



SCHOOL OF RELIGION, PHILOSOPHY AND CLASSICS

Rethinking the Concept of Race's Conundrums in African Philosophy

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Abstract

The pattern of discourse in the history of African philosophy resulted from historic events such as slavery, colonialism, race and racism. Historically therefore, the concept of race played a significant part in the existence of African philosophy. Recent years have seen a series of studies on the concept of race, with philosophers at the lead of this research development. These philosophers, including Joshua Glasgow, W. E. B. Du Bois, Lucius Outlaw, Kwame Anthony Appiah, Naomi Zack and Emmanuel C. Eze, among others, undertook to explain the concept of race with articulations on whether it should be conserved or eliminated. Thus *Eliminativists and Conservationists* standpoints, where the former hold that race is an illusion and race-thinking should be eliminated, while the later contend that race is very real and the concept should be conserved

This dissertation is a critical assessment of how the concept of race affects African philosophy and an exploration of how the concept can be transcended. To achieve this objective, the dissertation appraised how the concept of race affects African philosophy. It further discussed the eliminativists and conservationists approaches to race, and how they contribute to and affect the concept likewise, it made an attempt to respectively reconcile the perspectives of the eliminativists and conservationists proponents. In the main, the dissertation explored and considered the possibilities of transcending the concept of race.

Keywords: Race, African, Philosophy, African philosophy, Transcend

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Introduction

In our world today, racial classification seems to be a common thing. Many people are contented with the racial categorization as well as their skin colours, while others are not for many different reasons. As might be expected, philosophers and scholars Joshua Glasgow and Naomi Zack, in recent years have committed their time to understanding the concept of race. In some instances, this has led to the denial by some of the existence of race and the logical coherence of the concept. Some scholars like Lucius Outlaw (2001) and W. E. B. Du Bois (1897) have defended the concept of race, but with important changes to the basis of racial identity which they describe as either a social construct or biologically based. Other scholars like Appiah and Naomi Zack oppose the idea that race exists. What seems to be the major questions is whether race is real or not and whether the concept of race should be conserved or eliminated.

It is important to note that the concept of race has played a significant part in African philosophy. The very existence of African philosophy appears to be a contentious issue among philosophers. Some philosophers claim that seeking 'an' African philosophy is a futile attempt and belongs in the realm of cultural anthropology. Some hold that African philosophy is a new enterprise that began in recent times under the auspices of Western philosophy. Others argue that African philosophy existed as far back as when people began trying to contend with their existential situation in the world. Generally, these assertions or inquiries of the existence of African philosophy and what should count as African philosophy owe to the issues surrounding the idea of race. The term 'African philosophy' tends to give one an idea of African history and its philosophical views. The pattern of discourse in the history of African philosophy was a result of historical events such as slavery, colonialism, race and racism. Thus, the topic is a (re)assessment of how race affects African philosophy. It illuminates negritude's and African philosophy's responsibility with supposedly revalued uses of race, and the visible possibilities of a transcendental modern notion of race.

This dissertation intends to answer the question: can we transcend or go beyond the concept of race? To do this, the study explores the conundrum of race in African philosophy, that

is, it considers the contributions of both the eliminativists and conservationists and ascertains whether the contributions can be reconciled and improved upon as a way of developing a contemporary race discourse.

The chapters in this study are systematically arranged with each beginning with an introduction of the specific issues to be addressed and discussed. These issues are about the concept race as well as the possibility of transcending it. In the first chapter, I discuss the idea of colonialism, racism and oppression with regards to race. The chapter further delves into the biological, philosophical and social concepts of race, with the view of showing how the idea of race has affected African identity and philosophy. Using Aristotle's idea of slavery, I argue that the European invention of race as a tool to rationalize their enslavement of Africans remains unjust. Concluding on this chapter, I contend that part of African philosophical project is to engage in issues like race, African philosophy and identity. In essence, these issues capture the experiences of Africa and Africans.

The second chapter examines some of the stances of philosophers that eventually led to their perspectives of race (whether directly or indirectly or unconsciously). In this given, I also discuss Descartes' 'Cogito', which seems to be the foundation upon which the idea of race or racism rests. Likewise, the chapter presents some arguments against David Hume, Immanuel Kant and Placide Tempels.

The third chapter discusses the works of nationalistic-ideological philosophers like Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Kenneth Kaunda, Senghor, Biko and Amilcar Cabral, and the existence of African philosophy as an indirect response to Humean and Kantian ideas of negroes/blacks. In other words, this chapter aims to show that the works of some nationalist-ideological philosophers and the existence of African philosophy is proof that Africans are not irrational or inferior to the whites. The chapter also explores the 'philosophical pride' that African philosophers acquired from Western philosophy and reaffirms the existence of African philosophy.

The fourth chapter assesses how scholars engage the discourse of race. A review of the ideas of Glasgow¹ (2009), du Bois (1897), Outlaw (2001), Appiah (1992), Zack (1993, 2002) and Eze (2002) regarding the concept of race will also form part of this chapter. As a stepping-stone to the possibility of transcending the concept of race, I give a descriptive summary about the eliminativists' and conservationists' views on the concept of race and the common ground between them. I conclude the chapter by contending for the possibility of transcending the concept of race. Similarly, I make a rebuttal against my argument on the basis of different reasons elaborated in the chapter.

As a final point, the fifth chapter concludes the study. In this chapter, I provide a summary of what each chapter underscored and achieved, and proffer some recommendations for emerging studies in African philosophy focusing on the concept of race.

¹ Although I did not write a review on Glasgow, but I included him because I used his theory of 'racial reconstructionism' as stepping-stone to the theory I proposed, 'racial transcendentalism'. I will explain this in detail in chapter four.

Chapter One

1. Understanding the Concept of Race: the Philosophical and the Social meaning of Race, and how Africa's Identity is shaped by the Issues of Race in African Philosophy

1.1. Introduction

The concept of race has been the subject of discussion for a long time. Historically this concept has faced significant scientific and philosophical contestations. In recent years, different books and articles in the humanities and the social sciences have been committed to understanding this concept. Eventually, this has led some important thinkers to deny both the existence of race and the logical coherence of the concept. Some scholars like Kwame Anthony Appiah and Naomi Zack have defended the concept of race, although with important changes to the basis of racial identity which they describe as either biologically based or a social construct. According to Naomi Zack, for example, “modern concepts of race derive from eighteenth- and nineteenth-century pseudoscience that rationalized European colonialism and chattel slavery” (1996: p.x). On this view many scholars are of the opinion that the Europeans had the idea of race before they enslaved Africans and the idea paved the way to that crime (Boxill 2001: 2).

Accordingly, some scholars like Léopold Sédar Senghor, Aimé Césaire, Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, among others, postulate that the idea of African philosophy ensued from historical events such as slavery, colonialism², race and racism. Basically, Léopold Sédar Senghor and Aimé Césaire perceived African philosophy as a philosophy born of struggle. The concept of race, as part of the historical events, was born out of colonial

² In line with Eze, I use the term “colonialism” in respect to Africa “as a clustered concept to designate the historical realities of: (a) the European imperial incursions into Africa, which began in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries and grew into the massive transatlantic slave trade; (b) the violent conquest of the various parts of the continent by diverse European powers which took place in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; (c) the forced administration of African lands and peoples which followed this conquest, and lasted into the years of independence in the 1950s and 1960s and – in case of Zimbabwe and South Africa – into the 1980s and the 1990s. Slave trade, conquest, occupation, and forced administration of peoples, in that order, were all part of an unfolding history of colonialism” (1998: 213–214).

misrepresentation of Africans as culturally naïve, rationally incompetent and intellectually docile. This brings to the fore the idea that race has a significant influence on the birth and structure of African philosophy. An example of this is the idea that whites have high mental capacities, and blacks have low mental capacities. In other words, “some races have high levels of mental capacities that others do not” (Eze 2002: 66), and some races are inferior to others. It is owing to this history that Appiah (1992: 10) earlier advanced that “for the generation that theorized the decolonization of Africa then, ‘race’ was a central organizing principle.”

My aim in this chapter is to discuss the biological, philosophical and social concepts of race, and to clearly show how the idea of race has affected African identity and philosophy. In the first section I explain the concept of race, and thereafter look at it from the biological point of view. Using Aristotle’s idea of slavery, I argue that the European invention of race as a tool to rationalize the enslavement of Africans remains an injustice. In addition, I discuss colonialism, racism and oppression with regards to race, as well as the philosophical and social meaning of the concept of race. In the second section of this chapter, I further examine the concept of race but in relation to how it has affected African philosophy and identity. Thus I argue that part of the African philosophical project is to engage in issues like race, African philosophy and identity which are expressive of African experiences.

1.2. A Brief History of the Concept of Race and the Biological Perspective

Viewing the concept of race through the lens of history is of a great importance. This importance lies in the fact that historically, physical characteristics were (and are still) used to distinguish humans from one another. For instance, the “first Portuguese that penetrated the interior of Africa in the fifteenth century found men absolutely black, with curled hair, flat noses, and thick lips” (Hannah Franziska 1996: 181). This new discovery of black people by the Portuguese led to the formation of two distinct races - the white and the black race.³ According to Augstein (1996: 183) “these two races are not only distinct by character

³ Winthrop Jordan’s famous book *White over Black: American Attitude towards the Negro, 1550 – 1812*, published in 1968 suggests that the Europeans “came to have the idea because they invented it to explain the

of form, as the characters drawn from the conformation of the cranium and face are; they are so by a *character of structure*, by a special and very complicated apparatus, by an apparatus which exists in one of the two races, and is wanting in the other.” “In the *white* race there are three distinct membranes (the derm, and the two epiderms). While in the *black* race the external layer of the skin is the seat of the *pigmentum* or colouring matter of the Negroes” (*ibid*: 183). Another distinct race is the *red* or *American* race. “Anatomy discovered under the second epiderm of the individual of the *red, copper-coloured, Indian, or American* race (for this race is called indifferently by all these names) a *pigmental apparatus* which is the seat of the *red* or *copper colour* of this race, as the *pigmental apparatus* of the Negro is the seat of black colour” (*ibid*: 183). The new concept of race worked within a new research space considered as *social and natural* history. Both of these sciences constitute the “science of man” (*ibid*)

According to Naomi Zack, the “modern concept of race is derived from the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century pseudoscience that rationalized European colonialism and chattel slavery” (1996: 7). The word “race,” according to Michael Banton, had acquired at least these meanings:

The notion that mankind is divisible into a certain number of ‘race’ whose characteristics are fixed and defy the modifying influences of external circumstances;... the idea that intellectual and moral capacities may be unevenly spread within the various human races;... and the notion that mental endowments are bound up with certain physiognomical specificities, which being defined as racial characteristics, are considered to reveal the inward nature of the individual or the population in Question (1987: ix-x).

Thomas Jefferson argued in his book – *Notes on the State of Virginia* – that the “natural” differences between whites and blacks is a prerequisite for them to be segregated “beyond reach of mixture” (1972: 143). He further explained that whether a black or a negro “resides in the reticular membrane between the skin and scarf-skin, or in the scarf-skin itself; whether it proceeds from the colour of the blood, the colour of the bile, or from that

physical differences between themselves and the people they were meeting on the other continents. As Jordan put it, the Europeans’ ‘discovery’ that various groups of men looked very different from each other ‘demanded explanation’, Africans black skin exciting particular wonder, and became, he says, a ‘standing problem for natural philosophers’” (quoted in Boxill 2001: 3).

of some other secretion, the difference is fixed in nature, and it is real as if its seat and cause were better known to us. And is this difference of no importance?” (1972: 138–142). Eze argues that the “importance” that Jefferson implied “was to free black slaves and send them back to Africa” (2001: 27). Similarly, Lincoln the emancipationist shared parallel views as Jefferson, wherein during one of the visits by black leaders to the White House, he explained:

You and we are different races. We have between us a broader difference that exists between any other two races. Whether it is right or wrong I need not discuss, but this physical difference is a great disadvantage to us both, as I think your race suffers very greatly, many of them by living among us, while ours suffer from your presence (Banton 1987: 1).

According to Banton, this gives us an idea of the natural science of race and people’s idea of whites and blacks. To Naomi Zack, race in biological terms means “a biological taxonomy or set of physical categories that can be used consistently and informatively to describe, explain, and make predictions about groups of human beings and individual members of those groups” (2002: 1). The biological concept of race can be seen as European invention. According to Bernard Boxill, the Europeans “invented the idea of biological race after they had enslaved Africans as part of a strategy to rationalize crime that was already well under way” (2001: 3). This idea of biological race paved the way for the crime which the Europeans had in mind, which is that of slavery. The historian Betty Wood sets out the following debate:

Some see it [the enslavement of West African peoples] as a process emerging out of a racial ideology that even before the English began to colonize the New World, they had identified West Africans as potential candidates for enslavement. Others downplay the initial significance of ethnicity and claim that economic and demographic considerations largely explain the substitution of involuntary Africa workers for indentured European servants in the English plantation colonies... The racist theory that underpinned the slave laws that began to be drawn up during the second half of the seventeenth century was a post hoc phenomenon (1997: 7).

According to Bernard Boxill, the first position that Wood listed suggests that “Europeans had the idea of race before they enslaved Africans and that the idea helped to identify Africans as candidates for enslavement” (Boxill 2001: 3). The second position, “that the idea of biological races was invented as part of a rationalization of slavery, is implicit in Eric Williams’s equally famous book –*Capitalism and Slavery* (*ibid*: 4). These positions

clearly show that there are reasons behind various actions. As humans we try to explain some certain things not because we want others to say how good or bad they are, but for others to get a better understanding of that thing. Boxill better explains this when he says that “the motives for inventing the idea of race were similarly innocent, and its consequences similarly deadly. It was invented for morally neutral reasons, probably to explain human physical variety; but it paved and eased the way for European enslavement of Africans” (*ibid*: 5).

Boxill further argues that Aristotle’s ideology that some human beings are natural slaves is possibly the only “viable traditional grounding available to Europeans for rationalizing black slavery” (2001: 6). Thus, by inventing the idea of race, Europeans used this argument to persuade themselves that Africans are natural slaves. In my view, the above argument did not really justify their position, given that as I take an analytical look into this argument, I construe it as a misinterpretation of Aristotle’s idea.⁴ Aristotle’s comments about “barbarians” constitute his idea of “natural” slaves. The inquiry of whether the Asians can be seen as “natural” slaves remains a complicated idea because, Aristotle purported that they possess intelligence and skills in craft-making. Another reason emanating from “Aristotle’s remarks on moral education, suggested that natural or innate tendencies can be modified or replaced by social training, political institutions, and by individual rational control” (Ward and Lott 2002: xiii). These reasons and factors do not support the description of the idea of natural slaves in Aristotle’s *Politics* Book I. Thus, we cannot dispute the fact that the same can be said of Africans, because Africans are intelligent, and they also possess other qualities.

The enslavement of Africans by the Europeans was purely a contingent reason, given that Africans were as free as others before the invention of the idea of race. To Aristotle, not all those who are actually slaves or actually freemen are natural slaves or natural freemen” (Book 1, chap. V: 1255b). The Europeans applied a method of force during their enslavement of Africans. The application of force clearly shows that the slaves (Africans)

⁴ I believe that Aristotle’s view of ‘natural slaves’ came as close in explaining that race do not determine his idea of natural slaves.

in question were not suitable for their role as slaves. Even in the midst of white and black, “a man is thus by nature a slave if he is capable of becoming... just as some are by nature free, so others are by nature slaves, and for these reasons, the condition of slavery is both beneficial and just” (*ibid*: 1254b–1255a). In these trends of thoughts, Aristotle further postulate that “coercion is a sign of injustice, not because consent legitimates all roles, but because the need for force suggests an unnatural fit” (*ibid*).⁵ Therefore, the application of force was and is a clear indication that the slave in question was and is not naturally suitable or fit for that role. Drawing from Aristotle’s ideas, I maintain that the Europeans (Portugal, France and England) position of the biological idea of race to rationalize their enslavement of Africans did and does not constitute a reasonable point to justify their intention of slavery. Indelibly linked to this discourse on the biological idea of race and its consequences are the concepts colonialism, racism and oppression.

1.2.1. Colonialism, Racism and Oppression

1.2.1.1. Colonialism

Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze described colonialism as “the indescribable crisis disproportionately suffered and endured by the African peoples in their tragic encounter with the European world from the beginning of the fifteenth century through the end of the nineteenth into the twentieth” (1998: 213). Historically, much of Africa has been the scene of long series of invasions by European fortune seekers. Each of these fortune seekers “was attracted to the continent by self-interest: economic, political, military, and prestige” (Harris 1998: 203). This self-interest was aimed at the extraction and trading of natural resources and raw materials like gold and ivory, among others. Sooner than later, these commercial, individual and institutional interests “quickly expanded into the exportation of able-bodied Africans and their children as slaves to the Americas and other parts of the world” (Eze 1998: 213). According to Aimé Césaire, “colonialism of the past three hundred years, particularly of the black people of Africa, has had more sophisticated weapons – efficient methods of economic exploitation, pseudo-psychology, pseudo-anthropology,

⁵ I believe that Aristotle’s view of ‘natural slaves’ came as close in explaining that race do not determine his idea of natural slaves.

uprootment of large populations to areas of new white settlements, and cultural indoctrination” (1959: 10).

The colonial period is a period “marked by the horror and violence of the transatlantic slave trade, the imperial occupation of most parts of Africa and the forced administrations of its peoples, and the resilient and enduring ideologies and practices of European cultural superiority (ethnocentrism) and “racial” supremacy (racism)” (Eze 1998: 213). This period, can be understood as what Cornel West categorized as “the Age of Europe.” According to West, this is the period “[b]etween 1492 and 1945”. This period was marked by “European breakthrough in oceanic transportation, agricultural production, state consolidation, bureaucratization, industrialization, urbanization and *imperial dominion* [that] shaped the makings of the modern world” (1993: 5). Describing the European domination and the situation as it was during the colonial period Aimé Césaire relates that:

Between colonizer and colonized there is room only for forced labour, intimidation, pressure, the police, taxation, theft, rape, compulsory crops, contempt, mistrust, arrogance, self-complacency, swinishness, brainless elites, degraded masses. No human contact, but a relations of domination and submission which turn the colonizing man into a classroom monitor, an army sergeant, a prison guard, a slave driver, and the indigenous man into an instrument of production... colonization = “thing-ification” (1972: 21).

“Colonial and capitalist expansions are therefore a logical necessity for the realization of the obviously universal European idea, and by labeling the non-European territories and people as “backward” in “industry,” they become legitimate prey for colonial and colonialist activities” (Eze 1998: 216). The colonizers maintained the balance of power through instigating fear and violence. They often kept a constant watch and control over the colonized preventing them from any form of rebellion. For instance, the Apartheid regime in South Africa used several forms of segregation and cruelty to dominate and stifle any rebellious acts by black natives.

According to Césaire (1972: 47), it was habitual for the colonized to feel that they are nothing without their masters, the colonizers (They felt helpless and unsure of whether to initiate any radical change. In most instances, they even tended to copy the way of life of the colonizers hence abandoning their own native values and principles. Though African countries have gained independence, western values still remain the required mode of

living. Thus, Africans want to do things as their colonizers, tagging or seeing it as a proper and a better way of living. “From the transformations in the African economies and politics to religion and the educational institutions, the goal was to maximize European profit, secure the total domination and subjection of the colonial territory to the metropole and reproduce Europe and European values not only in material lives, but also in the cultural and spiritual lives and expressions of the African” (Eze 1998: 216). Nicholas B. Dirks says that, “now that decolonization and the twentieth-century transformations of the world order have rendered colonialism a historical category, linked to the present more by such terms as *neo* and *post* than by any formal continuity, there is both license and risk in our collective interrogation of the colonial past” (1992: 5).

By means of false generosity, the colonizers capitalized on the dependent nature of the colonized and manipulated them through offerings of charitable help, which kept them bondage as beggars and servants (Césaire 1972: 60). Also, the colonizers proved that colonization “dehumanizes even the most civilized man; that colonial activity, colonial enterprise, and colonial conquest which is based on contempt for the native and justified by the contempt, inevitably tends to change him who undertakes it; that the colonizer who in order to ease his conscience gets into the habit of seeing the other man as *an animal*, accustoms himself to treating him like an animal and tends objectively to transform *himself* into an animal” (Césaire 1972: 20).

1.2.1.2. Racism

The word ‘racism’ and ‘racist’ were used by individuals to describe the idea and actions of other people who espouse the doctrine of inequality. In light of this, Mogobe B. Ramose argues that “the struggle for reason – who is and who is not a rational animal – is the foundation of racism” (2003: 3). Hume and Kant are good examples of the above statement. Hume believed that “some races have high levels of mental capacities and that others do not” (2002: 66).

Racism mostly comes down to prejudice against one or more racial groups that displaysome certain kind of hostile behaviour towards the members of the other groups. In

other words, “racism exists when one ethnic group or historical collectivity dominates, excludes, or seeks to eliminate another on the basis of differences that it [the first group] believes are hereditary and unalterable” (Jorge Garcia 2004: 36). I think that this can be direct or indirect, it can be intentional or unintentional, and it can be implicit or explicit. Our actions can be racist, just like policies and societies can be racist.

Anthony Appiah used his impression of racialism to better explain the idea of racism. He argues that racism can be defined in terms of racialism. According to him, racialism is a “presupposition of other doctrines that have been called ‘racism’, and these other doctrines have in the last few centuries been the basis of a great deal of human suffering and the source of a great of moral error” (Appiah 2003: 208). Appiah further explains that racialism is the “belief that there are heritable characteristics possessed by members of our species that allow us to divide them into a small set of races, and in such a way that all the members of these races share certain traits and tendencies with each other that they do not share with members of any other race” (Appiah 1990: 3-17). As such, racialism can be seen as the belief in a “racial essence.” In addition, he distinguished between two kinds of racism - extrinsic racism and intrinsic racism. For extrinsic racism, “the racial essence entails certain morally relevant qualities; that is, the extrinsic racist believes that people in different racial categories exhibit different characteristics, and these justify different treatment” (Valls 2005: 6). This form of racism involves empirical claims, while intrinsic racism “is like someone who prefers her own family members simply because they are *her* family members” (Valls 2005: 6).

Peter Sedgwick further explains the idea of racism when he states that:

Racism draws a hierarchical distinction between races, opening a gulf between them and setting one racially designated group over and above another on a scale of worth, intelligence, or importance. A racist ideology, therefore, is constructed on the basis of hierarchical distinctions drawn between different groups... racism thus embodies the attitude of a rigid and naturalized conception concerning the nature of individuals and groups. Whether or not racism should therefore be defined solely in terms of ideologically constructed attitudes or additionally in terms of the norms and practices of a given society is a matter of some debates (1999: 325).

Racism has been frequently entangled with hostility and prejudice between different groups of people. Sometimes one's idea of racism has to do with the matter of physical characteristics that deals with one's bearing on the other's abilities or moral character. Racist attitudes are wildly backed by mistaken and inaccurate beliefs about others as a group. Their hostility and prejudice are harshly based on something that the other cannot change; for example, skin colour. This example goes to the heart of the other's identity.

1.2.1.3. Oppression

Oppression as defined by Paulo Freire is “any situation in which “A” objectively exploits “B” or hinders his and her pursuit of self-affirmation as a responsible person’ (1970: 55). It is the subjection of a person or a group of people to a cruel and inhumane domination. Drawing from this point, oppression, in the words of Sally Haslanger “might begin with the idea that x oppresses y just in case x is an agent with some power or authority and that y is suffering unjustly or wrongfully under x or as a result of x 's unjust exercise of power” (2004: 98–99). From time immemorial, oppression has subsisted in any place where human beings inhabit. More evident is the oppression in Africa during the colonial times (Césaire 1972 and Dirks 1992). Oppressors and people with oppressive minds coined several ideologies to justify this unjust and inhumane treatment of the oppressed. The oppressed are considered by the oppressors to be an uncivilized, primitive, savage, worthless and barbaric set of people who need to be civilized (Freire 1970: 56).

According to Freire, the oppressors justify their oppressive acts by claiming that their actions are meant in some ways to civilize the oppressed and raise them to the level of true human beings. For the oppressors, it is really an act of charity (false generosity) to oppress, teach and force their ideologies on the oppressed who are seen as under-developed humans (1970: 26–27). “In order to have the continued opportunity to express their “generosity,” the oppressors must perpetuate injustice as well. An unjust social order is the permanent fount of “generosity,” which is nourished by death, despair, and poverty. That is why the dispensers of false generosity become desperate at the slightest threat to its source” (*ibid*).

