all of reality is composed of matter and that there is nothing over and above matter such as the mental or spirit. It is in this regard that materialism is in consonance with the scientific view as the two views see corporeal body as matter without any spiritual aspect. I shall later discuss in chapter two of this dissertation Aristotle, David Hume, Sigmund Freud, and Karl Marx as Materialist theorists.

In contrast to the scientific and materialist views, the religious view of humans seems to conform to the Cartesian view in some respects. Religions such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam conceive of man as being created by God, and in God’s image. And because humankind is thus created in God’s image, humankind has both a corporeal body and a soul through which God manifests Himself in the human body so that humankind lives a life which conforms to the

ways of God. In this way, humans have both a body and a soul. This essential characteristic separates humankind from other living things of the sensible world.

So far, the worldviews I have presented may be considered Western views. But non-Western communities also have conceptions of human nature. The non-Western view mainly sees humankind from the angle of groups of human beings living together and how the groups conceive of humans to be. In chapter two of this work, I shall briefly present the Akan, and the Yoruba views of humans, which constitute for my work the non-Western views of humans and which seem to conform to the *Aṅlɔ*-Eve and therefore the dualist worldview of the human being.

In the foregoing I have been making the attempt to establish that the various human nature definitions or theories of the world can be classified into three philosophical groups. They are materialism, idealism and substance dualism. I wish to emphasize too that the existentialist view, religious views, social science views, psycho-social views, socio-cultural views, and many more can, from my analyses, be subsumed under either the materialist, idealist or dualist views.

In engaging in this dissertation, this researcher is fully aware of Kwasi Wiredu's suggestion of how not to compare African thought with Western thought. Wiredu distinguishes between traditional African thought which he suggests is non-scientific in nature from Western thought which is scientific in nature and on which grounds it would be improper to compare Traditional African thought and Western thought (Wiredu, 1998). I strongly believe that the conclusion Wiredu wishes to draw is that it should rather be correct to engage in

the comparison of philosophical works of individual Africans concerning, specifically, African problems as in the case of individuals from the Western world who engaged in the activity of philosophy such as J. P. Sartre, Descartes and others.

Wiredu may be right in that line of thinking. However, this dissertation is undertaken, in spite of Wiredu's 'caution' for the following reasons:

- i. I believe that Wiredu is aware, as Gyekye (1997) says that '...philosophers whether from the same culture or from different cultures, are not in complete agreement on the definition and methods of their discipline...' On this basis, this researcher finds herself disagreeing with Wiredu's suggested method of comparison.
- ii. Besides, Wiredu may be aware that apart from a couple of Africans who have done some philosophical work regarding Africa, Africa and therefore Africans are yet to have a fully developed African philosophical thought on their culture, values and problems which can match Western philosophical thought. A large chunk of African thought still remains 'native' and 'traditional'. By implication, for now all we have to work with is 'Traditional African Thought' – as Wiredu would refer to them. As can be seen, the scope of this dissertation is yet to see any deep philosophical discussions. It is for that reason that this researcher wishes to engage in this philosophical discussion as a way of contributing to making traditional African thought more philosophical.
- iii. Thirdly, I am tempted to agree with Gyekye (1997) on his definition of the word 'tradition'. Gyekye argued that the definitions provided by dictionaries and

sociologists are flawed in one way or another. In the end Gyekye proposed a new workable definition thus: ‘A tradition is any cultural product that was created or pursued by past generations and that, having been accepted and preserved, in whole or in part, by successive generations, has been maintained to the present.’ Gyekye adds a little explanation to the word present in his definition. He said, ‘Note that “present” here means a certain or a particular present time, not merely *our* present, contemporary world.’ Gyekye (1997) argues to the conclusion, as it seems to me, that there cannot be modernity, and therefore a scientific age and therefore scientific thinking– as I think Wiredu wishes to rather refer to it – without some traces of tradition. Gyekye’s definition seems to agree with what has been said from the beginning about Descartes that he was only putting together what has been preserved by the culture during Descartes time. As it is, the conclusion of this researcher is that this research and dissertation would serve two purposes: a. the work would satisfy the definition Gyekye gave and b). at the same time making (traditional) African thought more scientific.

### **Statement of Problem**

There is a *prima facie* case that supports the view that Cartesian and Anlo-Ewe conceptions of human nature share basic characteristics; that both have similar metaphysical orientation which is reflected in the apparently similar conceptions of the universe and the place human have in it. For instance, both views conceive humans as having a dual nature: the material and the immaterial. Both Descartes and the Anlo-Ewe believe that there is a Supreme Being who is the ultimate reality who created the physical world and an incorporeal reality. Again, both Descartes

and the Anlo-Eve believe in the immortality of the soul. Could there be more similarities between the two conceptions? And are there any real significant differences between the two views? What is the basis for claiming that there are differences and/or similarities? In other words this work seeks to investigate both worldviews (Descartes and the Anlo-Eve conceptions of the human being) to find out the differences and the point(s) of convergence between the two conceptions.

### Objectives of the study

- i. To review the importance of theories of human nature.
- ii. To examine the relevance of dualism as a theory of human nature
- iii. To examine the Anlo conception of human nature
- iv. To identify the core features of both Descartes and Anlo worldviews of human nature.
- v. To find out if scientific processes are the only means by which we can have full knowledge of the world
- vi. And to assess African culture (as symbolized in the Anlo-Eve worldview) has some affiliations with that of the Western world, that Africans share some basic values with the Western world.

### The Significance of the Study

This study is significant in many respects. It identifies the areas of similarities and differences between Descartes' conception of human nature and the Anlo-Eve of Ghana. For instance, both Descartes and the Anlo-Eve believe that humankind has a dual nature although both schemes differ about the attributes of humans.

Besides the above, I believe that the result of this study would enrich our understanding of the nature of humans and hopefully contribute to knowledge of human nature as it shows (through the various plausible theories) that human nature is indeed a complex concept and that we need to harness the strengths of the various theories to arrive at the full knowledge of human nature.

Another significance of the study is its support of the claim that the mind/body problem cannot be addressed or resolved by scientific or mathematical approach alone. This is because issues like morality, religion, language and myths, and, in fact, human mind, are real issues to humans all over the world though such issues are not scientifically testable but, nevertheless, they form the basic conceptual as well as metaphysical considerations of human life.

Then also, the study is meant to be a contribution to African Philosophy.

Finally, the study shows that, in spite of its problems, due to progress in science, substance dualism enjoys diverse cross-cultural support, as evidenced in the Anjɔ-Eve worldview among others. The work also shows that dualism is still significant, for it constitutes an intellectual paradigm.

### Delimitation

This research intends to engage in a comparative analysis of Descartes' conception of human nature and the Anjɔ-Eve conception of human nature, to find out points of convergence and divergence of the two conceptual schemes. The study or analysis of any other theory of human nature shall therefore serve as subsidiary to the elucidation of the two conceptions, and help in illuminating the intricate issues involved in the two construals of the nature of the human being.

Also, the study is not meant to prove the authenticity of the Anlo-Eve and Descartes conceptions of human being. It is a research mainly to present and hence analyze the similarities and differences between the two worldviews.

### Limitations

Researchers are usually faced with enormous obstacles that make it difficult for them to achieve their aims. I believe that my major obstacle towards achieving the aim of this research would be access to resource material, particularly written material on the Anlo-Eve conception of human nature. I envisage this challenge because I am not aware of any empirical research conducted into Anlo-Eve perception of human nature. Besides, no extensive fieldwork was undertaken since I believe that it is not a matter of statistics that would yield the Anlo-Eve worldview. Rather, the literature on Eve religion and Eve language, supplemented with questionnaire administered to, and interviews with, some Eve academics, chiefs, and elders of court and elders in the community, constitute the main material for this study.

### Thesis

The study holds that Descartes' theory of mind, notwithstanding its problems, weaknesses and challenges, still has some relevance in today's world, and confirms some of the traditional conceptions of human nature. Hence, it gives credence to the view that no theory of human nature can be dismissed as being mythical or irrelevant. It also implies that a purely scientific view of humans does not appraise humankind holistically since, contrary to the physicalist claim that the mind is wholly a physical system, scientists, so far, failed to capture the

qualitative content of experience in their theory. This would make it instructive to revisit the dualist theory to reappraise its merits. This is where the Anlo-Eve metaphysics of the human being comes in handy, re-emphasizing that the Anlo-Eve worldview regarding human nature shares significant characteristics with the Greek and Cartesian conceptions.

## Research Methodology

This study is a qualitative one. But since it involves some amount of interviews, interviewees and respondents answering one question or the other, a selection of respondents was made. This is an outline of the study: the study area, study design, data and source, the target population, research instruments used, ethical issues, challenges faced from the field and conclusions.

Study Area is the Anlo traditional area which occupies the area east of the Volta River, from Dzodze to Keta and Aflao which constitute the southern part of the Volta Region.

Research Design: In designing the research, the study adopted the convenience sampling design where 50 respondents, comprising chiefs, elders of court, and elderly people in the communities, from the age of 55 and above, were selected and the individual data are collected to help answer research questions of interest. This was with an aim to reach a target population as mentioned above who are considered to have deep knowledge of the worldview of the Anlo. Data were

collected at a defined point in time in December, 2008 to find out how the Anlo conceive of the human nature and therefore of the (human) person.

Data Sources: The study harnessed both primary and secondary data. Primary data were collected from respondents in the Anlo traditional area, using questionnaire and interview schedules. The data collected from the field included bio-data of respondents, the origin of human beings, what the human being is composed of, and how the belief system influences the Anlo in his/her daily life. Although it was relatively easy accessing other secondary materials, this researcher could not come across any secondary material concerning the Anlo conception of the human being. It seems that this researcher is the first to be doing a work on the Anlo human soul.

The study population comprised the chiefs of the Anlo traditional area, the elders of (chiefs's) court, elderly people in the community and traditionalists i.e. those individuals like scholars or other who are not largely or not at all influenced by Christianity, formal education or other cultures, who still uphold the tenets of the original culture of the Anlo. In each sub-area of study, the chief of the area was consulted as they were traditionally the custodians of the culture of the people, war leaders, spiritual leaders of the people, role models of the life style of the people, and social leaders. This implies that they have sufficient knowledge of the spiritual, social, psychological, and metaphysical understanding of the human

being as the Anlo understand it to be. Though the elders of court, elders in general, and traditionalists do not perform the role of chiefs as mentioned above, they are also regarded as repositories of the general workings and dynamics of the people.

The most appropriate instrument for this study was the primary data of interviews and administration of questionnaire. The interview schedule was used because it is known to have the advantage of building good rapport, relaxing the respondents, and making them feel at ease enough to answer questions objectively and as they best know answers to the questions. Besides, it provides the opportunity for those who could not read or write to have the Ewe translation and have better clarifications to the questions and thereby preventing ambiguity in understanding the questions.

Since the study was non-political in content, and the highest appropriate respondent in the hierarchy were the chiefs, it was the chiefs who were consulted for permission to conduct interviews and administer questionnaires to their people. The laid down procedures of having audience with a chief were followed and the researcher had to identify herself to the respondents. Participation in the study was not by coercion but on the free acceptance to answer and participate.

Even though it was easy getting access to chiefs' palaces and respondents' houses, it was not easy having immediate face-to-face interviews. That was because the respondents had either travelled or gone to work either in the farm or fishing or other. Hence, the researcher adopted evening or early morning visits or

booking of appointments for interviews. In all, the field work has been a success in spite of the few challenges.

### Organization of chapters

The thesis is made up of five chapters as follows:

Chapter one presents the background to the study. Chapter two discusses various theories of human nature. It surveys some dominant theories of the nature of humans. The theories include rationalist, scientific, materialist, religious, and non-Western views of man which highlight the core properties of human nature. Chapter three discusses Cartesian Dualism and its legacy. The Cartesian doctrine of substance dualism (which shall henceforth be referred to as dualism), its problems, weaknesses and challenges are presented and examined. The problems, weaknesses and challenges will help in comparing this theory with the *Aḥl*-Eve view of human nature. Chapter four presents the *Aḥl*-Eve (which shall henceforth be simply referred to as *Aḥl*) conception of human nature. Chapter five compares the Cartesian and the *Aḥl* conceptions of human nature and discusses the similarities and differences between the two concepts. It ends with the conclusions, which put forward my personal views gathered from the two conceptions.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON THE NATURE OF HUMANS**

The previous chapter has established that humans do have a nature. The focus of this chapter, therefore, is to outline some definitions of human nature offered by various individuals along the following lines: A. definitions of human nature from non-dualist perspectives, B. implications of the non-dualist definitions, C. some (Western) dualists definitions of human nature, D. definitions of human nature from some African individuals, E. implications of the definitions from African perspectives, F. approaches from which human nature is defined and G. summary. The essence is to highlight the features which pervade dualistic definitions relevant for this essay.

#### A. Definitions of ‘Human Nature’ from non-dualist perspective

##### 1. Aristotle

To begin with, Aristotle (384-322BCE), a Greek materialist philosopher provides a teleological account of human nature. Aristotle (McKeon, 1941) believes that the essence of any thing is the purpose or the end that the thing serves. In the same vein, human nature resides in the purpose man serves. The end or the purpose of human beings is to behave in a rational manner, and have moral goodness. Humans are able to achieve this through the faculty of reason. Aristotle believes that reason resides in the soul. This soul, for Aristotle, is not immaterial as substance dualists propose. Aristotle’s soul is part of the corporeal aspect of the human being comprising Nature, Custom and Reason. Aristotle

believes, further, that the human being is distinct from other things in nature by virtue of him/her possessing reason. The human individual comprises, therefore, a body and a soul. The body and the soul are not separate entities (as Plato thought) but two interdependent principles, one of which exists by virtue of the other.

Aristotle's definition of human nature, therefore, is that humankind is part of the substance of nature who must behave or behaves in a rational manner, guided by reason, if he must obey his nature. Aristotle emphasized reason and purpose as the core of human nature.

## 2. Thomas Hobbes

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679CE) is a British existentialist philosopher. Hobbes (Molesworth, 1962) proposes that humans are physical objects, sophisticated machines, all of whose functions and activities can be explained and described in purely mechanistic terms. He believes that actions, desires and appetites arise in the human body which are experienced as pain or discomforts which must be overcome. Thus, each person is motivated to act in a way believed likely to relieve the physical pressure that impinge on the body. Human volition is therefore nothing but the determination of the will by the strongest present desire. However, human beings as moral agents are free.

In sum, Hobbes defines humans as free, selfish and ready to take advantage of others to their own benefit to the extent that morality is downplayed and reason only helps humans in their selfish actions. And in this regard, Hobbes differs

from both Descartes and the Anjlo who are dualists. He emphasizes the will and freedom as the core nature of humans.

