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An inquiry into the nature of group agency and individual agency: A study of rational autonomy

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Declaration

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Graduate Programme in Philosophy, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.
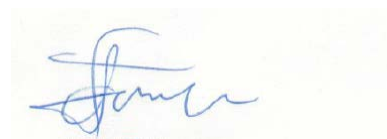

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Abstract

Human agency entails being able to rationalize over decisions, passing judgements and executing actions based on these deliberations. All these rationalizations and executions flow from a principle of rational autonomy. Rational autonomy entails that the agent is able to analyse propositions about the world from an informed explanatory and conceptual framework, and execute actions based on such judgements. If the agent's rational autonomy is heavily constrained by outside factors such that the agent does not have any alternative courses of actions than the one the external influences suggest, then their agency appears to be diminished. In this thesis I explore the nature of agency that arises from a group of people that has assumed agent status. I argue that such groups come to form what can be called a group agent, whose reasoning and execution of actions follows immediately from the members that constitute it. I demonstrate that members of group agents have their own individual agency diminished due to the group's restrictions over their rational autonomy and analyse the implications of such restrictions on their moral responsibility. I also explore the possibility of group agent status being accorded to societies and argue that there are certain societal groups that possess group agent traits. Against this background I demonstrate that members of such societies have their agency diminished since the thought patterns that inform their rational autonomy are heavily constrained by the group.

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to all my children, living and yet unborn, I love you more than life itself.

Table of contents

Introduction

More often than not, human beings find themselves as being part of one group or another. Such groups as the corporates we work in, the churches we go to, or the social clubs that we associate with are part of our everyday lives, giving us this or the other benefit ranging from financial to affectionate benefits. It is interesting to note that when we are part of such groups, at times we may be compelled to lose our identity as individuals so that we may become desirable members of the group to which we belong. For example, if, as an individual, a person may be against certain ideals, when they become part of a group that endorses such ideals, then the individual is 'forced' to also endorse such contrary ideals so that they may be considered a desirable member of that group.

However, human beings are generally understood as being producers of actions derived from their own calculated and rational decision-making scheme; having what is known as rational autonomy. This ability to freely produce actions is what makes human beings agents. Being an agent entails that a person has certain goals and is able to deliberate between a variety of alternative courses of action that may produce such goals, choose the most appropriate one based on a variety of factors, and execute that action that they perceive to be most appropriate in the achievement of such goals.

An important feature of agency to be emphasised here is that an agent has to exercise their rational autonomy without the profound interference of external forces to such a degree that the agent is left with only one (or limited) choice(s) of action. If, for example, a person is 'forced' by external influences to select only one option, then, because the actions were not brought about following from the rational autonomy of the agent, then the person's agency becomes limited or diminished. Agency, by its very nature, stems from the fact that human beings can rationally and autonomously produce actions without external influences that heavily limit the range of options that the agent can deliberate upon and choose from.

At its core, then, agency appears to stem from this free rational decision-making ability of the agent. This rational autonomy, or the agent's ability to freely rationalise over information in the world and acting upon it is an essential feature of what it means to be an agent. The agent's rational autonomy ought to be derived from the individual's own interpretation of the world. If the agent's rationalisations are limited by external influences such as other people's opinions or group opinions to such an extent that the agent's understanding of the world and their acting

upon it is not stemming from this free choice, then it would appear that their agency also becomes limited or diminished. In this study I intend to investigate whether the agent would still retain their agent-status if their rational autonomy was to be profoundly influenced by external forces in this way.

The issue of agency and rational autonomy has a bearing on the status of moral responsibility on the part of the agent. The more an action is produced from the unconstrained rational autonomy of the agent, the more the agent is morally responsible for such actions. A forced person cannot be accorded any moral responsibility for their actions, which is why actions such as rape, are morally wrong since one of the participants in the act was unwilling and forced to perform an action that they would otherwise have not agreed to, hence losing their agent status in the process. I intend to investigate the relationship between being part of a group agent and moral responsibility on the part of individual members of the group agent.

It is interesting to note that when individual agents become part of a group they may face conflicting goals that may limit their own rational autonomy. In this thesis, it is my intention to demonstrate that when agents become part of a group that has a distinct set of goals, then they may be compelled to advance those actions that push the goals of the group further, rather than their own ends, even if the agent's own rational autonomy may point otherwise. If the group is in favour of action ϕ which may go against the judgement of the individual agent, I seek to investigate what would happen to the individual's rational autonomy and agency in such circumstances.

The very concept of a group agent is complicated and not all groups can be considered as group agents. I will therefore outline criteria that a group must meet in order for it to count as an agent, the most important being that there must be some form of rationality that proceeds from the interaction of its members. If a group meets such criteria, then it can be considered as a group agent, and it is then important to understand the dynamics of the relations between the group and the individual member vis a vis their agent status. I will explore various theories that underlie group relations such as the polarisation theory (Elster, 1986) and the social identity theory (Gaertner, 2009) which all try to explain the interactions and behaviour of individual members when part of a group. Such interactive traits are key to understanding the nature of rational autonomy and individual agency when individual agents become part of a group agent.

Another contentious issue I seek to explore is whether societies or social groups can count as group agents. Usually societies are not considered as agents in themselves for a variety of reasons that I will outline. However, I seek to explore various theories in political philosophy that may give insights into the nature of agency at society level. My aim is that through an analysis of such theories as the social contract theory, realism and idealism, insights into the nature of social groups as agents can be formulated. After establishing that certain social groups can be considered as agents if they meet certain conditions for group agency, I will then carry out a case study of one social group, the Shona society of Zimbabwe, in a bid to demonstrate whether the group can be considered a group agent or not. Further, it is my intention to explore the implications of such a group having group agent-status on the rational autonomy and agent status of its individual members. My hope is that by carrying out such a case study, insights into the nature of agency and rational autonomy in a social group setting can be better understood leading to a better understanding of the various complexities of agency that are at play in any social group that can be considered as an agent.