Oppression is a very cruel form of dehumanization for both the oppressors and the oppressed in the inclination of being fully human (Freire 1970: 44). Freire argues that the oppressed people are the only ones capable of liberating themselves and the oppressors from the dehumanizing structure of oppression (1979: 56). This is because the oppressors are often preoccupied with their success and gains from oppression. In effect, they are oblivious to and incapable of liberating themselves and the oppressed. It is sometimes possible that the oppressors come to realize their ill treatment of the oppressed and they give up and allow the people to live freely once more. Nevertheless, it is the exclusive task of the oppressed to truly overcome oppression and restore true humanity. In the process of bringing about liberation, the way forward for the oppressed people is to engage themselves in a critical reflection that will enable their liberating actions to be an objective and humanizing one. Their actions should not be a mere switching of sides to become oppressors of the former oppressors or their own people (Freire 1970: 62).

The next section of this chapter discusses the philosophical and social meaning of the concept of race. It looks at Outlaw's and Appiah's stipulative definitions of race, and the discussion of the concept of race as a social construction.

1.3. Race: The Philosophical and the Social Meaning

Among philosophers there is no universal definition of the concept of race. "Part of the problem is that since ordinary language does not provide precise definitions, any philosophical definition of these key concepts must be, to at least some extent, stipulative" (Valls 2005: 6). Still, one advantage of a stipulative definition is that it "captures some of the important features of how the word is ordinarily used" (*ibid*). The inquiry of which features to pick out in the stipulated definition, is open to debate. However, different philosophers, who agree on the need for greater conceptual clarity than ordinary language provides, disagree on how this is best achieved (*ibid*). According to Outlaw, "the term 'race' is a vehicle for notions deployed in the organization of these worlds in our encounters with persons who are significantly different from us particularly in terms of physical features (skin color and other anatomical features), but also, often combined with these when they are different with respect to language, behavior, ideas, and other 'cultural'

matters” (2001: 58). In the public arena today, there is surprisingly little consensus about the meaning of the concept of race. This is so because of the stipulative definition of the concept of race.

Appiah also makes an effort to distinguish between racism and racialism. According to Appiah, racialism is a “presupposition of other doctrines that have been called ‘racism’, and these other doctrines have been, in the last few centuries, the basis of a great deal of human suffering and the source of a great deal of moral error” (1992: 14). In other words, racialism can be seen as the belief in a “racial essence,” because things like skin colour, hair type, and facial features are part of the essential heritable characteristics of the “races of human beings”. “We could divide human beings into a small number of groups called ‘races’, in such a way that the members of these groups shared certain fundamental, heritable, physical, moral, intellectual, and cultural characteristics with one another that they did not share with members of any other race” (Appiah 1996: 192). In my view, Appiah’s attempt to characterize racism and racialism seems to achieve clarity on the concept of race. To make Appiah’s characterization more precise, Ron Mallon (2004: 668) underscore that:

we need to distinguish between heritable difference that are mediated by the environment, and those that result more directly from a genotype. Heritability measures the ration of variance in a characteristic in an environment that is due to genes to the total variance in the environment. If a community systematically tattoos the hand of every person with a cleft in their chin, then the heritability of the tattoos would be high. Nonetheless, the presence of the tattoo on the hands is the result of a social policy.

For some, race is a socially constructed idea produced by human interaction within a society. This is to say that it is contingent on the collective acceptance of the concept within the society. “We construct the social world at least out of other social constructions of the world, and certainly by re/constructing material objects of nature” (Eze 2008: 212). This in other words means that our socially constructed idea of race is produced out of other constructions of the world. This construction is certainly based on the construction and reconstruction of some material objects and things of nature. The existence of humans and other things rightly reveal that we did not construct or make the world *ex nihilo* (Eze 2008:

121). So, the concept of race is created from the idea of something, like matter, nature or the idea of human being. Furthermore, this position “does not commit us to explain what ‘matter’ or ‘nature’ consists of in every state, not how either is permanently in itself” (*ibid*). Through the discovery of newer truths, the society reconstructs or constructs what it believes to be objective idea of a particular thing or concept. Things like volcanic eruption and tornado are examples of things the society can reconstruct and construct. They are forces we have no choice but to reckon with (*ibid*). “To say that these not-us-es which we have decided to call brute facts of nature can be ‘constructed’ by humans might be to say something meaningful, but meaningful only in a special way. It is meaningful only in a very technical, limited sense” (*ibid*).

From the above we might say that “race” as we know it to be today is socially constructed or invented. It is socially constructed based on the way people engage with the concept and the discovery of Africa, America or Asia, among others. It is noteworthy that to speak of this is not to say that any of the above did not exist before the individuals behind the concept. Many historians, philosophers and social scientists believe that race is socially constructed, meaning that the biological concept of race has been guarded by the social framework in which racial research has taken place (Yudell 2009: 1). Philosophers generally accept that race is a piece of social construction because human beings’ concept of race does not arise in a vacuum. Therefore it rightly suggests that our social environments play an important role in explaining the content of our concepts of race. Likewise, it “correctly emphasizes the diversity of human beings’ concepts of race across cultures” (Machery and Faucher 2005: 1208). People’s ideas on the concept of race are based on their social environment. Some social constructionists believe that this concept can be culturally transmitted. This is to say that one’s culture can influence one’s idea of race, and the idea can be handed down to generations to come. The above is in line “with social constructionists’ reliance on traditional theories of social learning, that is, with the idea that the concept of race is acquired from one’s social environment” (Machery and Faucher 2005: 1208). Hence, this explains why people within a culture sometimes have the same concept of race. “Social constructionists propose that the concept of race – that is, the belief that a classification based on skin color and other skin-deep properties like

body shape or hair style maps onto meaningful, important biological kinds – is a pseudo-biological concept that has been used to justify and rationalize the unequal treatment of groups of people by others” (Machery and Faucher 2005: 1208).

I think that the concept has been in existence before the inventors and European explorers, because to speak of race is to speak about its existence. “This manner of speaking is merely, as Rorty would have it, a way of paying compliments to – or for others, and in some cases, expressing a more ambiguous evaluation of the thing discovered, the discoverer, or both” (Eze 2008: 122). I think that the existence of race can be compared to Wittgenstein’s idea of language. Wittgenstein had a major influence on philosophical thoughts in topics like language and logic. In his philosophical investigations, Wittgenstein showed the “application of modern logic to metaphysics, via language, provided new insights into the relations between world, thought and language and into the nature of philosophy” (Biletzki and Matar, 2011: 1). Language according to Wittgenstein is the word that speaks to us. For example “someone coming into a strange country will sometimes learn the language of the inhabitants from ostensive definitions⁶ that they give him, and will often guess the meaning of these definitions which sometimes maybe right or wrong” (Wittgenstein 1972: 32). The word only speaks to him what he guesses, and what he guesses is what the word speaks to him, meaning he cannot go beyond what the word has in store for him. Same can be said about the concept of race, given that as humans we come into the world with the idea of nothing, waiting in hope for the world to give us what it has. The idea of race comes into our minds based on the way the words speak to us, and in connection with something around us. Essentially, one can round these up to entail that we did not force the word to speak to us in other for us to know what we know today. We only know what we know today based on what the world offered us. The word only speaks when it thinks that it is time for humans to know about that particular thing or concept. Therefore the inference from this is that the concept of race has been in existence before us.

⁶ Ostensive definition is a definition that involves the exhibition and characterization of things to be defined. It is also a definition that points out the instances to be covered.

Since the idea of race has been in existence before the inventors, there is no need to criticize the inventors. Instead, we need to compliment the genius of the inventors and explorers as a way to acknowledge their efforts in discovering this concept which we were ignorant of its existence. There is no doubt that the discovery of race has led to various risks (e.g., economic and political exploitation, racism etc.). This notwithstanding, we cannot doubt its epistemic value and contribution to our well-being and survival. Also, it is because of the above risks, problems and damages that some philosophers were able to venture in the debate of conserving or eliminating⁷ the concept of race. The question of how to go beyond⁸ these risks, problems, and damage should however be our main focus. Just like the concept or idea of race was discovered by someone, so too the idea or way in which we can go beyond the concept of race needs to be discovered. More so, just because we have not taken time to think about the concept does not mean that it is not in existence. Will anything in the world today be true if it had not existed? We cannot speak to affirmative here and “Heidegger in his inimitable style also opined that Newton’s law could not be true if Newton had existed” (Eze 2008: 122). Therefore, the idea of race could not be true if there is nothing as race. This means that the existence of this concept depends on the concept itself for its validity.

Africans have been blaming the Europeans for the way they handle and interpret the concept. However, I think that there is a need to reconsider or consider the possibility that based on the existing nature of the concept of race, the Europeans actually explained and made use of the concept properly. Reversing the positions to envision that Africans were the inventors and discoverers, would their actions be different from that of the Europeans or would they have acted differently? I submit that the answer to this question is a *no*, because if they were the discoverers or inventors (irrespective of the mode of discovery – accidental or deliberate), Africans would do just the same thing the Europeans did. Therefore, “whether rightly or wrongly greeted by laurels or threatened with fatwa in drawing the attention of a people to new realities—that is, “inventing,” “discovering,” or “constructing” perceptions of realities in question – the inventor or discoverer presents a

⁷ I will consider this the idea of the conservationist and eliminativist in some detail in chapter Four.

⁸ I will consider this in some detail in chapter Three.

world of meaning to a people” (Eze 2008: 122). Referring to the word “meaning,” Wittgenstein explains that, “for a *large* class of cases—though not for all—in which we employ the word ‘meaning’ it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language” (1972: 43). He further articulated that “the *meaning* of a name is sometimes explained by pointing to its *bearer*” (Wittgenstein 1972: 43). What we make of the world now remains the conceivable thing it would have been, regardless of who the inventors were or would be. Thus, the society constructs or reconstructs what it believes to be objective reality out there through the discovery of newer truths. It clearly shows that the way in which the Europeans interpreted the concept might actually be its nature, and we cannot go against the laws of nature.

1.4. The need for a Rethink: Race, African Philosophy and Identity

The philosophical writings of some modern philosophers like Hume, Kant and Hegel, arouse psychological defensiveness by most modern African intellectuals when they come across intellectual racial discrimination and anti-African prejudices in the works of some Europeans thinkers. Appiah, for example, writes: “Few contemporary readers are likely to be undisturbed the moments when they discover Africa is banished from Hegel’s supposedly universal history; when Hume declares in the essay on ‘National Characters’ that blacks are incapable of eminence in action or speculation” (1997: 400); and Kant’s classification or hierarchical chart on the different “races”. Appiah’s statement on the idea of race and other colonial and neo-colonial exploitation and degradation of African humanity reawakens the existence of African philosophy. I articulate the word “reawakens” because African philosophy has always been in existence even before colonization. It was as a result of the Europeans misinterpretation of African cultures, ideas and ways of life that Africans reinforced their ideas to ensure the Europeans can better understand their philosophy. This was done after many African scholars assimilated European culture and life style through education. The Europeans were ignorant of the existence of African philosophy due to the language problems and barriers. By educating the Africans to better understand their language, the Europeans unconsciously paved the way for them to better understand African philosophy. However, many are still ignorant of this fact because the forethought of educating blacks was merely for the purpose of easy

communication and exploitation. Unknown to many, European education sequentially became a means for Africans to educate the Europeans about their philosophy (African Philosophy). Eze confirmed this when he voices that “we know that the earliest Africans in America and Europe were largely and forcefully brought there through slavery, and the succeeding generation who came after the abolition of slave trade came largely to learn the ways of the West in preparation for the revolutions that would crystallize in constitutional de-colonization (Kwame Nkrumah, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Senghor etc.)” (1998: 219). Thus African philosophy is still an ongoing task because of the denigration of Africans’ humanity.

According to Chinua Achebe, all these racial tags, exploitation, and degradation, are “unfortunately for the black man, a tag of disability.”⁹ To quote Appiah (1992: 176):

“Race” disables us because it proposes as a basis for common action the illusion that black (and white and yellow) people are fundamentally allied by nature and, thus, without effort; it leaves us unprepared, therefore, to handle the “intra-racial” conflicts that arise from the very different situations of black (and white and yellow) people in different parts of the economy and of the world.

From the above it is quite clear that the idea of race is a real issue that affects Africans in various ways. Amongst the ways are “social conjectures about given economic relations such as “exploitation of the masses” to political repression or to more complex events such as apartheid and other forms of discrimination” (Masolo: 1994: 249), and the degradation of Africans and African philosophy. We cannot doubt the fact that it is because of the issue of race that “African Philosophy labours under this yet-to-end exploitation and denigration of African humanity. Apparently, it challenges the long-standing exclusion as the negative “other” of reason and of the western world in the major traditions of modern Western philosophy” (Eze 1998: 219).

Léopold Sédar Senghor’s theoretical work illustrates how race plays itself out in modern and African discourse. Senghor stipulates that the “Black man’s emotivity is due neither to inherently superior sensory faculties nor to inherently inferior rational faculties, but to a particular attitude toward the external world and its apparent complexity. Essentially

⁹ Achebe, Interview.

positive and dynamic, this attitude is a direct result of the notion of life force and its intensification and the tendency to relate to the external world as to a network of interacting forces” (Senghor quoted in Wolfers 1979: 75). The above explains his idea about the meaning of reason and humanity. Following Eze’s point, “Senghor may have been disingenuous but he was not at all innocent of modern racial battles over the meaning of reason and humanity, especially when he notoriously defended a thesis that *on the surface*, is unsurpassably droll: “Emotion is Negro, and reason Greek”” (Eze 2001: 41). According to Eze, “it is as if Senghor said, “Well, you keep your Reason; we have our Emotion. Besides, our Emotion is superior to your Reason” (*ibid*). The above reaction from Senghor is simply an example that better describes and informs us how the concept of race has affected some Africans. It explicitly shows Africans’ awareness of racial consciousness and their intellectual urge to defend it without the fore-knowledge of them being racist at the same time. Trying to philosophically justify a person’s capability of reasoning and responsibility one falls into this idea of racialization. “Racialization has produced arbitrary boundaries and exacerbated tension in the diaspora alliance with other peoples of colour; qua victims of racism – people of south Asian descent in England, Hispanics in the United States, “Arabs” in France, and Turks in Germany–have proven essential” (Appiah 1992: 176).

It was the issue of race that led to the question of the existence of African philosophy. This contentious and perennial query saturated the discourse of African philosophy for so many years because, “the imperative of whiteness as a normative idea, which even today seems to operate to consign diverse Afros in diverse nations to a “race: of inferiors” (Eze 2001: xv). This idea has affected Africans to the extent that they have to distinctively show what should be considered as African philosophy. In addition to this, Appiah explains the concept of identity when he asserts that “every human identity is constructed historical; everyone has its share of false presuppositions, of the errors and inaccuracies that courtesy calls “myth”, religion “heresy”, and science “magic” (1992: 174). As such, various historical invention, cultural affinities, and biological inventions come with its own identity.

From Eze's point of view, to designate a field of philosophy as "African" is consistent with the custom of naming philosophical traditions and practices according to their cultural, ethic, national, merely geographical origins" (Eze: 1997:3). Following from this, I believe that to engage in philosophy is principally a matter of employing one's mental and rational capacities to address, articulate and resolve the ultimate question in life about existence, God, human nature and so on. This view is no different from what the Europeans or Modern Western philosophers have done. All human beings as rational animals are endowed with these capacities and all societies are confronted by these ultimate questions. Since we apply reason in all that we do, reasoning does not belong to anyone, it is part of nature. Therefore handed-down beliefs are bound to exist, whether reserved in writing or orally-transmitted, which are the fruit of individuals' attempts to employ their inventions of some concepts and the postulation of ultimate questions in life.

The inventions of some concepts and the postulation of ultimate causes are a reflection of this search, some of them representing immaterial or quasi-material realities (the Soul, God, and the like). However, conceptual transformations that have been happening through the centuries, in both Africa and Europe, attest to the fact that our articulation of reality is a highly contested terrain. Therefore, I consider as "Philosophy" all discourses or texts that represent an attempt by individuals to employ their rational capacities to address, articulate and resolve the ultimate question of life. An unmistakable feature of the African continent is its cultural and ideological plurality. We cannot subscribe to any essentialist notion of African thought, except that as members of human race living on the African continent, we can all account for an innate capacity to employ our mental and rational capacities. I believe that there are some ultimate questions which have been accorded greater emphasis in African and those that need more emphasis, depending on the particular era of African history. The concept of race constitutes one of the questions. The arrival of the colonizers in Africa marked the interchange of modernity and tradition. Out of this contentious union came some ultimate questions, one of which is the underlying concern of the concept of race and African identities. It is to these regards that Chinua Achebe said:

It is, of course true that the African identity is still in the making. There isn't a final identity that is African. But, at the same time, there *is* an identity coming into existence. And it has a certain context and a certain meaning. Because if somebody meets me, say, in a shop in Cambridge, and he says "Are you from Africa?" This means that African means something to some people. Each of these tags a meaning, and a penalty and a responsibility (quoted in Appiah 1992: 173).¹⁰

According to Appiah, "meaning is not always one we can be happy with, and identity is one we must continue to reshape. So in thinking about how we are to reshape identity, it becomes important to remember that the African identity is for its bearers, only one among many" (1992: 177). Masolo also gives a better explanation of African identity using the word "return" in Aimé Césaire's book. According to Masolo, the word "return" which appears in the title of Aimé Césaire Poem – *Return to My Native Land* – is a term "which symbolizes many aspects of the struggle of the people of African origin to control their own identity... a symbolic call to all black peoples to rally together around the idea of common origin and in a struggle to defend that unifying commonality... – a uniting idea of common origin for all black peoples" (1994: 2). This commonality became their identity tag and a language that expresses Africans unification.

There might be some who may want to object with the following question: how can superstitious beliefs, some of which answer to ultimate questions and still abound in Africa today, be a product of African philosophical speculation? Also, it could be argued that if the object of African philosophical speculation should be limited to "ultimate questions which are expressive of the African experience", the various African philosophical schools, especially professional philosophy would have to refrain from exploring new horizons.

Primarily, while superstitious beliefs cannot be considered the fruit of philosophical speculation, by contemporary standards, they do represent an era when the rational capacities of a people, determined by their traditional cultural context and the resources available to them, had more limited access to speculative and experimental knowledge. However, these beliefs could be coherently understood within their immediate context. Kwasi Wiredu further explains this when he says "African philosophers cannot... take the

¹⁰ Achebe, Interview.

sort of cultural pride in the philosophical achievement of Aristotle or Hume or Kant or Frege or Husserl, of which the Western student of philosophy may permit himself... thus any partiality that African philosophers may develop for these thinkers must rest mostly on considerations of truth-value” (1984: 159). Additionally, when we endeavour to articulate the ultimate questions which are expressive of this contemporary era in African experience, it is important that one has insight into this experience. Among many things, this experience is characterised by the “differences played by the colonial experience in shaping the continent’s diversities. But then, even identical colonial policies identically implemented working on the very different cultural materials would surely have produced widely varying results” (Appiah 1992: 174). It can also be characterised as a movement towards modern and contemporary thoughts. Hence African philosophers are only limited by their readiness to embrace the aforementioned and other resources to take the field of African philosophy to new horizons.

Concurring with Eze’s views, I will like to say that “race” “continues to be valued as a means of recognition or appointment of worth. The “black” social identity raises questions not only about “the future of the race” but also about the future of race itself – anyone’s race. Perhaps only the future can address these questions, however, I see no harm in reading the present for signs of this future” (Eze 2001: xv).

1.5. Conclusion

This chapter outlined a basic understanding of the concept of race from a biological perspective while also looking at how the concept of race has affected Africans’ identity and African philosophy. The chapter drew attention to the fact that the concept of race can be linked or identified as one a struggle history. Race, as part of historical events was born out of colonial misrepresentation of Africa as culturally naïve, rationally incompetent and intellectually docile. Using Aristotle’s idea of slavery, I expanded on this concept of race, arguing that that the Europeans invention of race as a tool to rationalize their enslavement of Africans remains an unfair act that cannot be justified. Furthermore, the concepts of colonialism, racism and oppression with regards to race were also elaborated in this chapter. I provided the philosophical meaning of race and the social constructive meaning

of the concept of race, and argued that even if Africans were to be the colonizers they would have made the same mistake as the Europeans did. In what followed, I briefly discussed race, African philosophy and identity, indicating how the concept of race has affected African identity. I also drew attention to the fact that African philosophical projects seek to resolve the race concept which is expressive of the African experience. To sum up, I also asserted that though the idea of race is a real issue that affects Africans in various ways, the race concept continues to be valued as a means of recognition or appointment of worth.

Chapter Two

2. Intellectual Lineage and the Indirect, Direct and Unconscious Interest in the Concept of Race

2.1. Introduction

Having expanded on the concept of race in the previous chapter, this chapter now focuses on how some modern philosophers provided theoretical grounds for the formation of race as a modern idea. My choice of philosophical figures includes Descartes, Hume, Kant, Sartre, and Tempels. For me, these philosophers represent an intellectual lineage that indirectly, directly, unconsciously took up interests in the concept of knowledge and the idea of race. My aim in this chapter is to engage some of the ideas of these philosophers by firstly taking us back to Descartes' "Cogito," which seems to be the foundation upon which some idea of race or racism rest. In discussing the Descartes' "Cogito," I go on to maintain that that Descartes in actuality did not engage in discussions about race or racism. However, his Jesuit teacher did engage the discussions on race and slavery. Descartes decision not to discuss these concepts could be attributed to his intellectual journey of knowing who he was, which shaped his philosophical perspectives. Secondly, I discuss Hume's empirical theory of knowledge, his concept of human mind, and his idea on race. Departing from Hume's views, I contest that he was wrong about the idea of European civilization, his idea of inferiority and superiority, and intellectual level of humans. Thirdly, I discuss Kant's notion of human knowledge and his idea of race, where I also contest his view of the Negro slave from Guinea that drowned himself when being forced into slavery. In this case, I argue that Negro or rather anyone in his situation must have a reason for his/her action, and this in turn is evidence of reason and self-awareness; which can be found in all humans. From the above give a general critique of Hume's and Kant's perspectives on the idea of reasoning or intellectual capacity. Fourthly, I explain Placide Tempels' idea of force, and allege that he misinterpreted the idea of force, which actually led to his unconscious idea of race. My reason for including Tempels is to show his misinterpretation of force, his unconscious idea of race, and to show that he is like a

mediator between Descartes, Hume, Kant, Sartre, and Africans or African philosophers and the discourse of African philosophy.

In everyday conversation as human, we show an inner desire for knowledge and truth. We ask questions and request proofs in order not be stuck in what we do not understand. This inner desire could be traced back to our whole being as human, just as Aristotle said, ‘human beings by nature desire to know’.¹¹ Pertinent to the act of knowing, knowing beings know reality in respect to the nature of their being. Thus, human beings as embodied spirits come to know things using the bodily senses which are directly exposed to the physical world. Modern philosophy was thought to deal with the most universal of issues, from reason to humankind, using the most pure of methodologies. However parts of Hume’s and Kant’s philosophy for which one hold them responsible are statements directly about race or “varieties of men”, such as Hume’s infamous footnote, which will be discussed in details in the chapter. Against this footnote, James Beattie criticizes Hume, saying that thousands of years before now, the whites were as much savages as the blacks. Beattie further argues that Hume’s expectation on black slaves in Europe to display ingenious acts was an idea that was hard to defend. They had little or no exposure to any form of formal education, yet they were expected to have brilliance in science and other inventive fields. If given same opportunities as their white Europeans, the slaves would surely have expressed enormous ingenuity as has been seen of Africans who were/are opportune to be educated in both European and African ways. One’s colour cannot be a determinant to the person’s intellectual level. While Hume was dismissive to Beattie’s criticisms, in a letter to William Straham, later published in the London Chronicle of June 12-14, 1777, he however reacted by calling Beattie “a bigoted silly fellow.” This exchange showed that Hume was not unaware of the controversial nature of his racial views, or why some of his contemporaries considered them troubling (Eze 2001: 52).

My focus in this chapter is based on three points: (1) Descartes introduced the idea of self, the “thinking thing,” as a way of defining the human person. Descartes never knew that he was bringing to the fore the idea of reason, which will be used as a direct criticism against

¹¹ Aristotle’s opening sentence in his *Metaphysics*

the Negroes. His idea can be seen as an idea that today plays an indirect role in the proper discourse of the concept of race. (2) Hume is really and deeply into the idea of race. It is clear in his footnote and in some of his writings. It is my thinking that his footnote explicitly described his idea and views about race. His direct interest in the concept of race can be seen in his discussions and response to Beattie. His theory of mind, informed him of the nature of race, and it was a way of expressing his prejudices against black people. (3) Kant's position is informed by Hume's essay – *On National Characters*. Like Hume, Kant was deeply into the idea of race as evident in his *Anthropology and Geography*. Matolino explained better Kant's direct involvement in the concept of race when he said that, Hume's and Kant's actions were a result of their ill-informed prejudices to form their racial outlook. He further argued that "this is unlike an ordinary uneducated racist who will combine prejudice with fear and hatred to promote or defend his attitude. Such racism is not well thought-out, given that it is not based on any reflection. However, it is based on pure hatred or inherited attitudes from the racist environment" (2011: 336). (4) Tempels' idea of the Baluba people can be seen as an indirect role in the concept of race.¹² I think his intention was not bad, but his misinterpretation of the culture and philosophy Bantu people was. His intention was to help his fellow Belgian missionaries and colonial administrators in their quest for the civilisation of Africa.