### 3. John Locke

Locke (1632-1704CE) is a British empiricist. Locke (Locke, 1690) views humans as a 'self'. That 'self' is a conscious thinking thing. The human is a self-aware and self-reflective consciousness fixed in a body. But before humans became self, humans' conscious mind was a tabula rasa, an empty mind which comes to be shaped by experience, sensations and reflections. Also, Locke said of humans that in their state of nature, humans had had perfect freedom to order their actions according to the laws of nature.

Locke does not impute anything spiritual or immaterial to humans as an aspect of human nature. But in contrast to Hobbes, Locke's criterion for humans having a nature emphasized consciousness and freedom. The concept of freedom and consciousness, as shall be seen in chapter four and five, are integral parts of the (human) person, as Descartes and the Anjlo who are substance dualists would propose.

### 4. David Hume

In contrast to Locke and Hobbes, David Hume (1711-1776) was a skeptic and atheist. His definition of human nature originated from his attack on rationalism, especially that of Hobbes, and rooted rather in (human) morality. He proposes that the foundation of morals is ultimately benevolence and sympathy. It is that original principle of human nature which can be reduced to self-interest.

Hume (*Hume*, 1739-'40) concludes that the general character of our moral language, produced and promoted by our social (sympathies and) benevolence, permit us to judge ourselves and others from the general point of view, which is the proper perspective of morality. With this, Hume defines humans in moral terms rather than, say, rationalism, will, reason or other.

## 5. Immanuel Kant

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) is a German rationalist. Kant (1797) emphasized reason, or rationality as the essence of humans. His view is connected to morality. In totality, Kant's version of humans is a moral being with reason. Such moral beings are rational agents with an autonomous will. A will is free or autonomous if it is psychologically and physically unforced in its operations. A rational will can not act under the idea of its own freedom; and a rational will, in so far as it is rational, is a will conforming itself to those laws valid for any rational will. Kant's idea of a human is a rational agent who has a rational will that enables him live a virtuous or morally good life with the aid of reason.

Kant cannot particularly be cited as a dualist even though he emphasized rationality as a defining nature of humans.

## 6. George Hegel

George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) was a German idealist. Like Kant, Hegel's notion of the human being is rooted in morality.

Indeed, Hegel (Hegel, 1948) argues that in the consciousness of God, humans somehow serve to realize Good's consciousness, and, thereby, God's own perfection. The individual mind is made up of passions, blind impulses and

prejudices. The individual mind is partly free but subjects itself to the yoke when it is met with the recognition of the rights of other individual minds. It is this meeting of the opposite of necessity, and the recognition of rights of others which brings about morality.

Hegel (Hegel, 1948) emphasizes that the state is mind objectified. The mind of God becomes actual only via its particularization in the minds of His finite creations, i.e. in the consciousness of God we somehow serve to realize his own self-consciousness and thereby his own perfection.

With this, Hegel invokes imagery consistent with the types of neo-Platonist conceptions of the universe common with Christian mysticism. It is a form of idealism of Berkeley but not in the complete sense of Berkeley.

Hegel's view agrees mostly with concepts which resonate in Christianity, a basis for Descartes' substance dualism. However, Hegel's view, being an idealist view does not conform with Descartes and the Anglo dualist view of human nature comprising, basically, soul and body.

## 7. Charles Darwin

Charles Darwin (1809-1882 CE) in explaining the developmental stages of humans tabulates how the natural inclinations that lead to moral sentiments could have been implanted in human nature by natural selection in the course of our evolutionary history.

Darwin (Darwin, 1936) believes that humans are the only truly moral animals because they have the reflexive capacity to judge desires by considering not only present circumstances but also past experiences and future prospects. Thus, they judge that some desires are more important or more enduring than others when

considered as part of a whole plan of life. Concluding his argument, Darwin elucidates on how human morality emerged by the four stages of social instinct, the intellectual faculty, language and habit.

## 8. Karl Marx

Karl Heinrich Marx (1818-1883) is a German philosopher who insists that the history of all hitherto existing societies is the history of class struggles. To Marx (Marx, 1844), the human is both a natural being and a living rational being. And humans are different from other animals by virtue of humans possessing consciousness and religion. And by these virtues, humans are able to produce their environment.

Humans are thereby different from other animals which produce only when their immediate physical needs compel them to do so but humans produce even when they are free from physical needs and produce only in freedom from such needs. Humans' production is purposive and planned. Production is human's activity. Humans must be free to produce to actualize themselves. With this, Marx presents the social, moral and economic aspect of humans. This view is consistent with part of how Descartes and the Anjlo view human nature. Indeed, as shall be seen in chapter four, the Anjlo emphasize hard work as a feature that defines a person.

## 9. Friedrich Nietzsche

Friedrich Nietzsche's (1844-1900) definition of human nature originates from his existentialist and anti-Christian perceptions. Nietzsche (Nietzsche, 1888)

suggests that there is no such thing as good and evil in human nature. Nietzsche believes in 'the will to power' i.e. everything we do is an attempt to further our own power in some way which makes a person a super-person, and that super-person is the ideal individual, the individual who completely separates himself from morality.

In this way, Nietzsche attacks morality (either derived from religion, society, philosophy or history). But he embraces 'higher morality' which would inform the lives of higher men. Presented thus, Nietzsche's emphasis differs only slightly from Karl Marx's suggestion. While Marx conceives humans doing work for the benefit of society, Nietzsche sees man doing work to achieve his own power.

## 10. Bertrand Russell

Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) is a British utilitarian philosopher whose idea of humans is rooted in morality. Russell argued from the principle that 'we ought to act in the way that we believe most likely to create as much good as possible and as little as its correlative evil'. Russell suggests the adoption of Hume's maxim as a guiding principle that: Reason is, and ought to be the slave of the passions. In other words, when an ethical disagreement is about means for achieving certain ends, it can be resolved by the use of reason; but when the disagreement is about ends, reason is of no help because what ends humans pursue depend ultimately on one's desires.

Thus, Russell ultimately links 'good' with desires. Somehow, it seems his utilitarian ideals are summed up in what appears to be self-evident to him that 'Happiness of mankind should be the aim of all action. The greatest happiness of

the greatest number and reason should be applied to find that greatest happiness for the greatest number' (Russell, 1935).

Russell (Russell, 1946) seems to conclude his argument thus that though primarily we call something 'good' when we desire it, but, since the use of the word is social, gradually, 'good' comes to apply to things desired by the whole social group.

## 11. Sigmund Freud

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) is a Jewish sexualist. Freud's conception of human nature focuses on human sexuality, indeed infantile sexual development. Freud believes that a substantial part of humans exists in a state of unconsciousness. Freud argues that the unconscious mind is dynamic in nature and actively exerts pressure and influence on what a person is and does. The unconscious desires can cause someone to do things that the person cannot explain rationally to others and even to himself.

This argument is rooted in Freud's theory of psychoanalysis or the theory of human mind and human character which proposes that the personality of a human individual emerges as a result of both heredity and/or experience.

Freud (1953-1969) explains further that the individual is a person. A person has three parts. They are the id, ego, and super-ego. Neurosis arises when there is conflict between the id and the ego. Super-ego, the highest stage/state of the evolutionary progress, is the overseer of our conscience and yet humans are not in control of the workings of the super-ego as we are of the id. A battle between the id and the super-ego is intervened by the ego.

Presented thus (Freud, 1953-1964), it seems, then, to Freud that the source of humanity's discontent, depression, and violence is the conflict between one's cultural evolutions (i.e. society and its customs) and one's biological evolutions (sexual survival). The conflict is resolved when society makes laws and rules to prevent humans from following our natural inclinations of self-preservation and survival of the fittest.

It appears that Freud defines human nature and therefore the person from the point of the id, ego, and super-ego. Such concepts seem to me to have some semblance to concepts such as mind, morality, rationality which defy scientific investigations. This does not mean that Freud's definition of human nature is dualist; it is to bring to mind that some of the bases for the definitions of human nature defy scientific investigations.

## 12. Jean-Paul Sartre

Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980), a Marxist and existentialist philosopher, believes that the human being is a thing-in-itself. A thing-in-itself is an overflowing infinite consciousness – where consciousness is a pre-reflective consciousness. Self-consciousness need the other (i.e. other human beings and other objects) to prove its own existence. In other words, others must exist for an overflowing infinite consciousness to also exist and know itself.

Thus construed, Sartre postulates that there is no creator and hence humans were not created, and not being created, humans have no essence before their existence and so are condemned to be free. Human condition is absolute freedom in the world. However, that freedom produces anxiety and fear. Humans learn,

therefore, in their anxiety and fear to accept the freedom he is condemned to have and make the most of it. Sartre concludes that it is useless for humans to search for the meaning of life in general but are condemned to improvise in freedom with no eternal values or norms humans can adhere to. Sartre's definition of human nature, therefore, is thoroughly an existential one, in dissonance with dualist perceptions.

### B. Implications of the non-dualist definitions

Human nature theorists, as mentioned above, are either rationalists, materialists, naturalists, existentialists, or physicalists. As can be seen, each individual differ in one way or the other in their conceptions of human nature. The postulants of the definitions discussed above do not dispute the extrinsic characteristics of humans. Indeed, they also agree a great deal that humans have the intrinsic characteristics such as the thinking capability, a sense of morality, consciousness, will, intelligence, rationality, and language abilities, concepts which form the bases of their definitions of human nature. However such concepts, to materialists and scientists, are not spiritual concepts. Such concepts are considered by some non-dualists as (emerging) properties of humans; but dualists consider some of the concepts spiritual and hence give humans the dual nature of having soul and body.

Indeed, even Descartes and the Anglo as substance dualists believe that (apart from the core feature of human nature comprising soul and body) morality, will, society, language, reason, consciousness, rationality or thinking capability are what gives humans personality (a concept thoroughly discussed in chapter four of

this dissertation). A human is a person if he or she exhibits such attributes. Dualists, especially substance or Cartesian dualists may define human nature along the following lines.

### C. Some Western Dualist definitions of human nature

#### 1. Plato

Plato (427-347BCE), a Greek rationalist philosopher, like Descartes, theorizes that the human being is made up of two substances: a corporeal body and an immaterial soul. The soul is immortal and survives the death of the body. It is the seat of knowledge.

However, as Plato (Plato, 1955) argues, the soul has a more fundamental ontology over the body, for it is capable of apprehending truth and the forms and survives after death of the body. The soul is immortal and would take abode with his master in a pure, holy world of knowledge in an immortal world. In this way, the soul, as much as being part of the body is still superior to the body, such that the body is only a subordinate instrument for the living of life on earth. The soul is the instrument for achieving virtue, where virtue is the persuasive rule of reason.

In summary, Plato's theory of humans says the human being is an individual who thrives in society and is made up of body and soul. The soul is superior to the body and comprises three parts – the appetitive, spirit and reason parts. Reason controls both the spirited and appetitive parts to create harmony in the human being, and hence, the soul, which is immortal, should be tended so that it would not be corrupted as to create disharmony in the human individual and

society. Thus he argues from the rationalist point of view and conceives humans as being dualistic in nature. With this basic conception, Plato establishes a holistic account of humans as basically soul and body which is rational and social by nature.

## 2. Saint Augustine of Hippo

Saint Augustine of Hippo (354-450 CE) is a neo-Platonic philosopher. He (St Augustine, 1990) defines human nature, emphasizing the importance of the unaided human will. For him, God is the ultimate source and point of origin for all that is on earth. God is composed of Good, Truth and Being, and by this, God is the unchanging point which unifies all that comes after, and below, and within an abiding and providentially ordained rational hierarchy.

In such a unity, the individual human being is a body-soul composite but the soul is a spiritual entity and is superior to the body. It is the province of the soul to rule the body. In sum, Saint Augustine's view can be regarded as a dualist one, agreeing with Descartes and the Anglo conceptions of human nature.

## 3. Saint Thomas Aquinas

Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), another dualist (Aquinas, 1998) proposes that the human is a composite of the will, reason and action who stands opposite to God because humans consist of soul and body (but God is immaterial). The intellectual soul of humans consists of the intellect and the will. The soul is the absolute indivisible form of humans. It is immaterial substance. The soul has the power of knowing many things without special divine revelation.

From this stand point, Aquinas' view of humans is also dualistic in nature.

This is in consonance with the views of Descartes and the Anlo.

#### D. Definition of human nature from some African individuals

##### 1. Moses Makinde

Moses Akin Makinde is a 21st century African philosopher. In attempting to show the striking similarities and differences between the Yoruba (of Nigeria) and the Western European concept of personality as represented by Plato, Aristotle, Descartes and Kant, Makinde seem to me to have drawn out and exemplified a general African definition of human nature.

Makinde (2007), in citing the Yoruba example, situates the African definition of 'the person' from the Yoruba point of view. He attempts to demonstrate that, largely, the African perceives the person as comprising body and soul and 'inner head', where body and soul coincide with the Cartesian body and soul of a person. But the 'inner head' is a spiritual domain that 'carries' the destiny of a person. Makinde argues that the concept of the 'inner head', though a spiritual thing, seems to be alien to Cartesian dualism. However, Makinde concludes that the question of what really a person is remains unanswerable for now in view of the mystery surrounding two of the elements, the soul and the 'inner head' but believes that the person, from the Yoruba point of view is tripartite.

## 2. Kwame Gyekye

Another 21st century African philosopher, Kwame Gyekye (Gyekye, 1998) presents the Akan (of Ghana) philosophical conception of the nature of the human being or the person focusing on the (human) *okra* (soul) and *honam* (body).

In the piece, Gyekye sets out to find out what constitutes a person, from the Akan worldview. In the Akan view, a person is composed of *honam* (body), *okra* (soul), *homhom* (breath), and *sunsum* (spirit). Gyekye proposes that the *sunsum* (spirit) which is considered to be material is actually an immaterial substance. Also, Gyekye believes that the Akan soul and body coincides with the Cartesian dualist conception, where the ‘body’ is a material substance and the soul is an immaterial substance. In consideration of the above, Gyekye concludes that “The Akan concept of a person ...is both dualistic and interactionist and for that matter, the... Akan metaphysics of the person and of the world in general... seems to imply that a human being is not just an assemblage of flesh and bone ... he... is a complex being who cannot completely be explained by the same laws of physics used to explain inanimate things, and that our world cannot simply be reduced to physics” (Gyekye, 1988).

### E. Implications of the definitions from African perspective

The foregoing has shown that Saint Augustine, Makinde and Gyekye are African philosophers. However, Makinde and Gyekye, in contrast to the Western philosophers discussed above, root their arguments in aspects of African traditional conceptions of the human being. This is in contrast to Augustine who leans on Christianity, God, and human will. Makinde and Gyekye argued to

almost the same conclusion from different directions that the general definition of human nature, from the African perspective, is dualistic. However, Makinde's (2007) view of humans is tripartite in nature, but Gyekye is dualistic in his conclusion.