To achieve these ends, I will proceed in the following manner. I will first outline what a human agent is and the various characteristics that make them agents. My primary focus will be on the agent's rational autonomy, what it means and why it is central to the concept of agency. This is going to be the discussion of the first chapter, wherein the concept of agency and the conditions necessary for agency will be explored.

Having established the nature of agency and rational autonomy in the first chapter, I will then discuss the concept of groups as agents in the second chapter. The underlying idea behind this chapter is that there are some groups that are composed of individual agents that can be considered as agents in themselves. However, this surely does not happen randomly or by chance. As such, I will formulate various criteria and analyse them so that the concept of 'group agent' can be better understood.

When individuals become part of a group agent, it is necessary to understand what becomes of their decision-making abilities. In the third chapter I will explore the group relations and dynamics that take place when individual agents are part of a group agent. This is all in a bid to give insights into what happens to an individual's rational autonomy and agency when they become part of a group agent.

In the fourth chapter I will explore the idea of social groups being considered as group agents. I consider various theories that we find in political philosophy, such as the social contract theories as well as realism and idealism in international relations. From the conclusions drawn from these various theories, it is hoped that we can formulate important ideas about the nature of the relationship that exists between the social group and/or state and the individual. This in turn will give important insights into the nature of the rational autonomy and agent-status of the individual members of the society as well as the agent-status of the social group as a whole.

The fifth chapter will become a testing ground for the veracity of the findings of the investigation. Of particular interest are what can be called 'traditional groups.' I will formulate various characteristics that define what a traditional group is and whether such traditional groups can be considered as group agents. A specific case study will then be given to check if the findings can be corroborated by an actual world example. Specifically, the Shona group of Zimbabwe will be a group of interest and literature that has been documented on this group will be juxtaposed to the concepts of a traditional society as well as the concepts of rational autonomy and agency.

In the sixth and final chapter I will then conclude, documenting the findings of the study as a whole. From these findings and conclusions I will then suggest recommendations so that the nature of agency and group agency can be better understood.

Chapter One: The nature of agency

1.1. Preamble

Various notions of agency have been raised, with the most popular being that agency is limited to rational creatures who have the ability to rationalise their ideas and perceptions, make judgements and create actions informed by such judgements (Mayr, 2011). In this chapter, my objective is to explore what the concept of agency involves. I seek to outline the criteria relevant for human agency and investigate what being an agent entails. An important aspect of our conception of what it is to be an agent is the idea that they are actors. Being subjects of experience, agents are conscious of the world around them and are receptive to the way things are, and have perceptual and emotional experiences as part of that receptivity. Agents deliberately act on the world and change it in light of various reasoning processes. Action and experience, agency and consciousness, hand in hand make up the nature of the human agent. But what is it to be an agent and what is it to realize one's agency in acting deliberately on things?

Usually, agents are described as intentional beings with the ability to bring about actions. Agents, then, are active in the production of actions, and not just passive entities (Mayr, 2011). Being active producers of actions implies that agents act after rational deliberations. What informs such rational deliberations is what can be called rational autonomy. My argument in this chapter is that rational autonomy is at the core of what it means to be a human agent. In this chapter it is my intention to explore such concepts and the chapter will be arranged as follows: in the first section I will explore what the term 'agent' means and come up with criteria for an entity to qualify for rational agency. In the second section I will outline what it means for an agent to act, exploring in detail the concept of rational autonomy. In the third section I will then examine agency and moral responsibility, since moral responsibility is typically considered an important part of human agency.

1.2. What is an agent?

Defining agency is a complicated task. Apart from the fact that it has been defined differently by different people from a variety of perspectives, it also involves a wide array of concepts that also need defining. The best way to explain what an agent is perhaps to give a practical

example. For purposes of explaining the concept of agency, I propose three hypothetical scenarios to explain the concept at hand.

1.2.1. Scenario One

Imagine a hypothetical situation in which a person, Mr Smith, has been put on trial for murder. The prosecution puts forward the following case to the judge: Mr Smith and Mr Robinson (the murdered party) had entered into a heated argument and Mr Smith had publicly threatened to harm Mr Robinson. Mr Smith followed the murdered person (Mr Robinson) for two weeks to establish his movement patterns and routines. Mr Smith would wait for the victim to finish work, then follow him to wherever he would be going. Mr Smith also put Mr Robinson on a round-the-clock surveillance, keeping track of every movement made by Mr Robinson in a diary. Mr Smith also bought a gun and ammunition for the weapon. On the day the murder took place, Mr Smith positioned himself on a street that the victim always passed through around that particular time and waited. When Mr Robinson drove by in his car Mr Smith opened fire and shot Mr Robinson four times in the head instantly killing Mr Robinson. Mr Smith was caught by police after some investigations and confessed all that had happened. Mr Smith pleaded guilty, citing that he had intended to kill Mr Robinson and successfully did so.

1.2.2. Scenario 2

Our second hypothetical scenario is similar to scenario one. In this case, a murder suspect, Mr Smith, is on trial for killing Mr Robinson. The details of what happened are as follows: on the day in question, Mr Smith and the victim had an argument and Mr Smith had threated to harm Mr Robinson. Mr Smith went to a bar and got very drunk. On his way back home, he was very drunk but decided to drive all the same disregarding his friends' advice to take a taxi home rather than drive. Coincidentally, Mr Robinson was also coming from another bar drunk as well, unwittingly crossing the road which Mr Smith was using. Witnesses saw Mr Smith's car coming very fast and swerving from left to right indicating that the person behind the wheel did not have good control of the car. At the same time, the victim was staggering from left to right indicating that he was very drunk, taking two steps back and one step forward as he was crossing the road. Mr Smith did not even see Mr Robinson crossing the road and struck him down causing the instant death of Mr Robinson. Mr Smith pleaded not guilty, citing that he was under the influence of alcohol and genuinely never saw the victim crossing the road. He had killed the victim, but did not have the *intention* to do so.