2.2. Descartes' Cogito: A Logical Step of Human Knowledge of the Self

As a young boy, Descartes studied at the famous Jesuit college of La Fleche and at the University of Poitiers Law Faculty. While in La Flèche, Descartes studied mathematics, logic, philosophy (like the works of scholastic philosophers) in which he distinguished himself by founding coordinate geometry. During these years, he showed special ability in mathematics, and was most impressed with the certainty and precision of mathematics, as compared with philosophy which produced chaos and doubts. But his silence on the views and practices of slavery posed a serious question. This was strange because "his Jesuit

¹² Tempels, P. 1959. *Bantu Philosophy*. Paris: Presence Africaine.

teachers' teachers, from Aristotle through Aquinas to the Coimbra commentators, to Luis de Molina (1535–1600) and Francisco Suarez (1548–1617), were never silent on slavery. They followed tradition in taking it as a fact in the human condition" (Reiss 2005: 18). The debate on slavery was also vital in "Francisco de Vitoria's (1483–1546) and Domingo de Soto's (1494–1561) work at Salamanca on law in general and Spain's legal duties to the indigenous peoples of the Americas in particular. It was crucial in the fierce debates between Juan Guan Ginés de Sepulveda (1490–1573) and Bartolomé de Las Casas (1484–1566)" (Reiss 2005: 18–19). Descartes' Jesuit teachers were groomed on all of these. So while Descartes' silence on these issues remains questionable, his indirect interest could only be recognized in his *Meditations*.

During Descartes' time, new and different ways of philosophizing emerged among thinkers. These revivals were due to the discovery of some ancient texts, like the renowned Greek sceptic Sextus Empiricus' summary of *Pyrrho* (c 360-c. 270).¹³ This work notably influenced the famous French sceptic Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592) (Copleston 1994). Montaigne largely contributed to the rebirth of scepticism during the XVIth century (Foglia 2013: 4). The main core of Montaigne's argument was and remains that "the relativity and unreliable character of sense-experience, the mind's dependence on sense-experience and its consequent incapacity for attaining absolute truth, and our inability to solve the problems which arise out of the conflicting claims of the senses and reason" (Copleston 1994: 19). He claimed that "man (sic) lacks the power to construct any certain metaphysical system, and the fact that the metaphysicians have arrived at different and incompatible conclusion bears witness to this" (Copleston 1960: 31). His "scepticism was intended to lead man (sic) to care for what really is – the individual's concrete life in all the reality of its givenness – of its situation" (Gilson & Langan 1963: 16). Foglia (2013: 4) makes known that around 1576, Montaigne had his own personal medal coined, he had it engraved with his age, with "*Epecho*", "I abstain" in Greek, and another Sceptic motto in French: '*Que sais-je?*': what do I know? (). This simply confirms his sceptical position towards the

¹³ Pyrrho was an ancient Greek philosopher, who is said to have accompanied Alexander on his march to India. And according to Diogenes Laertius, Pyrrho expressed his philosophical views only by word of mouth, but his views are known through those of his pupil (Copleston 1961:413).

realization of certain knowledge. According to Montaigne, doubting was the highest mark of wisdom, because he was conversant with the method of doubts. Like Montaigne, Descartes began philosophizing on life by using doubt as a device of judgment. Just like Socrates tried to free philosophy from the scepticism of the sophist, so too did Descartes. According to Gilson (1955: 26), Descartes was "a direct answer to the challenge of Montaigne's skepticism", as he employed scepticism as a means of overcoming scepticism. Descartes knew many of Montaigne's works and those of his Jesuit teachers. Thus, Montaigne's sceptical essays became a firm foothold to Descartes's quest for certainty.

Descartes, a 17th century French rationalist philosopher, and father of modern philosophy, investigated the nature of "man." He postulated the theory of human knowing. He was concerned chiefly with the problem of intellectual certainty. Descartes began the *Meditations* with this words: "Opportunely on this day, I have thus rid the mind of all cares, I have obtained for my mind secure leisure, I am quite alone, I shall work seriously and freely at a general overthrow of my opinions" (AT 7:17–18). These meditations appeared to have directed Descartes general project of wanting to cast doubt on opinions on the way to something firm and lasting (a foundation for knowledge).

According to Stumpf (1975: 250), Descartes searched for his one truth and found it in the very act of doubting. The *Cogito* is the argument which Descartes uses to ascertain certainty on the human person. He started off by telling us to doubt everything we know in order to arrive at a certain or indubitable truth. "Though I can doubt that my body exists, or that I am awake, or that I am being deceived¹⁴, in short that all is illusion or false, one thing remains about which I can have no doubt at all, that *I think*" (*ibid*). From this, we should be able to deduce something that is certain. This would be the existence of a self as a conscious or a thinking being. Properly structured, the argument may take this shape: "to doubt is to think, and it must necessarily be that I who [think am] something; and remarking this truth, *I think*" (*ibid*). Hence Descartes assertion "*cogito ergo sum*, that is, I think therefore I am" (1979: 17). Put in this form, Descartes's argument is logically valid

¹⁴ It is important to underscore that St. Augustine used a similar concept like the one of Descartes, though in a different way; St Augustine asserts that if he is deceived then he exists: '*si fallor, ergo sum*.'

because, if thinking is a prerequisite for existing, being able to think necessarily qualifies me to be an existing thing.

For Descartes, the *cogito ergo sum* is the first item of knowledge, and the first absolute foundation of truth in his enquiry. The reason for this is because the truth in itself is indubitable and it is a clear and distinct truth. The truth in *cogito ergo sum* is so solid and sure that the most excessive suppositions of the sceptics could not conquer it, “I concluded that I might without scruple accept it as the first principle of the philosophy of which I was in search” (D.M. 4; AT VI 32). *Ipsa facto*, Descartes said that “this conclusion, *I think, therefore I am*, is the first and most certain of all which occur to one who philosophizes in an orderly way” (PP I, 7; AT VIII 7). Accordingly, Descartes employed this basic truth for reversing his doubting of the self, things, true ideas, and God (Stumpf 1975: 251).

Having found the indubitable truth that he is a thinking thing, Descartes then tried to define the essence of this thinking thing. Descartes said that to say *Cogito ergo sum* is to affirm his existence. Crossing from epistemology to ontology, Descartes asks: What is this ‘I’ who thinks and therefore exists? He reasons that I cannot be the body since its existence betokens doubt. I am essentially a thinking thing, says Descartes, and nothing more. I am a thing that “doubts, understands, affirms, denies, wills, refuses, and which also imagines and feels” (M. 2; AT VII 28). It is to these regards that Descartes said:

Examining with attention what I was, I saw that I could pretend that I had no body and that there was nor any place where I was, but that I could not pretend, on that account, that I did not exist; and that, on the contrary, from the very fact that I thought about doubting the truth of other things, it followed very evidently and very certainly that I existed. On the other hand, had I simply stopped thinking, even no reason to believe that I existed. From this I knew that *I was a substance the whole essence or nature of which was merely to think*.¹⁵

From the above, it is clear that the essence of the human is the capacity to think. And that is the truth of the *cogito*. There is no doubt that Descartes’s views on other things (including dualism, his proof of God’s existence, and innate ideas) have been argued against, and have been crushed by some thinkers. But “his essential definition of ‘man’ as a being whose

¹⁵ René Descartes, “Letter of Dedication,” *Meditations on First Philosophy* [1641], trans. Lawrence J. Lafleur, New York: Library of Liberal Arts, Macmillan, 1951, pp. 3 and 5; Eze’ emphasis.

reason for being is ‘merely to think’ has remained acceptable” (Eze 2001: 5). According to Paul Ricoeur (1970: 417), Descartes’ “I think, therefore I am” is “the reflective foundation of every proposition concerning man.” Blaise Pascal, a contemporary thinker, further acknowledged that one “can easily conceive of a man without hands, feet, head...I cannot conceive of man without thought” (1995: 59).

2.2.1. Nothing on Race

Descartes said nothing about race or slavery – directly, at least not in any modern sense. Many though have (like Joan Dayan) accused Descartes of philosophical liability for modern racist attitudes.¹⁶ Dayan was the one who founded the 1685 code noir that regulated French colonial slavery. Thus for him slavery was unthinkable without Descartes. “After the Discours de la method and Meditations, the Code was “the nasty belch that follows a meal of pure thought.” The thinkers of Descartes’ Meditations in 1640 set the stage for the 1685 edict of Louis XIV” (Reiss 2005: 18). These two texts basically show how the making of enlightened man led to the destruction of the unenlightened brute, and how the thinking mind’s dominated the servile body.

According to Reiss, “Descartes’ quest for his essence in the first Meditation’s thought experiment of self-dismemberment, enabled later arguments that those supposedly lacking thought—black ivory, “pieces of the Indies,” or African “ebony wood”—could be “bought, bartered, and sold... figured as heads of cattle, coins, parcels of land, pieces of furniture” (*ibid*). For these, being without thought aligns with Dayan’s idea that “no amount of amputation, torture, or disfiguring can matter” (Dayan 1995: 204) because, “objectifying racialized others resulted from claims of mind’s control of body and body’s lack of thought” (Reiss 2005: 18). His silence about these ideas is still questionable, but maybe he made due of what his mind demanded at that point in time. By this I mean that Descartes decided to venture into a new discourse, different from what was in place during his time.

¹⁶ According to Timothy Reiss, Descartes “virtual silence and seeming indifference have not stopped people from taxing him and some putative “Cartesianism” with spawning modern Western philosophical apologia for slavery and racism or, conversely, from praising him both for having treaded everything human except mind as purely accidental, making all facets of body, including sex and skin color, insignificant” (2005: 17).

2.3. Hume's Empirical Theory of Knowledge

Hume presents us with a theory of knowledge which is empirical. Empiricism is an epistemological movement according to which nothing around us can be known to be real unless its existence is revealed in or is inferable from information we gain directly in sense experience or introspection of our subjective state (Dancy 1992: 120). This is a philosophical movement that Hume strongly promoted. This theory starts from his distinction between perception and thought. He stated that when we see, hear, feel, something we are aware of something immediately present to the mind through the senses. We can as well, think, believe, and reason about things that are not present to our senses at the time, such as objects, past events, and the future (*ibid*). However, these thoughts are products of some objects that were present to the senses. Hence, the guiding principle of empiricism says that *nihil est in intellectu quod non prius fuerit in sensu* – there is nothing in the intellect which has not first been in sense. Hence, to discover the causes and effects of our perception, we ought to consult experience, and not reason. We realize this view about the discovery of causes and effects when we notice the constant link between particular objects with one another. We tend to overlook this because most ordinary causal judgments are so familiar to us. Hence, our judgment of them seems immediate due to the multiplicity of our experience of them. Reasoning concerns either *relations of ideas* or *matters of fact* (Hume 1888: 261).

Hume sought to use his empirical theory as a reformation for philosophy. This reform in philosophy has two related aspects: the elimination of metaphysics and the establishment of an empirical experimental science of human nature. Hume was greatly influenced by the success of experiment in natural science, hence wanted to apply the same method of inquiry to human beings. He shifted the focus away from the traditional metaphysical search for ‘ultimate original principles’ in order to concentrate on describing the human nature. “This nature is discoverable through experience and observation, and to which we can give reasoned cognitive content by tracing the ideas involved to the impressions that gave rise to them (Dancy 1992: 183). His choice Dancy further explains is because he claimed to have found that, “ultimate principles are not just false; they are incoherent, because they go beyond anything that can be experienced” (1992: 183).

Hume also called these ultimate principles ‘perceptions’. Perception is the first type of mental activity (psychological and epistemological). They are contained, basically in the mind, because the mind has them as its immediate objects of comprehension. Hume separated these perceptions into impressions and ideas, arguing that what differentiates the two terms consists in “the degrees of force and liveliness with which they strike upon the mind” (Solomon 1977: 112), and register into our thought or consciousness. According to Hume, “those perceptions, which entered with most force and violence, we may name *impressions*; this will include sensations, passions and emotions in their first appearance to the soul” (*ibid*: 112–113). On the other hand, He referred to *ideas* as the ‘faint images’ of *impressions* in thinking and reasoning as the mind recalls its *impressions*, which includes perceptions or thoughts provoked by conversations. To him, “the comparison to theatre must not mislead us, as only the successive perceptions constitute the mind” (1962: 253). In distinguishing between simple and complex perceptions, Hume divided them into *impressions* and *ideas*, based on the degree of impact they have on the mind. To him, perceiving the colour of something, say a green apple example remains a simple impression. While the thought of this very green apple would be regarded as a simple idea, the use of sight to view an object will produce a complex impression of that object in the mind. The recollection of such an impression would produce a complex idea. Impressions, as accentuated by Hume, have precedence over ideas because they are a result of the direct contact of the mind with the sensual experience of a thing, whereas ideas only come in later. “The true idea of the human mind,” Hume insisted, “is to consider it a system of different perceptions or different existence which are linked together by the relation of cause and effect, and mutually produce, destroy, influence, and modify each other” (1962: 252–259). While complex ideas stand the chance of alteration as the mind recollects them, complex impressions cannot be altered by the mind because they are quite visible and worthy of experiment. What we call the mind, according to Hume, “is nothing but a heap of collection of different perceptions, united together by certain relations” (1962: 207). Thus, “Knowledge, understood in this way, is indirectly what Hume regarded as the “key feature of human nature”—because knowledge is coeval with, and represents the unique aspects of the human subjectivity” (Eze 2001: 65).

2.3.1. Hume on the Human Mind

In a revolutionary step in the history of philosophy, Hume rejected the basic idea of the *self*. He worked towards the total refutation of the traditional philosophical concepts of the *self* as being constant and invariable. He asserted that we claim to be thoroughly conscious of this thing called the *self*, but looking into himself, he did not notice anything called *self*. Rather, he only collided with a series of perceptions such as cold or heat. To Hume therefore, perceptions were the only observable things in him, as there was no time that he was without a perception. These perceptions are what we mistakenly give the term *self*. According to Hume, we need real ideas to attach an invariable existence, thus his suggestion that real ideas only emerge from ‘one impression’, which ought to remain constant despite the change in time. Hume (1888: 251–252) however went further to explain that the human person is not ‘one impression’, but a reference of several impressions since no impression is stable and constant, giving the idea of *self* to the human person would be erroneous..

The notion of invariable and unstable perception led Hume to deny the existence of the individual’s *self-identity*. He upheld that because people do not have a stable perception of themselves as distinct entities, they “are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement” (Hume 1888: 252). In this sense, Hume emphasized that what is responsible for the mind’s linkage of perceptions as one causing the other is a secret tie between particular ideas. However, it is to these successive perceptions that we ascribe our *self-identity*. According to Hume, no single power of the soul remains unchangeably the same even for a moment. Hume debunked the traditional metaphysician’s claim of essential unity that the different related objects are the same in effect, by arguing that only an invention of new and unintelligible theories that connects the objects together can prevent their disruption of variation. Some of such claims included the metaphysicians’ view on “the continued existence of perceptions of our senses..., hence, running into the notion of a *soul*, *self* and *substance* to disguise the variation” (: 254). What then would be our outlook to this ascription? In view of this inquiry, Hume therefore resolved that it would

be our task to prove that all objects to which we ascribe identity consist of succession of related invariable perceptions and objects.

Hume's theory of human nature appears to be racial in nature because he puts forth a new idea of man in his theory of nature. His idea of "man" was new because it was different from those of his predecessors, especially Descartes. Hume aimed at bringing out new ideas in view of undertaking a broad scientific study of man, which he called "anatomical philosophy." Anatomical philosophy, "would combine Cartesianism and Newtonian theories, a synthesis Hume hoped would yield a completely general theory of human nature to explain why human beings act, think, perceive and feel in all the ways they do" (Hume 2001: 60, Stroud 1977: 4). Hume actually admitted that it was impossible to regard the total scepticism of the existence of human nature, and human knowledge on natural grounds. To Hume, the idea of total scepticism was superfluous because nature could not consent to it, thus his his Treatise that:

Nature, by an absolute and uncontrollable necessity has determin'd us to judge as well as to breath and feel; nor can we any more forbear viewing certain objects in a stronger and fuller light, upon account of their customary connexion with a present impression, than we can hinder ourselves from thinking as long as we are awake, or seeing the surrounding bodies, when we turn our eyes toward them broad sunshine (1978: 251).

Eze explains the above by saying, "the 'proof' offered here against scepticism on natural grounds is similar to Descartes's conclusion on logical grounds in "I think, therefore I am". This is because by the very act of doubting, one proves that one exists. Therefore one could not, according to Hume have a mind and body structured by nature in certain ways and deny that this structure of this mind and this body inescapably leads one to think, judge, breathe, feel, and so on, in specific ways" (2001: 61). In Hume's view, a philosopher must identify and anatomically define these natural processes and the structures of their organization.

Hume's theory of the mind was at the heart of his analysis of his theory of human nature. The mind according to Hume, constitutes what he called the "self." His idea of the mind did not depend on anything or the existence of anything. Based on his idea, the mind is not a thing, as he actually denied the existence of any substances, material or immaterial that

can be attributed to the mind. This is to show that he was not in support of Berkeley's notion of "spirit", and Locke's and Malebranche's ideas of material or immaterial substances. Hume explicitly rejected Descartes' definitions and ideas of the mind that "thought was the essence of the mind – not this thought or that thought, but thought in general" (1962: 298–299). This in Hume's perspective seemed to be "absolutely unintelligible, since everything that exists is particulate; and therefore it must be our several particular perceptions that compose the mind. I say *compose* the mind, not *belonging* to it. The mind is not a substance in which the perceptions inhere" (1962: 298–299). Hume went further to reject the idea or position that "we are every moment immediately conscious of what we call *self*; that we feel its existence and continuance in existence, and are certain beyond the evidence of a demonstration that both of it perfects identity and simplicity" (*ibid*). He continued in his *Treatise* by stating that these assertions "are contrary to that very experience which is pleaded for them, nor have we any idea of *self*, after the manner it is her explain'd"; he queries: "From what impression cou'd this idea [of the self] be deriv'd? This question 'tis impossible to answer without a manifest contradiction and absurdity" (1978: 251). Hume therefore proposed that "what we call a *mind* is nothing but a heap of collection of different perceptions united together by certain relations" (1978: 207).

The above posed a question of what these relations can possibly be. Hume suggested that we have common relation and philosophical relation. These two relations together make the relations in Hume's discussion. Thus, the idea of relations is the important feature of the human mind; the common relations is "attributed to processes of unreflective nature and the union of ideas, where the mind actively generates (self) reflection in the form of combination or comparison – in fact, by self-doubling as a wall of mirrors – of ideas" (Eze 2001: 64). Hume was of the idea that the common relation is based always on the ways or "sense in which we used the word, relation; and 'tis only in philosophy that we extend it to mean any particular subject of comparison" (1978: 14). For Hume, common relation occurs naturally, while philosophical relation is driven by the activities of understanding. There are many philosophical relations according to Hume, about seven of them. He estimated these as follows: resemblance, identity, space and time, quantity, quality, contrariety, and

cause and effect. These relations are the ones that offer themselves to the “determination of the mind” (1978: 14). And they are the ones that create the possible certainty and objectivity of knowledge, therefore the possibility of sciences and the arts” (Eze 2001: 66). The true idea of the human mind, Hume insisted, “is to consider it a system of different perceptions or different existences, which are link’d together by the relation of cause and effect and mutually produce, destroy, influence and modify each other” (1978: 252–259).

Furthermore, Hume linked intellectual capacity and achievement with skin complexion as a statistical examination. This is to say that the theory of human mind is at the heart of Hume’s analysis of human nature, because he believed that intellectual achievement is based on one’s skin colour. This was why Hume said that some races are inferior to others, and the Negro is an example of this racial inferiority.

2.3.2. Hume on Race

Since nature has essentially yielded or produced different kinds of human beings – by race, Hume thought that the same nature made some people to have high levels of mental capacities and others not. Hume used the Negro as an example of those that did not have mental capacity. The whites were/are capable of active use of their mental capacity or reason, but the blacks were/are incapable. “The double use of psychological and epistemological that Hume made of his theory of mind underlies his remarks about the “nature” of the races. He believed that the races – of which he said there are about four or five – are endowed naturally with different *kinds* of psychological and cognitive constitutions” (Eze 2001: 66). Hume actually wrote little that directly addresses the concept of race. However, his views on human racial difference occurred in his famous footnote within “Of National Characters”. Ironically, the footnote was not part of the original essay; it was added between 1753 and 1754 to a revised version. The original was written in 1748 (Eze 2001: 51). The writing of the footnote was first published in the 1754 edition of his essays – *Moral, Political and Literary*. In this footnote, Hume asserted:

I am apt to suspect the Negroes, and in general all the other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the whites. There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufactures amongst them, no arts, no sciences.

On the other hand, the most rude and barbarous of the whites, such as the ancients GERMANS, the present TARTARS, have still something eminent about them, in their valour, form of government, or some other particular. Such a uniform and constant difference could not happen, in so many countries and ages, if nature had not made an original distinction betwixt these breeds of men. Not to mention our colonies, there NEGROE slaves dispersed all over EUROPE, of whom none ever discovered any symptoms of ingenuity; tho' low people, without education, will start up amongst us, and distinguish themselves in every profession. In JAMAICA, indeed, they talk of one negroe as a man of parts and learning; but 'tis likely he is admired for very slender accomplishments, like a parrot, who speaks a few words plainly [This note was added in Edition K.] (1882: 252).

It is clear that Hume was of the idea that members of different races differ in respects that permit different treatments – respects like intelligence. That for Hume is a basis for treating people differently. “We should keep in mind therefore, that when Hume said that some races are inferior to others, and the evidence for this is that the inferior ones lack the science and the arts, he was saying in effect that members of the inferior races are ontologically (psychologically) and functionally (cognitively) deficient” (Eze 2001: 66). By ontological (psychological), it means that the inferior races are incapable of active uses of reason. By functional (cognitive), it means that the inferior races are susceptible to only the passive process of the mind. Hume further explained that:

All kinds of reasoning consist of nothing but *comparison*, and a discovery of those relations, either constant of inconstant, which two or more objects bear to each other. This comparison we may make, wither when both objects are present to the senses, or when neither of them is present, or when only one. When both the objects are present to the senses along with the relation, we call this perception rather than reasoning; nor is there in this case any exercise of the thought, or any action, properly speaking, but mere passive admission of the impressions thro' the organs of the sensation (1997: 30 – 33).

It is evident in this modern time that there are no “such differences in morally relevant characteristics—that Negroes do not necessarily lack intellectual capacities” (Appiah 1992: 14). Hume’s belief was a result of cognitive incapacity - an inability to change his mind even after the revised footnote in the face of evidence and various reply and responses. What Hume had in mind was not a theory but an ideology. As Appiah said, “it would be odd to call someone brought up in a remote corner of the world with false and demeaning views about the white people a *racist* if she gave up these beliefs quite easily in the face of evidence” (*ibid*).

2.4. Kant's Idea of Human Knowledge

Like Descartes, Kant hoped to contribute to the advancement of knowledge and philosophy. Kant's deontological version of liberalism dominated moral and political discourses, having prevailed over the earlier dominant consequentialist version of liberalism primarily connected with Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill (Gaus, Courtland, & Schmitz 2015: 1 – 2). Kant is the famous theorist of personhood, whose *Logic* reformulated Descartes' anthropological thesis. Although Kant took more seriously the consideration that “cultures may differ in their conception of human subjectivity so that “I think, therefore I am” is not the only interesting thing that could be said about human nature, in the *Logic* the question of determining the rational nature of man remained the major focus” (Eze 2001: 5). Kant classified philosophy into four categories: (1) what can I know? (2) What ought I to do? (3) What may I hope? (4) What is man? (Kant 1974, *ibid*: 5). “The first question belongs to metaphysics, the second to morality, the third to religion”, but all could be placed under the fourth, which is anthropology, because the first three questions are connected to the last (*ibid*: 5).

In *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, Kant expressed the view that “the aim of every step in the cultural progress which is man's education is to assign the knowledge and skill he has acquired to the world's use. But *the most important object in the world to which he can apply them is man*” (1974: 3). If *Anthropology* was, accordingly, “intended to explain the internal and external nature of the “earthly being endowed with reason”; it would be a “systematic treatise comprising our knowledge of man”¹⁷ (Kant 1974: 3, Eze 2001: 5). In his *Anthropology*, Kant went on to explain what he thought about the “I” that

¹⁷ However, Kant elaborates further in his *Critique of Pure Reason* in B138: “To know anything in space (for instance, a line), I must *draw* it, and thus synthetically bring into being a determinate combination of the given manifold, so that the unity of this act is at the same time the unity of consciousness (as in the concept of a line); and it is through this unity of consciousness that an object (a determinate space) is first known. The synthetic unity of consciousness is, therefore, an objective condition of all knowledge. It is not merely a condition that I myself require in knowing an object, but is a condition under which every intuition must stand in order to *become an object for me*.... Although this proposition makes synthetic unity a condition of all thought, it is, as already stated, itself analytic. For it says no more than that all *my* representations in any given intuition must be subject to that condition under which alone I can ascribe them to the identical self as *my* representations, and so can comprehend them as synthetically combined in one apperception through the general expression, ‘*I think*’” (1929).