Critical observation of the foregoing 'definitions' of human nature have revealed that since Plato's age to the present, human nature has been seen by individuals and philosophers, whether of Western or African origins, as either basically moral, spiritual, physical, or other.

With the foregoing at the back of our minds, one is compelled to agree with Wiredu (1996) in his discussions on 'Universalism and Particularism in religion: From an African Perspective' that '...two assumptions may... safely be made about the human species..., one, that the entire race shares some fundamental categories and criteria of thought in common and, two,...nevertheless, there are some very deep disparities among the different tribes of humankind in regard to their modes of conceptualizing in some sensitive areas of thought'.

Wiredu made these two assumptions with regard to communication; but his two assumptions that the human race shares 'fundamental categories' and yet 'there are disparities' is also as true of human nature in general.

#### F. Approaches from which 'human nature' is defined

Mbiti (1996) says this in discussing the problem of the soul where he refers to naturalists, physicalists and materialists being all scientific in their approach: 'In my experience, most defenders of the scientific image either ignore the dominant

humanistic image or deem it silly and misguided, while the defenders of the humanistic image simply assert that the scientific image is demeaning'. He points out that both share a common aspiration though: '...to maintain a robust conception of what it means to be a person, a being possessed of consciousness, with capacities for self knowledge, and the ability to live rationally, morally and meaningfully.'

To Mbiti, 'No advocate of the scientific image has yet made an adequate effort to explain carefully and explicitly how the scientific image can do this'.

By Mbiti's admission, the scientific defences have lacked adequate explanation for their position in upholding the scientific image – that there is nothing spiritual about human.

But Owen Flanagan (2002) counter-asserts in his *The Problem of The Soul – Two Visions of Mind and How to Reconcile Them* that '...most religions define man in dualistic terms .... The Cartesian picture is still part of the dominant image of our age... Gilbert Ryle called it 'the myth of the ghost in the machine', and described it as "The Official Doctrine". Most philosophers, psychologists and religious leaders, as well as lay persons, subscribe to it. It still wields great influence ... over both lay and scholarly ideas about the mind'.

Certainly, most African cultures, subscribe to the dualistic or the humanistic image, as represented by Gyekye and others discussed above.

## G. Summary

In sum, the various definitions as mapped out above in spite of the differences and diversities in approach can be said to be either humanistic, scientific,

monistic, or dualistic in content. Over the ages, defences have been offered in support of both. Yet none of them have been able to circumvent the chronic challenges to make either one of them what the case is about human nature. The environments and the cultures we find ourselves in usually shape our view of human nature.

This researcher finds herself influenced by her African and Anjlo environment; hence the thesis on the comparison between the Anjlo and the Cartesian conceptions of human nature.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **THE CARTESIAN CONCEPTION OF HUMAN NATURE**

The discussions in chapter two have shown that human nature is seen from various angles. Also, we have seen that the knowledge of human nature stems from various strata of intellectual inquiries. As has been emphasized for the purposes of this dissertation, to know human nature is, in principle, to take either a materialist or dualist position on what essentially the human being is made up of. This chapter discusses mainly *substance dualism*, a theory strongly advocated by Descartes, as a theory of human nature, the implication of the theory and the problems connected with it. It is in place, therefore, to begin this chapter with the question: ‘who is Descartes?’

#### The Background of René Descartes (1596-1650)

Descartes was born in La Haye, near Tours (or Touraine), in France, to a Councilor of the Parliament of Brittany. He grew up to become a famous (French) mathematician and philosopher. In principle, he was a rationalist philosopher (who like all rationalists holds the view that reason alone, without the aid of sense perception, is capable of arriving at knowledge) and a scientist.

Descartes was sent in 1604 to study at the Jesuit College of La Fleche. He left school at the age of seventeen and joined the army and began to travel and spent the greater part of his life abroad engaging in many activities. In Holland, he published philosophical essays from his own philosophy which was believed to have mathematical foundation. Such works include *The Discourse on Methods*

(1637), *The Meditations* (1637), and *The Principia Philosophica* (1644). But Descartes' life was cut short when he contracted pneumonia resulting in his early death at the age of 54, on February 11, 1650.

He wanted and attempted to find mathematical bases for his metaphysical philosophy in order to make Philosophy reflect the nature of Science. Descartes applied the mathematical method to philosophical issues especially as he did in the *Meditations*. And it is by that method that he arrives at the *Cogito ergo sum*, 'I think therefore I exist', a conclusion of the existence of the self/body, of the soul, and of God, whom Descartes considers to be *the Foundation of all truth* and of the material world.

It is also in his sole dependence on reason to attain truth that Descartes was regarded as a modern rationalist. It is through his rationalist method that he arrives at the knowledge (as he claims) of the existence of the self, the soul, God and the material world, through the use of arguments and proofs on *a priori* deductions. Descartes' rationalist philosophy covers all aspects of Philosophy such as Human Nature, Philosophy of God, Reality and Being, Epistemology, Ethics, and Social Philosophy.

So what does Descartes conceive human nature to be?

### Descartes' Conception of Human Nature

Descartes conception belongs to the rationalist school of thought that boils down to what is generally referred to as Substance Dualism. So what is Substance Dualism?

Descartes theorizes that the essential thing about human nature is the human's capability to think. He concludes, after his long rigorous meditations, that even if he could doubt, or be deceived by the evil genius, of the existence of the material world, one fact remains that at least there is a self, a thinking thing which the evil genius cannot deceive (Descartes, 1637).

To Descartes, a thinking thing is a thing that doubts, asserts, affirms, denies, conjectures, believes, reflects, wills, feels, imagines, senses, understands, perceives, expects, hopes, makes judgements and suppositions, wishes, desires, knows, loves, hates, does not will, and does many more of these activities. These activities are referred to as mental states, and in modern philosophical terms as consciousness or introspection. 'Consciousness' and 'introspection' are different concepts, but essentially they mean 'thinking about'. Consciousness includes the activity of thinking and also the awareness that one is thinking about something. It also means the activity of turning one's attention unto oneself to apprehend a flux of thoughts, sensations, hopes, aspirations, fears, desires, etc.

With this, Descartes gives fundamental consideration to the existence of the mind. Yet, in his latter reflections, where he 'proves' the concrete existence of the external or material world, he affirms or accords the physical world a fundamental existence too. He referred to both mind and material things as substances, where 'substance' means a thing capable of existing by itself. Mind and Body are relative substances but God, who is the one who guarantees that we can come to know the world around us, is the Finite Substance. Yet the mind and the body are diametrically opposed. The mind is everything the body is not yet

Descartes argues that the mind and the body interact (Descartes, 1637). Chapter one of this dissertation discussed much of the attributes of the mind and body.

To Descartes, though mind and body are relative substances he gave the mind a more fundamental existence over the body, or rather that the mind is more known than the body. It is the mind which conceives the body and makes meaning of it (Descartes, 1637). The mind, as Descartes postulates, survives the body after the death of the body, and it has a disembodied existence. The most essential thing which makes humans human and different from other objects of the world is their capability to think and reason.

Indeed, the above conception of human nature received great applause and support from many circles. It was only until later that other theories like philosophical behaviourism, identity theory, materialism, functionalism, the psycho-physical supervenience theory, and eliminative materialism evolve as a form of reaction to substance dualism of Descartes.

### Arguments for Substance Dualism

In the course of the development of Substance Dualism, Cartesians offered the following four arguments to support the Cartesian theory of human nature :

- i. The Religious perspective: Many religions argue that the universe and hence life has meaning and purpose and humans have a place in that purpose which transcends the physical and is achieved by the immortal soul, without which there is no belief in God.
- ii. Argument from introspection asserts that in spite of a flux of thoughts, sensations, desires, emotions, hopes, aspirations and many others of such mental states revealed through introspection, such

states can never be revealed through the neural network of the brain, even under the most powerful microscopic lens.

- iii. Argument from irreducibility reiterates that mental states like wishing, desiring, feeling pain, hoping, etc cannot be reduced into physicalistic terms, especially with regard to the qualitative aspect of our experiences. Such mental states and properties are so incorrigible, private, and personal that they cannot be translated into scientific language.
- iv. Argument from parapsychological phenomena indicates that experiences like telepathy, clairvoyance, pre-recognition of the future lead one to believe in the autonomy of substance dualism.

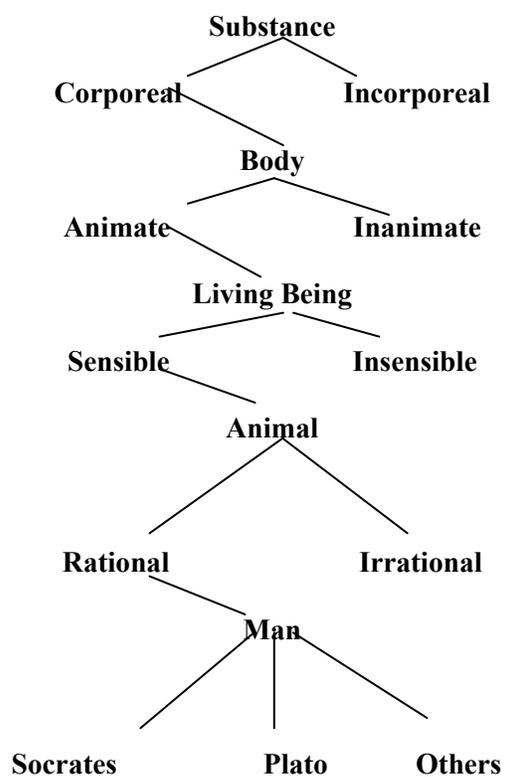
In spite of all the above arguments in support of Substance Dualism, there are arguments that make Substance Dualism less plausible. The following are four arguments which fly in the face of Substance Dualism:

- i. Argument from Ockham's Razor is Ockham's principle which says: 'Do not multiply entities beyond what is strictly necessary to explain a phenomenon'. The principle, in simple terms, means that if there are two or more hypotheses or explanations for a phenomenon then the simpler or simplest explanation/hypothesis should be preferred. Indeed, the materialist would argue that between the materialist and the substance dualist's theories of human nature the materialist's hypothesis is simpler because it posits only one ontology to explain the world.

- ii. Argument from Explanatory Impotence: It is argued (Churchland, 1988) that the theory of substance dualism lacks plausibility in its explanation for the existence of the soul; or that its explanation lacks potency. As it is, the materialist can explain the brain, its properties, defects, the laws that govern it, its workings, composition and effects and many other properties of the brain. But the dualist fails to explain anything about the mind, its properties, laws that govern it, its operations, and how it affects and is affected by the body.
- iii. Neural Dependency Argument: Another formidable hurdle for the substance dualist is the argument (Churchland, 1988) that blows and chemicals to the head (brain) make reasoning and consciousness to cease. The implication of this statement is that mental phenomena are nothing over and above brain activity. Consciousness and reasoning depend on the proper functioning of the brain and the neural system. Especially in the human case it appears that without the mental system there would be no consciousness or mind.
- iv. Argument from Evolutionary History: It has been theorized that every living thing evolved from a simple state to what they are now, without the exception of humans. Each living thing has a central nervous system except that that of humans is more complex. The conclusion is that humans, like all other creatures, is nothing more than matter; there are no non-physical properties about humans. As the Tree of Porphyry shows below, how did the spiritual or the mind evolve? The theory of Biological

## The Tree of Porphyry

The tree of Porphyry below demonstrates how the incorporeal fails to evolve with the biology of living things and makes belief in the immaterial redoubtable:



The tree of Porphyry (Porphyry, 1992) explains that if there are two substances, the corporeal and incorporeal, then humans have no part in the incorporeal. The reason is that any human is a rational animal and sensible so long as they are living things and part of the animate world which in turn form part of the physical objects of the world. The incorporeal seem to have no link at all with the corporeal world. Hence, the mind cannot be incorporeal.

### The Problems with the Cartesian Dualism

Given the foregoing arguments against substance dualism, the theory is faced with three major problems:

- i. If the mind is what dualists say that it is, having no shape, no size, not spatial, etc, how does it come to have any causal influence or relation with the body, a substance whose nature is wholly unlike the mind? How does the spiritual interact with the material? Descartes provides an answer that the mind, an indivisible whole, is lodged in the body (Meditations 164-167) through the activities of the brain, specifically through the pineal gland and its interactions with the body. This solution seems inadequate to the materialists. After all, the brain is part of the body, and the qualities of the body are diametrically opposed to the mind.
- ii. The second problem of substance dualism is that, even if the human being is composed of soul and body, can the soul have disembodied existence? In what manner? In what form? Can it be perceived?
- iii. M. Lockwood argues that Descartes' dualism creates a problem of skepticism in the existence of the external world. He believes that Cartesian view of the mind, resulting in inner state, private thoughts and private world of one's own consciousness can lead to the manufacture of

the brain (or so-called mind). This significant question is: If one is acquainted with the private world of one's own consciousness, how can one's thought mean or refer to some thing in the external world? The possibility is that our thought may not correspond to anything in the external world at all. In this way the Cartesian view of the human threatens the loss of the world. We would have no way of believing in the external world because Descartes' mind reaches out into the world to grasp objects, in order to make them subjects of thought and yet the Cartesian mind cannot roam beyond the confines of the private stage (Lockwood, 1989).

### Conclusion of the Chapter

In this chapter I have established that Descartes, as a scientist and a philosopher, has made a significant contribution to the theories of human nature, especially with his substance dualism.

In spite of the intractable problems of substance dualism, the theory cannot be dismissed as irrelevant. This is because some communities, like the Ἀγλῶ-Εὐε, have a conception of human nature which is very much consistent with Descartes' substance dualism, though the two theories differ in content.

The problems notwithstanding, Descartes' theory of human nature has left the following implications which would be pertinent to the comparison between it and the Ἀγλῶ conception of man. Descartes' thoughts implicitly make remarks about the following: reality, bodies, personality, knowledge, freedom, morality, society, religion, immortality of the soul, and fulfillment.

The notions just mentioned are very relevant to the understanding of the nature of humans. For instance, concerning reality, Descartes is a metaphysical dualist who believes that reality is of two irreducible categories of substance. The two categories of reality are matter and spirit. Bodies are ontologically opposed to the soul or the 'thinking thing'. It is the power to choose. It is the power of free will and also the greatest perfection in humans. Regarding 'personality', Descartes believes that a person is fundamentally a person because of one's cognitive power, the ability to think, to reason, to understand, to imagine, have memory and sensation. It is the cognitive power that gives humans a sense of understanding which also orients humans to knowledge and affords humans a volition faculty of the will. The human being is therefore a rational soul.