1.2.3. Scenario 3

In scenario three, we find a similar situation to situation one. In this case, the case before the judge is slightly different. Mr Smith put Mr Robinson on surveillance to establish his routine. He followed Mr Robinson to and from work in order to get a picture of his schedule. Mr Smith bought a gun and some ammunition, which was consistent with the weapon type used and bullets found in Mr Robinson. However, Mr Smith had been *tasked* to kill Mr Robinson by another person, person Z, who had kidnapped Mr Smith's wife and children, threatening to kill them**,** as well as Mr Smith himself**,** if Mr Smith refused to carry out the task. Under the fear for losing his family and fear of losing his own life, Mr Smith carries out the task, but is apprehended by the police and now finds himself in a murder trial.

1.3. Analysis

Now that the three hypothetical situations have been given, I will give an analysis of the three situations and determine from them what the concept of agency entails. In scenario one, it is clear that Mr Smith made a non-coerced and conscious decision to bring some harm to Mr Robinson. His reason was perhaps to take revenge on a wrong that he felt had been done on him. He took all rational and deliberate steps to plan a course of action; following Mr Robinson around, choosing a method of killing as well as buying a gun. He had all the time and alternatives to change his mind and suspend the decision to kill Mr Robinson, but proceeded to intentionally shoot Mr Robinson four times to ensure that Mr Robinson was dead. The gun did not go off accidentally, but the trigger was intentionally pulled four times with the intention of shooting and killing Mr Robinson. The end result was the death of Mr Robinson.

In hypothetical scenario two, we have Mr Smith killing Mr Robinson. Although Mr Smith had reason to kill Mr Robinson, in the sense that they had been involved in an argument, Mr Smith, unlike his counterpart in scenario one, did not take intentional steps to kill Mr Robinson. Instead, a series of coincidental events led to Mr Robinson, who happened to be drunk at that particular time, being struck by Mr Smith's car, which was being driven by a heavily intoxicated Mr Smith. In this case, Mr Smith did not intend to kill Mr Robinson and the death was not deliberate, but accidental. By accidental here is meant a coincidental act brought about by a series of events outside both parties' intentional control (Stout, 2005). Mr Smith did not

wish to bring it about that Mr Robinson should die unlike what we find in situation one, where Mr Smith deliberately killed Mr Robinson[1].

In hypothetical scenario three, we find a person who takes some intentional steps to kill Mr Robinson. Mr Smith establishes the routine of Mr Robinson, and deliberately takes further actions to ensure that Mr Robinson gets killed. But unlike Mr Smith in situation one, this person has a profound external influence behind his actions. Led by the threat of having his family killed and having his own life at risk, Mr Smith is not a willing participant in his actions and is left with limited options from which to act. The fear of losing his family and his own life in the event of failing to kill Mr Robinson forces him to commit the act. Under no such pressure or compulsion from person Z, Mr Robinson would ordinarily not do any acts of this sort. At this juncture it is now possible to discuss what an agent is, based on these scenarios.

1.4. Agents and actions

Thus far, it is apparent that all talk of agents would be meaningless without any reference to actions. In all the scenarios given above, actions of some sort were involved. Human agency involves the performance or production of actions of one sort or the other. To be an agent means, then, to produce an action. The day to day lives of human beings are filled with actions. We walk, talk, sing, worship, construct houses, build cars and even perform complicated surgeries. All these are instances of actions performed by human beings. It can be argued that even fully paralysed people can be said to produce actions such as deliberate blinking in order to communicate with other people, as long as such blinking is deliberate. Agents, then are primarily action producers. The moment a person ceases to perform actions they are either in a comatose state or they are dead, in which case they would cease to be agents. An action, according to Stout (2005) is the transformation of the world in light of various reasons. In essence, action is the power to change the state of affairs in the world. An action, then, is to be defined as the bringing about of a change in the current order of the universe. For instance if the current order of the universe is such that a person is sitting down, an alteration of this state of affairs can be brought about by the person standing up.

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[1] Even though the death was accidental, this does not mean that Mr. Smith is not responsible for the death, in that by driving intoxicated he should have been able to foresee that he was in a position to kill someone, even if not in a position to see that he would kill Mr. Robinson in particular.

The biological makeup of a human being is specially designed to fulfil this function. The tendons join muscles to bones and body parts together in such a way as to allow free movement. To be a human agent indeed means to be able to create actions. As humans then, whenever we bring about alterations to the current state of the universe as described above then actions are being performed. However, to be an agent, it is not sufficient that actions are just brought about randomly.

Actions should be distinguished from things that happen in a passive way to a human being. For example, in a scenario where a human being is walking in a street and a ball strikes them after having been kicked by some kids playing in the background, we cannot say that the person who was struck by the ball performed the action of being struck by a ball. This, at best, is a mere happening or event in which the action in the event (that of being struck by a ball) was not produced by that particular person. Describing actions that constitute those produced by agents involves a number of other concepts which shall be discussed in subsequent sections.

1.5. Agents and intentions

It is now apparent that agency involves actions. But not all actions define a human agent. Part of a human being's life are actions that the human being is not responsible for. For instance, certain involuntary reflex actions exist that a person is not directly responsible for, for example, human beings involuntarily blink their eyes often and they ordinarily have no regulatory control over this type of reflex, although it is possible to perform this action willingly. For instance, if a person is to demonstrate what blinking means to an audience they can control this movement of the eye-lids. Actions that characterise agency are such that they are *intentional*. According to Wegner, an "…intention is normally understood as an idea of what one is going to do that appears in consciousness just before one does it" (2002:18). Hence, the agent actually knows beforehand that they are going to produce this or the other type of action rather than it happening accidentally, randomly or by chance. Agential actions, then, can be described as those that the agent produces on/for a purpose or *intentionally.*

Intentional actions are linked to the unconstrained activity of the agent. This suggests that it must be completely 'up to the agent,' whether or not she acts, and that she must be free to decide without determination by other factors. True action, it appears, implies self-determination which is derived from intentions. The intentional aspect distinguishes between real agential actions and accidental actions or mere happenings. An agent is therefore one who

has a laid out plan of what one is going to do. Although agents sometimes act outside of the original plan (or intention), their actions are mostly plan-oriented.