Descartes was talking about. Kant saw the “I” as a transcendental unity of human consciousness. He further explained his point in his *Anthropology* when he said:

The fact that man can have the idea “I” raises him infinitely above all the other beings living on earth. By this he is a *person*; and by virtue of his unity of consciousness through all the changes he may undergo, he is one and the same person—that is, a being altogether different in rank and dignity from *things*, such as irrational animals, which we can dispose of as we please. This holds even if he cannot yet say “I”; for he still has it in mind. So any language must *think* “I” when it speaks in the first person, even if it has no special word to express it. For this power (the ability to think) is *understanding* (1974: 18–19).

This passage addresses Kant’s idea of the nature and function of the “I” with human setting. We can see from the above that the “anthropological definition of “Man’s Inner Self” is cognitivist; and the epistemological definition of the transcendental consciousness is also anthropological” (Eze 2001: 6). There is a striking similarity between the “privileges accorded by both thinkers to the faculty of *understanding*, which according to Eze is the advancement made by “both as the bearer of anthropological identity, as in the assertion: “I am human”” (*ibid*: 8). In the stream of modern thought and in both Descartes and Kant’s propositions, the position assigned to reason is the position at which “man” is on its own – “(1) constitutes itself and through this self-act (2) stabilizes otherwise dispersed and contradictory states of reality” (*ibid*: 8–9). Kant (1929: 472) briefly explained that:

Man is one of the appearances of the sensible world, and in so far one of the natural causes the causality of which must stand under empirical laws. ... Man, however, who knows all the rest of nature solely through the senses, knows himself also through *pure* apperception; and this indeed, in acts and inner determinations which he cannot regard as impressions of the senses. He is thus to himself, on the one hand, phenomenon, and on the other hand, in respect of certain faculties the action of which cannot be ascribed to the receptivity of sensibility, a purely intelligible object. We entitle these faculties understanding and reason.

Kant’s understanding of man is in his concept of nature, which is more established in his anthropology and geography. He believes that man is best understood in these two studies because humans are part and parcel of nature. “Within ‘man’, nature is manifested in two ways or in two aspects: externally (as body) and internal (as soul, spirit). To study ‘man’ in nature or as part of nature, is therefore to study the two aspects of nature contained, revealed, or manifested in the human entity. While the one human aspect of nature (or natural aspect of the human) is bodily, physical, and external, the other is psychological, moral and internal” (Eze 2003: 431). According to history it was Kant who introduced

anthropology as a branch of study to the German universities. As mentioned above, both Kant's physical geography and anthropology combined to study man's physical, bodily and internal aspects of man, and the psychological and moral aspects of man.

2.4.1. Kant on Race

According to Kant, "among the deviations, that is, among the hereditary dissimilarities that we find in animals that belong to a single line of descent are those called races. Races are deviations that are constantly preserved over many generations and come about as a consequence of migration (dislocation to other regions) or through interbreeding with other deviations of the same line of descent, which always produces half-breed offspring" (AA, II, p. 430, Bernasconi 2002: 146). The same can be said of Negroes and Whites, because in Kant's view, both are not different species of humans, but they are different races. Kant classified humans into different classes: "white" (European), "yellow" (Asians), "black" (Africans), and "red" (American Indians). This classification is based on his geographical and psychological classifications. Within Kant's elaboration, "the races that inhabit America, Africa, Asia, and the Hindustan are incapable of moral maturity because they lack talent – a gift of nature" (*ibid*: 98). Therefore, Kant situated a taxonomy of race and hybrid within species. Kant made use of his taxonomy of races when he said that: "in this way Negroes and whites are not different species of humans (for they belong presumably to one stock), but they are different races, for each perpetuates itself in every area, and they generate between them children that are necessarily hybrid, or blendings (mulattoes)" (Kant 1950: 17, Zack 2002: 19).

Furthermore, Kant offered the psychological-moral explanation for the differences on the basis of rational ability to raise oneself into a full humanity. "In Kant's table of moral classifications, while the Americans are completely uneducable because they lack 'affect and passion', the Africans escape such a malheur, but can only be 'trained' or 'educated' as slaves and servants" (Eze 2003: 438–439).¹⁸ Based on his view, the African deserves

¹⁸ "The meaning of the distinction that Kant makes between ability to be 'educated' or to educate oneself on the one hand, and to 'train' somebody on the other, can be surmised from the following. 'training', for Kant, seems to consist purely of physical coercion and corporeal punishment, for in his writings about how to flog the African servant or slave into submission, Kant 'advises us to use a split bamboo cane instead of a whip,

this kind of 'training' because he or she is lazy, prone to jealousy and hesitation (*ibid*). He further affirmed that, "the African is all these because, for climate and anthropological reasons, he or she lacks 'true' (rational and moral) character" (Kant 1978: 264, Eze *ibid*: 439).

In 1785, Kant argued that "the presence of an inflammable 'substance' phlogiston in the African's blood makes the skin colour 'black' and, by analogy and extrapolation is assumed to be responsible for the skin colour of other 'race' or 'racial' distinctions. He nevertheless maintained throughout a hierarchical extrapolation of these colour differences" (1997, Eze 2003: 441). Kant further attributed the supposed grades of superiority and inferiority of race to the presence or absence of "talent." According to Kant, white skin was the only concrete and "physical evidence of racial superiority (1785: 138). As such, skin colour for Kant, was proof of rational superiority or inferiority. His position on the importance of skin colour was obvious in a statement he made on the question of the reasoning of a black person. When he evaluated a statement with the comment: "this fellow was quite black from head to foot, a clear proof that what he said was stupid" (*ibid*). Based on the above comment, Eze stresses that "it cannot therefore be argued that skin colour for Kant was merely a physical characteristic. It is rather, evidence of an unchanging and unchangeable moral quality. 'Race' then, in Kant's view, is based upon an ahistorical principle of reason (Idee) and moral law" (2003: 441). Here is another example illustrating that Kant's view of race is an ahistorical principle of reason. In 1761, Immanuel Kant wrote:

Montesquieu is correct in his judgement that the weak-heartedness that makes death so terrifying to the Indian or the Negro also makes him fear many things other than death that the European can withstand. The Negro slave from Guinea drowns himself if he is to be forced into slavery. The Indian women burn themselves. The Carib commits suicide at the slightest provocation. The Peruvian trembles in the face of an enemy, and when he is led to death, he is ambivalent, as though it means nothing. His awakened imagination, however, also makes him dare to do something, but the heat of the moment is soon past and timidity resumes its old place again... The inhabitant of the temperate parts of the world, above all the central part, has a more beautiful body, works harder, is more jocular, more controlled in his passion, more intelligent than any other race of people in the world,

so that the 'negro' will suffer a deal of pains (because of the 'negro's' thick skin, he would not be racked with sufficient agonies through a whip) but without dying'. To beat 'the Negro' efficiently requires 'a split cane rather than a whip, because the blood needs to find a way out of the Negro's thick skin to avoid festering' " (Neugebauer quoted in Eze 2003: 438–439).

that is why at all points in time these peoples have educated the others and controlled them with weapons (1997: 62–64).

What the above simply shows is the reaction of different races when any of them was being forced into slavery. The Negro slave from Guinea decided to drown himself because he was being forced into slavery, while the Indian women decided to burn themselves on the same account of slavery. Other races also had their own reaction when they were being forced into slavery. So the idea of all suicide as irrational is one way to understand the broader view of Kant's argument as ahistorical. Despite this background, I however think that the actions of the individual (Kant's examples) shows that they were aware of what they will go through if they were subjected to slavery. In my view, this can be used against Kant's argument on human knowing, because reasoning is a free gift to humanity. How we as humans and individuals use it is up to us. Whether we make a wrong judgment or a right judgment, what counts at the end is the fact that we made use of it. In the above case, the different examples of people that Kant mentioned could identify with the "I". That very act of identification makes them a thinking thing. Their consciousness had reached the objective existence, which in turn made them to be more aware that it was better to die, than to be enslaved and tortured to death in the hands of the Europeans. According to Hill and Bernard (2001: 465) "people often do terrible things from blind sentiments and impulse, not because they did not think about the outcome of their actions, but because they are merely taking means perceived as necessary to achieve ends prompted by their non-rational inclinations" at that point in time. This a claim which Hill and Bernard argue Kant was obviously aware of but ignored. This also is a claim I concur with on the basis that as humans, we must first have a concrete consciousness of who we are and what we want to do. This is to say we cannot know or be conscious of something without participating in that thing and being participated in by that thing. Consciousness paves the way for reasoning. When one is conscious of something, it creates room for thoughts about that particular thing before one's action follows. One's mind/reasoning/thought has to work in a coherent way with one's actions. The action of that Negro and that of the other people that Kant used as an example better explains a reasoning that coincides with their actions. Thus, in the face of slavery they thought of what to do to escape slavery and this for me is coherent reasoning in display.

Let's take for instance, myself as a human being. Since I was conceived in my mother's womb until now, I have passed through many stages of change. I have changed size, shape, degrees of strength, things I learnt, and skills I developed. In addition to these changes, I take responsibility of my doings, with the consciousness to assume my responsibility. In fact, these changes cannot take place in somebody if they are not aware of their personal identity. Therefore, every moment I recall to my conscience, I am aware of what I call self because the things I do are done by *myself*. Undoubtedly, there is a common belief that there is such a thing as 'self' that persists throughout one's life. This simply means there is something about a person's feature or quality that survives from birth throughout childhood and adulthood until death. It is true also that they are human beings like myself to whom it is vital for preserving my dignity as a morally responsible person. As such, I am aware and conscious of my actions. In other words, I am conscious of things I do and some things I want to do in order to avoid mistakes; and I reason or engage in a critical thinking before doing whatever I want to do. I think the same can be said of those people that Kant used as an example, especially the Negro slave.

I think all humans have the right to life (their own life), to well-being and freedom. "If the intrinsic value of any person's enjoyment of these goods is equal to that of any other, then all men do have an equal right – hence a human right to secure, obtain, or enjoy these goods" (Wasserstrom 2001: 186). Kant perceived the action of the Negro slave as irrational only because he was black. In this case can one say Kant turned a blind eye to the idea of suicide during his time? I think that he did not see that as irrational solely because it was an action committed by a white person. In the act of suicide, whether one is white or black there is a reason behind the action and that reason cannot be seen as irrational from the part of the viewer, because it is a rational decision from the point of the person that committed suicide. So, talking about reason in this case, the Negro that drowned himself engaged in a rigorous thinking before making his choice based on the self-evident reason of slavery. I suggest that this cannot be tagged or seen as lack of reason, because Kant only considered it that way based on his racial idea of reason. If Kant insisted on the irrationality, then I suggest that it would be irrational for any person, no matter the race, to commit suicide. Suicide is a premeditated decision or action and not a spontaneous decision or

action. A premeditated action involves reason, no matter the time of the action. I think therefore that Kant's statement above, regardless of his idea of other races, indicates that we are all humans capable of reasoning, self-awareness, and knowing.

Kant and Hume have inappropriate views of blacks. To have a mind is to think, and to think is to have a mind. Both of these go together. Surely all blacks have minds, hence are thinkers. Philosophy is basically a way of thinking, and Africans think. How will we regard the thoughts of the blacks if they are denied any philosophy or rationality? Even the black slaves in Europe would have had times when they contemplated on their situation and what ought to be done. Besides, in African tradition, there are proverbs, riddles, tales and other folk stories. Though many are not written, yet the oral ones express a great philosophical thought and system. Sayings such as "*umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*" (it is through others that one attains selfhood), express some deep value of the other. This can be seen in Sartre's *Ontology of Being*. Hence, such value will drive people towards others and acting harmoniously. Such is surely a philosophy which can keep a society's system in check. Moreover, we cannot doubt that which does not exist, and to have a doubt on whether there is an existence of something or not, it essentially means that that thing does exist and is a matter of discussion to know its depth and value.

2.5. The Unconscious Racial Intention: Tempels' misinterpretation of the Bantu Ontology and African philosophy

As a Belgian missionary Placide Tempels worked among the Baluba people on the North Katanga province of the Congo (Deacon 2003: 99). In the course of his work, he discovered that "fellow Belgians who worked in various stations and held different positions in the colonial administration were mostly worried about the failure of civilisation to take hold on the Baluba" (Matolino 2011: 336). Because of this failure, Tempels decided to investigate what the possible cause of the failure could be "by presenting what he deemed to be a comprehensive study of the Baluba" (*ibid*). Just like Hume and Kant claimed to have investigated and comprehensively understood African people, Tempels also claimed to have done same with regards to the Baluba, but still could not avoid the idea of hasty generalization. According to Matolino, "Tempels did not just wish to limit his findings to

the Baluba. Instead, he generalized his findings to apply to all the Bantu, and justified it on the ground that other colonial administrators had confirmed with him that his articulation of Bantu philosophy resembled what they had observed but could not articulate” (2011: 337). In other words, his investigation was influenced by the indoctrinated viewpoints and opinions of the colonialists (Deacon 2003: 100).

Life and death, as Tempels had observed among both Christian Europeans and the Bantu, seemed to condition human behaviour universally. Even the *evolues* – the ‘civilized’ Christians among the Bantu - *return* to their old ways “because their ancestors left them their practical solutions to the great problems of life and death, of salvation and destruction” (Tempels 1965: 13). Now these ‘solutions,’ which are based on fidelity to magical interpretations of life and on magical practices, are as he argued, “conceptions which in the course of centuries have persisted and been embraced by entire peoples” (*ibid*). Tempels goes on to suggest that the only satisfactory explanation of this persistence is that these conceptions must be found within a body of logically coordinated and motivated thoughts, within a ‘Lore,’ since no behaviour can be universal or permanent through time “if it has not got at its base, a body of ideas, a logical system, a complete positive philosophy of the universe, of man, and of the things that surround him, of existence, of life, of death and of the life beyond” (Tempels 1965: 14).

Having observed the frequent return by the so-called ‘civilised’ Bantu Christians to their old ways of behaviour, Tempels began to “postulate, seek and discover a logical system of human thought as the ultimate foundation of any logical and universal system of human behaviour,” since “no live code of behaviour is possible unless the meaning of life sensed” (Tempels 1965: 15). According to Tempels, anybody working among the Bantu needs to understand their ontology, because even their logic depends on it. Whoever understands this ontology penetrates into the ‘soul’ of the Bantu. The gulf dividing the blacks and whites will “remain and even widen for as long as we [whites] do not meet them in the wholesome aspirations of their ontology” (Tempels 1965: 16). According to Tempels, all aspects of

Bantu customs, including religion and magic,¹⁹ “lie on the unique principle, the recognition of the intimate nature of things, that is to say, on the principle of their ontology. For it is only this philosophical term that can best designate their knowledge of being and of the existence of things” (1965: 22–23). The entire system of Bantu thought based on this ontology is what Tempels calls ‘philosophy’ in his work, though he confesses not to be able to convince his reader – the missionaries and colonial administrators – “that a true philosophy can exist among the natives, and that there is sense in searching for it” (Tempels 1965: 28). Thus, for Tempels, ontology is the focus of Bantu philosophy and this ontology is saturated by the vital force.

Since Tempels was writing primarily for European readers, his exposition of Bantu Ontology was expressed in western philosophical terms to make it accessible to its intended readers. Thus it was done by the systematic exposition of a theory, often preceded by the analysis of those examples (expressions or behaviour of the Bantu) from which the theory emerged. But an undertaking already begs the question: can the Western methodology be applied successfully to African values without limiting the richness of those values?

Tempels is no different from Locke, because his aim in systematically presenting ‘African philosophy’ was for the purpose of civilizing, Christianizing and raising the Bantu or African person to the Western mode of living. He sought only to understand the African way of life so as to present it to his European audience so that they can devise better ways of teaching and training the Africans. According to Hountondji, this clearly showed that Tempels’ Bantu “is not addressed to Africans but to the Europeans, and particularly to two categories of Europeans – colonials and missionaries...As usual, Africans are excluded from the discussion and Bantu philosophy is a mere pretext for learned disquisitions among Europeans” (1982: 34).

To further elaborate on the above point, I argue Tempels started off on a wrong note, and then I build my argument using the standpoints of philosophers like Masolo (1994). Firstly, his objective of investigating the philosophy of the Bantu was biased, given that it aimed

¹⁹ Sometimes the use of these concepts reveals a grave misunderstanding of the religious beliefs and practices here in question.

to benefit his colleagues, the missionaries and colonialists that he philosophized *about* the Bantu and not for the interest of the latter (Masolo 1994: 46).

Secondly, Tempels' action of thinking for and about Bantu puts him as a colonialist. Close to this is his outright confession that his studies would serve as a guiding tool for the *civilization* of the ignorant people of Africa (Masolo 1994: 46). It is important to note then that the result of Tempels' research, the Bantu Philosophy, is a colonial machinery, a tool which was to be used in the exploitation of the Bantu. Since no one philosophizes out of context but always within the world of his experience, Tempels' project was marred by his own background. This is why Aimé Césaire condemns Tempels' ideology when he explains that: "Bantu thought is ontological, the Bantu only ask for satisfaction of an ontological nature. Decent wages! Comfortable housing! Food! These Bantu are pure spirits, I tell you: "What they desire first of all and above all is not the improvement of their economic or material situation, but the white man's recognition of and respect for their dignity as men, their full human value"" (1972: 38–39). As a Christian, he felt obliged to view the Bantus' behavior with distrust. Their regard for their traditional model of life was seen as awkward; thus, his use of the verb 'return' to describe the christened African practice of their tradition (Masolo 1994: 47). Besides, as a trained Western thinker with all that that entails, his model of philosophy was scientific and theoretical; so he could not feel comfortable regarding the African mode of thought as philosophic.

Lastly, I will like to point out that it cannot be assumed that Tempels' study of the way of life of the Bantu and the philosophy that arose from it is enough to suffice as African philosophy. Tempels "failed to articulate a philosophical system of the Bantu and rather presented a magical system of the Bantu that was supposed to offer evidence of how ridiculous Bantu thought is and hence, why the African should not be seen as an equal to the white person" (Matolino 2011: 339). Africa as it is known today is a heterogeneous continent; and often times, great differences exist even between tribes lying side-by-side.

Tempels postulates that the primary metaphysical category of African people is synopsized around an unconscious ultimate value called "Vital Force" (Tempels 1959:30). By vital force, Tempels means a kind of strength and power that is proper to a being, and it is "the

invisible reality of everything that exists, but is supreme in man. And man can reinforce his vital force by mean of the forces of other beings of creation” (1965: 32). That is to say that every being has a certain unique force, strength and power for which it is known for.

According to Tempels, anything that strengthens a person’s vital force is held in great esteem, while anything that vitiates the vital force of a person is highly prevented by magical recipes. The magical rites are aimed at activating or invoking the natural forces that are purportedly placed at the service of man by God to strengthen man’s vital energy since Africans live their entire life in seeking ways to live strongly or to revitalize their Force through magic. Tempels then, declares that African philosophy is a philosophy of magic. I contend that this is a misinterpretation of African philosophy. As I already specified above, it cannot be assumed that Tempels’ study of the way of life of the Bantu and the philosophy that arose from it serves enough to suffice as African philosophy. Matolino (2011: 340) better explains this when he averred that:

Tempels’ attempt at explaining his newly invented notion of force points to his commitment to philosophical racialism. For a start, Tempels claims that force is pervasive. It is everywhere and it is in everything. It extends sideways, upwards, and downwards. But most importantly, this notion of force, unlike its Western counterpart, is not static but dynamic. In other words, it is practical as it seeks to be fulfilled in the manner that the individual muntu relates to the rest of her society. Since Tempels had categorized force as an equivalent to the notion of being, we can see that he intended to show that there was a huge difference between African and Western metaphysics. This difference is primarily to be found in the way that Western notions are capable of abstracting while the Bantu are innocuous when it comes to such an activity.

This is the reason why Theophilus Okere rightly criticizes Tempels by maintaining that “the essence of force of Tempels’ revolution is thus the systematic substitution of the word “force” wherever one formerly read “magic” or indeed wherever one formerly read “mana” in the theories of religion and magic formulated by the rationalist-evolutionist schools of ethnology” (Okere 1983: 5). Hence, his aim in systematically presenting ‘African philosophy’ was for the purpose of civilizing, Christianizing and raising the Bantu or African person to the Western mode of living. He seeks only to understand the African way of life so as to present it to his European audience so that they can devise better ways of teaching and training the Africans.

From the above, it is not surprising therefore that Tempels views 'magical' practices as some sort of 'corruption' of the logically coherent Bantu ontology. These practices, to him, represent continual deviation through the passion of the quest for vital strengthening toward realities that are not life, or toward magical means of strengthening that are claimed to hold higher worth (Tempels 1959: 27–45). For Tempels, there are two modes of thought or system of rationality and two philosophical systems derivable from them: one Western, the other Bantu or Africa. The former is scientific and proper, the latter is *prima facie* intuitive, magical, and contradictory. But if we may ask, what yardstick is Tempels using to appraise the African mode of thought? The answer is obvious: Tempels is inappropriately and indiscriminately applying the Western logical construct and the Christian ideal. Thus he bedevils the Bantu ontology and depicts it as inferior vis-à-vis Christianity.

From my observation, Tempels appears to classify Western metaphysics under experimental sciences, and the Bantu theory of forces with the improvable experience. For this reason, strange as it may be, Tempels characterizes Bantu ontology as a product of the imagination of the Bantu, a subjective idea which does not correspond at all to reality, and is unacceptable from the point of view of reason, objectivity, and scientificity of the real (1959: 56–60). But this begs the question: can African values be properly classified using the European standard or yardstick without inevitably leading to a procrustean bed or a strait jacket? It clearly appears as if Tempels is of the idea or suggestion that rationality is the culture of the whites. "Tempels' work conceives the Bantu as incapable of abstract or rational thought, which makes them not quite as human as Belgians. As they are primarily interested in matters of primitive force, the idea of justice, human dignity, and equality would hardly apply to them" (Matolino 2011: 340). From the above, we can see that Tempels reaches this conclusion because he is still deeply stanch in the idea that there are different races. In other words, in his in-depth thoughtfulness, there are different races and each of these races has different essential characteristics that make them different from each other. Compared to his Belgian compatriots, the Bantu are inferior, and their ontological outlook is different and inferior to that of his Belgian contemporaries. Thus it is clear that Tempels cannot escape the tag of extrinsic or intrinsic racism.

It is important to underscore that the vital force poses a stumbling block for European rationalists since it shows that not everything that is real is reasonable. The vital force is not dependent on reason to justify its very existence. It certainly exists with or without the vindication of reason. The Westerners must realise that not everything that exist can be or needs to be proved. Most importantly, the truth of vital force is a truth that is *felt* and lived and not merely thought of. Tempels claims *prima facie* that, vital force is a figment of the African imagination, but this of course is because the Westerners have always used reason rather than intuition to understand these phenomena. The vital force essentially transcends reason and it is by nature symbolic and polyvalent. To claim that they are mere figments of African imagination is to make an unfounded and pseudo claim. Besides, we know that when people, that is, the Europeans are afraid of something, they tend to bedevil that thing. Tempels accentuates that in African ontology, the concept of Force is inextricably bound to the notion of being. Africans conceive the notion of being as that which has force; something energetic, active and animated as opposed to something inert and lifeless. It suffices to state that force is being and being is force. Outside the notion of force, being cannot be known (1959: 34). In this regard, Africans distinguish beings according to the vital force proper to their essence or nature (: 35). This is why he equates being with force (Being = force), just as we would analytically equate “animal + reason = man” (Masolo 1994: 48). This force according to Tempels is as much the essence of a mouse, a tree, a cow or a human as it is of a stone, footprint, soil, or a piece of cloth. In short, the vital force saturates the life of the Bantu.

Extrapolating from African behaviour and usage of language, Tempels asserts that the entire behavior of the African people is lived with a dominant and oriental desire to intensify one’s vital force; to live strongly, to acquire life, potency and power. He elucidates that in the African concept, the perfect possessor and source of force in every creature is God, the ‘Strong One’ (Tempels 1959: 31). Thus, God is the one that endows every being in the universe – divinities, humans, animals, plants, inanimate things etc – with a certain unique vital force that is distinctive and proper to its being. As founders of the human race and transmitters of the divine inheritance of vital human strength, the spirits of the first ancestors are deemed to possess some extraordinary force almost immediately

after God (*ibid*). The dead people are also adjudged to possess potent powers capable of making influence in the world.