On acquisition of knowledge, Descartes concludes from his first principles that intuition should be the guide to provide us with logical grounds for logical deductions. His thought on freedom is that freedom is the respect in which we most resemble divine infinity. It is the power of freewill that enables us to choose. The power of freewill is the greatest perfection in humans. It makes us the masters of our actions and makes us to take blame or praise for our actions. Descartes' thoughts on morality do not go far but he believes that humans' cognitive power makes humans autonomous and self-conscious, thereby separating humans from other animals. It is the reasoning power which enables humans to speak and to be able to express thoughts. It is also the reasoning power that enables humans to formulate rules and laws that govern him/her in society.

Descartes himself formulated four maxims that should guide humans in life, which he referred to as codes of morals (Descartes, 1637).

Descartes has very little to say on society but he believes that society can be cohesive if the individual members love one another and live in unity. This is deduced from his moral codes. On the issue of fulfillment, Descartes simply said it is the pursuit of virtue. Finally, on matters of religion, there is no doubt that Descartes endorses the existence of God.

Let me end by saying, however, that all these concepts thus mentioned above shall be the bases of comparison between Cartesian dualism and the Anjlo conception of human nature in chapter five of this essay. But before then we shall examine, in the next chapter, chapter four, a descriptive analysis of the Anjlo concept of human nature and draw out some implications of the Anjlo concept of human nature to enable us to identify the similarities and differences between the two conceptions.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **THE ADLO CONCEPTION OF HUMAN NATURE**

The main crux of this chapter is to outline the Aᅇlo concept of human nature and at the end draw out some of the implications of this conception. In this consideration, a greater effort is made to lay bare the Aᅇlo view of the human being from the African philosophical view point, at the same time, guarding against the temptation to clothe it in Western philosophical paradigms. This effort is intended to corroborate the existing literature and ideas expressed by African philosophers and other thinkers so as to establish the authenticity of African philosophico-cultural belief independently of Western philosophy (Tsenay Serequeberhar, 1991).

It is in this regard that I shall attempt to present human beings and their nature, as it is understood and practised by the native Aᅇlo-Eve, whom I shall henceforth simply refer to as the Aᅇlo, of the Volta region of Ghana. It will therefore be proper to begin this work by putting the Aᅇlo in context and establishing their philosophy of life as well as where they can be located on the map of Ghana, in the West African Sub-region of Africa.

The Eve are a large group of people of whom the Aᅇlo are a sub-group. The Eve are found in Ghana, Togo, and Benin. In Ghana, they occupy the area east of the Volta River, from Kete Krachie in the north to Keta and Aflao to the south and the eastern coasts of the region.

The original home of the Ewe was (in) Ketu, a Yoruba town in Dahomey, now Benin. The Yoruba Empire expanded and Ketu, home of the Ewe, became affected by the wave of expansion. The people therefore were forced by the resulting instability and confusion to move out in search of peace and a new home. They traveled across rivers and forests until they settled in Nuatja (or ƆƆtsie as the locals pronounce it). At Nuatja, they lived in an entirely walled town, which was once founded earlier by other Ketu migrants. But their king, Agorkorli was very wicked and tyrannical and gave his subjects many impossible and difficult tasks. The people, therefore, planned an escape. They started throwing water on a particular side of the clay wall of the town. In time, the wall became soft. One night when the King had retired to bed, unsuspecting, the people started to drum and dance. At midnight, the soft part of the wall was slashed and pushed down backwards. It was through this opening that the people used to escape by walking backwards out of the town. The King woke up the following morning to find the town quiet and empty. He discovered too that footsteps led to the town yet no one was in the town. His wise elders resolved the puzzle as they thought correctly that the people escaped from the town walking backwards.

Meanwhile, as the Ewe escaped, they journeyed long distances but in the course of their travels, they split into three main divisions. One division went south- west to settle in the lowland region east of the River Volta in Ghana. A second division settled in the coastal plains; they are now the Anjɔ (the focus of this essay), and the third division went west and north-east to settle in the upland

and valley regions east of the Volta. It is believed that the Ewe arrived in the southern Volta region of Ghana by the middle of the seventeenth century. What is now called the Volta region is mainly occupied by the Ewe, and partly by Akans and Northerners, to the extreme north of the region. The region is therefore bordered on the west by the Volta River, on the east by the Togo border, to the north by (parts of) the Northern region and to the south by the sea.

The first division comprises those who occupy the Hohoe and Kpandu districts. The second division also now occupies Peki, Tsito and Ho areas. The third division, the Aɲɔ, arrived later to settle in the coastal plains.

The Aɲɔ State was the largest of the states that had emerged consisting of thirty- six towns and villages. The Aɲɔ State was involved in many wars during which they were defeated sometimes, and fought again to regain their supremacy over other states and foreign countries like the Danes. They also came into contact with foreign missionaries like the Bremen Mission who influenced their lives a great deal in terms of religion, education, social life, culture and employment (Fynn & Addo-Fennin, 1991).

As Agbodeka (1997) said, it is difficult defining accurately the area that the Aɲɔ occupy for various reasons. At least, one main reason for the problem of proper demarcation of geographical borders is the cross-cultural, cross-language and cross-border issues. However, the Aɲɔ area can be roughly said to include areas from Dzodze (to the north of the coastal strip) to Keta and Aflao, in the extreme south of the coastal strip. It includes people like the Avenor, Some, Aflao, Klikor, Wheta, Akatsi, and Afife. In other words, the southern part of the

Volta region can be referred to as the Aᅇᅇ area. In political divisions, the Aᅇᅇ State will include the Keta, Ketu, Akatsi and South Tongu districts.

Having put the Aᅇᅇ in context, it will now be appropriate to portray in detail how they conceive of humans (to be). This is done under the following sub-topics:

- i. The origin of humans
- ii The communal life of a person
- iii The philosophy of life and here-after
- iv. What it is to be human
- v. Implications of the conception

### The origin of humans

Interviews with the chiefs and the various people of Aᅇᅇ show that the Aᅇᅇ do not believe that man is only a pack of bones and blood. They believe also that he has an immaterial part which comes to occupy the body and survives the body after the death of the body. Certainly, for the Aᅇᅇ, humans and the entire universe were created by God, *Mawu*.

The Aᅇᅇ accord God, *Mawu* a big place in their daily lives and attribute to him the creation of the world, both visible and invisible; but they are silent on how *Mawu*, created the universe (Nelson-Adzakpey, 1982). However, for the creation of humans, the Aᅇᅇ's creation myth, as confirmed by my interviewees, has it that there is an astral abode of human 'souls' called '*Bome*'. The souls there are very young children. The children do not have a father but they have a mother, an elderly old woman called '*Bomenɔ*'. She does not bring forth children

either. She takes care of the children and even adds regularly to this number by creating new children, fashioned from clay. *Bomenɔ* freely gives such soul-children to couples or women who need them. It is when *Bomenɔ* gives them away that women become pregnant. It is believed that before a human soul comes into *Kodzogbe*, (this world), he has to declare to *Bomenɔ* what kind of life he would come to lead on *Kodzogbe* (earth) and even the manner in which he would die. This implies that the soul which will come to inhabit a human fetus is already aware of what it would become and what it would or would not achieve in *Kodzogbe* (this world). It is not clear how the souls and their mother, *Bomenɔ* live in *Bome*. But, as S. K. Mote says in his article ‘Dzorgbe’ published in *Ewegbalexexle Akpa Enelia*, edited by Wiegabbe & Others (1997, p128), one thing is clear: that *Bome* is a very sublime and holy place; yet it is not a place where the souls are knowledgeable. Indeed, there are certain indications in the use of the *Anɔ* language pointing to the fact that in that state, before a soul comes into the world, the souls lack knowledge. Hence when someone says to another person that ‘*Etsi Bome*’, (literally meaning ‘you are still in *Bome*’) the person really means to tell the other person that he lacks knowledge, or precisely that he is foolish or stupid. Let me quickly explain here that, as my respondents indicate, it is consistent to say that the souls in *Bome* are not knowledgeable or aware of their destinies when on earth, in a human body. In fact, acquisition of knowledge and human destiny are two divergent concepts. Acquisition of knowledge involves intuiting and making deductions and conclusions from both a priori and a posteriori truths and also from experiencing or observing, an asset that children of

*Bome* lack. It so happens that their (the souls') only endowment is the capability of a subconscious access to their destinies.

One of my informants, Mr. Atsu Liasiedzi of Dzita in the south-eastern corner of the Volta region conveyed to me that belief has it that a childless couple or woman who have/has made several attempts at having children but failed could pleaded with *Bomenɔ*. The childless couple will have to 'buy' children from *Bomenɔ* through traditional priests or priestesses who perform rites, rituals and sacrifices for the woman to conceive.

Many of my respondents confirm their belief in the existence of a Supreme Being who created human beings with a myth. The myth has it that humans were once formed from the clay of the earth by the Supreme Being, '*Mawu Sogbolisa*'; and then after forming the human being, he put his spirit into the human being to make the clay come alive as a human. This particular myth could be attributed to Christian and other foreign religious influences on the traditional beliefs of the Aɲɔ. But, whether this myth evolved out of Western religious influence, the dual aspect of man is persistent in the thought of the Aɲɔ. Let me close this section by briefly pointing out that the Aɲɔ believe that it is not only humans who are the creation of God; indeed, the Aɲɔ believe that the entire contents of the world were created by God *ex nihilo*. As the Aɲɔ would say '*Mawu Sogbolisa; efe asi 'fe afɔ*'. This is to say that the Supreme God is so great a creator and designer that he creates everything and creates and designs the figure of man to the extent that man has fingers and toes separated from one another. This brings us to the next considerations.

Spiritual connotations are associated with pregnancy, birth, and death. As those I interviewed imputed, the growing foetus in its mother's womb is thought to have a soul; but its soul is so vulnerable. Indeed, as they say, there are many things that the expectant mother cannot do so as to protect the foetus. The point being made here is that even unborn children are thought to have a soul. Another phenomenon which portrays the Anlo's belief in the existence of the soul is that, as the child is born, certain rites are performed to protect its vulnerable soul from harm (Mbiti, 1990).

Rites are performed to mark adolescence of both males and females. Some of the rites performed are suggestive of the individual having an immaterial soul which is in need of protection (Mbiti, 1990).

### The communal life of a Person

Once a child is born into *Kodzogbe* (this world) he is (considered both) a soul and a body. He is called '*Ame*', a person. Let me briefly explain the concept of '*Ame*', person as conceived by the Anlo. The word, '*Ame*' has approximately the same meaning as 'person' as is used in the English language. And as it is in the English language, '*ame*' as a noun can be post-modified with adjectives to form other nouns as exemplified below:

<i>ame-kuku</i>	dead person
<i>ame-gbagbe</i>	living person
<i>ame-tsikpo/kpotsi</i>	dead body (corpse)
<i>ame-madinu</i>	hopeless/useless person
<i>ame-nyui/vava</i>	good/worthy person
<i>ame-vodi</i>	wicked person

There are many more adjectives that can be used to qualify 'ame', (person). The above are only a few examples to show that 'person' in English has the same equivalent in the language. However, 'ame' can be used to mean words such as someone, anyone, somebody, one anybody, as in the following examples: 'Yɔ amema nam', (Call me that person), 'Ame ade le afima?' (Is anybody there?), 'Ame adeke mele afima o', (There is no one/nobody there), 'Ame adee wɔ nu sia', (It is somebody who did this), 'Ame ade va afisia', (Some one has been here), and many others.

To return to the original point, my respondents believe that it is impossible separating the body from the soul as different entities. What an individual does reflect what sort of purpose 'adzɔgbe' he brings to this world. In other words, a person's activity on earth is an activity of the soul. However, training, in morality, work, societal behaviour, is geared towards molding to achieve an aptitude that conforms to the society's values. But, what he makes of himself in the end is what he solemnly presented to *Bomenɔ*, as what would be his purpose on earth. Much effort is made in training the child to be morally upright. This training begins from the home where he learns from both parents, other adults at home, siblings (if there are any), from other adult members of the society, and even from other well-behaved children. Indeed, he is a child of the community. He is corrected by adult members of the community if he goes morally wayward. The belief is that it is the soul, from *Bome*, which is actually being trained in morals to develop an acceptable character and behave decently in society. It is *de* (character), which determines *nɔnɔme* (behaviour) for any person. An individual

would therefore be described as having *ede nyui* (good character) if he has been able to imbibe the moral training; or as having *de baɖa* (bad character) if he fails to conform to societal norms. However, it is believed that one's character can be influenced by one's peers, strangers and evil spirits depending on how strong or weak one's soul is. For instance, if someone asks a child, *Afikae nekpɔ numa tsoe?* (Where did you pick up that thing/behaviour from?), he implicitly implies that that unacceptable behaviour must have been an influence from somewhere, but not from home.

My respondents indicate that training in morality is more for utilitarian purposes – for self-fulfillment and harmony in society. However, the kind of life a person lives on earth determines the place he earns among the ancestors, *Tɔgbeawo and Mamaawo* (Gyekye, 1996). A person with bad morals or bad character cannot earn a venerated place among the ancestors. Hence, he is not consulted during libation prayers for blessings or assistance. It is believed that some of the souls of such people become ghosts, hovering on earth and tormenting the living who may have offended them when they were in *Kodzogbe* (this world).

### The philosophy of life-hereafter

There are beliefs associated with the death of a person. First of all, there is a belief that there is an immaterial part of the human which survives death. And as that 'immaterial substance' departs the body, it results in the death of the person. Besides, the Anɔ believe also that a person lives the same kind of life he/she led on earth when heshe gets to the afterworld (Mbiti, 1975).

Also, among the Anlo, there is the belief, confirmed by all my respondents that after the death of a person, that immaterial part which survives him/her stays on earth in the form of a ghost. The ghost either torments or blesses (a) living relative(s), depending on what the ghost feels he suffered or enjoyed from the relative(s) when he was alive. More so, it is believed that when funerals are not properly conducted for a dead person, the dead could return to torment the living for that omission (Mbiti, 1975).

Also of importance to the Anlo is the belief in *Togbeawo* and *Mamaawo* (the ancestors). As my respondents say, the Anlo believe that the souls of the dead live in an ancestral world where they can be consulted by the living for help in time of trouble. The ancestors help sustain morality in society when they punish offence with either misfortunes or bad luck (Mbiti, 1975 and Mbiti, 1990). In this case, it is important in the Anlo's conception, to observe that in the life hereafter, the ancestors are most often males. However, there are exceptional cases when women could form part of the ancestral world. In that case, the woman must have been exceptionally heroic when alive and, like the men, lived exceptionally good moral lives as to be an example to the young and to the youth to earn her a place among the ancestors.