Taking a look at the three scenarios given in section 1.2, it is apparent that in scenario one, the murderer killed Mr Robinson on purpose. He *intended* to bring about actions that would ensure that Mr Robinson died. The purpose for producing all the actions that led to Mr Robinson's death was to ensure that Mr Robinson died. Hence, it can be adequately claimed that Mr Smith pulled the trigger with the intention of killing Mr Robinson and succeeded in doing so. Because the action was intentional, it can also be claimed that Mr Smith was acting in his full capacity as an agent, purposely producing actions that ensured that his goal was fulfilled.

In comparison with the second and third scenarios, the agent-status of Mr Smith is different. In scenario two, we observe Mr Smith performing the action of killing Mr Robinson, but unlike in scenario one, Mr Smith has what we can call limited agency. By limited agency here is to be understood as when the agent is not in a state of controlling the process of bringing about actions. Because Mr Smith was heavily intoxicated, his agent status was limited. Although it is true that he struck Mr Robinson with the car and had previously threatened to bring harm to Mr Robinson, Mr Smith however lacked the element of intentionality. The car was not in his direct control as it would have been had he not been drunk. Because intentionality is lacking, we cannot adequately claim that Mr Smith was acting as a full agent, but as a 'limited' agent. Hence, a limited agent is when the agent is not in full control of what they do for a variety of reasons including substance intoxication, temporary (or permanent) insanity or in some cases, possession by some spiritual forces (Wegner, 2002). In such instances, the challenge lies in proving the level at which a person is out of their control. People who break the law can receive less harsh sentences in a court of law or be charged with a slightly different crime in such circumstances. For instance, a person can be charged with manslaughter instead of murder, if it can be proven that they had limited agency at the time the crime was committed. The assumption here would be that actions committed under these special conditions will not be considered as actions done by agents but by people whose agency is limited.

According to Nannini, "…every intentional explanation presupposes an intentional description" (2007:50). He goes further to explain that:

> The intentional explanation "A did X because she intended to get Y is valid only if it can more precisely be stated as: "A did X because A intended to get Y and believed that doing X would bring about her getting Y." This explanation is equivalent in turn to the following sentence:

"A's intention of getting Y [IA(Y)] and A's belief that her doing X would cause her getting Y [BA(X→Y)] led A to do X" This can be further summarized in the following expression: $IAY \wedge BA (X \rightarrow Y) \Rightarrow X$. This in turn is implied by these two sentences:

$$IA(Y) \wedge BA(X \rightarrow Y) \Rightarrow IA(X)$$

$$IA(X) \Rightarrow X \text{ (Nannini, 2007:50).}$$

In short, according to Nannini, a person's intention to do any action is the reason for that action being done. From this, it is apparent that intentional actions are those which can be traced back to the intention upon which they were created. If this reasoning is correct, then all intentional actions done by agents have an intentional cause upon which the action is founded. As Everson (2010) puts it, in order to explain an agent's action one needs to determine what the agent was intending to do by performing it, and to know the primary reason why someone acted as they did is to know the intention with which the action was done. Hence, when an agent does something intentionally they must have a favourable attitude toward performing actions of that type, and believe that the action they perform is of that type. For instance, if Mr Smith's intention in hypothetical scenario one was to kill Mr Robinson then this would mean that this intention was the reason behind Mr Smith's subsequent actions. This would also mean that Mr Smith had a favourable attitude towards killing Mr Robinson (perhaps believing that it was the right thing to do) and also believed that the actions he was performing (such as taking aim and pulling the trigger) were of the type required to fulfil his intention.

For Stout (2005), when an agent is said to act intentionally, they must be in the mental state of intending. The agent must also have certain beliefs; for example, that what the agent is trying to do is not impossible, and perhaps the agent needs to know what they are doing and must have some knowledge or consciousness of their own agency. In other words, it is a characteristic of agency that the agent knows what they are doing, and at least a belief that it is possible to achieve it and must have some knowledge of doing what they intend to do.

1.6. Agents and the will

In line with the previous section, it is also important to note that for an agent to act intentionally, they have to bring about the action from their will. Human beings are thought to be naturally endowed with the ability to decide (Wegner, 2002). This power to decide or to choose is what I shall call the will. An agent wills that a certain action be produced, in other words, the agent *decides or chooses* to create the action. Let us assume that Mr Smith in scenario one is

confronted with two choices, either to kill Mr Robinson or not. He is free to choose either option and is not under any compulsion or pressure to choose either of the two. In scenario one, Mr Smith *chose* to take the option of killing and hence ended up taking active steps to fulfil his choice of action. He could have chosen *not* to kill Mr Robinson but instead chose to carry out the action. This capacity to choose is a significant characteristic of agents in that when an agent is confronted with options upon which they should act, they should make a choice on the basis of the freedom to choose.

If we look at scenario three, where Mr Smith decided that he was going to kill Mr Robinson, a certain sense of agency can be observed. However, it is important to note that Mr Smith's options in this case were limited in the sense that he was under the threat of having his family killed or his own life being taken, resulting in the actions being forced actions or actions that the agent would ordinarily not do. In this case, there was what can be called an *illusion* of choice. It is an illusion in that inasmuch as the person actually carried out the act of killing Mr Robinson, and even though it seems that he had the option not to kill Mr Robinson, there was an enormous amount of pressure to make only one choice. In this case, the agency of the person was limited by the external threat to his life.

According to Libet et al. (2004), the will is defined as the common experience that one can produce inner concrete or abstract goals for one's future behaviour and cognition. The will executes the expected goals. Willed acts concern the future. They include a program or an inner concept of how to reach a specific goal. Goals of this type are retained as memories of the future which constitute an inherent component of consciousness. Sion (2004) equates the will to what is called volition. He adds an extra qualification to the word, calling it "free will" (Sion, 2004:12). For Sion, the will is to be distinguished from natural spontaneity. Its chief characteristic is that it forms a causal relationship between an agent and their actions, making all actions acts of the will.