Tempels' exposé may at time seem convincing or persuasive, but looked at more closely, it contains many hitches. The background of the author rather than the research, influenced, controlled, and to an extent distorted his conclusion. An important feature of Tempels' involvement with the Bantu must be remembered. His ultimate objective in studying Bantu Religion, magic, mythology, and ontology is to understand the worldview for the purpose of deciding its compatibility with Christianity and Western philosophy. The 'danger' of the objective is that Tempels is too eager to find his Christian-European experience represented in a Bantu worldview. Hence "he concurs with the main claim of the naked version of philosophical racialism that the capacity to think is something that was ordained by nature and naturally denied the African" (Matolino 2011: 340). Thus, he defines philosophy in such a manner that the conditions for the very possibility of philosophy are European.

Tempels enjoys the privilege of being among those that have produced written work on African Philosophy. *La Philosophie Bantoue* is the outcome of Tempels' observation of the behavior and study of the language of the Bantu people, the Shaba Baluba of Zaire. His work has to its credit whole hosts of concepts such as the famous vital force in African philosophy. In this regard, Tempels must be credited for being among those that has provided our generation a written work on African philosophy. His book influenced at the continental level, the self-understanding and development of twentieth century history of African philosophy. If it is said that most philosophy in the West is a footnote to Plato, I dare to say that most contemporary African philosophy is a footnote to Tempels. This is justifiable if one is to consider the philosophical activities that came to light after his publication of *Bantu Philosophy*. To date, many African thinkers are still either reacting or responding to his thesis. Indubitably, the publication of Tempels' book jolted many scholars out of their customary lethargy provoking endless, sporadic and polemic debate about whether or not there exists such an entity as could be legitimately called African

philosophy. These also aroused the interest of the negretude movement and the pan-African movement that will be discussed in the next chapter.

2.6. Conclusion

The main aim of this chapter has been to present the direct, indirect and unconscious ideas of different modern philosophers on race. I started by taking us back to Descartes' "Cogito," where I indicated that despite being the seeming foundation of the idea of race and racism, Descartes did not engage discussions on these concepts. Although his Jesuit Descartes avoidance of these concepts as presented in the chapter could be linked to the fact that he undertook the intellectual journey of knowing who he is. In my perspective, his reason for knowing himself resulted from and was informed by the happenings during his time. The chapter also discussed Hume's empirical theory of knowledge, his concept of human mind, and his idea on race. Taking a different stance from Hume, I contended that he was wrong about his idea of European civilization. I also discussed Kant's idea of human knowledge and his idea of race, where he used the example of the Negro slave from Guinea that drowned himself as he was being forced into slavery. Reflecting on this example, I argued that that the Negro or rather anyone in that Negro's position must have had a reason for his/her action, thus the evidence of reason and self-awareness which can be found in all humans. In same light, I advanced a general critique of Hume's and Kant's ideas on intellectual capacity. . As a final point, I also examined Tempels' idea of force and showed how he misinterpreted the idea, thus leading to his unconscious perception of race or racism.

Chapter Three

3. The Works of the Nationalist Ideological Philosophers and the Existence of African Philosophy as an Indirect Response on Hume's and Kant's ideas about the Negroes/Blacks

3.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, I explained that nature has essentially yielded or produced different kinds of human beings – by race. Hume in his thinking argued that the same nature made some people to have high levels of mental capacities and others not to have. He used the Negro as an example of those that do not have mental capacity. Hume asserted in his renowned footnote that “I am apt to suspect the Negroes, and in general all the other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the whites.²⁰ There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation; no ingenious manufacturers amongst them, no arts, no sciences” (1882: 252).

I also explained that “in Kant's table of moral classifications, while the Americans are completely uneducable because they lack ‘affect and passion’, the Africans escaped such a malheur, but can only be ‘trained’ or ‘educated’ as slaves and servants” (Eze 2003: 438–439). Based on his view, the African deserves this kind of ‘training’ because he or she is lazy, prone to jealousy and hesitation (*ibid*). He further said that “the African is all these because, for climate and anthropological reasons, he or she lacks ‘true’ (rational and moral) character” (Kant 1978: 264, Eze 2003: 439). Kant further attributed the supposed grades of superiority and inferiority of race to the presence or absence of “talent.” Taking skin colour as evidence of a racial class, Kant maintained that “white skin, seems the only concrete, physical evidence of this racial superiority; skin colour reveals race as species,

²⁰ “We should keep in mind, therefore, that when Hume says that some races are inferior to others, and the evidence for this is that the inferior ones lack the science and the arts, he is saying, in effect, that members of the inferior races are ontologically (Psychologically) and functionally (cognitively) deficient” (Eze 2001: 66).

class, and morally as “difference in Character”” (1785: 138). As such, skin colour for Kant, was a proof of rational superiority or inferiority.

On the basis of the above, my intention in this chapter therefore, is to show that the works of nationalist-ideological philosophers and the existence of African philosophy are proofs that Africans are not irrational or inferior to the whites. Thus, I discuss the works of the nationalist- ideological philosophers, and the existence of African philosophy as an indirect response to Hume’s and Kant’s ideas of the Negroes/blacks, as captured above. My focus on this trend of discussion is purposeful because the nationalist-ideological approach, its thoughts and writings actually help to untie Africans from the yolk of colonialism. The nationalist-ideological philosophers are the first to start this movement of change. This trend is a viable alternative because the philosophical ideology of these philosophers is an ardent call for all Africans to return to their values and shun everything that is foreign and dehumanizing. Their works proof that intellectual superiority and inferiority is something that varies among individuals. Some persons are more gifted intellectually than others, and this does not have to be due to one’s race of colour. Even among people of the same race, some display high ingenuity while others display less. And their philosophical ideas and contributions prove that “African philosophy can only be revived if and when the African society is truly free and independent” (Ocheng’-Odhiambo 2010: 150 – 151).

My intention in the first section of this chapter is to briefly explain the idea of the nationalistic-ideological philosophy, and the reasons that inform the philosophy. In the sections that follow, I aim to discuss the nature of nationalistic-ideological philosophy, and their philosophical ideologies as a response to the existence of African philosophy. Some of their philosophical ideas are: Consciencism, Communalism, Humanism, Cultural Life, Negritude, Black Consciousness, and Pan-Africanism. In line with this, I would also critique the nationalistic-ideological philosophy, and conclude the chapter by reaffirming the existence of African philosophy, as an indirect response to Hume’s and Kant’s ideas that blacks are irrational and inferior to the whites. Against Kant’s idea that African “can only be ‘trained’ or ‘educated’ as slaves and servants,” I would argue that the philosophical pride that some African philosophers have acquired has falsified his ideas. Likewise, I shall

support the idea that African philosophy should be primarily concerned with the experience, culture and history of Africans with the aim of making sense of the people's experience through critical and rigorous reflection.

3.2. Nationalist-ideological Philosophy

Nationalistic-ideological philosophy emanates from the ideologies of national liberation movements. It arose before the independent era in Africa and out of the conviction that political independence must be accompanied by “a true mental liberation” (Bodunrin 1991: 64). Basically, it started off as a fight against colonial imperialistic ideologies in Africa. This philosophy “advocates mental liberation and a return to African humanism” (Hapanyengwi-Chemhuru 2013: 46). The conviction that informs this philosophy is that the European model and ideologies have failed in Africa. The nationalistic-ideological philosophy used a practical way to convey their ideas, a way that obviously shows that Africa was in need of economic, political, social and cultural transformation. Thus, it is not surprising to note that “Nkrumah was deeply convinced that Africa must rationalize the dominant intellectual strands in Africa's historical experience and reinstate what was noble and everlasting in traditional African society” (Mbonjo 1998: 176). Nationalistic-ideological philosophy is thus an attempt to deal with the problems of national and socialist revolutions or African revolution (Mbonjo 1998: 183).

3.3. The Birth of Nationalistic Ideological Philosophy

Nationalistic-ideological philosophy was born out of the struggle for liberation of Africans from colonialism. Colonialism, as Tsenay Serequeberhan explains, set the communist-social structure of African societies on the path to ruins, suppressing the stable indigenous African societies; a situation that left Africans wallowing in miasma of confusion in trying to fit in the shoes of their colonizers (1991: 3). Thus, the rich and solid traditional African life and culture which was set on a strong structure was distorted, because of colonialism. Africans lost their identity at the expense of colonial powers. The aftermath of colonialism propagated pseudo-ideas such as the conception that traditional beliefs and social structures (culture and language) are flawed, hence, there is a need for ‘civilization.’ This created the

idea of Africans being inferior to the Europeans. Thus nationalistic ideological philosophy was necessitated by the ravages of colonialism and the need for Africans to liberate themselves politically, and decolonize their minds from pseudo-ideas like white supremacy and black inferiority.

Upon realization of independence many African leaders embarked on a quest for solutions to contemporary problems in Africa. They saw a need to restructure the disfigured and distorted African society. Consequently, nationalistic-ideological philosophy is a reaction to the debased African socio-political system which was founded by colonial powers. It is a reaction against the Western capitalist systems, economic imperialism, Marxism and western socialism. Nationalistic-ideological philosophy set out in the quest to re-establish and restructure the African social context after colonialism. This trend, as Makumba avows, “coming from the African worldview, was understood by Africa’s pioneer ideologies to be a worthy response to what had become a dehumanizing and exploitative situation brought about by colonization” (2007: 135).

Nationalistic-ideological philosophy is geared towards a unique African political system which not only decolonizes the African but also equips them with solutions to contemporary African problems. This political system is based on the traditional African socialism, humanism, familyhood and the existential situation in Africa (Coetzee & Roux 1998: 96). The members of this trend include African leaders and statesmen such as Léopold Sédar Senghor (of Guinea), Kwame Nkrumah (from Ghana), Kenneth Kaunda (from Zambia) Julius Nyerere (from Tanzania), Jomo Kenyatta and Tom Mboya (from Kenya), among others. The trend is embodied in the various manifestos and political writings produced by these statesmen/leaders during the African liberation struggle. The philosophical foundation of this trend, as Makumba puts it, was “influenced by the political and social urgency of their environment” (2007: 134). These social and political urgencies led these optimistic statesmen to formulate philosophical blueprints for the reconstruction of their respective countries, culturally, politically, socially and economically.

3.4. The Nature of Nationalistic-ideological Philosophy

Basically, Nationalistic-ideological philosophy is an attempt “to evolve a new and if possible, unique political theory based on traditional African socialism and familyhood which Nyerere calls *ujamaa* Njoroge” (1986: 96). Nationalistic-ideological philosophy can be referred to as a philosophy of transition, “a voice crying in the wilderness”, calling all Africans to consciousness of their own identity and personality (Makumba 1998: 150). It is a social synthesis of contemporary African reality and African social values. This social synthesis of Nationalistic-ideological philosophy is geared towards political, economic, social, religious and cultural situations of pre and post – independent era. Nationalistic Ideological Philosophy according to Serequeberhan consists of the “manifestos, the pamphlets and political works produced by the liberation struggle” (1991: 20). It encompasses the whole gamut of national liberation literatures and the African anti-colonial struggles which pan-Africanism is inclusive. As a result, the literature that has been produced in this time constitutes the basis of “an African philosophical discourse on politics” (*ibid*). In other words, “the political and philosophic output of the African anti-colonial struggle as a whole has to be understood as the originative grounding that is presupposed by contemporary African intellectual works as such” (*ibid*).

The role of nationalistic-ideological philosophy is that of “assuming a leading position in the questions of the best options befitting Africa’s divergent conditions of social and political organization and re-examination and re-appraisal of traditional culture in the hope of identifying and preserving what is useful and worth developing from what is obsolete and fit for dustbin” (Njoroge 1986: 96). According to the proponents of this trend, there is a necessary connection between theory and practice, which is praxis; in a nutshell, it means a unification of theory and action. These philosophers of pre and post-independent era saw that theory alone could not solve the problems of Africa, thus, the need to devise a pragmatic way of salvaging the African problems. From the foregoing, it is obvious that these philosophers aimed at radical transformation of political, economic, social and cultural aberrations in African sequel to the impact of colonialism. It aimed at decolonizing the minds of Africans so that they can reassert themselves in the world. According to Mbonjo (1998: 183), the hallmark of nationalistic- ideological philosophy is their ardent

zeal and clarion call for all Africans to return to their values and shun everything Western that is not in conformity with this noble goal. Njoroge (1986: 88) further asserts that the nationalistic-ideological philosophy could also be called “political philosophy.”

3.5. The Philosophical Ideologies of the Nationalist Ideological Philosophers

What these African political thinkers have developed and offered to Africans are ideas such as consciencism, communalism, familyhood, negritude, humanism, nationhood, unification, socialism and Pan-Africanism.

3.5.1. Consciencism

Consciencism as presented by Nkrumah is the philosophy of the African revolution which upholds the ideology of socialism and the redemption of African humanist society of the past (Mbonjo 1998: 177). Nkrumah defined Consciencism as:

The map in intellectual terms of the disposition of forces which will enable African society to digest Western and Islamic and the Euro-Christian elements in Africa, and develop them in such a way that they fit into the African personality. The African personality is itself defined as the cluster of humanist principles which underlie the traditional African society. Philosophical Consciencism is that philosophical standpoint which, taking its start from the present content of the African conscience indicates the way in which progress is forged out of the conflict in that conscience (1970: 79).

Consciencism is both revolutionary and evolutionary. Consciencism on the hand is revolutionary when it deals with colonialism and capitalism. On the other hand, it is evolutionary when it is “considered in relation to the traditional African society whose guiding principles of egalitarianism and the concern of all for each, seeks to reassert and enthrone and regard as fundamental to any society or social order” (Mbonjo 1998: 177). In other words, there are two main values found in the traditional African society which need to be guided or taken care of by the philosophical consciencism. The first is the idea of egalitarianism that all of us belong to the same species without discrimination of sex or of race. The second is that each person is responsible for the other as long as we live in a community. Consciencism has as starting point the idea that in every society, there is a kind of explicit or implicit ideology that defines a social cohesion towards a desirable society (*ibid*: 178). Hence consciencism is meant to theoretically guide the ideology of

socialism in Africa. In his own words, Nkrumah affirms that “philosophical consciencism builds itself by becoming a reflection of the objectivity, in conceptual terms, of the unfolding of matter” (*ibid*: 179). This leads us to the ethical perspective of the notion of philosophical consciencism. It has already been said that the ideology of socialism emphasizes on egalitarianism which derives directly from materialism (*ibid*: 180). Hence it follows according to philosophical consciencism that “each man must be treated as an end in himself and not just as a tool or a means to an end” (*ibid*: 180). In this respect, Nkrumah writes: “The cardinal ethical principle of philosophical consciencism is to treat each man as an end in himself and not merely as a means. This is fundamental to all socialist or humanist conception of man” (quoted in Mbonjo 1998: 180). Thus for Nkrumah, philosophical consciencism will serve as the solid theoretical foundation on which a truly unifying ideology for all Africa can be built (*ibid*: 182).

Thus understood, consciencism could not and cannot accommodate colonialism. Reason being that colonialism is “a doctrine of exploitation and a doctrine of alienating” (Mbonjo 1998: 21). This implies that colonialism is a means by which the colonial power secures material advantages for her own economic development. It is considered as a crude form of imperialism, which is the “policy that aims at creating, organizing and maintaining an empire” (*ibid*: 22). As a result, our African political thinkers reject colonialism as well as the idea that it is to bring civilization to a people or to prepare them for self-rule. In the Casablanca Conference of January 7 1961, Nkrumah delivered a speech – part of it reading thus:

For my part, I must say that as long as I live, and as long as any little vestige of colonialism and imperialism remains in Africa, I shall prosecute a ruthless war on these monsters, a war in which there shall be no truce. Colonialism and imperialism have no honour, no shame, no morals and conscience. The devastation which they have brought in Africa is without parallel anywhere in the history of the world, but now Africans have arrived on the scene. We have arrested their progress and are determined to give them battle with all the forces of our command until we have achieved the total liberation of the African continent and have built a strong Union of African states. As I have always stated, and as I will continue to proclaim, I can see no security for African states unless African leaders like ourselves have realized beyond all doubts that salvation for Africa lies in Unity (quoted in Obeng 1979: 2).

3.5.2. Communalism

African traditional worldview encompasses “an attitude towards the human person, which can only be described in its social manifestation as being socialist” (Makumba 2007:139). Hence, African communalism was considered the ‘socio-political ancestor of socialism’ (*ibid*). This is what Julius Nyerere calls Ujamaa, meaning familyhood. A family according to Nyerere embraces the whole human society. So it is “the foundation and the objective of African socialism... the true African socialist system regards all men as his brethren – as members of his ever-extending family” (*ibid*: 140). This idea of African socialism is opposed both to capitalism and Marxist socialism. In fact, capitalism “seeks happiness through the exploitation of one person by another, and Marxist socialism seeks happiness through conflict between persons” (*ibid*: 140). Conversely, African socialism rooted in African communalism is “an attitude of the mind” (*ibid*: 140). Its foundation lies in the principle of human equality which “has to be applied to the different sectors of society; namely economic, social and political” (*ibid*: 141); and based on love and sharing.

3.5.3. Humanism

In the same line as Julius Nyerere’s ideas, Kenneth Kaunda calls this attitude African Humanism. For him, it is because Africa is human-centred and that ideology conquered colonialism (Makumba 2007: 143). Central to Kaunda’s humanist claim is that humanism is rooted in human person in relation with God. As a result, African Humanism is closely related to Christian anthropology, where the human person is ‘truly self only before God and that the spiritual dimension is an integral part of the human personality’ (*ibid*). Humanism, as it is with the role of any society, seeks to uphold and protect the dignity of the human person. It is a form of socialism that is based on political, social, cultural and economic aspects of the life of a human person and geared towards the improvement of the human life. Kaunda saw a connection with Christianity and he advocated religious beliefs as fitting complements to traditional African society. Humanism was a tool to break away from the colonial heritage and to develop and reconstruct an African identity.

3.5.4. Cultural Life

Amilcar Cabral sees cultural life as an element of resistance to foreign domination (Wolfers 1979: 141). For him, there is a dependant and reciprocal connection between the cultural factor and the economic and political factor in the behaviours of human societies. “In fact, at every moment of the life of a society, culture is the result, with more or less awakened consciousness of economic and political activities, the more or less dynamic expression of the type of relations prevailing within that society” (*ibid*). Again, there is a characteristic common to every kind of imperialist domination, which is “the denial of the historical process of the dominated people by means of violent usurpation of the freedom of the process of development of the productive forces” (*ibid*). In this regard, who knows what would have been the technological and economic development from the different African cultures if they were not destroyed? The point is that according to Cabral, “culture is simultaneously the fruit of a people’s history and a determinant of history by the positive or negative influence it exerts on the evolution of relations between man and his environment and among men or human groups within a society, as well as between different societies” (*ibid*).

3.5.5. Negritude

In the Francophone case, the story has often been told, and the centrality of the race of Negritude cannot be ignored. Negritude was one of the first anti-colonial moments concerned precisely with the idea of race in Africa. Central to the concept of negritude is, “the idea of suffering through servitude either directly through slavery or indirectly through colonization” (Wolfers 1979: 27). Césaire and Senghor both experienced the sufferings of racial segregation as young students. Hence, for them, there was a need for awakening the black person as a process of converting the victims into consciousness of reshaping their destiny. Aimé Césaire coined the word “negritude”, and his idea of negritude basically originated in history, a history of bitterness and discomfort. Thus, “Negritude emerged as a concept with different resonances in, and applicable to different contexts. Yet, the revaluation of blackness and of the pan-African experience constituted a denominator common to all its variants” (Berkday 2010: 206–207). Césaire therefore

defines negritude as “the sum of the cultural values of the black world as expressed in the life, the institutions, and the works of black men; the sum of the values of the civilization of the black world” (Wolfers 1979: 44). Léopold Sédar Senghor (2001) in his work *“Negritude and Modernity or Negritude as a Humanism for the Twentieth Century”* explains Negritude as a “philosophy that postulates a cultural actions adapted to the spiritual and sociological conditions of the black man” (quoted in Wolfers 1979: 144). He further explains that Negritude has a double meaning: “subjective and objective, particular and universal, topical and eternal” (Senghor 2001: 144). “Objectively, as a civilization, Negritude is the totality of values; not only those of the peoples of black African, but also of the black minorities of America, or even of Asia or the South Sea Islands... Subjectively, Negritude is a will to take on the values of the black world, to live them oneself, after having impregnated and actualized them, but also to make them live in and through others” (Senghor 2001: 144).

According to Wolfers (1979: 45), “the supreme value of black African civilization is life forces”. African values simply show that blood bonds are of great significance because of vital realities, but not just because of race. Senghor holds that “the family in Africa encompasses all persons descending from a common ancestor who is responsible for the flame of life transmitted to his descendants” (Wolfers 1979: 48). As a result, negritude is all about pointing out the African values and their authenticity. For instance, Senghor stipulates that:

Black man’s emotivity is due neither to inherently superior sensory faculties nor to inherently inferior rational faculties, but to a particular attitude toward the external world and its apparent complexity. Essentially positive and dynamic, this attitude is a direct result of the notion of life force and its intensification and the tendency to relate to the external world as to a network of interacting forces (1979: 75).

It is important to underscore that Senghor may have been disingenuous, but he is not at all innocent of the ongoing modern racial battles “over the meaning of reason and humanity when he notoriously defended a thesis that, *on the surface*, is unsurpassably droll: “Emotion is Negro, and reason Greek”” (Eze 2001: 41). According to Eze, it is as if Senghor said, “well, you keep your Reason; we have our Emotion. Besides, our Emotion

is superior to your Reason” (*ibid*). Nevertheless, Senghor’s theoretical work illustrates how race plays itself in modern discourse.

3.5.6. Black Consciousness

Steve Biko says that “the basic tenet of black consciousness is that the black man must reject all value systems that seek to make him foreign in the country of his birth and reduce his basic human dignity” (Boddy-Evans 2010). What Biko was trying to do, was to bring to the awareness of the African masses the injustice wrought on him by the apartheid era. His main point was that African should seek to reject injustice and recognise her value, and Africans should stop feeling inferior in their own home. In other words, he insisted on a sense of superiority instead of inferiority amongst blacks. According to Biko, the white people “must be made to realise that they are only human, not superior, and this goes same for the blacks. They must be made to realise that they are also humans, not inferiors” (quoted in Boddy-Evans 2010). What Biko was saying is that the white masses who colonized and forced apartheid on the black masses should not treat blacks as their inferiors. His idea was built on the knowledge that the white masses are not better than the blacks, in fact, all people are equal and should be treated as such. Biko further said that by merely “describing yourself as black you have started on a road towards emancipation, you have committed yourself to fight against all forces that seek to use your blackness as a stamp that marks you out as a subservient being” (Bobby-Evans 2010). Thus, it is the responsibility of the blacks to fight against oppress.

3.5.7. Pan-Africanism

According to Appiah:

For the generation that theorized the decolonization of Africa, then, “race” was a central organizing principle. And, since these Africans largely inherited their conception of “race” from their New precursors, we shall understand Pan-Africanism’s profound entanglement with that conception best if we look first at how it is handled in the work of the African-American intellectuals who forged the links between race and Pan-Africanism (1992: 10).

The idea of African unity that these African political thinkers were all emphasizing and advocating is mainly expressed in the movement of pan-Africanism. The latter has as basic

premise that “the people of Africa and African descent throughout the globe constitute a common cultural and political community by virtue of their origin in Africa and their common racial, social and economic oppression” (Mbonjo 1998: 121). Furthermore, pan-Africanism holds that in order to bring about effective action for the liberation and development of Africa, a political, economic and cultural unity is necessary (*ibid*). Thus defined, pan-Africanism started to develop in the nineteenth century when the countries like Liberia and Sierra Leone were formed to “create a homeland in Africa for American Slaves and return them gradually” (*ibid*: 123). However, the expression “pan-Africanism” came into use with Henry Sylvester Williams from Trinidad and William Edward Burghardt Du Bois of the United States (*ibid*: 125). The essential elements of pan-Africanism were “national self-determination, individual freedom and democratic socialism” (*ibid*: 126). It is in this sense that one can say that African unity “can only become a reality when national self-interest and continent-wide unity come together” (Makumba 2007: 147).

3.6. African Philosophy and Philosophical Pride: The Existence of African Philosophy as an Indirect Response on Hume’s and Kant’s ideas about the Negroes/Blacks

The philosophical writings of the nationalistic ideological philosophers and some modern African intellectuals were as a result of the intellectual racial discrimination and anti-African prejudices in the works of some European thinkers like Hume and Kant. The works of some nationalistic ideological philosophers helped tremendously to prove that Africans are capable of intellectual exercise. Thus this section seeks to reaffirm the existence of African philosophy and to show that many works of Africans or African philosophers have been done just to express their divergent perspectives from that of the west, and to show that they are intellectually capable to engage in the discourse.