One event that lends credence to the belief in an immaterial soul is the violent and/or premature death of a person either through a protracted illness or through an accident. Close relatives would have to consult the spirit of the dead through a traditional priest or priestess to find out the cause of the death of their person. In this case, the observable cause of death is obviously either the sickness or the

accident. But they believe that the sickness or the accident may have been precipitated by a malicious person through spiritual means. This points out that the priest can invoke the spirit/soul of the dead (Nukunya, 1992) – which re-emphasizes the Anlo belief in an immaterial soul.

Burials and funerals of chiefs (and even of ordinary people) provide another source for the belief that the soul survives a person in the hereafter. It is believed that the souls of people who live in the world of the dead maintain same status in the celestial world as was the case when they were alive in *Kodzogbe* (this world) and play same roles in the life hereafter as was the case in corporeal life. For that matter, when a chief dies, a child or a youth, normally a male, was ritually sacrificed. The soul of the boy was to accompany the chief and serve the chief in the other world - as chiefs must have waiters - in the other world as it was in the material world for them. In addition, the coffins, of both chiefs and ordinary people, are stuffed with certain items that are supposed to facilitate life in the hereafter. In fact, every stage of the growing life of a growing person is marked with rites showing that man has an immaterial soul. I hasten to add that some of the practices just mentioned are now either being modified or on the decline due to the advent of Christianity and its impact, and also due to human rights advocacy. Nevertheless, the belief is still held that people continue (in) their roles in the hereafter.

That being the case, the focus of discussion in the subsequent paragraphs shall be what the Anlo conceive a human being to be.

## What it is to be human

So far, the discussions have been focused on the cycle of human existence, his social life as well as pointing out certain practices which emphasize the Anlo's belief in the existence of the soul. However, what do the Anlo conceive the human being to be? What really makes a human a person in the Anlo's conception of human nature? This is a philosophical question that must be addressed in this section.

As discussed earlier, the Anlo conceive of the human as having a body and a soul. Much has been said about the soul but there are certain conceptions about the material body which still go to strengthen the Anlo belief in the soul. My respondents believe that the body of *Ame* (a person) is made of clay and has certain vital parts. A person, *ame*, has blood. Blood connotes a couple of things. Blood together with breath makes a person stay alive. If a person loses much blood the body automatically lets go of his breath/spirit and the result is death of the body. However, apart from this scientific interpretation, *Uu* (blood) is sometimes considered as determining the *nɔnɔme* (personality) of a person. It is believed that the personality of a parent can be transferred to the child through the blood during conception.

Then also the person *ame* has *ta* (a head) which contains *ahɔhɔ*, the brain. That *ahɔhɔ* has an abstract aspect called '*Susu*', which can loosely be translated into English as Mind because the Anlo seem not to have a precise word for 'mind' (as understood in Western philosophical discussions) or intellect. Let me briefly

explain *susu*, the mind or the intellect as my respondents and therefore the Anlo use and/or understand it.

Adults are expected to demonstrate the use of their *Susu* because of their rich experiences over the years. In other words, adults can apply their knowledge of the world and their hindsight of experiences to be able to resolve tricky and difficult situations. An adult, therefore, who seems incapable of resolving his problems is admonished by his peers and those older than him or her to ‘use your *susu*, mind’. However, a child can also be rebuked to use his *susu*, by adults if the adults consider him or her at an age old enough to solve some childish problems. A person who fails consistently to use his *susu* is considered foolish or stupid and unproductive in decision making concerning himself, his home and the entire society.

To return to the discussion on *ta* (head), *ta* means much more than just the word, ‘head’. Notions such as wisdom, knowledge, consciousness, thought processes or thinking, secret thoughts, aspirations, imaginations, stupidity or foolishness, and other mental states are associated with *ta*, the head by all my respondents. When one person says to another, *Wota menyo o* (your head is not good), he means that the person is unfortunate (in a particular event) or that the person is just predisposed to being unfortunate. And when a person says *Mexo ta le esi/enu* (I have taken his head away from him), he means ‘I have been able to sway him’ (from his decision) or ‘I have been able to convince him’ (to do otherwise). And when one is asked, *Ta mele nuwo oa?* (Don’t you have a head on your body?), he implies implicitly that the other person is not thinking, or is a

fool. Again when someone, especially a child, does something commendable, or says something wise an adult would usually ask *amikae nesi de ta?* (What oil did you apply to your head?) This rhetorical question actually means the other person is wise in the suggestion he has made or in an action he has taken. Closely related to *ta* (head) is *tagbɔ*. *Tagbɔ* has no English equivalent except to mean ‘having to do with the head’. But it is mostly used to imply negative things. So when an *Aŋlɔ* says to another person *Wotagbɔ menyɔ o*, (your head is not good), the person really means to say the person has malicious thoughts or the person is wicked. And when he says *Tagbɔ foɖiwo* (Your head is dirty) it means actually that the person does not think of anything good about others. And when one says either seriously or jokingly to another person *Tagbɔ gbegblewo (sia)*, the person really means ‘you are mad’ or ‘you are not thinking properly/correctly’.

Next to the *ta* (head) is the *dzi* (heart). Heart is considered as the seat of emotions, passions and a source of conscience. All my respondents agree that when a person touches the left part of the chest and says *Nyedzi lalam/tsotsom* (My heart is throbbing or beating fast), it is true that the heart is beating fast. But besides that literal meaning, he is actually saying, ‘I am afraid or terrified or nervous about an impending danger or something unpleasant’. Also, when someone tells another person *Wodzi netsi nya na wo (sia)* (Let your heart talk to you), he means that ‘your conscience should instruct you’.

Besides, all my respondents agree that the person is also conceived of having a ‘*Luwɔ*’, something that can be translated as both soul or spirit (or sometimes one’s shadow). It can also be used to mean consciousness. But more often than

not when the Anɔ refers to soul, *luɔ*, he does imply that immaterial part of man that comes from 'Bome' to inhabit the body and survives after the death of the body. It is this soul which gives a person personality and character and determines his behaviour. When this soul departs from the body, the body dies. However, it is believed that the shadow '*luɔ*' is an important aspect of the human being. The shadow is the physical manifestation of the immaterial soul. The Anɔ believe that when malicious spirits 'catch' or attack the shadow by metaphysical processes the material body will suffer some misfortune in the form of illness or death or other. But other times, when an Anɔ says, *Efe luɔ dzo le 'ta* (his soul has left his head), it means the body is not dead but the person is dazed and for a while is not conscious of his environment or of his own actions.

*Susu*, loosely translated as mind, is another aspect of the person. In fact, the Anɔ do not have an equivalent for Mind. In concrete terms, therefore, *Susu* will mean the processes of the *ahɔhɔ* (brain) translated into thinking. It is that which portrays a person as wise or foolish, intelligent or stupid, clever or dull. It is *susu* which processes the training (either in morals or vocation) given him, which he chooses to internalize or reject. As my respondents say, *susu* is sometimes thought to control the actions and behaviour of the individual. For that matter, when one gets involved in a misdemeanor or an offence, particularly at home or among one's peers, the normal question asked is *Susu mele asiwo oa?* or *Me' tame bum oa?* (Don't you have a mind?) – which actually means, are you not thinking (enough not to have done that?) When someone says angrily to another, *susume foɔiwo!* (you have a dirty brain/mind!), he means that the other person

does not think of positive things but the negative or evil thoughts. *Susu*, therefore, plays a role by depicting how wise, intelligent, thoughtful or otherwise a person is.

The next aspect of the person is the '*Gbɔgbɔ*'. '*Gbɔgbɔ*', my respondents believe, has two meanings: spirit or breath. It is breath that gives life to the '*ametsikpo*' (corporeal body), made from clay by *Bomenɔ* or *Mawu Sogbolisa*, so that the clay becomes a living thing on earth. In that case *gbɔgbɔ* is the living principle or vital element of a person, and for that matter, any living thing. On the other hand, *gbɔgbɔ* (the spirit) of the person is sometimes equated with the soul. I believe that it is equivalent to the consciousness of the human being. So, when someone says '*Wofui efe gbɔgbɔ koe bu ɖii*' (they beat him till he lost his breath/spirit), it actually means they beat him/her, or he/she was beaten till he became dazed or unconscious. In another sense *gbɔgbɔ* may mean soul or even character. For instance, someone may be told '*Wogbɔgbɔ menyo o*' (your spirit is not good). This, in fact, means you have a bad character.

And that brings us to another important consideration about what a person is. That aspect is the *de* (character) of a person. The '*de*' (character) of a person is an important aspect which determines the image of a person, as he is seen by society. *De* is that quality that makes a person different from others in perspective. The concept, *de*, is different from behaviour '*nuwɔna/agbenɔnɔ*'. My respondents believe that *De* is that which gives personality to the person. As said earlier, *de* (character) determines the place of a person among the ancestors '*Tɔgbewo/Mamaawo*'. Another concept associated with *de* (character) is

'*nɔnɔme*'. It is quite impossible translating it into English. But it could simply mean personality. (It cannot be translated as behaviour; the Ewe equivalent of the English concept called *behaviour* is '*nuwɔna*' or '*agbenɔnɔ*'). '*Nɔnɔme*' would, therefore, be the totality of '*de*' (character) and '*nuwɔna*' (behaviour) as the individual portrays in society. Most of these concepts are discussed by C.R. Gaba in his article (Gaba, 1971).

My respondents confirm that the Aɲɔ believe in destiny. As is indicated by my respondents and interviewees, 'destiny' may be captured in the words *Dzɔdzɔme* or *Xɔvee*. So, when an Aɲɔ says to another person '*Yiha fe dzɔdzɔmee ma*' (that is his nature), he only affirms that persons carry with their souls, into *Kodzogbe*, this world, certain traits from *Bome* (the world of souls). This, to the Aɲɔ, denotes and affirms the soul aspect of the human, implying (again to the Aɲɔ) that humans have a dual nature.

The foregoing analyses depict that the Aɲɔ believe that a person comes into this world both as a soul and a body, and with a purpose. The purpose(s), although they may not be immediately obvious to the person when he/she is now on earth, is/are supposed to have been made known to *Bomenɔ* by the soul of the person when he/she is on the verge of inhabiting a human fetus. Once a soul takes human form, he/she, i.e. the child, becomes, at once, a 'possession' of the community. He/she is given both moral and career training. Moral life of a person is depicted through one's *nɔnɔme* (personality), *de* (character), *luvɔ* (soul/spirit), *dzi/dzitsinya* (heart that instructs/conscience). And what helps a person to imbibe moral lessons is one's wisdom or intelligence. The *ta* (head), *dzi*

(heart), and *ahɔhɔ* (brain), and blood therefore, become important parts of the body to which intelligence, conscience, and morality, and even the soul are associated. It is these things a human must possess to be called a person or a human being proper.

### Implications of the Conception

The discussions above lead naturally to the deducing of the following notions and concepts that the Aɲɔ attach to their concept of the human being. The discussions of the souls living in the celestial world with *Bomenɔ* prior to life on earth, and revealing their purpose to *Bomenɔ* before taking on human form, together with the notion of *nɔnɔme* (personality), and *de* (character), *dzi/dzitsinya* (conscience) and influence of others on one's character bring out the following issues:

- (1) the issues of the creation of humankind, the dualistic nature of humankind, the concept of the human soul, the immortal nature of the soul, reincarnation, and the astral existence of the soul in say the ancestral world
- (2) the concept of destiny and determinism
- (3) the acquisition of knowledge (or epistemological questions)
- (4) the principle of causation (or causal connection) and finally
- (5) the problem of a disembodied existence of the soul and also of how the incorporeal soul inhabits the corporeal body.

This writer agrees with Gyekye regarding his views expressed in his article of 1981 (Gyekye, 1981). In this article, Gyekye explains some aspects of the Akan view of human nature which largely conform with the Aɲɔ view that the Aɲɔ

have a dual conception of human nature, and not a tripartite one as many have a tendency of conceiving human nature. This assertion is based on the beliefs, oral traditions, sayings, myths, folktales, and customs of the Anlo, proof of which I shall present next.

To begin with, the basis of the Anlo ontology is the Anlo idea about God as the Supreme Being. In my interviews with chiefs, elders of chiefs court, elders of the Anlo land, and some scholars, all my informants agree, as clarified by Gaba, that God the Supreme Being is ‘...a great power, a source of life, an all pervasive energy diffused throughout the world of nature... has attributes of human beings, though he has never been one and never will be a human being, ... He is spirit, ... He is not Mind but is like a Mind, ...yet He is in the sky,...He is the breath of life which sustains,...He is a creative artist, Mawu adanuwɔɔ,...Protector of the helpless, ...a loving Father,...a Judge in control of moral order, ...Helper but not of the evil people, ...not enshrined or worshipped but indirectly through the smaller gods’(Gaba, 1969). This is the idea the Anlo have about the Supreme Being who created the world and human beings through Bomenɔ. The description says that human beings were souls which come to inhabit human beings upon pregnancy. This soul, *huvɔ* as all my informants agree, is different from the breath that God breathes into man as a life force. And yet again humans have another ‘spirit’ *gbɔgbɔ* which is the core of human character, *de*. The crucial point is that a person is made up of a body, soul and spirit. The body is clearly a physical or material composition which disintegrates after death. But, even though my informants are all not agreed as to whether it is the spirit or the soul

which returns to its creator and which goes to live in the ancestral world, they all agree that both the soul and the spirit are immaterial. It is for this reason that one is led to conclude that the Aṅlɔ view of a person is dualistic: there are only two realities: the immaterial reality and the material, where the spirit and the soul are considered immaterial. The Aṅlɔ are therefore dualists.

Besides, burial and funeral rites and customs, supposed to bring a clean separation between the living and the dead, bring to mind the existence of ghosts, the immaterial part of man, which lends credence to the view that the Aṅlɔ are ‘dualists’. Then also the Aṅlɔ superstitious belief in the workings of charms, juju, and witchcraft (these concepts are universal though) which are supposed to attack a person invisibly and yet manifest themselves in the physical lives of individuals leads to the view that the Aṅlɔ are dualists. To add to the foregoing, the belief in an ancestral world where souls of the dead live makes the Aṅlɔ dualists. Above all, the Aṅlɔ belief in God, as the Supreme Being, presupposes an immaterial world. Indeed, the following names preceded by *Se* or *Mawu*, or contain such words are indigenous and traditional Aṅlɔ names which automatically say something about God as *Se* and *Mawu* mean God, the Supreme Being: *Sedinam*, *Sewænam*, *Setɔ*, *Senyo*, *Sesi*, *Tuinese*, *Mawuli*, *Segbedzi*, *Sefenya*, *Mawufemɔ*, *Srumawuda*, *Sedina*, *Senewæ*, *Mawuwæ*, *Mawusi*,

The point of the above is that the Aṅlɔ are dualists. And in as much as the problem of substance dualism remains intractable, it will remain intractable proving the existence of ghosts or the ancestral world or the existence of God or

the existence of witches or the workings of charms or juju. The foregoing are, however, the evidence for the Anlo 'dualism'.