For Hughes (1867), the will, in order to act rightly, is dependent upon the understanding and the judgements of the mind. On the other hand, the understanding and the judgements are dependent upon the will for execution into the actual results of their conceptive themes; without the will there would be no *executive* power, hence no practical and actual results. The function of the will is elective and executive; it chooses and it determines.

1.7. Agents and deliberations

The core of agency lies in reasoning. The assumption is that agents mostly act for a reason. What agents do adapts to what they have *reason* to do. Agents produce intentional actions which are embedded in a system of reasons, subject to questions about justification, and sensitive to what should be done in particular circumstances. According to Davidson (2006) every action has a reason why it has been performed and this reason explains the action. Such explanations are called rationalizations. This is corroborated by Bratman (2006), who argues that actions by an agent are deliberations in which the agent considers what she sees as reasons, that is, as justifying normative reasons for or against her alternatives. The agent deliberates on given propositions then proceeds from this to a conclusion that she has normative reason so to act. The agent, thereby has the capacities needed for such normative deliberation, to accept relevant premises, and act according to the dictates of this reasoning.

As Everson (2010) articulates, in the standard account of agency, every action can be explained as resulting from a belief and desire of the agent and these beliefs and desires stand as reasons for the actions performed. In explaining the action, we come to know why the agent acted as she did, and to know why the agent does something is to know the reason for her doing it. Davidson also argues along similar lines and says that:

> A reason rationalises an action only if it leads us to see something the agent saw, or thought she saw, in her action some feature, consequence, or aspect of the action the agent wanted, desired, prized, held dear, thought dutiful, beneficial, obligatory, or agreeable (Davidson, 2006:12)

Nannini (2007) outlines what can be called the causal theory of action as follows:

> If I explain A's action of doing X by saying that A did X because she wanted to get Y and believed that in her present situation, doing X was the most expedient way to get Y, my explanation is a causal explanation, that is, the 'because' included in my explanation refers to a cause-effect relation of the same kind as the causal relation that may obtain between two physical events. A's intention of getting Y and A's belief that she will get Y if she does X are two mental states which, if combined, cause A's action of doing X just as fire causes smoke. This kind of causality is what is known as 'natural causality.' (Nannini, 2007:49)

In scenario one outlined above, if it is the case that Mr Smith killed Mr Robinson to get revenge, and in doing so he believed he could achieve this end, then revenge becomes the reason why Mr Smith acted the way he did. Hence, whenever an agent acts for a reason, they can be characterised as having a pro-attitude towards actions of that kind and believing (knowing, perceiving and remembering) that their actions are of that kind (Davidson, 2006). Pro-attitudes

here include desires, wantings, urgings, promptings, moral views, aesthetic principles, economic prejudices, social conventions, and public and private goals and values, insofar as these can be interpreted as attitudes of an agent directed towards actions of a certain kind.

For most of the actions that agents do, they reason out whatever information will be presented before them and decide on a course of action from that deliberation. The very basis of agency is premised on this ability to weigh information. Tallon (1997) describes this process of information processing as consisting of various stages—from the conceptual stage to the execution stage where the action is carried out. The first stage comprises of understanding, insight as well as intelligent consciousness. At the understanding phase, the mind examines the information provided by experience and asks questions like "What is this? What is the meaning of my experience?" (Tallon, 1997:6). As a response to the questions, insight aims towards the meaning of the experience. Intelligent consciousness means the agent is not only aware of their immediate experience of the world, but is also able to deliberate upon the insights provided by the understanding. For instance, when an agent encounters a vicious-looking dog in the street, they are not only aware that there is a dog, but also aware of the danger that the dog may pose, and perhaps already judging possible escape strategies if the dog was to attack. The collective term *thinking* may be given to the mental processes that go on between the operation of questioning, the operation of insight as well as intelligent consciousness.

At the stage of conceptualisation, the agent tries to make sense of their experience by coming up with, or formulating concepts, ideas, hypotheses, theories, guesses, hunches, summaries and the like. At this stage, the insights are tested to verify which are true and which are false. This is called the level of judgement or rational/critical consciousness (Tallon, 1997). The objective of this stage is to question or to verify one's insights through evidence. If certain conditions are fulfilled then the agent proceeds to the judgement stage and concludes that the information is either true or false. All these stages lead up to the final stage, which can be called the stage of decision, where the purpose of cognition is fulfilled when knowledge leads to action.

Explaining how rational reflection occurs, List and Pettit put it as follows:

> …if a creature is to count as an intentional agent, then it must have desires or goals for which it is disposed to act and it must form beliefs about its environment to guide its action, identifying suitable opportunities and strategies. Such desires and beliefs can be characterized as attitudes towards propositions, with the desire consisting in the targeting of a proposition, the belief in the acceptance of a proposition, and with the distinction between targeting and acceptance being

given by a difference in direction of fit. An agent will act to make the world fit a targeted proposition—a would-be-goal—and will adjust to make its mind fit a proposition it accepts. (2011:496)

Explaining the reasoning process of the agent, List and Pettit go on to say:

> It will act for the realization of its desires, seeking to bring the world in line with them; and it will act in this way according to its beliefs, where its beliefs are brought into line by the world. If a system is to fulfil world-changing desires according to world-tracking beliefs, then it must satisfy 3 sorts of standards. Attitude-to-evidence standards will require, among other things, that the system's beliefs be responsive to evidence. Attitude-to-attitude standards will require that, even as they adjust under evidential inputs, its beliefs and desires do not assume such an incoherent form that they support inconsistent options. And attitude-to-action standards will require that the system tend to act, and to form intentions to act, on the lines that its beliefs and desires support. These are the standards of rationality (2011:496).