The term “Africa”, while generally taken to refer to a particular geographical area located at the South Pole, has been bedevilled by different ill-conceptions. Terms like ‘the land of Darkness’, ‘the dead end’, ‘the cold-less’ or ‘sunny land’ have been used to describe the continent. As Mogobe B. Ramose (2002) noted, these derogatory expressions by some

anthropologists point to the fact that the history of Africa is mainly the history of West European experience of “Africa” and only incidentally is it the story of the peoples of the continent about themselves. By implication, all that arises from Africa is thought to be barbaric and unworthy of being counted among the credence of human achievement. To this end, the likes of Hume and Kant would categorize Africans as irrational beings who are unable to engage in critical reflection upon their own experience. This thought of African backwardness further drove Europeans, albeit their greed for her wealth, to invade the continent with the aim of civilizing the Africans. From this backdrop, the existence of African philosophy is denied. The above also imprints in Kant’s and Hume’s mind their fallacious views of blacks.

If African philosophy does exist, which I take to be true, its nature is what constitutes our concern in this work. Etymologically, philosophy is the love of wisdom. It is an art of critical reflection upon lived experience. Taken as such, African philosophy ought to seek to reflect critically upon the lived experience of the people. So, when we talk about African philosophy, we are talking about works that relate to Africa. It can be philosophical works from Africans that contribute to one’s understanding of Africa and Africans, based on the person’s experience of African culture. Hountondji defines ‘African philosophy’ as “a set of texts, specifically a set of texts written by Africans themselves and described as philosophical by their authors themselves” (1983: 33). This is to show that he actually affirms and acknowledges the existence of African philosophy. One thing to note from this is the contextual specificity of African philosophy. This is necessary taking into consideration that African philosophy has for long been silenced by the West. In response, Africa must speak up for herself and about herself. This is crucial because of the need to divest Africa and her mode of thought of any *undue* colonial influence. As Wiredu aptly noted, this task must be carefully carried out with a double critical stand towards both what is Western and African (1984). African philosophers must not shy away from taking a critical stand towards elements within their cultural worldview that is inimical to rational thought, nor should they accept as axiomatic any conceptual work from the West. On the contrary, both traditions can offer philosophers materials upon which they can conduct their reflection. Thus, against Hountondji’s assumed definition, I want to argue that African

philosophy is the written and unwritten/oral reflection of thinkers based on the ways in which African people of the past and the present critically make sense of their existence, heritage, religion, customs, their tradition and culture, and the world they live in.

As a reminder, we should note that the contextual specificity spoken of earlier should not be taken to be a report of cultural or communal worldview of a community within Africa. This is what Oruka calls ethnophilosophy (2003). In the face of criticisms from outside Africa, African philosophy must out-grow collective worldview. Philosophy is primarily about independent thought of persons about phenomena of their experience. However, the works of this trend of philosophy can be useful to professional philosophers as a material for reflection. More importantly, contextual specificity should take into consideration, the diversity of African cultures; as it is sometimes said: ‘there is not one Africa but many’. In this light, Wiredu makes a point by alluding that African philosophy “have to be intensive studies of those elements of culture that play significant roles in the constitution of meanings in the various African world views” (1996: 159). This is a call for particularistic studies that avoid hasty generalization.

To this end, one may object that this culture of specificity can hamper intra-African and international philosophical dialogue. This objection needs not concern us given that a particularistic study done in a culture that interprets the language of that culture can spur a similar project in another. This would throw light on concepts with which communication can be carried out. After all, dialogue presupposes understanding of differences as well as similarities. “If we understand “philosophy” as the tradition to which Plato and Aristotle, Descartes and Hume, Kant and Hegel belong, then at least the following concepts are bound to be regarded as central to that canon: beauty, being, causation, evil, God, gods, good, illusion, justice, knowledge, life, meaning, mind, person, reality, reason, right, truth, understanding, and wrong.” As such, we will understand that both Western and African philosophers have engaged themselves in an ongoing task on these concepts, based on their own views and understandings, in search of similarities and differences (Appiah 1992: 86 – 87). No doubt, that not all cultures have the above concepts, but any philosopher talking or discussing about any of these concepts, engage with it in contrast and in connection to

his/her own culture. According to Eze (1998: 217) therefore, “the idea of ‘African philosophy’ as a field of inquiry has its contemporary roots in the effort of African thinkers to combat political and economic exploitations, and to examine, question, and contest identities imposed upon them by the Europeans” (*ibid*).

The arrival of the colonizers in Africa marked the interchange of modernity and tradition. It is in light of this interchange that I would like to applaud ethnophilosophy for acting as a backdrop to subsequent philosophical undertakings which were in support of either redefining or redeeming the African self-concept and ultimately human nature. The exchange of ideas and reasoning can be seen as a part of this interchange; an interchange of ideas and reasoning. I think it is a philosophical pride²¹ that African philosophers should really appreciate. Western education has happened in a way that actually warranted a proper communication of African philosophy to the world. The inquiring into the ‘philosophicality’ of African philosophy is *ipso facto* the inquiry of the validity of philosophy in ‘cultures devoid of reason’. D. A Masolo appreciated the exchange of ideas and the role of reasoning by stating:

The birth of the debate on African philosophy is historically associated with two happenings: Western discourse on Africa and the African response to it... At the centre of this debate is the concept of reason, a value which is believed to stand as the great divide between the civilized and the uncivilized, the logical and the mystical... To a large extent, the debate about African philosophy can be summarized as a significant contribution to the discussion and definition of reason... (1994: 1).

Even if many people are still living with the belief that “Europeans had not invented African studies, Africans would have had to invent it” (Owomoyela 1987: 92), I believe that Africans cannot help but acknowledge the knowledge that they actually tapped from the European language and training which enables them to educate Europeans more about African tradition. Appiah affirms this when he writes:

The training of African university philosophers has been in the traditions of the West, we may begin—here as elsewhere in the characterization of African intellectual life—by relating the situation of the contemporary African intellectual to the cultures of their former

²¹ Pride in this context means a deep sense or feelings of pleasure or satisfaction derived from one’s achievement, particularly a quality or skill. In this case, Africa philosophers cannot deny the fact that they are proud of what they have learnt and achieved from the Western philosophers.

colonizers. Provided we keep open minds, that need not blind us to the way that philosophy in Africa grows also out of her own indigenous traditions (1992: 86).

Therefore, the African way of philosophizing is a reflection of African tradition, her existential experience and her knowledge of what she has acquired from the Westerners. As Appiah puts it, “there is, then, in every culture a folk philosophy, and implicit in that folk philosophy are all (or many) of the concepts that academic philosophers have made central to their study in the West” (1992: 87).

3.7. How is the Nationalistic-ideological Philosophy and the Existence of African Philosophy an Indirect Response to Hume’s and Kant’s Ideas about the Negroes/Blacks?

According to Mogobe B. Ramose (2003: 3), “the struggle for reason – who is and who is not a rational animal – is the foundation of racism”. David Hume and Kant are good examples of the above statement. Hume believed that “some races have high levels of mental capacities and that others do not” (2002: 66). Kant believed that “white skin, it seems, is the only concrete, physical evidence of this racial superiority skin colour...” (1785: 138). As such, skin colour for Kant is proof of rational superiority or inferiority. From their ideas, it is quite clear that race is a real issue that affects Africans in various ways. We cannot doubt the fact that it is because of the issue of race that “African Philosophy labours under this yet-to-end exploitation and denigration of African humanity. This philosophy as argued by Eze (1998: 219) “challenges the long-standing exclusion as the negative “other” of reason and of the western world in the major traditions of modern Western philosophy”..

As I explained in my first chapter, the philosophical writings of some modern philosophers like, Hume, Kant and Hegel, aroused psychological defensiveness by most modern African intellectuals when they come across intellectual racial discrimination and anti-African prejudices in the works of some Europeans thinkers. Appiah, for example, relates that “Few contemporary readers are likely to be undisturbed when they discover the moments when Africa is banished from Hegel’s supposedly universal history and when David Hume declares in the essay on ‘National Characters’ that blacks are incapable of eminence in action or speculation” (1997: 400). This also includes Kant’s classification or hierarchical

chart on the different “races.” Appiah’s statement, the idea of race, and other colonial and neo-colonial exploitation and degradation of African humanity reawakens the existence of African philosophy. Following this view, nationalistic-ideological philosophy and trends of African philosophy can be conceived as an indirect response to Hume and Kant. To emphasize this point, I affirm that the nationalistic-ideological philosophy has tremendously helped in the restoration of Africa pride. The writings of the philosophers in this trend are visible examples which encompass the whole gamut of African values in her political, economic, and cultural values. They disentangled African society “from its yolk of colonialism, and then reverted to former cardinal principles of traditional African” (Ochieng’-Odhiambo 2010: 151).

Kant explains that Africans “can only be ‘trained’ or ‘educated’ as slaves and servants”. Against this idea, the nationalist-ideological philosophers and other African philosophers/scholars proof that they can assimilate European culture and lifestyle, through education. The Europeans were ignorant of the existence of African philosophy, due to the language problems and barriers. By educating the Africans to better understand their language, the Europeans unconsciously paved the way for them to better understand African philosophy. Many are still ignorant of this fact, because the idea of educating blacks was for easy communication and exploitation. Unknown to many, European education was a means for Africans to educate the Europeans with their philosophy (African Philosophy). Eze confirmed this when he said that “we know that the earliest Africans in America and Europe were largely forcefully brought there through slavery, and that the succeeding generation who came after the abolition of slave trade came largely to learn the ways of the West in preparation for the revolutions that would crystallize in constitutional de-colonization (Kwame Nkrumah, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Senghor etc.)” (1998: 219). It was as a result of the Europeans misinterpretation of her culture, ideas and way of life that the nationalist-ideological philosophers reinforced their ideas so that the Europeans can better understand their philosophy. Following this views, the existence of African philosophy can also considered as an indirect response to Hume and Kant. To emphasize this point, Eze states that:

African philosophy as a field of inquiry thus has its contemporary roots in the effort of African thinkers to combat political and economic exploitations, and to examine, question, and contest ideaties imposed upon them by Europeans. The claims and counter-claims, justifications and alienations that characterize such historical conceptual protests and contestations indelibly mark the discipline of African philosophy (2001: 217).

Against Hume's and Kant's ideas that Africans are inferior to the whites, and are irrational beings who are unable to engage in critical reflection upon their own existence, I present that in this case the nationalist-ideological philosophers have employed their mental and rational capacities to address and articulate issues concerning Africans. This is no different from what the Europeans or modern Western philosophers have done. All human being, as rational animals, are endowed with these capacities and all societies are confronted by these ultimate questions. Since we apply reason in all that we do, reasoning does not belong to anyone, it is part of nature.

Léopold Sédar Senghor's theoretical work "advocated some kind of symbiosis within the African context, for some dominant suppositions within both the West and Africa contexts" (Ochieng'-Odhiambo 2010: 151). Senghor stipulated that "Black man's emotivity is due neither to inherently superior sensory faculties nor to inherently inferior rational faculties, but to a particular attitude toward the external world and its apparent complexity. Essentially positive and dynamic, this attitude is a direct result of the notion of life force and its intensification, and the tendency to relate to the external world as to a network of interacting forces" (Senghor quoted in Wolfers 1979: 75). The above explains his idea on the meaning of reason and humanity. The above reaction from Senghor is simply an example that better describes and informs us on how the concept of race has affected some Africans. It explicitly shows Africans' awareness of racial consciousness and their intellectual urge to defend it without the fore-knowledge of them being racist at the same time. In effect, this was what the works and writings of the Nationalistic-ideological philosophers actually defended.

Against Hume's and Kant's misunderstanding of Africans, I recap what I had articulated in my previous chapters (chapter one and two). The conceptual transformations that have been happening through the centuries, in both Africa and Europe, attest to the fact that our articulation of reality is a highly contested terrain. I consider as "Philosophy" all discourses

or texts that represent an attempt by individuals to employ their rational capacities to address, articulate and resolve the ultimate question of life. An unmistakeable feature of the African continent is its cultural and ideological plurality. We cannot subscribe to any essentialist notion of African thought, except that as members of human race living on the African continent, we can all account for an innate capacity to employ our mental and rational capacities. I believe that there are some ultimate questions which have been accorded greater emphasis in African and those that needs more emphasis, depending on the particular era of African history. The concept of race is one of these questions. The arrival of the colonizers in Africa marked the interchange of modernity and tradition. Out of this contentious union there is some ultimate questions, one of which is the underlying concern of the concept or race and African identities. It is to these regards that Chinua Achebe said:

It is, of course true that the African identity is still in the making. There isn't a final identity that is African. But, at the same time, there *is* an identity coming into existence. And it has a certain context and a certain meaning. Because if somebody meets me, say, in a shop in Cambridge, he says "Are you from Africa?" Which means that African means something to some people. Each of these tags a meaning, and a penalty and a responsibility (quoted in Appiah 1992: 173).²²

According to Appiah, "meaning is not always one we can be happy with, and identity is one we must continue to reshape. Thinking about how we are to reshape identity, we should do well to remember that the African identity is, for its bearer's only one among many" (1992: 177). Masolo also gives a better explanation of African identity using the word "return" in Aimé Césaire's book. According to Masolo, the word "return," which appears in the title of Aimé Césaire Poem – *Return to My Native Land* – is a term "which symbolizes many aspects of the struggle of the peoples of African origin to control their own identity... a symbolic call to all black people to rally together around the idea of common origin and in a struggle to defend that unifying commonality... – a uniting idea of common origin for all black peoples" (1994: 2). This commonality became their identity tag and a language that expresses Africans unification. This is exactly what the

²² Achebe, Interview.

nationalistic-ideological philosophers and the existence of African philosophy has actually shown.

3.8. Conclusion

As a response to Hume's and Kant's ideas of the Negros/blacks, this chapter showed that the works of nationalist-ideological philosophers and the existence of African philosophy is a proof that Africans are not irrational or inferior to the whites. The chapter in summary explained the nationalist-ideological philosophy, capitalizing on the rationale that their works actually helped to untie African from the yolk of colonialism. The chapter further drew attention to the fact that the Nationalist-ideological philosophers are the ones that started movement of change. This trend became the viable alternative because the philosophical ideology of these philosophers constitutes an ardent call for all Africans to return to their values and shun everything that is foreign and dehumanizing. Furthermore, I probed the reasons behind nationalistic-ideological philosophy and also discussed its nature, as well as the philosophical ideologies of the proponents. In the chapter, I also argued that the philosophical pride that some African philosophers have acquired has counteracted Hume's and Kant's ideas that blacks are irrational and inferior to the whites. In reaffirming the existence of African philosophy, I elucidated that African philosophy should be primarily concerned with the experience, culture and history of Africans with the aim of making sense of the people's experience through critical and rigorous reflection. Likewise, I discussed the philosophical pride that African philosophy has acquired, and concluded that the nationalistic-ideological philosophy and the existence of African philosophy is an indirect response to Hume and Kant.

Chapter Four

4. Answering the Question: Can we Transcend or Go Beyond the Concept of Race?

4.1. Introduction

In recent years, philosophers have devoted their time to the discourse of race and to understanding the ascription of race. These philosophers have paid increasing attention to the idea and the normative question of whether race should be conserved or eliminated.

Conservationists such as W. E. B. Du Bois, Lucius Outlaw, Paul Taylor and Ron Sundstrom argue that race is indeed very real and should be conserved, because race talk is very necessary. Du Bois argues that the common history, experiences, traditions and impulses, and common blood and language need to be preserved or conserved. This is because they are part of the Negro identity and Negroes can only contribute to civilization and humanity if and only if they keep all the above in mind. For Outlaw, the notion of race ought not to be eliminated but to be conserved, because the existence of racial groups plays a big role in our social life. He further claims that “for most of us, the knowledge that there are different races of people is one of the most obvious features of our social worlds” (1990: 58).

Eliminativists such as Kwame Anthony Appiah, Naomi Zack, Lawrence Blum and Ashley Montagu argue that race does not exist and that it is an illusion. Appiah’s argument in defense of the concept of race lies on his idea that race is an illusion and that the concept of race cannot do anything for us. Furthermore, he alludes that the biological idea of race is of limited use because what biologists seem to suggest about genetic idea of race is different from the historical theory of evolution. Naomi Zack argues that “Essences, geography, phenotypes, genotypes, and genealogy are the only known candidates for physical scientific bases of race. Each fails. Therefore, there is no physical scientific basis for the social racial taxonomy” (Zack 2002: 88). What the above means is that the “ordinary concept of race has no scientific basis” (Zack 1993: 18).

Like the above philosophers, Eze's (2002) work in *Achieving our Humanity* edges close to being a work of racial prognosis. However, more than this, Eze took a step forward by investigating Western and African philosophy alike for racial biases obtained from society. Eze argues that race is not essential to understanding and defining humankind. My reason for including Eze's discourse of race in this chapter is that his work investigates the idea of race and racial biases within Western and African philosophy.

My aim in this chapter is to discuss the ideas of the conservationists and the eliminativists camps, and to use their standpoints to answer the question posed in the title of this chapter about the possibility of transcending the concept of race. In this way, I would also elaborate on the meaning and idea of racial skepticism (eliminativists) and racial constructivism (conservationist), as well as discuss the race concepts of two philosophers from each camp. From the conservationists', focus will be on the ideas of W. E. B. Du Bois and Lucius Outlaw; while the works of Kwame Anthony Appiah and Naomi Zack would be used to expand on the eliminativists' perspectives. The section following these would look at Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze's ideas on race. Overall, the chapter would answer the question on the possibility of transcending the concept of race by expanding on and adopting Joshua Glasgow's theory of 'racial reconstructionism' as the answer to the question posed. My argument for the choice of this theory would be based on the fact that it neither advocates for the elimination or conservation of the concept of race or race-thinking. It however encourages that we should see the concept of race as one that has a different meaning and future beyond the mere meaning that calls for its elimination or conservation.

4.2. Racial Skepticism and Racial Constructivism

Ron Mallon (2006) provides a good outline of the contemporary philosophical terrain of the concept of race. In his works, he divided the concept of race into different competing camps. They are made up of "three metaphysical camps (racial naturalism, racial skepticism, and racial constructivism) and two normative camps (eliminativism and conservationism)" (Michael 2012: 5). Racial naturalism signifies the popular biological conception of race, which portrays races as bearing "biobehavioral essences: underlying natural (and perhaps genetic) properties that are (1) heritable, biological features, (2) shared

by all and only the members of a race, and (3) explain behavioral, characterological, and cultural predispositions of individual persons and racial groups” (Mallon 2006: 528–529).

Racial skepticism holds that races of any type do not exist. According to the racial skeptists, “the term race cannot refer to anything real in the world, since the one thing in the world to which the term could uniquely refer—discrete, essentialist, biological races—have been proven not to exist” (Michael 2012: 3). Both Appiah and Zack adopt normative racial *eliminativism*, and this view recommends disposal of the concept of race entirely. In other words, the eliminativist argument is based on the idea that race is an illusion and should be eliminated from public discourse.

Racial constructivism refers to the argument that, even if the biological concept of race is false, races have come into existence and continue to exist through “human culture and human decisions” (Mallon 2007: 94). Racial constructivists consent to the skeptics’ removal of biological race, but they argue that the term still meaningfully refers to the widespread grouping of individuals into certain categories by society. “Normatively, race constructivists argue that since society labels people according to racial categories, and since such labeling often leads to race-based differences in resources, opportunities and well-being, the concept of race must therefore be conserved in order to facilitate race-based social movements or policies – such as affirmative action – that compensate for socially constructed but socially relevant racial differences” (Michael 2012: 4).

Normative racial *eliminativism* holds that race is an illusion, therefore we should eliminate race-thinking. Examples of those that belong to this group are; Kwame Anthony Appiah, Naomi Zack, Ashley Montagu and Lawrence Blum. The *conservationists* hold that race is very real and we should conserve the concept of race. Example conservationists include W. E. B. Du Bois, Lucius Outlaw, Paul Taylor and Ron Sundstrom. These philosophers can also be seen as racial realists for their proposition that the idea of race is real.

4.3. The Ideas of the Conservationist and the Eliminativist

In this section elaborates the ideas of race from the viewpoints of two philosophers from each camp. From the conservationists’, the thoughts of W. E. B. Du Bois and Lucius

Outlaw constitute the focus; while those of Kwame Anthony Appiah and Naomi Zack are eliminativists.

4.3.1. William Edward Burghardt Du Bois

W. E. B. Du Bois called his life story the “Autobiography of a Race Concept”. He was concerned not just with the meaning of race, but with the truth about the concept. In his paper “The Conservation of Race” (1897), he declared that the “American Negro,” has “been led to...minimize race distinctions” because, “most of the discussions of race with which he is familiar have lurked certain assumptions as to his natural abilities, his political, intellectual and moral status, which he felt were wrong” (1897: 75). Nevertheless, he went on to say that “in our calmer moments we must acknowledge that human beings are divided into races, and “even if when we come to inquire into the essential difference of races we find it hard to come at once to any definite conclusion” (1897: 75). He further said that so far, “the final word of science is that we have at least two, perhaps three great families of human beings – the whites and Negroes, possible the yellow race” (1897: 75). This is not to say that he was satisfied with the final word or conclusion of nineteenth century science. This explains his views that “what matters are not the “grosser physical differences of colour, hair and bone” but the “differences – subtle, delicate and elusive, though they may be – which have silently but definitely separated men into groups”” (1897: 75). What mattered for him was the idea that “race” is not a biological concept, but a historical and sociohistorical concept. For him, the “sociohistorical races each had a “message” for humanity – a message which derives in some way from God’s purpose in creating races.” He claimed that “the Negro race has still to deliver its full message; therefore it is the duty of Negroes to work together – through race and organizations – so that this message can be delivered” (Appiah 1985: 25). By virtue of the Negroes sociohistorical community, what one can decipher from the above is that to deliver this message that Du Bois was talking about; the concept of race needs to be conserved.

Du Bois was not satisfied with the late-nineteenth century biological and anthropological idea of race, which was why he said that the concept of race is a sociohistorical notion. Considering the sociohistorical idea of race, he argued that the history of the world is not

of individuals, “but of groups, not of nations, but of races, and he who ignores or seeks to override the race idea in human history ignores and overrides the central thought of all history” (Du Bois 2001: 84). Du Bois considers that there are eight “distinctly differentiated races, in the sense in which history tell us the word must be used” (1897: 76). He listed distinct races as follows: “slave, Teutons, English (in both Great Britain and American), Negroes (of Africa and America), the Romance race, Semites, Hindus, and Mongolians. Du Bois further asserted that:

The question now is: What is the real distinction between these nations? Is it physical differences of blood, colour and cranial measurements? Certainly we must all acknowledge that physical differences play a great part. . . . But while race differences have followed along mainly physical lines, yet no mere physical distinction would really define or explain the deeper differences—the cohesiveness and continuity of these groups. The deeper differences are spiritual, psychical, differences—undoubtedly based on the physical, but infinitely transcending them (1897: 77).

Thus, he defined race as “a vast family of human beings, generally of common blood and language, always of common history, traditions and impulses, who are both voluntarily and involuntarily striving together for the accomplishment of certain more or less vividly conceived ideals of life” (2001: 85). Tommy Lott defined Du Bois’s definition of race when he said that “Du Bois wanted to get African Americans to invent themselves as a cultural group because he wanted blacks to be strong, and believed that the ‘strength of a group lies in its cultural integrity’” (quoted in Boxill 2001: 33). Furthermore, Du Bois proposed that the “negro people as a race have a contribution to make to civilization and humanity, which no other race can make” (1897: 85). This contribution can only be achieved when the “Negro decent, as a body, maintain their race identity until this mission of the Negro people is accomplished, and the ideal of human brotherhood has become a practical possibility” (*ibid*). What the above means is that in order for the Negro people or decent to achieve the above, they must conserve the idea of race; that is, the idea that they are of the same race (identity), before they can possibly achieve or contribute to civilization and humanity. Du Bois made this clear when he said that “the eight million people of Negro blood in the United states of America—must soon come to realize that if they are to take their place in the pan-Negroism, then their destiny is *not* absorption by the white Americans” (1897: 79). He further said that:

Manifestly some of the great races of today – particularly the Negro race – have not as yet given to civilization the full spiritual message which they are capable of giving. I will not say that the Negro race has as yet given no message to the world, for it is still a mooted question among scientists as to just how far Egyptian civilization was Negro in its origin; if it was not wholly Negro, it was certainly very closely allied. Be that as it may, however the fact still remains that the full, complete Negro message of the whole Negro race has not as yet been given to the world: that the messages and ideal of the yellow race have not been completed, and that the striving of the mighty Slaves has but begun. The question is, then: How shall this message be delivered; how shall these various ideals be realised? The answer is plain: By the development of these race groups, not as individuals, but as races (2001: 87).