### Conclusion of the chapter

From the above, it is certain that the Anlo conceive of human beings as having a dual nature. Nevertheless, the concept of dualness in both views differs. While Descartes' view is called (substance) dualism, which allows for bifurcation of things into compartments, African, and therefore Anlo duality, on the other hand allows for equi-primordially, or the binary fusion of the two entities. The Anlo, and therefore the African view, is properly called duality (in African thought). James (1959) cited in Okoro's (2011) paper delivered at the university of Lagos, Nigeria, has this to say about African duality:

'Thus for the traditional African, Being and non-Being, mind and matter, are primordially predisposed. However, of two things that are equi-primordially predisposed, one has primacy over the other. ... Granted then that spirit and matter are equi-primordially predisposed, spirit as the animating and organizing principle has primacy over matter... For the Igbo (as it is for every other African people) the primacy placed on spirit ... simply means that every material thing is endowed with spirit force which can be likened to soul, mind, psyche, vital force or life force' (Okoro, 2011).

In other words, the Anlo conception of human nature is, in a way, similar to the Cartesian conception. Even though the Anlo duality may not necessarily be subsumed under substance dualism the idea of spirit or soul being immaterial, and body as matter are accepted, as substance dualism does. But, there are differences though. This is because concepts such as aspiration, hope, passion, desire, wish (and therefore conscious states), recur in the language of Descartes and the Anlo.

However, they play a great role in Descartes' concept of human beings but play very little or no roles at all in the philosophy of the Anjlo's concerning what it is to be human.

One other similarity is the dualistic nature of humans, which readily gives rise to the age-long questions of disembodied existence, the problem of the corporeal and the incorporeal coexisting. There are other differences also. For instance while Descartes insists that the incorporeal aspect of a person is the intellect or mind, the Anjlo believe in an immortal soul. Also, while Descartes emphasizes wishing, hoping, fears, happiness, doubting, feeling and other mental states as attributes of the 'thinking thing', the Anjlo attach significant meanings to those concepts or mental states but they are, on the contrary, attributed to the heart, which is considered as the seat of emotions, besides other biological functions of the heart. There are other similarities and differences between the two theories. We would in the next chapter look at these and then examine the major issues raised by the Anjlo conception of man.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **A COMPARISON OF THE CARTESIAN AND ARABIC CONCEPTIONS OF HUMAN NATURE**

The previous chapter discussed the Arabic conception of human nature and attempted to highlight some philosophical implications of that conception. But, earlier, in chapter three, the focus was on Descartes' conception of man and the philosophical implications of that conception too. In this chapter, attempt shall be made to compare (and contrast) the two views and draw out their philosophical significance. The comparison shall focus on the following themes that the two views seem to portray:

- i. God, reality and creation
- ii. Substance dualism, immortality of the soul and mental states.
- iii. Acquisition of knowledge
- iv. Causal interaction, free will, determinism and destiny
- v. Morality
- vi. Personality and
- vii. Fulfillment.

#### **God, reality and creation**

Both Descartes and the Arabic are dualists of different sorts. Both believe in a corporeal and immaterial reality. This is the conclusion arrived at in chapter three, where Descartes argues that there is a corporeal world, the proof of which lies in the belief in the existence of a perfect being, God, who, due to his perfection, cannot deceive human beings about the existence of the corporeal

world. In other words, the idea of God precludes God from deceiving us (or else he is no longer a perfect being). And, therefore, since God is a perfect being, he must, of necessity, exist, and in existing has endowed us with the faculty of understanding and will which enable us to apprehend and assert in us the ideas about the corporeal world, which have objective reality. And since God is a perfect being he could not have created the imperfect faculties of the understanding and the will by which we grasp ideas of the corporeal world. Descartes asserts in the end that the ideas we have of the corporeal world are, therefore, in essence, caused by God. Hence God is the ultimate reality and all other entities, including man and the physical world, are the outcomes of God's will.

Thus Descartes establishes that there is a corporeal world. And in the same vein he endorses an incorporeal world, having made mind, an immaterial substance. The implications of the mind being an incorporeal substance, capable of disembodied existence presuppose Descartes' belief in (a) an incorporeal world and (b) the immortality of the soul. Descartes' belief in the incorporeal world and the immortality of the soul is further strengthened by his attempted proof of the existence of God. This is because religion, belief in the existence of God or the gods, in most cases, connotes immortality of the soul and life hereafter. And belief in the immortality of the soul leads to belief in a spiritual (or an incorporeal) world where the soul abides for ever.

In comparison, the Anjlo are also 'dualists'. The Anjlo believe that there is an incorporeal world and the corporeal world as Descartes also proposes. This is

presupposed in the Anjlo conception of a person. As described in chapter four, the Anjlo believe in the myth that a person was first a soul in *Bome* fashioned by *Bomenɔ*. It is a soul that comes to inhabit a foetus to give it life, consciousness, and transforms it into a person. Then, at death, the soul departs the body to live in a spiritual world called the ancestral world. In comparison, Socrates and Plato believe that the immortal soul goes to abide with the Masters. But Aristotle's soul, though not a soul in the sense of Socrates and Plato, disperses to join the universal intelligence. But in the Anjlo conception, the immaterial soul abides in the ancestral world or become a ghost that hover on earth. The Anjlo's belief that the world and its contents were created by God (Mote, 1963), supports the Anjlo's realist worldview, making the Anjlo ontological dualists. Like Descartes, the Anjlo also believe that God is the ultimate creator of the universe, including humans.

The discussions above point out that both the Anjlo and Descartes are dualists, although Descartes is a substance dualist and the Anjlo endorse duality. Besides, both Descartes and the Anjlo, in general agree that the world was created by God and also that the immaterial part of man, called the soul, is capable of disembodied existence. Also, both agree that the soul resides in a particular part of the human body. Descartes believes that the intellect, the thinking thing resides in the conarium or the pineal gland and the conarium is so volatile that it leaves the body almost immediately after death. That is why, as Descartes says, (Kenny, 1970) surgeons, who also know about the existence of the pineal gland, do not usually lay hands on it during post-mortem investigations. The Anjlo, on the other hand, as my respondents indicate, believe that the soul resides in the

‘heart’ (the seat of our emotions) and leaves the body after death. Descartes and the Anjlo are in agreement regarding their belief that the soul is created by God. But the Anjlo believe that the soul had prior existence in some world before coming to inhabit the human being; and after death it goes to live in another world, referred to as the ancestral world.

### Substance Dualism, Immortality of the soul and mental states

Descartes and the Anjlo’s belief about the origin of the human being and the physical world leads naturally to substance dualism, as has been discussed in chapter three of this thesis, according to which there are two fundamental entities: (a) the corporeal body or material things and (b) the soul as an incorporeal and immortal substance including God (where, according to Descartes’ substance dualism, [*Meditations III*] a substance is a thing that is fundamental and can exist independently). Descartes theorizes that a person comprises two substances: the corporeal body and the incorporeal mind/intellect/cognitive power. He argues that the two substances are wholly different in their properties as discussed in chapter two of this thesis. The Anjlo believe also that the soul is a spiritual thing that comes to inhabit the body during conception, and leaves the body after death to live in an ancestral world or be a malignant ghost that torments the living, or as a benevolent ghost that helps the living.

Substance dualism naturally gives rise to the theory of immortality of the soul by both the Anjlo and Descartes, where both mean that the soul does not corrupt and decay as the body does when it dies, but lives on in eternity. In his *Meditations IV* and *VI*, Descartes may not have been very overt in his assertion

about the soul being immortal. However, he implicitly accepts that the soul is immortal. Descartes confirms this belief to Mersenne in Descartes' letter to the latter on 25 November 1630.

‘... perhaps I may some day complete a little treatise of Metaphysics, ... in which I set out principally to prove the existence of God and of our souls when they are separate from the body, from which their immortality follows...’ (Kenny, 1970).

In another letter to Mersenne, on 24 December, 1640, he writes:

‘You say that I have said a word about the immortality of the soul. You should not be surprised. I could not prove that God could not annihilate the soul but only that it is by nature entirely distinct from the body, and so that it is not bound by nature to die with it...’ (Kenny, 1970)

And then again he affirms this when he writes to Elizabeth on 1 September, 1645:

‘...because even without the teachings of faith, natural philosophy by itself makes us hope that our souls will be in a happier state after death than now; and makes us fear nothing more than being attached to a body which altogether takes away its liberty.’ (Kenny, 1970).

The arguments from the irreducibility of mental states as well as the concept of qualia support Descartes' concept of the mind as an incorporeal substance, and hence the autonomy of the mind, or soul. (The concept of irreducibility of mental states is championed by D.C. Dennet (1980). It states that mental or conscious states such as desiring, happiness, pain, thinking, etc, cannot be reduced to physicalistic terms, and Kim (1996) thinks that 'qualia' is a term that defies definition. But he provides a provisional definition as the qualitative feel or phenomenal event that cannot be detected even under the most powerful neural machine). But the Anglo belief in the disembodied existence of the soul is the belief in ghosts as evident by some Anglo people who claim to have experiences

with ghosts. If these experiences are true then it goes to support Anlo belief in the immortality of the soul. Indeed all my informants agree that the Anlo believe in the existence of ghosts hence the elaborate burial and funeral ceremonies and rites and customs.

There are other arguments that support the Anlo belief in the immortality of the soul. Concepts like juju, burial ceremonies and rites that are performed for both low and high-born, invocation of ghosts to find out the cause of their deaths, belief in the influences of witchcraft, talismans and their powers, reincarnation and demonic powers (concepts that have been discussed earlier, in chapter four of this thesis), even though these are not scientific concepts, support the Anlo belief in the existence of the spirit world. Let me haste to say that it could be argued that the ancestral world and the world of ghosts are only a higher hierarchy in the Anlo ontology. In other words, life in the ancestral world cannot be used as proof for the immortality of the soul because ghosts and those in the ancestral world commune and interact closely with the living.

The point above is that since spirits such as ghosts commune with the living so closely, such spirits cannot be said to be truly removed from corporeal life. But this is a challenge that the Cartesian dualists would dismiss on the grounds that the ancestral world is conceived to be a spirit world where corporeality plays no part. In the Anlo ontology, the ancestors are next to the deities and God. They are almost like God; they are spirits and almost omnipresent – which humans are not. That God and the deities commune with man and man makes sacrifices to the gods as he does to the ancestors make God or the gods no less incorporeal or

does not make God or the gods human. In the same way, that humans make sacrifices to the ancestors and commune with them do not make the ancestral spirits human. Besides, except for the belief that the ancestors live the same life as they led when they were on earth, the living have very little idea of any other kind of life the ancestors live in their world save that humans call on them in times of trouble for assistance, and make sacrifices to them as recognition of their services to humans. It is my view, that the ancestors, if they do exist in the ancestral world, must live a more supernatural life than they lived on earth to be capable of helping and assisting the living in time of trouble – a thing they could not do when they were in the world of the living.

Substance dualism has been defended as a theory and has been challenged by materialist theories. Until the present, the problems of substance dualism remain intractable. It is for this reason that Churchland (1988) proposes the theory of eliminative materialism, the position that the older framework, of mental states, be completely eliminated from philosophical discussions, rather than be reduced, by a matured neuroscience. But the solution of Churchland notwithstanding, it is worth thinking through the *Aṅlɔ* notion of the immortality of the soul. One reason for such a venture is that most African communities seem to have a dualistic view of man. Apart from the Akan and the Yoruba concepts of human nature presented in chapter two of this work, scholars like Parrinder (1983), Sarpong (1974), Idowu (1973), Adegbola (1983), Mbiti (1975) and many others, in making generalizations about African religion, culture, and the concept of human nature, have come to the same conclusions. These conclusions are that the

Supreme Being is the creator of the universe, including humans, and that a person has a body and a soul which comes to inhabit him/her at birth, and that a person has a certain destiny predetermined for him/her by the Supreme Being and known only by the soul; that the soul comes to fulfill its destiny on earth, and that the Supreme Being is the moral upholder who punishes wrongdoing and rewards good deeds – and other such ideas that traverse African communities. Indeed, this concept about the human being is not limited to African communities. Socrates and Plato, of Greece, Descartes, of French origin, and the religious views, which have been discussed in detail in chapter two of this work present a similar view of humans as Africans do. If a wide variety of peoples hold such a view about the soul, then it is worth investigating the value of such a view – drawing not only on scientific resources for that investigation but on even metaphysical sources too.

In summary, Descartes and the Anjlo's concepts of human nature point to the much-challenged theory of substance dualism and immortality of the soul. But the two concepts are supported by different arguments altogether.

### Acquisition of knowledge

On acquisition of knowledge, Descartes is a rationalist, who believes that it is reason that provides grounds for logical deductions and conclusions from first principles (or *a priori* premises). He believes that the world is known through reasoning, though he does not dismiss empirical knowledge which he used in arriving at his knowledge of God and the corporeal world (*Mediation VI*). But he theorizes that it is the use of reason which can make knowledge indubitable.

Descartes therefore provides rules that guide in the use of our reasoning which can assure us of certain and indubitable knowledge (Smith, 1952).

On the other hand, as Gyekye (1996) confirms, the Anlo are both empirical and intuitive in the acquisition of knowledge. The Anlo believe that a person is a person if he is wise, intelligent and capable of solving difficult intellectual problems adeptly. So, it is the wise person who is considered knowledgeable. Wisdom is supposed to be acquired through long years of experience (with people, ideas, with the workings of the world). It is the long years of experience that enable the person to quickly intuit and provide answers in very short pithy sayings like proverbs, riddles, idioms, aphorisms, adages. The child is not considered wise or expected to display attributes of wisdom. And most often when a child displays great capability of wisdom and knowledge, the Anlo usually attribute it to the work of the Supreme Being and the gods. Gyekye notes about Africans and particularly about the Ewe that knowledge is important to them, and that knowledge is acquired through intuition from experiences of the material world. Through experience, the African knows about 'the most effective system of crop rotation, the best time to plough and plant and to harvest, and the most effective method of food processing and preservation...of medicinal property of herbs and other plants for healing, ...and that Africans have always been acute observers of the workings of nature' (Gyekye, 1996). But, notwithstanding the African and hence the Anlo to be both empirical and intuitive, Gyekye argues rightly also that wisdom is not the preserve of the old or the elders. He says:

'...Age has nothing to do with wisdom; an elderly or young person can be said to be wise. The view... that wisdom is ...a

preserve of the elders is wrong...'(Gyekye, 1996).