From this, it is apparent that agents are calculating beings, producing actions that conform to set standards of rationality. For instance, it is generally a standard of rationality to check for consistency between beliefs. An example given by List and Pettit (2011) is that of checking to see if propositions 'p' and 'q' are consistent. If the two propositions are not contradictory then the agent is led to conclude that p and q can be joined in a conjunction 'p and q.' If somehow p and q are contradictory, then an agent would try to eliminate the inconsistency among the beliefs by giving up either p or q or both. Actions produced by the agent are a product of this reasoning process. Each action by an agent can be traced to the reasoning process that led to its production. This reasoning process can be further classified into what can be called rational autonomy and it is this kind of autonomy that I take to be central to agency.

1.8. Agency and rational autonomy

It is a characteristic of agents that they act freely and without any external influences that limit their action options to a bare minimum or to none at all. As I highlighted in section 1.6, agents are generally considered as having free will or the ability to create actions in their own capacity as agents, and it is from this belief that agents are thought of as autonomous beings. According to Kather (2008), autonomy is based on self-consciousness and rationality. Humans are autonomous if they are able to recognise their interests, to reflect on them, and to argue for them. If a human being lacks these basic capacities, then their agency becomes limited. An agent becomes autonomous when their actions are created intentionally.

As noted by Bandura (2006), a core property of human agency is that agents are free to form intentions that include action plans and strategies. Agents also have what is known as forethought which includes future-directed plans. Agents set goals for themselves and anticipate likely outcomes of prospective actions to guide and motivate their efforts. Through visualising the likely future, actions are created in such a way that caters for likely outcomes. Agency thus involves a high level of self-directedness—the deliberative ability to make choices and action plans and also the ability to construct appropriate courses of action and the regulation of their execution.

Furthermore, agents are also self-examiners of their own functioning. Through self-awareness, they reflect on their personal efficacy, the soundness of their thoughts and actions, and the meaning of their pursuits, and they make corrective adjustments if necessary (Bandura, 2006). All this means that the agent is an autonomous being, free to plan, reflect and execute actions in the universe without external impediments. To be a full agent, then, the entity in question needs to possess rational autonomy. By rational autonomy I take to mean the ability by an entity to make free and informed choices without force from external sources. I will now outline important principles inherent in it.

By free choices I mean that the notion of rational autonomy is based on two principles, that is, the principle of infinite possibilities and the theory of counterfactuals, which are to be considered before and after the action has been produced. The idea behind infinite possibilities is that for a process of rationalisation to be adequately so-called, then there has to be an infinite range of alternative courses of action that the entity can choose from. Although in reality it can be difficult to formulate such possibilities in enumerative terms, that is, to determine how many alternatives have to be in place for the agent to choose, conceptually, it remains true that the agent has to have at their disposal a range of various or alternative courses of action from which to choose. In the absence of such a range of alternative actions there would only be one course of action and no other options, which would result in limited agency. That we should have a range of courses of action stems from the fact that in any decision making scenario the agent will choose between alternatives rather than just one course of action, in which case the agent would not really have a choice. Hence, there ought to be at a range of possible alternative courses of action from which the agent can choose from if such choices are to be considered as free.

For example, if a person gets into a grocery store to buy liquid detergents, if the choice the person is going to make is truly 'of her choice,' it means that there were at least some alternatives from which to choose from. If there is only one type of detergent and no other (especially where she really would have preferred another type of detergent and not the only one available) then we cannot come to the conclusion that this detergent was the agent's free choice. However, if there were at least a range of varieties from which to choose, then reason would come in so that the person would rationalise over the available options, weighing the advantages of one over the other, perhaps in terms of pricing and product reputation. In the absence of such alternatives then rationalisations of this nature would not take place. From this it appears that for rational autonomy to be present there ought to be at least a number of possible alternatives to choose from.

In hypothetical scenario three outlined in section 1.2.3, an important aspect concerning the range of possibilities is implicit. We find Mr Smith's family kidnapped and harm will befall them if he does not kill Mr Robinson. Let us assume further that the kidnapper will be true to their word that some harm will actually befall Mr Smith's family if he acts contrary to what has been instructed. In principle, Mr Smith has the option of not carrying out the task and even to go and report to the police. But then, such actions would have more damaging results than carrying out the kidnapper's task of killing Mr Robinson. It appears that the only option left is that which will bring more desirable results, at least in the agent's own point of view. Hence, although in principle Mr Smith could be said to have other options, when considerations of the negative results that may occur from the other alternatives, it appears that he *really* has only one. In other words, he was not really making a free choice.

After the action has been produced, counterfactual possibilities also have to be possible for the action to be considered as stemming from the free activity of the agent. The idea is that for every action produced, if they are to be considered as stemming from a rationally autonomous being, then there should be at least some counterfactual alternatives that the agent could have opted for. A counterfactual possibility in this sense is to be understood as events that did not happen, but had the possibility of happening (Roese, 1997). Counterfactuals answer to the question, "could this event have happened otherwise?" or in the agent's case, "could the entity have acted in any other way?" If the answer to this question is "no," then the entity in question may not have acted as an agent, since there was no other way the entity could have acted. The entity may have been forced to act in such a way as in the example discussed earlier in the

chapter about a person being asked to kill someone at the threat of the death of his family. Counterfactual possibilities, although representing things that did not actually happen, play an important role in understanding what it means for an agent to be acting freely. When the agent reflects on the actions they produced, especially actions that did not produce the intended results, then it should be possible, in principle at least, to think of alternative courses of action that they could have taken to ensure a successful achievement of their goals. If such alternative courses of action are not possible, then possibly there was only one way this event could have happened, which in turn means that the person's rational autonomy is limited, since they could have not acted otherwise.

By saying that the agent needs to make 'informed' choices, the idea is that rational autonomy is based on the entity's frame of reference and their explanatory framework. By frame of reference is meant the sum total of all that the entity knows from experience, culture and education, or, summed up in two words, *knowledge base* (Balke et al., 2014). This knowledge base provides the entity with an encyclopaedic kind of information resource based on upbringing, experience, education as well as exploration and discovery. From this knowledge base, the entity has a resource from which to assess the situation at hand and produce actions accordingly. It is an agent's frame of reference that enables them to assess situations and make judgements upon them.