Du Bois maintained that the common history, experiences, traditions and impulses, and common blood and language need to be preserved or conserved, because they are part of the Negro identity and Negro can only contribute to civilization and humanity if and only if they keep all the above in mind. Du Bois further states that “it is our duty to conserve our physical powers, our intellectual endowments, our spiritual ideals; as a race we must strive by race organization, by race solidarity, by race unity to the realization of that broader humanity which freely recognizes differences in men, but sternly deprecates inequality in their opportunities of development” (2001: 88).

4.3.2. Lucius Outlaw

Lucius Outlaw (2001) argues for the conservation of race, in his article “Toward a Critical Theory of “Race”. According to Outlaw, “the notion of “race” as a fundamental component of “race thinking” –that is, a way of conceptualizing and organizing social worlds composed of persons whose differences allow for arranging them into groups that come to be called “race” –has had a powerful career in Western history and continues to be a matter of significant social weight (2001: 63). He further asserts that:

the term “race” is a vehicle for notions deployed in the organization of these worlds in our encounters with persons who are significantly different from us particularly in terms of physical features (skin color and other anatomical features), but also, often combined with these, when they are different with respect to language, behavior, ideas, and other “cultural” matters (2001: 58).

Outlaw asserts that in the United State, “race” seems to be a constitutive element of their common sense and focal point of contention. Outlaw stresses that “as we are constantly burdened by the need to resolve difficulties, posing varying degrees of danger to the social whole in which “race” is the focal point of contention, we are likewise constantly

reinforced in our assumption that “race” is self-evident” (2001: 58). The void of conflicts seems to rest on the rationalization of “race” as society progresses, develops and share some new forms of self-understanding and similar forms of social practices. Thus, there has been persistence of social struggles in which race is a key factor due to anticolonial and antiracist struggles throughout the “so-called Third World and Europe.”

Outlaw seems to pair the notion of race with the idea of ethnicity. He believes that racial/ethnic bonds have been the backbone of different communities. David E. McClean further clarifies this point on Outlaw’s assertion that racial/ethnic bonds continue to hold communities together, and that physical features are caught up in the formation of those bonds. This physical features are, “skin colour and other anatomical features, appears to be a reason why various community are still living together” (2004: 155). Thus, for Outlaw, without the racial/ethnic bonds a community of people cannot live together. To further explain the above, Outlaw tried to explain his idea of ethnicity when he said that:

According to the logic of “ethnicity” as the paradigm for conceptualizing groups differences and fashioning social policy to deal with them, the socially devisive effects of “ethnic” differences were to disappear in the social-cultural “melting pot” through assimilation, or, according to the pluralists, ethnic identity would be maintained across time but would be mediated by principles of the body politic: all *individuals*, “without regard to race, creed, color, or national origin,” were to win their places in society on the basis of demonstrated achievement (i.e., merit). For both assimilationists and pluralists, *group* characteristics (ethnicity) were to have no play in the determination of merit. Their legitimacy was restricted to the private sphere of “culture.” This has been the officially sanctioned, and widely socially shared, interpretation of the basic principles of the body politic in the United States in the modern period, even though it was, in significant measure, a cover for the otherwise sometimes explicit but always programmatic, domination of Africans and of other peoples (2001: 61).

The above can definitely give one the idea that Outlaw is really devoted to the robustness of racial and ethnic based identities—so much that, “he seems to view them as almost inviolable, as having almost inalienable rights to exist as they are and to be protected from eroding assaults from the outside, and especially by those who use Eurocentric notions or reason and scientific method” (McClean 2004: 155). By a frequent combination of race and ethnicity/culture as a way of suggesting that one cannot do without the other, Outlaw rhetorically argued for the conservation of race. Thus, it applies that if one decides to criticize the concept of race, that person is also criticizing ethnicity or cultures. “To those

who would do away with racial/ethnic groups by dint of logical reasoning,” Outlaw says that, “they are violating the Aristotelian principle that we must determine whether the subject of an inquiry is a *teche* or an *episteme*—that race/ethnics are more appropriately analyzed as morals and politics are examined, that is, with appropriate reference to the needs, character, and purposes of individuals and communities” (*Ibid*). And so Outlaw ends by saying that:

Lest we move too fast on this, however, there is still to be explored the “other side” of “race”: namely, the lived experiences of those within racial groups (e.g., blacks for whom Black Nationalism, in many ways, is fundamental). That “race” is without a scientific basis in biological terms does *not* mean, thereby, that it is without any social value, racism notwithstanding. The exploration of “race” from this “other side” is required before we will have an adequate critical theory, one that truly contributes to enlightenment and emancipation, in part by appreciating the integrity of those who see themselves through the prism of “race.” We must not err yet again in thinking that “race thinking” must be completely eliminated on the way to emancipated society. That elimination I think unlikely—and unnecessary. Certainly, however, the social divisive forms and consequences of “race thinking” ought to be eliminated, to whatever extent possible (2001: 82).

For Outlaw therefore, the notion of race ought not to be eliminated, but to be conserved because existence of racial groups plays a big role in our social life. He further asserts that, “race” “is partly political and partly cultural;” and “the biological aspects of “race” are conscripted into projects of cultural, political, and social construction” (2001: 70).

4.3.3. Kwame Anthony Appiah

Kwame Anthony Appiah (1992), in his book “In My Father’s House”, gives us his idea on race which he perceives would help preserve humanity. According to Appiah, “to say that biological races existed because it was possible to classify people into a small number of classes according to their gross morphology, would be to save racialism in the letter but lose it in the substance” (1992: 37). Appiah believes that race is relatively unimportant by virtue of the fact that it does not explain biological difference among human beings. According to Appiah, the meaning that has been attached to racial classification is not important. Considering Du Bois’ idea and the biological concept of race, race can be seen as non-existent. Appiah further criticizes the biological concept of race by drawing from his experience and arguing that “biological evidence about race is not sufficiently known and appreciated” (Appiah 1985: 22). Appiah adopts normative racial *eliminativism* which

endorses the idea of discarding the concept of race completely. In other words, he holds that race of any kind does not exist, and because of its historical genealogy, the term race can only refer to one or more discrete groups of people who alone share biologically significant genetic features” (Michael 2012: 2). A monopoly on certain genetic features could only arise in a group of people that practices inbreeding at a high level that is well genetically isolated. The Amish in American can be an example of such genetic isolation (Appiah 1996: 73).

Appiah argues that:

To establish that this notion of race is relatively unimportant in explaining biological differences between people, where biological difference is measured in the proportion of differences in loci on the chromosome, is not yet to show that race is unimportant in explaining cultural difference. It could be that large differences in intellectual or moral capacity are caused by differences at very few loci, and that at these loci, all (or most) black-skinned people differ from all (or most) white-skinned or yellow-skinned ones. As it happens, there is little evidence for any such proposition and much against it. But suppose we had reason to believe it. In the biological conception of the human organism, in which characteristics are determined by the pattern of genes in interaction with environments, it is the presence of the alleles (which give rise to these moral and intellectual capacities) that accounts for the observed differences in those capacities in people in similar environments. So the characteristic racial morphological—skin and hair and bone—could be a sign of those differences only if it were (highly) correlated with those alleles. Since there are no such strong correlations, even those who think that intellectual and moral character and strongly genetically determined must accept that *race* is at best a poor indicator of capacity (1992: 37).

The recovered notion of race would be of no biological interest, as there “are relatively straightforward reasons for thinking that large parts of humanity will fit into no class of people who can be characterized as sharing not only a common superficial morphology but also significant other biological characteristics” (Appiah 1992: 37). He further argues on the ground of the origin of human descent and conventional evolutionary theory. According to Appiah, “There is no doubt that all human beings descend from an original population (probably, as it happens, in Africa), and from there people radiated out to cover the habitable globe” (*ibid*). “Conventional evolutionary theory would predict that as these populations move into different environments and new characters were thrown up by mutation, some differences would emerge as different characteristics gave better chances of production and survival” (*ibid*). If I can get his idea correctly, Appiah is of the idea that based on human descent there is nothing as race because we are all from one descent and

mutational change should not be a reason for human/racial classification. Differences would emerge based on environment but that still is not a reason for classification. “In a sense, trying to classify people into a few races is like trying to classify books in a library: you may use a single property—size, say—but you will get a useless classification... No one – not even the most compulsive librarian!—thinks that book classifications reflect deep facts about books. Each of them is more or less useless for various purposes” (Appiah 1992: 38). Thus, for Appiah, the classification of human beings does not reflect any deep facts about humans in general. In other words, the concept of race does not reflect any deep facts about human beings. Human beings as we know have different purposes to achieve in life, so the classification of humans does not tell us which races we should value, as “the numbers in the Dewey decimal system does not correspond with qualities of utility or interest or literary merit” (*ibid*).

“The notion of race that was recovered would be of no biological interest—the interesting biological generalizations are about genotypes, phenotypes, and their distribution in geographical population” (Appiah 1992: 37). Besides the above biological classification or generalizations, the notion of race would be of no biological interest because all humans are linked with each other and there is no need to classify people into different races based on human descent. According to Appiah, if there arises any need for the classification, “we could just as well classify people according to whether or not they were redheaded, or redheaded and freckled, or redheaded, freckled, and broad-nosed too, but nobody claims that this sort of classification is central to human biology” (*ibid*). Appiah further argues that “the appeal of race as a classificatory notion provides us with an instance of a familiar pattern in the history of science” (1992: 38). Scientists started the idea of classification and categorization based on their folk theory of the world. Gradually science developed and became the sole tools for a deeper understanding of things around us. Thus, “in early chemistry, color and taste played an important role in the classification of substances; in early natural history, plant and animal species were identified largely by their gross visible morphology” (*ibid*). Because of the above and scientists’ methods of discovery and organization, and classification becomes a special activity. “The benefit we gain is that we

are able to make generalization of greater power and scope” (*ibid*), but the disadvantage is that we seem to always classify things that do not need to be classified.

Concluding on this discourse, Appiah states that:

The truth is that there are no races: there is nothing in the world that can do all we ask race to do for us. As we have seen, even the biologist’s notion has only limited uses, and the notion that Du Bois required, and that underlies the more hateful racism of modern era, refers to nothing in the world at all. The evil that is done is done by the concept and by easy–yet impossible–assumptions as to its applications.

To call it “biologizing” is not, however, to consign our concept of race to biology. For what is present there is not our concept but our word only. Even the biologist who believe in human races use the term *race*, as they say, “without any social implication”²³ What exists “out there” in the world—communities of meaning, shading variously into each other in the rich structure of the social world in the province not of biological but of human sciences (1992: 45).

It is important to underscore that the outlook of Appiah’s argument in defense of the concept of race lies on his idea that race is an illusion and that the concept of race cannot do anything for us. More so, the biological idea of race is of limited use because what biologists seem to suggest about genetic idea of race based on the idea of classification is different from the historical theory of evolution. Thus, Appiah believes that race is relatively unimportant because it does not explain the biological difference among human beings.

4.3.4. Naomi Zack

Naomi Zack, in “Philosophy of Science and Race” (1993, 2002) provided a clear view of the racial skeptic’s argument against the idea of the biological foundations of race. Like Appiah, Zack adopts normative racial *eliminativism*, which endorses the idea of discarding the concept of race completely. In other words, she holds that race of any kind does not exist because the idea of racial naturalism seems to be false. To Zack, “Race” “means a biological taxonomy or set of physical categories that can be used consistently and informatively to describe, explain, and make predictions about groups of human beings and individual members of those groups” (2002: 1). Zack further explains that “race cannot

²³ Nei and Roychoudhury, “Genetic Relationship and Evolution of Human Races,” 4.

be founded upon transmission genetics, since the genes transmitted from one generation to the next lead to very specific physical traits, not general racial characteristics shared by all members of a putatively racial group” (Michael 2012: 5). Furthermore, “*genealogy* cannot ground race, since clades (populations descended from a common ancestor) may have common genetic characteristics, but these need not correlate with the visible traits associated with races” (Michael 2012: 5). Zack further suggest that many “biologists and anthropologists are sceptical of the concept of race as a useful scientific tool because no racial population, past and present, has ever been completely isolated from other races in terms of breeding” (1993: 15).

In Michael’s view, “Zack provides an accessible summary of the racial skeptic’s argument against the biological foundations for race, sequentially summarizing the scientific rejection of essences, geography, phenotypes, post-Mendelian transmission genetics, and genealogies as possible foundations for races” (2012: 2). Zack discussed Aristotelian and Thomist doctrines of essence and substance. Zack explains their doctrines, saying that they “are what they are because they contain the essences of the kinds to which they belong: essences (somehow) inhere in individual things that are substances; and the essences of substances support their accidental attributes” (2001: 44). The above ideas, especially the Aristotelian doctrine of essence “thought to ground the common characteristics of distinct species,” were rejected by Zack and early modern philosophers. “If essences cannot even ground differences among species, then they clearly cannot ground the differences among races, which even nineteenth century racial science still understood as members of the same species” (Michael 2012: 2). This essentialist doctrine of race was philosophically dethroned by the folk concept of race. Zack further elaborated on this by stating that:

The present folk concept of race did not exist when essentialist theories of ontology and meaning were widely accepted in the ancient and medieval periods. And, essentialist theories of ontology and meaning were philosophically dethroned by the later half of the nineteenth century, when American scientists constructed speculative theories of the hierarchy of human races, based on philosophical essentialism. These scientists posited a unique essence or “genius” for each race that was present in all its members: in cultural and biological rank, the white race was highest, the black race lowest; the essence of the black race was infinitely transmittable from one generation of direct genealogical descent to the next, but the essence of the white race could only be preserved if the essence of the black race were not present with it in the same individual (2001: 44).

Against the essentialist theory, the folk theories divided humanity based on their geographical location. Geographically humanity was divided into African, European, Asian, and Amerindian races. But contemporary population genetics divulge the emptiness of this divide for two reasons. Firstly, “geographically based environmental stimuli lead to continuous physical adaptations in skin, hair and bone rather than the discrete differences associated with race” (Michael 2012:2). Secondly, “although mitochondrial DNA mutations provide evidence of the geographical origins of populations, these mutations do not correlate with the physical traits associated with racial groups” (Michael 2012: 2). Similarly, Zack is of the idea that phenotypes cannot be a ground for folk theories of race. Skin color has been the primary common sense criterion for racial classification, membership and identification. “Skin color differences are taken for granted as evidence of racial difference, if not considered to be racial differences in themselves, then skin color is assumed to be the evolutionary result of ancestral geographical environment” (Zack 2002:42). According to Zack, there are problems with this assumption, one being “using an evolutionary geographical model to explain skin color differences.” Zack further explains the problems stating that:

People with dark skin are present in cold climates, and light skin is not necessarily an adaptive advantage in cold climates that have less sunlight, because recent evidence suggests that vitamin D can be stored in the body. Even more recent evidence suggests that skin color differences around the globe are adaptive responses to the amount of ultraviolet light present. UV light is necessary to produce vitamin D-3 and folate, which support fetal growth, and more of it is absorbed by lighter than darker skin. Too much UV light causes skin cancer, and too little retards fetal growth and bone development (2002: 42).

Zack further asserts that there are two important problems when we use skin color as the basis for race. The first problem is an obvious one, it is based on the idea that “apart from custom, there is no reason to believe that skin color differences are in themselves, or in combination with other biological differences, sufficiently important to provide a basis for a human subspecies, or racial, taxonomy” (2002: 42 – 43). The second problem is that “while skin color is accepted as a foundation for racial difference in society, in nature there are no distinct groups. Furthermore, the geographical continuity of human skin color is not an isolated pattern of human phenotypical difference” (Zack 2002: 43). Zack also argues that race cannot be founded upon transmission genetics. This idea of transmission genetics and genealogy, which I explain later, focuses on hereditary. According to Zack, there are

two ways that race seems to be heredity. “First, physical racial traits are hereditary traits and to a large extent are determined by genes. Second, an individual’s racial membership is usually taken to be the result of the racial membership of his or her parents and ancestors” (2002: 59). Zack explains this using Mendelian law of heredity, which elucidates that the hereditary material of animal and plants is contained in DNA, “the molecule deoxyribonucleic acid. Thus she argues that the genes transmitted from one generation to the next lead to very specific physical traits and not general racial characteristics shared by all members of a putatively racial group” (Michael 2012: 2). Zack asserts that in genetic terms, there is nothing about “racial traits” that makes children or people racial. Furthermore, she avows that, “if there are no racial phenotypes to begin with, then there cannot be any racial genotypes because, effects not in evidence cannot be presumed to have causes” (2002: 71). Lastly, Zack argues that genealogy, which is the second kind of racial hereditary, cannot ground race. The subject of genealogy has to do with one’s ancestral racial groups or family lineage. “Since the environment usually changes in ways that are continuous geographically, the so-called racial traits of indigenous populations or groups that have lived in particular places for relatively long time periods have been called *clines*” (2002: 73). According to Zack:

Genealogy has a macro and micro level. On the macro level and evolutionary group spanning millennia could provide a genealogical grounding of race if it had distinctive common ancestry. On the micro level, genealogy describes how, within time frames in social, recorded history, individuals are related to each other through parents, ancestors, and collateral kin (relatives descended from common ancestors in different parental lines of descent), both macro and micro genealogy concern relations of entire organisms and not simply their specific biological traits. (2002: 59–60).

Thus, Zack argues that genealogy cannot ground race “since clades (populations descended from a common ancestor) may have common genetic characteristics, but these need not correlate with the visible traits associated with races” (Michael 2012: 2). In this given, Zack concludes her argument with the idea that “Essences, geography, phenotypes, genotypes, and genealogy are the only known candidates for physical scientific bases of race. Each fails. Therefore, there is no physical scientific basis for the social racial taxonomy” (Zack 2002: 88). She further states that “black and white racial designations are themselves racist because the concept of race does not have an adequate scientific foundation. If racial designations are racist, then people ought to be identified in the third person as members

of races, then individuals in the first person ought to have racial identities” (Zack 1993: 3–4).

4.3.5. Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze

Like the above philosophers, Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze’s (2002) work – *Achieving our Humanity* – edges close to being a work of racial prognosis. However, more than this, Eze treads a rare route, investigating Western and African philosophy alike, for racial biases obtained from society but granted a certain transcendentalism or philosophical back-bone in detailed scholarly analysis. Eze argues that race is not essential to understanding and defining humankind. In other words, the effect of race is best invalidated than maintained. To show this, he brings metaphysics to bear on race, enlightening race’s difficult problem. He also brings race to bear on the history of modern metaphysics and moral thinking, enlightening modern philosophy’s responsibility with hateful uses of race. He also talks about race in line with the history of African philosophy, illuminating negritude’s and African philosophy’s responsibility with supposedly revalued uses of race. He thus brings to the fore the idea that race has a significant impact on the birth and structure of modern and African philosophy. This is why Eze said that he “would be pleased to hear that that race has indeed been postmodernly transcended; but the contemporary reality of social experience instructs otherwise” (2001: xvii). In essence, he argues for the universality of the world’s different cultures and the visible possibilities of the transcendental modern idea of race.

As something of a curative to modern philosophy’s “racial unconscious”, Eze proposes an ethnographic critique. According to Eze, modern philosophy, often referred to as enlightenment philosophy, needs an enlightenment of its own. Such enlightenment would be two-pronged. First, it would awaken modern philosophy to the fact that much of its “universalist” philosophizing is underlined by racial undertones obtained unconsciously from specific societal contexts. Eze further argues that what modern philosophy has done without knowing, is to promote and discuss issues without an awareness that their deliberations are informed by racial biases and underpinnings already imbued in the culture, language and predispositions in Europe. Second, Eze says, “that while maintaining

the strength of modern philosophy's universal achievements, it also contextualizes these achievements in the racial and ethnic attitudes that limit them – in view of calling philosophy to further transcend these limits" (2002: x). This means that rather than simply imposing the findings of Western philosophical theories of reason (for example) on all the other races of men, philosophy should contextualize – or investigate the possible application of – its universalist findings in the world's different cultures, in the hope of drawing out some universality.

In order to accomplish his aim in the ethnographic critique, Eze posits that we can cash in on the long standing relationship between anthropology and ethnology on the one hand, both of which are disciplines which systematically study man in his context; and philosophy on the other hand serves as a useful starting point. This relationship is seen in modern western philosophy, but more so, it has also been obtained in modern African philosophy. What Eze seems to be suggesting is that while philosophy, which treads universals, obtains universal results needs to clearly state or show what qualifies as reason. Philosophy is supposed to bank on the contextualization mechanisms present in anthropology and ethnology to ask and seek an answer concerning what reason would translate into in each cultural context. Now, while a critique about the specific way in which Eze believes this conjoining of philosophy and ethnology or anthropology can be most fittingly achieved for his purposes may seem fickle at this point, such ceases to be the case in the face of multiple ways of achieving it, which are not necessarily analogous to each other.

There are two possible ways to perform this interfusion, which are to draw from the universalistic character of philosophy and the limit placed on it in the work done on particular cultures by anthropologists and ethnologists, but which do not necessarily arrive at the result Eze anticipates – in fact one of them does quite the opposite. First, philosophy with what Eze terms the strength of its universal achievements might work to "reform" how ethnology and anthropology obtain its results. In such setting, the questions asked, the strategies employed and the sources of information are likely to differ from what they are traditionally in ethnographic and anthropological studies, without these disciplines

radically losing their context-value. One classic example of such a setting is one that has constituted the focus of debate in African philosophy since the mid-1940s when it appeared, namely, Placide Tempels' *Bantu Philosophy*, which was discussed in chapter two. On one side of the debate, *Bantu Philosophy* is considered a classic work of ethnology, since it attempts to delineate and analyze the experiences (spiritual and otherwise) of the Bantu, as a people different from other peoples – like whites or Europeans, as in Tempels' case. Generally speaking, this is what ethnology as a branch of anthropology does. On the other end of the disputation, scholars like Henry Odera Oruka have termed *Bantu Philosophy* a piece of ethno-philosophical work, a fusion of philosophy and ethnology. What we find in this fusion is an overwhelming of ethnology by philosophical methods, language and a universalistic outlook. Criticisms of *Bantu Philosophy* have included the fact that it barely bears a resemblance of Bantu cosmo-reality. The Bantu family of languages, for instance, does not even have a word for *vital force*, a term at the centre of Tempels' analysis. Here, at least we find a possible case in which a fusion of philosophy's universalist character and ethnology's context-value, more than anything else seems to have failed to achieve an ethnographic critique that fits Eze's bill.

Enthusiasts of Eze's overall position in *Achieving our Humanity* may contend that Eze's omission of an articulation of how philosophy and ethnography may co-operate in the ethnographic critique does not play so much of a part towards the postracial future he proposes. I believe the opposite is quite the case. A disproportionate fusion of philosophy and ethnography, as I have shown above, will certainly affect the viability of Eze's postracial future. While I admit that it will be rather difficult even for Eze to speculate as to the specifics of such fusion as my critique demands of him, and that it would probably take him far afield and off topic, nothing detracts from its importance in any way. Therefore, it seems to be the case that Eze would have ventured a definition of what the limits of such a relationship ought to be.

But what is the aim of the ethnographic critique? What sort of effect does Eze expect it to have first in philosophy, and from philosophy into the wider society? What must be kept in mind is that Eze links the ethnographic critique somewhat fundamentally to the main

aim of *Achieving our Humanity*, namely, (to quote from the title) achieving the idea of a post-racial future. He says “the project of a postracial philosophy is, as it were, an effort to enlighten further modern philosophy’s projects of enlightenment” (2002: x).

To adumbrate the ethnographic critique’s aim Eze gives something of a personal race history. He says that growing up in Nigeria, his home country, he never knew such things as races; “it wasn’t until I came to the United States and England that I became black. In Nigeria, I grew up believing that I belong to the Igbo “tribe,” so that when the Igbos had conflicts with other equally “tribal” groups—conflicts such as the one that led to the Biafra war of the 1960’s—the language for articulating intergroup tensions and grievances was that of tribalism” (2002: 216). In his travels around Africa – journeys that took him to Zaire – he observed that though he was known as a “foreigner” never had he, for once, thought of himself as a member of a discrete race, disparate from members of other races in certain clearly defined ways, until he arrived in the United States of America, and more specifically, until he had to fill out a form to obtain a Social Security Number. Eze tells this story to the intended effect of arguing that race is not a necessity, that it is a contingent reality. He says, “examples abound that it is not necessary for humans to belong to a particular “race” in order to pursue and realize a socially meaningful sense of private or public humanity” (*ibid.*). So how did we come to have race? Whatever the answer to this question, Eze believes that philosophy can help us navigate the present realities of the racial experience, given that what has been of interest to philosophy in race matters is the dialectical and transcendental elements of race discourse,. So philosophy can fashion a system or perspective that recreates the dialectics of race. The post racial world Eze envisions is one in which, without denying that races exist, one can no longer be disadvantaged merely for his or her belonging to a given race, and one can no longer be advantaged over another merely because one belongs to a particular race.