Indeed, the phrase: *amikae nesi de ta?* (What oil or pomade have you applied to your head?) is an idiom and a rhetorical question which means to humorously compliment a child who demonstrates great wisdom. But Gyekye accepts again correctly though that 'knowledge of the inherited ancestral traditions may be a preserve of the elders...' (Gyekye, 1996). As confirmed by all my informants, an Anlo child cannot have in-depth knowledge of say burial or funeral rites, initiation rites, widowhood rights, enstoolment rites, outdoorings rites, or knowledge about procedures at some high ranking meetings and many others, not even when he is taught. He can only have a superficial idea until he grows to have constant experience and observation of such situations. The foregoing reiterates the point that the Anlo acquire knowledge through experience, empirical observation and through intuition.

In the light of the above, the emphasis is that in comparison, both Descartes and the Anlo do not downgrade the part the senses play in providing humans with knowledge. But, unlike Descartes, the Anlo do not emphasize the certainty and indubitability of conclusions in order to accept such conclusions as true. It is for this reason that the Anlo easily believe the pronouncements of the spokespersons of the gods as true and work by such revelations. It is for this reason that the Anlo and Africans on the whole are considered superstitious as their ideas and beliefs are not based on logical reasoning and conclusions (Mbiti, 1975).

## Causal relations, Free Will, Destiny and Determinism

Another issue to look at is the concept of causal relations and its implications. Descartes and the Anlo believe that every effect has a cause. Gaba (1997) reiterates this belief of the Anlo when he says that only God is the First Mover of all things. The Anlo believe that God or the gods is/are the creator(s) and sustainer(s) of all things. Mbiti (1975), Gyekye (1996), and Rev. Ted Nelson-Adzakpey (1982) explain that African myths are silent on how the Supreme Being created the universe but they (the Africans) believe that it is the Supreme Being, God, who created the world including humans. Let me quickly add that scholars of African traditional religion such as Chukwundi Eze (1998), Awolalu and Dopamu (1979), and Ohadike emphasize that Africans do not directly worship God. But in their prayers and sacrifices to the gods the first name the African figure is God. Because they reason that God is the first cause, the Anlo and Africans consult God through the gods and the oracles in time of trouble to find out the cause or the reason for an effect such as premature death, unexplainable sickness, misfortune, persistent failure in any venture and many others. To the Anlo, everything has a cause and every (mysterious) phenomenon is explainable by reference to the gods. The sources of strange happenings are often traced to malevolent spirits or ghosts, demonic spirits, witchcraft, juju, charms, ill will, etc. Persistent success in business and any other venture is usually attributed to the benevolence of God and the gods, the kindness of the ancestors, and to one's hard work and determination; but hardly do the Anlo attempt to find out the cause for good fortune and successes. It is implicitly assumed that the gods are benevolent

towards a person. However, in some instances, some Anjlo who are blessed with prosperity in their work, children, health, and general well being make personal gods which they place on top of the roof of their buildings and worship.

In essence, the Anjlo attribute the existence of the world and events happening in it, particularly the unfortunate ones, to God first, and then to the gods and to, say, destiny. To the Anjlo nothing happens without a cause, a cause which can be either God, disfavour with the gods, or punishment from the gods or malevolent ghosts, or an enemy.

Closely related to the concept of causation/causal relation is free will (volition) of action, and destiny or determinism. Descartes believes that when it comes to persons, humans are free in their actions and the person is the master of his/her own actions for which the person could be blamed or praised. Descartes believes that free will is the respect in which humans most resemble God, that the power of free will is the greatest perfection in which humans most resemble divine infinity. Free will to act and to take decisions, to Descartes, is therefore an integral part of human nature. This is an implication got from Descartes' letter to Elizabeth on 6 October 1645 when Descartes asserts that free will originates from God, who by his free will willed the universe into existence. Descartes writes this to Elizabeth:

‘But God is the universal cause of everything in such a way as to be also the total cause of everything; and so nothing can happen without His will’ (Kenny, 1970).

By implication, therefore, since God made humans in his own image (as the Christian doctrine which Descartes advocates says), if humans have free will they ‘inherit’ it from God, their creator.

On the other hand, the Aḡlɔ are liberal and, at the same time, deterministic in their concept of human nature. The Aḡlɔ believe that the human being is tied to his/her fate. This is because even before the soul from *Bome* comes to inhabit the body of a human being, it is believed that the soul has already informed *Bomencɔ* of the kind of life he/she would live in *Kodzogbe* (this world), even of the kind of death he/she may die. In corporeal life, therefore, whatever a human being suffers and experiences is what he/she has already promised to the supreme God. This is what is referred to as destiny in Aḡlɔ concept, a concept which pervades the African concept of human nature as seen in both the Akan and the Yoruba concepts discussed earlier in this dissertation.

There are a couple of proverbs that show that the Aḡlɔ believe in destiny. When the Aḡlɔ say, for instance, *that ‘Kpɔgbale le tsiḡbe tsi fui gake ḡḡḡḡ gale enu ko’*, (the skin of the leopard has been beaten often by rain but the spots still remains; the spots will not disappear) he means to say that no matter what happens to a person he will still remain what he has always been. And, again, when he says, *‘Kpɔvi meḡḡna na kpɔgbale o’* (the cub of the leopard does not get impatient for its [leopard’s] spot), he means, in essence, that whatever a person is supposed to become he will become.

However, in spite of the concept of destiny, the Aḡlɔ hold individuals responsible for their actions, either against themselves or against other people.

This brings in the question of morality, pre-meditated and accidental (or human caused) actions (that take place through careful thinking-through, and not events) and the justice system of the Anlo. This is to quickly explain, as an after-thought, that indeed religion and the gods play an important part in the justice system, punishment, and sanction of immoral behaviour of the Anlo, but morality, itself, as discussed in chapter four of this work, is not based on religion.

But, I would, for now, confine myself to the discussions of free will, actions, determinism, and destiny, as the next sub-section extensively discusses morality. All my informants agree that the Anlo believe in free will in spite of their firm belief in determinism. To them, there is nothing contradictory in holding the two beliefs at the same time. Some of my informants reconcile this when they say that one's destiny can be changed through consultation with particular idols or gods who have the ability to decipher one's purpose on earth. If the god determines an imminent unfortunate incident, they request for certain materials, usually animals, which are used for rituals and sacrifices. Rev. Seth Agleby, in explaining the origin of idols in his article *'The origin of Idols'*, published in The Ghana Bulletin of Theology, emphasized this intervention role of the gods. Indeed before anyone would consult the gods for such a sacrifice, he must have had some unfortunate experiences, and the consultation with the gods would only be a confirmation for him/her. The implication is that an event purposed to occur has been averted through intervention. In addition to this, although the individual is very much aware of the ruthlessness of the gods when they punish for wrong doing, a person is free to please himself/herself until he/she experiences the anger of the gods.

Suffice it for me to conclude that the Anjlo would accept it as destiny if after many attempts at consultation with the gods and sacrifices to avert or stop an event the situation remains unsolved or unresolved. But in most cases the idea of destiny and free will is least on the mind of the Anjlo until the unfortunate incident of very high import occurs. Events such as sudden death of a young or eminent person, sudden loss of wealth, recurrence of mishaps to an individual, sudden and even prolonged ill-health, loss of occupation, accidents at sea and many such occurrences are not attributed to chance or to accident. They are caused by one thing or the other, and in most cases the cause is attributed to evil intentioned people, to the disfavour of the gods, or to malicious ghosts. However, the last cause attributed to such events is one's purpose on earth or that the person purposed to *Bomeno* in *Bofe* to experience such an event – in spite of the belief in human's purpose on earth.

## Morality

Morality is a concept important to both Descartes and the Anjlo. For instance, Descartes believes that the person is unique and distinct from animals because humans have a cognitive power to reason out his/her action (whether they are right or wrong with regard to socially established and even divinely accepted rules). And the power of reason, combined with the human being's ability to speak makes the human being autonomous and capable of higher order thoughts, which the human being expresses, hence he/she exhibits more complex behaviour (different from animals') of which he is self-conscious. It is the cognitive power of humans that makes a human being attribute to him/herself duties, rights and

responsibilities, to which he/she is accountable, if he/she fails in one. In that respect, Descartes formulates maxims (four codes of morals) that should guide a person who lives in a society. Descartes concludes that by attending to the codes one would pursue virtue and do good things (Sutcliffe, 1968). Descartes' morality could be said to be a secular morality not founded on religion (or the idea of God or the gods).

In the same vein, the Anlo place great emphasis on virtue or morality which is founded more on what experience has taught them than on religious beliefs and on what the gods say. (Gyekye, 1996) believes that African, and therefore the Anlo religion is a natural religion. For that matter, the people could not have received commandments from God, as revealed religions do. Moral codes are derived from experience and observation). As my description in chapter four of this work shows, from birth to death, a child is trained in two ways. A child is trained in morals and in, at least, a vocation (either of the father's, if the child is a boy, or in her mother's if the child is a girl – but most often girls are trained vocationally in good housekeeping). The child is trained by both adults in his home and by the entire community.

The Anlo have many moral codes to follow. Some of the moral requirements include honesty, obedience, humility, respect for others, diligence at work, love for one's family and community, unity, involvement truthfulness, being law-abiding and many others. As many of my respondents say, the training in morals is with one purpose in mind – to be able to live peaceably with other people in the community. The moral codes affect dealing in business with others, associating

with those older than one-self, or even younger, in interpersonal relationships, in personal actions that can affect oneself and many others. Nelson-Adzakpey (1982) says of the Aṅlɔ that ‘...the people’s ethical observances,...their moral values, are the very foundation of the community and communal happiness.’ It is for this reason that a child is taught to be virtuous, through constant corrections and punishments, rewards and others until he learns to behave rightly.

Indeed, Aṅlɔ moral codes can be described as a universal moral code as it is consistent with many codes of different communities of the world. Aṅlɔ morality or virtuous living is mainly utilitarian. Again, Nelson-Adzakpey confirms this when he said living a moral life is not only to avoid incurring the disfavour or displeasure of the gods but also for one’s own honour and that of the clan (1982). This is because, apart from the purposes of peaceful co-existence with others, a good moral life can also earn a person a place among the ancestors (Gyekye, 1996). However, a person does not live a good moral life with the intent of earning a place among the ancestors.

One other reason for living a good moral life may come from the inherent need to co-exist with others for the welfare of humanity, avoid conflicts and live peaceably with others (Nelson-Adzakpey, 1982). The Aṅlɔ lay great emphasis on moral training. This is depicted succinctly by the following. E. Y. Egblewogbe, in his *Games and Songs*, reiterates the importance of Aṅlɔ moral training as what defines a person as a person. He says, ‘... a person who has not been able to learn the moral codes and live by them is described as an animal or a fool’ (Egblewogbw, 1975). Indeed, when one person asks another, ‘*Ele ame me fifia?*’

(to wit, are you really behaving like a person?), the implication is that the person being questioned seems to demonstrate some behaviour which does not stand to moral reason.

From the foregoing, a child or an adult who goes against the norms of the society is made to face the consequences of his actions, if he or she is discovered to be the culprit of a moral offence. The justice system begins first from the home where parents punish wrongdoing of children. Indeed, in the Anlo community, morality, the justice system and fair play begin from God and ends on the ancestors. God, deities, the gods, humans and ancestors punish evil and reward good (Abotchie, 1997).

It could be inferred from the above that Descartes and the Anlo morality are the same and yet different. Both Descartes and the Anlo insist on three basic things: i) respect and confidence in oneself (which demonstrate virtues like truthfulness, honesty and the like), ii) love for one's community (which is inclusive of one's family and country), and iii) being diligent at a (chosen) vocation. Secondly, though Descartes' morality evolved from an individual's experience, both Descartes and the Anlo evolve their moral codes from experience, although the Anlo have a tinge of religion to theirs. Again, for both Descartes and the Anlo the main purpose of their moral codes is to achieve a peaceful co-existence in this world since seen on the surface, the moral codes of both do not imply a future fulfillment in the world to come. But one main difference between Descartes and the Anlo is that the Anlo codes come with an

implied justice system which may compel one to conform to the norms of the community.

## Personality

The next notion for consideration by way of comparison is personality. Descartes theorizes that fundamentally a human being is a thing that exists, thinks, doubts, reasons, understands, and so on. And a human being is a rational soul only because of his cognitive power – his thinking ability. The cognitive power is the source of understanding, imagination, memory, sensation, volition, and, sometimes, actions. The cognitive power is a volition faculty of the will (and choices), feeling and emotion, upon which behaviour, actions and, therefore, morality depend. In Descartes' view, therefore, personality has to do with the cognitive power that helps to deduce moral codes, in conjunction with a person's free will and morality that gives the person fulfillment and happiness.

In Descartes' view, therefore, personality hinges on a person's cognitive or thinking power, which, if he/she loses, makes a person cease to be a person, so to say. The term 'personality' was a difficult one to immediately translate into English by my informants. But, contrary to Descartes' view, the Anlo does not lay as much emphasis on the cognitive capability, though it helps in processing moral codes but rather the Anlo believe that personality is a combination of recognition of moral codes and behaviour in conformity with the codes.

For instance, when an Anlo say to another person who may have behaved offensively, '*Mele tame bum hafi wɔ numa oa?*' (Were you not thinking before you did that? Or were you in your right mind before doing that?) the offended

person expects some amount of thinking about the codes of the society before the offender initiated that action, implying the place of the cognitive power processing moral codes.

The Anlo believe too that behaviour could be received from *Bome*, (where personality is determined from *Bome*) or may be due to the influence of demonic spirits. But again, the Anlo believe that it is the heart or one's conscience which recognizes the moral codes, and conscience is located in the heart, (which the Akan refer to as *sunsum* or spirit of a person, a second element of personality [Gyekye, 1995) and not in the brain as Descartes suggests.

In the Anlo view, personality is deterministic in one way and malleable in another way, depending on one's 'spirit' (the inner strength or ability to withstand challenges and obstacles) and also on how one uses his/her *susu* (mind) in processing the moral rules. Let me briefly explain 'spirit'. The Anlo think of 'spirit' in two ways. In one way, the spirit is a life force or the breath that makes living things alive. In another way, the spirit is interpreted as the aura or the inner strength, ability, or capability which enables humans to withstand challenges and problems and determines the character and personality of a person. If one's spirit is strong he cannot be influenced by peers and evil spirits to do wrong. It is then that the person is free to do the bidding of the moral codes and be molded by them. On the contrary, a person with a weak spirit is easily amenable by peers and evil influences to go against the norms of his society. However, one's personality could be the work of destiny, if no amount of sanctions, corrections, punishments, threats could change that individual to live a good moral life.