An agent's explanatory framework can be defined as the agent's perception of the principles governing the world. This perception gives to the agent explanations of what causes certain events and what actions are possible in that situation. It gives a range of possibilities from which the agent reacts to certain events. For instance, we could find agents whose explanatory framework is radically grounded in the firm belief that the world operates from principles that are spiritual in nature, such that things like natural disasters, diseases, wealth and death have a spiritual cause. When a disease strikes, they may opt to make the action of going to church or some other spiritual expert. On the other hand we could have another agent whose explanatory framework is such that they understand the operating principles of the universe as stemming from a purely naturalistic or scientifically explainable cause. Such things as earthquakes, death, diseases, in their view, can be explained by reference to natural or non-spiritual causes. If disease strikes for such people, then they are going to visit the doctor, whose scientific diagnosis falls within their frame of reference. Then there are those whose explanatory frameworks are accommodative to both worldviews, having naturalistic explanations on one

hand and spiritual explanations on the other and leaving the possibility open that other worldviews may hold some truth. For instance, when disease strikes and an operation has to be performed, people may go to the doctor and also pray that the operation will go well.

A person's explanatory framework is important to rational autonomy because it gives a guide on the action options that the person can take. For example, if a person's explanatory framework is radically scientific in orientation and they believe that there is nothing supernatural about the universe, then opting for an action that is spiritual in nature when disease strikes may be difficult (or may not even be an option), since their perception of the guiding principles of the universe is such that spiritual occurrences are not real since they are difficult to verify scientifically. Likewise, a person whose explanatory framework is radically spiritual in orientation will seek spiritual intervention when a natural disaster strikes, since they are of the fundamental opinion that the world operates at a spiritual level. People whose explanatory framework is suspicious of human nature will take more cautionary actions when dealing with other people and people who are optimistic about human nature will take less cautionary measures. This perhaps explains why people coming from small rural communities built on trust are usually the victims of scams when they go to big cities where conmen usually thrive.

Rational autonomy, then, is based on the nature of the environment one finds oneself in. For example, it is increased by literacy in a print-saturated environment, or by numeracy in a society which uses money, or by critical thought in a society in which unscrupulous and dishonest people are to be found (Tallon, 1997). Most decisions and choices that agents make only make sense within a specific structure. For example, for a man to wear a necktie in modern day society shows respect and formality while wearing denims would show the opposite. A choice of what to wear only makes sense within a specific context.

The more and varied (in the sense of being vastly different from each other) options one has at one's disposal, the more one is rationally autonomous. To say that the agent needs to act free from external forces would imply that rational autonomy is congruent with notions of liberal democracy, which presupposes that citizens have the capacity to choose their own way of life and not to follow like sheep, but to make one's own decisions, to choose, to make up one's own minds. If, for example, Mr. Robinson is compelled to kill Mr. Smith by the threat of having his own family killed, then if he does kill Mr. Smith then he would be doing this from the compulsion of the external force which heavily limits his action options. According to Mill,

"he who lets the world, or his own portion of it, choose his plan for him, has no need of any other faculty than the ape-like one of imitation. He who chooses his plan for himself employs all his faculties […and is rationally autonomous]" (1859:34). To be an agent then, it appears that rational autonomy is at the core. The actions or decisions that an agent makes are premised on their frame of reference and explanatory frameworks. The choices they make are in turn informed by how they interpret reality. In short, rational autonomy implies that beings are able to access information, rationally scrutinise it by contrasting it with other information that they have, and be able to act on it in a number of ways, where the action stems from their own rational scrutiny of the overall information. To further explain this I will discuss two notions of rationality, that is, theoretical rationality and practical rationality.

1.8.1. Theoretical Rationality

According to Walker (2009), theoretical rationality involves the unconstrained "forming and supporting of beliefs through drawing logical conclusions from accepted propositions, inferring proper implications from matters of fact, and substantiating claims with supporting argument" (2009:21). Theoretical rationality requires that the agent has to hold mostly coherent beliefs. Hence, if an agent believes that regular exercise will keep her in good health and also that she is exercising regularly, then on theoretical rationality grounds, she ought to believe that her exercising regularly will keep her in good health. In contrast, it would appear irrational to believe the two propositions and yet deny the conclusion drawn.

Theoretical rationality is also based on the ability of the agent to freely draw inductive inferential conclusions from experience or knowledge of particular instances. Hence, if the agent knows from past experience that rat poison is harmful to humans and observes a child taking rat poison, then the agent will reason that the child's life is in danger. It would be irrational in this regard for the agent to deny that the child's life is in danger in such circumstances. Probability and statistics then play a pivotal role in theoretical rationality. For instance, it would be irrational to accept that surgery has a 60 percent chance of succeeding while at the same time denying the claim that is has a 40 percent chance of not succeeding.

Theoretical rationality is important to rational autonomy in the sense that it is the one that allows the agent to freely formulate or recognise a range of options based on certain inferences. It is the one that enables the agent to come up with alternative courses of actions based on their understanding of the relationship between the various types of information that the world would

be presenting before them. Theoretical rationality is responsible for sorting information from the agent's frame of reference, checking for inconsistencies, organising it into a coherent whole, and making the relevant inferences from this organised information. In turn, theoretical rationality is premised on the assumption that the individual has at their disposal a non-restricted access to information that is coherent and free from biases or distortions. It is from such information that the agent can make informed decisions according to reason.

For instance, if the individual has a limited access to information or only has access to certain types of information then this restricts their theoretical rationality in the sense that they have a limited understanding of how the world operates and hence may make uninformed conclusions. Again, if the information they receive is biased then this limits their theoretical rationality in the sense that they will be basing their conclusions on information that may not be an account of the whole story. For example, if a person was to borrow money from me with no intention of returning it then if they promise to bring it back they have provided distorted information which may make me come to a judgment that is uninformed and thereby limiting my theoretical rationality. So information about states of affairs in the world has to be, in principle at least, widely varied with multiple perspectives available on the same issue and this information has to be as accurate as possible, chiefly free from biases and distortions that could amount to misrepresentations of the actual states of affairs. If information is limited or distorted then this limits a person's decision making ability and theoretical rationality.