Now, let us evaluate the plausibility of Eze’s claim (about himself and his idea of race) that “it wasn’t until I came to the United States and England that I became black” (2001: 216). This statement is of paramount importance since it is the premise upon which Eze builds

his claim that race is a contingent reality. It is a claim central to the conclusion he reaches in this book.

One would notice that Eze's claim here is not that "it wasn't until I came to the United States and England that I knew I was black"; this is an epistemic claim; a claim about knowledge, and a rather difficult claim to refute, as knowledge is objectively private. It is rather awkward to try to refute a person's claim about when that person got to know something or when that person acquired a piece of knowledge, without twirling yourself into an incoherent critique of that person's knowledge. To evaluate this claim, let's call this epistemic claim "E". Note, Eze's actual claim is that "it wasn't until I came to the United States and England that I became black". This claim seems to be an ontological claim; a claim about what a thing essentially is. To evaluate this claim again, let's call this ontological claim "O". Now, the difference between E and O is important in two respects. First, both claims do not amount to the same thing and are not subject to the same criticisms. In Eze's work both claims could not be deployed with the same desired effect toward the conclusion. E is a claim about what a thing knows it is, while the second, O, is a claim about what a thing is, whether or not that thing knows it. Since, the difference is so clear, the question is, "why is it of any import to point this out here?" A consideration of a possible critique of Eze's main claim – that is of O – reveals why it is of importance to maintain the vital distinction between both.

A critique of Eze's claim has it that, Eze conflates the moment when he knew he was black with the moment he became black. Critics posit that Eze seems to think that the moment he knew he was black is the same as the moment he became black. This critique is made much more insistent if you transpose it into two different times; the time of an incidence and the time of one's awareness. The time of the incidence and the time of one's awareness are two different things. In other words, both periods are not one and the same. For example, an injured soccer player, his or her injured or broken leg does not depend upon the player's knowledge of it. So, to return to Eze's actual words, critics opine that it was because Eze was always already black that he was able to discover it on arriving in the West.

This critique would work if racial identities or if races were merely about the colour of one's skin. The racial dialectics as Eze discussed in detail in this work is such that it is impinged upon another. He speaks about society always looking for "a class of victims", about blacks all around the world being bound together by the experience of "being blackened together" and in the racial dialectic; he speaks of the "white" racial identity as having defined the "black" racial identity. What this means is that racial "blackness" or "whiteness" is put upon you by the other, crucially in a dialectic moment and in a moment of racial interaction and interlocation. I think that Eze was "blackened" when he entered upon this interlocation on his first meeting with people of a different racial kind. Further, what this shows is that racial "whitening" or "blackening" is not a necessary part of our existence but rather something added on from the outside. The above is clear in Eze's inscription that:

The idea of tribe or ethnicity in Africa has little or nothing to do with the color of skin, eye, or hair. In Nigeria all the people who belong to the various tribes and ethnicities may be said to be considered racially "black" only because, as I and other Africans growing up in the modern world have discovered, one can be black—with those special and over determined meanings attaching to the label—without knowing or choosing it. With the exception of the very educated individuals who travel to South Africa, Europe, and the Americas, or who have read extensive literature produced by Africans and African-descended peoples in these parts of the world, Nigerians do not routinely identify themselves racially. In fact, the language or race and the vocabulary of racism as means of initiating and conducting intra- or intergroup conflict are practically absent in most parts of contemporary Africa. With the exceptions of the Republic of South Africa, Zimbabwe, or Algeria, which have had large settlements of white populations, these observations apply to most of Africa's modern nations. Thus, despite travels in West and Central Africa where my status as "foreign" was always on display either through my physical features or inability to speak the local languages, it is outside of Africa that I learned the modern meanings of "blackness" as a racial identity (2001: 218).

A critique of Eze's claim which I think much more formidable, and difficult to respond to, would be that whether Eze knew of it or not, Eze's race-group had already been "blackened". That is to say Eze's first encounter with the facts of (his) race does not translate to his first moment as black or "blackened". Now, it is hard to respond to this critique especially as Eze's claim was very specifically personal – considering he utilized the personal pronoun – which means we do not know exactly how this figures in a critique that puts Eze within a collectivity. What is clear, though is that this critique does not significantly thwart Eze's conclusion that race is not a necessary human phenomena, since to do that the critique would need to establish the appreciably more robust claim that

humans were born “blackened” or “whitened” even before any interaction and interlocation ever took place between the races.

4.4. Can we Transcend the Concept of Race?

The question of whether we should conserve or eliminate race is twisted up in the question of whether race is real or illusory. Thus, the conservationists and the eliminativists both want to conserve or eliminate the concept of race for different reasons. For instance, the eliminativists want to wave-away racial discrimination, biological make up, and social injustice. This is visible in Appiah’s statement, when he says: “as we have seen, even the biologist’s notion has only limited uses, and the notion of Du Bois required, and that underlies the more hateful racisms of the modern era, refers to nothing in the world at all, the evil that is done is done by the concept and by easy – yet impossible – assumptions as to its application” (1992: 15). From the above argument, it is apparent that the eliminativists are concerned about the damage the concept has caused, and also the possible damage it will continue to cause if the concept of race is conserved. On the whole the eliminativists want to eliminate the concept of race from public discourse, ignoring the fact that the concept of race is still a social issue. On the other hand, the conservationists want to conserve the concept of race solely because of their racial experiences. For example, colonial experience, racism and oppression. According to the conservationists, racial identity entails the reality that there exist people thought to be members of a particular race because they share certain characteristics with others which they do not have in common with other people. However, the ability to categorize and compare is widely considered a basic element that suggests difference. This categorization and comparison, according to the conservationists is seen as the reality of human society. For them, people of the same race often cannot help but compare themselves to each other. Such comparison often does not need to degenerate into a search for what is better, white or black, but human history and experience show that we compare mostly so that we could choose that which we have found to be better. Ideally, it is possible that such differences do not entail hurtful relations in society.

There is no doubt that both camps have good reason why they avow their positions. Their contribution, I think, is a perspective that is “grounded in the histories of philosophical thought in modern Europe and in Africa” (Eze 2001: 221). While their engagement in racial discourse has contributed a lot, I however do have some points of disagreements with both camps. I disagree with the eliminativists on the idea that race is an illusion. Besides the “conventional evolutionary theory would predict that as these populations move into different environments and new characters were thrown up by mutation, some differences would emerge as different characteristics gave better chances of production and survival” (Appiah 1992: 37). Looking at the idea of the ungrounded biological classification of race that the eliminativists based their argument on, I think that the eliminativists are scared of the idea that if we hold on or cling to the negative baggage (colonialism, oppression, racism and racial segregation), history might repeat itself. On the other hand, I disagree with the conservationists’ idea on conservation of race because, the past experience and negative baggage should be seen as epistemic knowledge that needs to be thought as part of history, instead of using it as a tool for recognition and dominance. Moreover, I believe that Du Bois’ assertion that the “Negro decent as a body maintain their race identity until this mission of the Negro people is accomplished, and the ideal of human brotherhood has become a practical possibility”, is based on his and the ‘negroes’ past experiences and negative baggage of the past. I submit therefore that instead of maintaining the idea that Negro decent has a mission to accomplish, we rather should say that the human race has a mission to accomplish.

Against the eliminativists, I want to argue that we²⁴ do not need to eliminate the concept of race; rather we only need to revisit the concept of race. In other words, we need to revisit the main reason why the concept of race is seen as an illusion according to the eliminativists. I think that their main spur dangles on the idea of the negative past, which hinges on the idea of colonization, oppression and racism.²⁵ They see race as an illusion not because of their argument that there is no biological racial classification or racial

²⁴ “We” in this context refers to humanity in general (both philosophers, scholars, and non-academics in general).

²⁵ A more detailed explanation of colonization, oppression and racism is in chapter one.

categorization, but because if the categorization happened to be recognized there will always be the idea of oppression, racial segregation and racism. Their desire to leave race behind is clouded with their hasty generalization that one's negative past will always lead to a destructive end. That is to say that, the historical negative past (colonization, oppression and racism) will eventually lead to retaliation, which can be catastrophe and destructions. Thus, in order to avoid catastrophe and destruction, the idea of the negative past needs to be eliminated or be seen as non-existence. Against this backdrop, I hold that we do not only need the concept of race because of the historical negative past, but we need the concept of race because we need the errors of the past that are intrinsically good and valuable in itself, to repair the future that we desire. Thus, in order to transcend the concept of race for a best possible future, we have to hold on to the intrinsic good and value of the past. Some intrinsic good and value can be the idea of education and easy communication.

Against the conservationists, I want to argue that we do not need to conserve the concept of race solely because of historical experiences or what the Negro race has to offer, but rather we only need to revisit the concept race. In other words, we need to revisit the main reason why the concept of race is real and should be conserved according to the conservationists. Even if we all accept that we are all different races there is no need for that continuous use of racial labels when referring to individuals. I am inclined to think that the main reason behind their conservation of the concept of race hangs on the historical experience of the past, which paved way for the idea of categorization and comparison. That is why according to the conservationists, racial identity entails the reality that people are said to be members of a particular race because they share certain characteristics with some people which they do not have in common with other people. The idea of comparison often seems to bring an atmosphere of tension. Questions like "which race is better?" arise. Conservationists still need to keep in mind that such comparisons often do not need to degenerate into a search for what is better, or best between white or black. This idea is dominant in Du Bois' idea about the mission of the Negro people. This is part of the reason why Appiah rejected the concept of race as it is often used to judge the intellectual capacity and moral character of other people. The judging of one's intellectual capacity based on race is an idea that has been dethroned and it should not be the case in this modern time.

Eliminativists and the conservationist are blinded by their argument of conserving or eliminating the concept. It has not dawned on them that this concept is now a universal concept that has more to offer for the future; “postracial future.” The language is the continuous engagement of an idea for a better understanding and philosophizing. The same can be said of the concept of race. There is a language proper to it which facilitates that universality. The language proper to it is the continuous engaging of the concept, which has been in places for long. Now, it is perfectly within our rights to presume that we have gotten to an extent in which there is no way we can diminish one of these languages (the ideas of the eliminativists and the conservationists) with regards to the ideas. Perhaps we have arrived at the point where we should stop arguing about which is the best theory of race, and instead combine ideas from both theories to better understand the concept of race. The possible idea we can get from the fusion is a future where racial labels may no longer impose on individuals or groups (Eze 2001: 223). A future “where no one is forced into a position in which one must automatically bear the privileges or the costs of a racial tag” (*ibid*).

Apparently it would take a lot of work and effort to wean these social identities of race, but it is in principle possible. More to the point, “it was very possible to *create* these social identities. Given various goods such as knowledge, productivity, stability, and recreation, we were able to justify creating new identities of being a professor or a Supreme Court Justice” (Glasgow 2009: 140–141). Since we can create these social identities, perhaps we can also choose to keep them aside when we choose to “through ‘mere’ convention” (Glasgow 2009: 141). Thus, I am inclined to think that both camps did not take these points into cognizance. They are both anxious with the negative past and what it can cause, disregarding the fact and reality that they all live together amidst the difference of skin colour. Although race discourse has become an existential issue, both the eliminativists and conservationists are out for the count of the fact that they have made racial discourse ‘existentially malleable.’ By this I mean that they are unaware that they have systematically made the concept of race or race discourse an existential issue that can be discussed in different ways for one to better understand without waving away the semantic meaning of

the concept. This simply means that the concept of race has become an everyday issue that people need to address

It is important to underscore that in order to balance the concept of race as propounded by both camps; we should eliminate some racist baggage from the ideas of both. This, I believe would help in levelling the disagreement between the camps. The differences, such as colour, eyes and hair, do not necessarily acquire hurtful relations in society. What the differences require is a *better* understanding of what makes the difference, why the difference, and what we can *achieve* together with the difference. The biological and other proof that has been argued to be the difference might not suggest the finality of concept, but it can only be seen as a stepping stone towards a more reliable understanding of the presupposed differences. Thus, I think that the concept of race has a “unique mission in the history of humankind” and this mission can only be actualized through the fusion of both camps (Glasgow 2009: 1).

Against the ideas of eliminativists and conservationists, Joshua Glasgow suggested “that we should *replace* racial discourse with a nearby discourse” (2009: 2). Glasgow asserts that “the basic idea to this position—what I will label *racial reconstructionism*—will be that we should stop using terms like ‘race,’ ‘black,’ ‘white,’ and so on to purport to refer to biological categories—as we currently use them. Instead we should use them to refer to wholly social categories” (2009: 2 – 3). As the name applies, racial reconstructionism is the idea that we should reconstruct our racial discourse. According to Glasgow (2009: 139), “Reconstructionism is a substitutionist view, not an eliminativist view, and according to substitutionism we should replace racial discourse with a nearby discourse, with attendant proximate concepts and conceptions.” With much relevant arguments on the untenability and tenability of race, Glasgow puts forth that, “if we are cognitively cursed to represent humanity in something like racial ways, then eliminativism is dead on arrival, but reconstructionism remains a viable alternative, since it asks us not to entirely do away with racial thinking, but to replace it with racial thinking” (2009: 143). He further suggests that this replacement will gear to further address moral, political, and prudential challenges that we want to face head-on.

To further affirm my point of argument and the possible outcome of Glasgow's theory of 'racial reconstructionism,' I would propose a position or theory that will be the new beginning after the implementation of Glasgow's theory. This position or theory is that we should neither eliminate the concept of race or race-thinking, nor conserve it. But that we should see the concept of race as a concept that has a different meaning and future beyond the mere meaning that calls for its elimination or conservation. The basic idea to this position—what I will label *racial transcendentalism*—will be that in as much as we use the terms like 'race,' 'black,' 'white,' and so on to refer to different individuals, we should instead use them not only as social or biological categories, but as an idea that keeps aside the negative ideas that call for its elimination or conservation. This negative idea involves moral, political and prudential challenges that we want to face head-on.

Transcendentalism or transcending in this context is to indicate that the agent "goes beyond" what simply is toward what can be: "the factual—including the agent's own properties—always emerges in light of the possible, where the possible is not a function of anonymous forces but a function of the agent's *choice* and *decision*" (Crowell 2010: 2). In this process of racial transcendence, the agent still recognises and retains his/her *knowledge* of where s/he started from and where s/he is at that moment, without a negative view of the old self or negative baggage, but a positive acceptance of it, in order to transcend it for a best possible future/world. This best possible future, as I said earlier, is a future "when no one is forced into a position in which one must automatically bear the privileges or the costs of a racial tag" (Eze 2001: 223). Our continuous learning and critical engagement regarding race—race discussion might help us more to move without hesitation beyond what we do know to what we do not know about race. It is therefore of essence to underscore that what we do know about race is the idea that race has little or nothing to do with the colour of skin, hair, or eye and racial classification or racial identity. The concept of race has more to do with what we can do together as a group, independent of our skin colour. Thus, what this idea of racial transcendence envisions is a best possible future/world in which, without denying the idea of race, but acknowledging its intrinsic good and values for a best possible future/world, one can no longer be disadvantaged merely for his or her skin color; one can no longer be advantaged over another merely because one belongs to a

particular group of people with a different skin colour; or that one comes from a different continent. With the above idea, it is important to underscore that the concept of race has come to stay in our modern imagination.

Via a thought experiment, I want to further explicate the possibility of racial transcendence. Supposing a renowned scientist comes up with some clear proofs that in fifty years' time Aliens or Robots might take over this planet earth. And according to this scientist, the chance of us dying that same year of invasion is highly probable. Suppose the only chance we have of preventing this from happening is to gather different scientists and brilliant minds from different parts of the world for a quick solution. According to this scientist, with the help of brilliant minds, we can stop the invasion in fifty years of research and hard work, very close to the day (aliens or Robots) invasion will start. Obviously, the probability of this scientist and brilliant minds being selected based on their race or skin colour is not one-over-two, or rather, the visibility of that selection is not plausible. The why inquiry that naturally should follow this example is substantiated on the basis that at the moment this scientist and brilliant minds are working to stop the invasion, they are not fighting for the survival of their own race, but for the entire human race. What comes into play is what you can offer, not what the colour of your skin can offer. After the research, for the research solutions to be effective, there is a need for unification. Unification in this sense means to work together during the fight to prevent the invasion.

Imagine again that after fifty years, following the fight for the survival of the human race, it was said that the human race will again experience this kind of invasion every twenty years; that it will take fifteen years to build another machine/weapons that humans can use to fight against aliens or robots; and that unification is of great importance. Do we perceive that after the fight, one will be forced into a position in which the other (black or white, etc) that helped in the survival process will *automatically* hold the idea of 'racial tagging or segregation'? The answer is no. And this is because the idea of 'unification' will be imprinted in every one's mind in order to survive the subsequent invasions. Even after the fifty years and subsequent years of invasion, the children that are born before and after each invasion might learn from their parents' racial classification for epistemic reasons (for

knowledge seek), not for its implementation again. In our world today, the struggle to transcend or address moral, political, and prudential challenges can also be seen as the struggle to fight or avoid alien or robot invasion as used in the thought experiment. Therefore, with or without the idea of challenges or invasion, if we can transcend the concept of race for good reasons for a best possible future/world, we would not rally around the fear “from having race, to not having races, to having races again” (Glasgow 2009; 121). This best possible future/world will be a future/world where “no one is forced into a position in which one must automatically bear the privileges or the costs of a racial tag” (Eze 2001: 223). In this case racial tags might still be in place, but without any cost/benefits.

Some years back I introduced a friend by the name of Grace to my friends, but occasionally some of my friends refer to her as ‘your white friend’. But I continuously reminded them that her name is Grace. For them Grace is white, but for me Grace is Grace – a human being like me. I do not see the skin colour but the person. Being a ‘white lady’ is not the essence of Grace, but an accident. Her essence is different from the idea of her being a white lady which is an accident. Her essence for me is the fact that she a human being. In this case, I have undoubtedly transcended the idea of colour that some of my friends are still battling with. When I first met Grace I saw her as a ‘white lady’, but as time went by I got to know and understand Grace beyond the idea of her colour. This is what the idea of transcendence in this context is all about. Transcending a given idea actually takes time. It involves a continuous engagement with that particular idea before we can be able to transcend it. Thus we can only transcend the concept of race if we continuously engage with the idea. Transcending is a process that will take time, but it is possible. According to our popular idea of the creation story, the creation of the world took time; the same can be said of the concept of race.

A similar example will be that of any other human being and their friends. Take for instance, when we first met our friends, it took time before we could know and understand them better. Our knowledge of them developed when we engaged in a continuous interaction and meetings with them. After some while, our knowledge of our friends changed and was noticeable. Change here is the idea that what we know about them now

has gone beyond what we know about them then. This is what the idea of transcendence in this context is all about.

Thus, in absence of the Enlightenment figures “it is our job – in the spirit of maintaining both the sparks of enlightenment we inherit and in pursuit of *our own* enlightening – to boldly show ourselves and others why and how one need not uncritically absorb the concept of race and racism from the past simply because the authorities we seem to trust did not know better” (Eze 2002: 286).

It might be objected that there is no difference between what I am arguing for and that of the eliminativists and conservationists, and that my proposal is not different from theirs. In response, I think this is a hasty conclusion. First, as we have seen from different philosophers, the concept of race is a volatile concept and subject, constantly changing in meaning. One of the more obvious examples of this is that “the once widespread belief in a natural or even metaphysical racial hierarchy is disappearing (even if some invidious remnants remain). Such change is the result of, among other things, intellectual debate, social activism, racial conflict, and a resultant improved science” (Glasgow 2009: 142). Jennifer L. Hochschild (2005: 71) also notes that it was once “common and uncontested” to use phrases such as ‘the Yankee race,’ which we do not hear too often. Thus it will be common at a point in time to use the word race without actually attaching it social identities and baggage. And the concept would not be heard too often at a point in time.

Secondly, according to racial transcendentalism, as a part of its change and evolution, we are only giving up some social identities or identifications of race. We are only *giving-up* the negative baggage of the past in order to better transcend the concept. Hence, I am neither eliminating nor conserving the whole ideas of both the eliminativists and conservationists. To put it simply, I am doing some ‘racial ideological selection.’ In this case, I am selecting what I think we do not need and what we need in order to transcend the concept of race. The negative ideas that we have to give up or keep aside are just there for epistemic reasons. Epistemic reasons in this sense mean that the ideas can be seen as a ‘knowledgeable stepping stone’ from where the discourse started, where it is now, to where it will be in the future. Therefore, if we are cognitively cursed to represent humanity in a

racial way, then some negative baggage or some ideas of the eliminativists and conservationists are not considered necessary. Racial transcendentalism can become a viable alternative, since it asks us also not to completely do away with the concept of race or racial thinking, but to transcend it for a better understanding of the concept for a best possible future/world.

4.5. Conclusion

This chapter aimed to discuss the ideas of the conservationists and the eliminativists, and to answer the question posed in the title of this chapter. In this way, the chapter commenced with a brief explanation of the meaning and idea of racial skepticism (eliminativists) and racial constructivism (conservationist). In discussing the concept of race as propounded by some proponents of these schools of thoughts, the chapter capitalized on the views of four philosophers, two from each school. Drawing from the conservationists, I discussed W. E. B. Du Bois' and Lucius Outlaw's ideas of race, and also elaborated on the eliminativists' racial concepts as propositioned by Kwame Anthony Appiah and Naomi Zack. Following this trend of discussions, I equally examined Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze's thoughts on race, while also making an argument for the possibility of transcending the race concept. This was achieved following the analytical discourse of the conservationists and the eliminativists' assertions about race where I highlighted the points of agreement, identified the gaps in both camps, and in finality responded to the question posed.

Chapter Five

5. Conclusion

This study was a critical assessment of how the concept of race affects African philosophy and how the concept can be transcended. In view of this aim, the study used the standpoints of the Eliminativists and Conservationists schools of thoughts to build on its contentions as well as reconcile the various discourses on the race concept.

To accomplish the study's aim, the first chapter outlined the basic understanding of the concept of race by departing from the biological perspective to the knowledge of how the concept has affected African identity and philosophy. Furthermore, it drew attention to the reality of the foundation of African philosophy as embedded in historical events such as slavery, colonialism, race and racism. Using Aristotle's idea of slavery, I then maintained that the Europeans invention of race as a tool to rationalize their enslavement of Africans is unjust. Likewise, I asserted that the concept of race has affected African identity; however, the African philosophical project seeks to resolve this concept and is expressive of the African experience. From these, I concluded by indicating that the concept of race continues to be valued as a means of recognition or appointment of worth.

The second chapter expounded on the direct, indirect and unconscious ideas of different modern philosophers on race. In effect, the chapter took us back to Descartes' "Cogito," which seems to be the foundation upon which some idea of race or racism rests. Discussing Hume's empirical theory of knowledge, his concept of human mind and idea on race, I argued to the contrary that he was incorrect about the ideas of European civilization, inferiority and superiority, and intellectual capacity. Equally, I discussed Kant's ideas on human knowledge and race. Using his example of the Negro slave from Guinea that drowned himself when being forced into slavery, I took a converse view and argued that the Negro or anyone in that Negro's situation must have had or have a reason for his/her action, and this actually is evidence of reason and self-awareness which can be found in all humans. Conclusively, I argued against Tempels' misinterpretation of force by insinuating that it basically led to his unconscious idea of race or racism.

The third chapter discussed the way in which some African philosophers responded to the direct and indirect interests of some modern philosophers. The chapter showed that the works of nationalist-ideological philosophers and the existence of African philosophy are evidences that Africans are not irrational or inferior to the whites. As such, I argued and reaffirmed the existence of African philosophy and the philosophical pride that some philosophers like Eze have acquired. Following from this, the fourth chapter discussed the notion of race as propounded by some of the proponents of conservationism and eliminativism.

Having elaborated on how race has affected African philosophy and the possibility of transcending the concept of race, the point of departure now is what to make of the issues and arguments covered in the research project. Claims and arguments have been made in support of my position on the subject; wherein I contributed my philosophical understanding of race by arguing that that Tempels' misinterpretation of the Bantu Ontology and African philosophy is an unconscious racial intention. In this given, I explained why I think the nationalistic-ideological philosophy and the existence of African philosophy is an indirect response to Hume and Kant. As a new insight, I also contended that it is possible to reconcile some ideas of the eliminativists and conservationists in order to transcend the concept of race. These new insights on the philosophy of race and African philosophy only seek to establish that racial transcendence may point us to the right direction with regards to ideas on whether or not we should eliminate or conserve race. The idea of universalism and particularism in African philosophy, which can also play a key role on African philosophy, is not considered in this light because it was not intended to be a part of this thesis. Moving forward and for the purposes of emerging research on the subject of this thesis, I recommend that future studies on African philosophy and the concept of race should be taken seriously. Seeing that race is a reality that challenges humanity, new strategies ought to be put in place to address the issue.

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