As discussed in chapter four, the person and his/her personality, in Anlo concept, connote many notions such as spirit, heart, head, character, behaviour, mind (*susu*), conscience and others. In Anlo life, therefore, one's personality is enhanced or degraded depending on how one harnesses the notions just mentioned. A person would have to use his *susu* (mind or thought processes, which involves the head and the brain) to process the moral training being given him/her through songs, plays, riddles, proverbs and others to be able to internalize or reject the codes and behave according to them or rebel against them. And by so doing the person shows himself/herself as having a good or bad character (*nɔnɔme*) or personality (*de*). It is in developing a strong personality that one can have a strong spirit that cannot easily be influenced by peers or evil spirits to do contrary to the codes of the community because one's conscience (*dzitsinya*, a heart that warns) would have cautioned the person against wrongdoing.

In Anlo perception, therefore, a person with an acceptable personality adheres to the norms of society and upholds the moral codes, otherwise he is considered a mad person. That is why an Anlo may be surprised and ask, '*Etsu ha kum wole hafi wɔ numa?*' (Is he/she getting mad at all?) if a neighbour behaves immorally/indecently.

It seems then that the notion of personality entails much more than the Descartes' notion of personality holds – if we restrict ourselves to his moral codes.

## Fulfillment

The concept of morality discussed already brings us to the closely related concept of fulfillment. Descartes' concept of human nature necessarily includes the notion of fulfillment. Descartes believes that a fulfilled person is someone who pursues virtues and lives a morally good life. This is because in pursuing virtue one would have lived according to the four maxims and consequently would have used one's cognitive powers effectively to conquer oneself, choose the best occupation for oneself and live peacefully with others in society. That is the way human life is fulfilled in Descartes' world. To Descartes, being virtuous, or living a moral life brings with it cheerfulness and contentment. He has these to say about being virtuous when he wrote to Elizabeth on the 4th of August 1645:

‘It seems to me that everyone can make himself content without any external assistance, provided that he respects three conditions, which are related to the three rules of morality which I put in the *Discourse on Method*’ (Kenny, 1970).

Again he wrote to Elizabeth on the 1st of September 1645:

... ‘because all actions of our soul that acquire us some perfection are virtuous, and all our contentment consists in our interior awareness of possessing some perfection. Thus whenever we practise any virtue – that is to say, do what reason tells us we should do – we automatically receive some satisfaction and pleasure from so doing.’ (Kenny, 1970).

Finally, and again to Elizabeth on 6th of October 1645:

‘But I make a distinction between the supreme good – which consists in the exercise of virtue, or, what comes to the same, the possession of all those goods whose acquisition depend upon our free will – and satisfaction of mind which results from that acquisition’ (Kenny, 1970).

Thus, Descartes believes that fulfillment depends on freewill and living a morally good life.

The Anlo believe that an individual is fulfilled on the basis of community's well-being which comes about if everyone lived a morally good life and lives by the moral codes of the community. In other words, an individual is fulfilled when the community is pleased with his actions and behaviour – because he has done something for the community and the family, and not mainly for himself. The Anlo accept that the individual must strive to achieve his personal desires; and the community gives him/her the chance to do so.

But, in the Anlo concept, the community's desires and needs supersede the individual's. The individual, through education (from parents, guardians, family members, and, in fact, the entire community) becomes much aware of his social responsibilities and strives to put the needs of the community ahead of his own needs. To quote Nelson Adzakpey again, '...the people's ethical observances, their moral values, are the very foundation of the community and communal happiness' (Ted-Adzakpey 1982). The Anlo is not individualistic. His/her fulfillment is found in his/her involvement in the community's life.

In essence, while Descartes' notion of fulfillment is very much individualistic, the Anlo seem to be communalistic and yet makes provision for personal fulfillment as well.

## Summary and conclusions

So far, I have attempted comparing the Anlo and Descartes' conceptions of the human being. Preceding this have been discussions of the views of human

nature as presented by Descartes and the Anjɔ. Comparisons made above have demonstrated that both views of Descartes and the Anjɔ differ in certain notions, and yet both again are in agreement regarding certain essential characteristics of human nature. However, both frameworks specifically identified same notions (such as free will, determinism, morality, causation, destiny and many others) in their conception of human nature, some of which were in agreement and others not.

The foregoing study has revealed the following. In the first place, we have seen that the core principles of dualism, i.e. the dual ontology of matter and spirit, as played out in body and soul a propos of human nature are present in both Cartesian and the Anjɔ conceptions. In the Cartesian conceptual scheme we have the corporeal represented in body, and the incorporeal in the ‘thinking thing’ or mind/soul. Similarly, in the Anjɔ worldview the corporeal is represented in *ame*, and the incorporeal in *luwɔ/gbɔgbɔ*. Both conceptions hold that an uncreated Supreme Being created the universe, including humans.

Granted that Descartes and the Anjɔ are agreed on the broad outlines of the human person, differences emerge with the details. For example, both Descartes and the Anjɔ regard morality and responsible action as important benchmarks for determining personality as well as a happy and fulfilled life. However, while in Descartes’ metaphysics there is some amount of determinism coupled with a great amount of free will for the individual, in the Anjɔ’s conception, a person’s life on earth is more predetermined; the Anjɔ person is less free in his actions. In other words, Descartes’ person seems to be freer and less determined while the Anjɔ

person is more predestined to live a particular kind of life, and yet at the same he/she has some amount of freedom in acting, once on earth. This is because he/she is responsible for his/her actions.

The upshot of the above is that, though both conceptual schemes recognize freedom and determinism as endowment of the human person, both worldviews are encumbered with the problem of reconciling how a person could be both free and at the same time determined. This is a contradiction that both Descartes and the Anjlo do not seem to be sufficiently aware of. But let me haste to indicate that this and other problems have been long standing philosophical issues that philosophers over the ages have made attempts at resolving.

The study has also shown that the duality of human nature characteristic of both Cartesian and the Anjlo conceptions is vulnerable in respect of rationally explaining the interaction between the two worlds as well as mind and body. Specifically, given metaphysical dualism, how may we explain the causal interaction between the immaterial (spiritual) domain and the material (physical) domain? Again, how can mind, a spiritual substance, have causal commerce with the body, a corporeal substance and vice versa? This is a point on which materialists such as Ryle (1968), Priest (1991) and Churchland (1988) have taken issue with Descartes and dualist proponents.

Criticisms of dualism, such as the one cited above, emanate from materialism and scientism. But these physicalist theories are human constructs, and they are not able to provide all the answers to all the concerns of human life. For instance, 'qualia', i.e. the qualitative feel of sensory experience such as pain, is a human

phenomenon. But because qualia resists capture in scientific explanation, science has a tendency of denying it (Dennett, 1993). Again, as this research has shown, most cultures in the world recognize a Supreme Being who is thought to have created the universe. But since science is unable to investigate myths and the unobservable – such as God and spirit – science disqualifies them, as objects of scientific investigation. However, science cannot disprove their existence. And the fact is that many people entertain the existence of these beings who, it is thought, continue to exercise influence in their lives.

That is not to say, however, that science has not been beneficial to humans. Indeed there have been advances in science, particularly in human anatomy and brain science which cannot be downplayed. Regardless of these advances, the dual conception of human nature continues to be widely held among many cultures in the world, including the most advanced countries.

## Recommendations

Having seen how significant ‘dualism’ is even in the present times, the study recommends the following:

1. since the human (person) is a complex concept, we need to harness all the strengths of the various theories, both scientific and otherwise so as to arrive at a meaningful definition and knowledge of human nature.
2. In undertaking this study, it is discovered that little or no philosophical work has been done to provide a review for this research. It is, therefore, recommended that Africans, and hence Ghanaians, undertake further

philosophical comparative studies to exhibit the capacity Africa (Ghana) has in regards such as government, politics, morality, language etc.

3. that no individual, or group(s) of persons, or people should look down on another's worldview.
4. finally, we need to undertake more intra-African comparative studies, not only of human nature but of other worldviews and disciplines.

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# QUESTIONNAIRE

## Questionnaire to determine the traditional beliefs of the Anlo-Ewe concerning human nature

Below are questions about the Anlo and how they conceive human nature to be. The questions require some simple explanations. Kindly answer them briefly, and as precisely and objectively as you possibly can.

**YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY IS ASSURED.**

Sex ..... Female                       Male  (please tick correct status)

Age .....

Profession ....

Tribe ...

Place of residence...

1...Where do the Anlo come from?

2...What is the origin of humankind according to Anlo traditional beliefs?

3...In the Anlo view, a human being is composed of what?

4...How does such a belief, about what beings are composed of, influence the lifestyle of the Anlo in terms of -

a)...work?

b)...behaviour in society?

**c)...behaviour at home?**

**d)...an individual's expectations about the future?**

**e)... his concept of life in the hereafter?**

**f)...moral life?**

**g)...death?**

**h)...relationship with ancestors?**

**i)...the custom of burials?**

**j)....funerals?**

**k)...other races/tribes (of humans)?**

**5...List the spirit beings recognized by the Anlo, in their order of importance**

**6...What does the term 'the ancestral world' designate in Anlo thought?**

**7...Who can become an ancestor? Male human beings  Female humans   
Both males and females  (please tick one option).**

**8...What action or characteristics can make a person become an ancestor**

9...Explain the relationship between the spirit beings and the human race.

10...List some main Anlo gods and indicate their functions.

11...Explain the functions of the following parts of the Anlo person.

a) head *ta*

b) heart *dzi*

c)...blood *uu*

d)...soul *lu uɔ*

e)...shadow *vɔɔli*

12..Please tell the difference between *ta*, *susu*, and *ahɔɔ*

13..What do the Anlo consider to constitute *amenyenyeye* Personality?

14..What do the terms such as *de*, *amenyenyeye* and *nɔnɔme/nuwɔna* designate in Anlo thought?

15..Does the belief in the ancestors influence one's moral life or character? Yes  No   
If yes, then in what way?

16..Are the gods the (sole) source of the Anlo moral codes? Yes  No  (Please

tick)

**17.. If the answer (to 16 above) is no, then mention or explain where else the moral codes are derived**

**18..Do the Anlo lay emphasis on good moral life? Yes  No**

**19..If yes, is there any expected gain? What is the gain?**

**20..Does the belief in the ancestors influence one's moral life or conduct? Yes No**

**21.. Do the Anlo believe that their life is predestined?**

**22..Do they believe in human freedom?**

**23..How do they reconcile predeterminism with human freedom?**

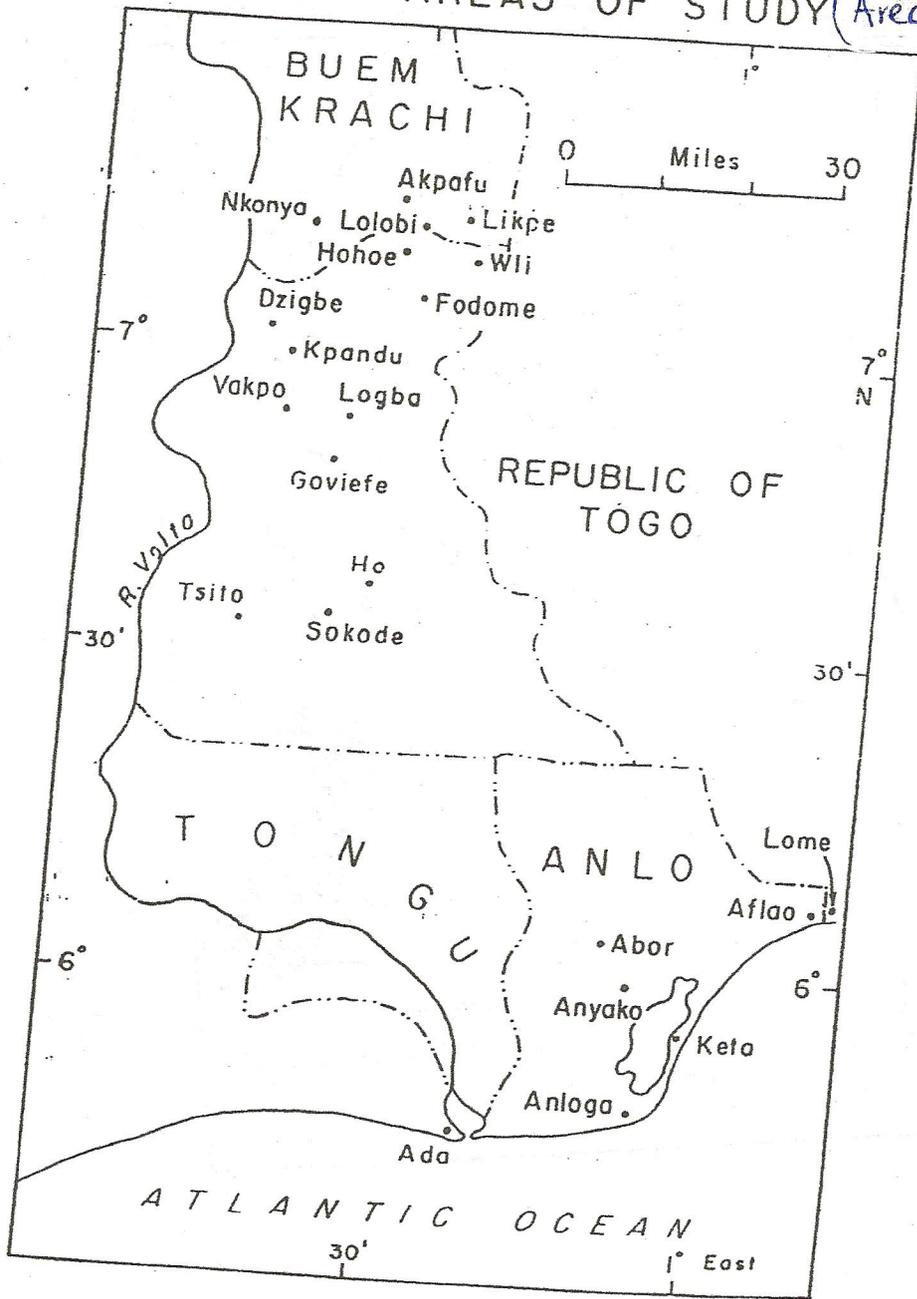
**24..Do the Anlo believe in ghosts? / What do ghosts mean to the Anlo?**

**25..If the Anlo believe in ghosts, then briefly explain what part ghosts play in the life of the Anlo.**

**I thank you very much for your ready cooperation.**

MAP 2 AREAS OF STUDY (Area where

Anglo-Ewe is spoken highlighted as ANLO)



MAP 1 Shaded area showing where Ewe is spoken