1.8.2. Practical Rationality

Practical rationality is concerned with the means that the agent takes to achieve their goals as well as deciding which ends the agent should pursue (Miller, 1997). Important in this regard is the distinction between ends that are contingently true for the agent. To give an example, having a goal of losing twenty kilograms within two weeks may be a contingent fact about Mary who is within a medically ideal weight range. There is nothing necessarily irrational or rational about the goal itself. Rather, practical rationality becomes relevant in the means Mary uses to achieve this goal and in the willing of these means. If Mary tries to lose twenty kilograms by increasing her overall calorie consumption (and making no other changes in her lifestyle), she is acting irrationally (assuming, of course, that she knows from her theoretical rationality the facts about the relationship between calorie consumption and weight gain). It is also practically irrational to will a goal but not to will the means required to achieve this goal.

If Mary truly wills the goal of losing 20 kilograms, but does not will the means (such as eating fewer calories and/or engaging in additional physical activity), her will is practically irrational.

An important feature of practical rationality is that individual agents have the freedom to choose the means they wish to achieve a certain goal and execute the action accordingly. So it involves choosing a particular course of action (Miller, 1997). When both practical and theoretical rationality are considered it seems that for an agent to be rationally autonomous, this means that the agent has to be in a position to reflect upon propositions and form judgments based on consistent formulation of inferences from such propositions. The agent also has to have the belief that the means she chooses to achieve her ends are achievable and she takes active steps to achieve her ends. In all this, the agent is unconstrained in her choices or coerced to make such choices by external influences which may diminish her choices to only one.

Hence, rational autonomy can be summed up as the freedom of the will to analyse propositions and form judgements as well as freely choosing the means through which they execute actions. But rational autonomy goes further. It is also a necessary aspect of rational autonomy that the individual be in a position to actually execute their choice of actions without restriction, otherwise this restriction would be a restriction of their rational autonomy. In other words, it is not enough that the agent simply rationalises and decides the means through which to execute their decision and end there. They have to be in a position to actualise this decision in the actual world, meaning that they have to be unconstrained in performing the actual actions that they deem fit. The whole notion of agency is centred upon the ability of the agent to produce actions from their rational calculations. So a rationally autonomous agent is one who not only simply makes rationalisations but one who also *acts* on them freely.

1.9. Agents and emotions

From the discussion thus far, it appears that human agents are only to be considered as such when their actions are stemming from the principle of rational autonomy, which apparently involves reason. From classical Greek writers such as Plato, this appears to be the standard for agency and emotions seem not to be considered as important in the agent's decision making. But recent literature on agency has sought to have a revival of the importance of emotions in informing the agent's rational autonomy and subsequent actions. It is important to note that human beings are also emotional and instinctive animals and as such, *sometimes* base their decisions on emotions or instincts, especially where such emotions and instincts give reason

for the agent's actions. As Salmela et al. (2009) note, part of what is central to agency is that agents *care* about things—things have import to them—where such caring makes intelligible the idea, central to rational autonomy (practical rationality in particular), that our ends are worth pursuing.

This attribute is not peculiar to human beings as such. For example, dogs and cats are intelligible as caring about things in the world. The distinguishing feature that separates human caring from animal caring is that human agents care about the kind of lives they lead thereby determining what they stand for in life or "who" we are as persons. Such caring about the kind of life worth living, or valuing, separates us from the animal kind of caring. In caring about something, we find it to be worthwhile in a way that justifies certain activities and in valuing something we find it to be worthwhile in a way that justifies our being a certain person and so living a certain way. Values serve to constitute our identities as the particular persons that we are, that is, in valuing something, the subject comes to identify herself with it.

Gonzalez (2012) describes emotions as relatively episodic mental states that go by such names as fear, anger, pity, envy, jealousy, resentment, disappointment, grief and the feeling of guilt, shame or boredom. Emotions can also be described as a trait-like dispositional state, which, in some instances, can last for years. For example, a person may feel angered every time they remember an incident that angered them many years back and this may in turn inform both their theoretical and practical rationality. For instance, if they were angered by a certain person, whom we shall call the perpetrator, it may be difficult for the agent to consider helping the perpetrator as an option in their practical rationality.

One view of the nature of emotions by Sabini et al. (1998) suggests that emotions are connected to cognition, connected to people's desires and plans, and connected to what people care about and value. On this view, the sources of emotions are abstract. The cause of anger, for example, is not frustration, but the perception of transgression—an abstract concept. If we look for the cause of envy, we find that the perception or judgment that one has been diminished by the accomplishment of another. On this conception of emotion, reason is central. A long tradition going back to the Stoics has it that emotion is a kind of judgment, that is, an episode of believing that the object of one's emotion has one or another kind of positive or negative value (Gonzalez, 2012). On this view, anger is a judgment made by theoretical rationality to the effect that somebody has culpably injured you or somebody closely associated with you, and that this is

bad, and this in turn informs practical rationality, perhaps suggesting that it would be good if that person were punished for this injury. Similarly, fear is a judgment to the effect that some harm is likely to befall you or somebody or something closely associated with you and that it would be good to avoid the harm.

However, this view of emotions being judgments has been criticised from a variety of viewpoints. Beginning with Plato, emotions have been viewed as not having a significant role in characterising the human agent (Marion, 2009). Kant, for instance, described emotions as brute forces that are beyond the will and independent of reason (Sabini, et al., 1998). For Kant, although emotions play a part in an agent's moral life, they act as distractions in attending to moral obligations. He assumes that emotions can even distort or erode reason. For example, a person cannot reason clearly when they are under immense pain or stress.

Notwithstanding these observations, Marion (2009) argues to the contrary. He suggests that emotions can actually be rational in the sense that they can inform the agent's theoretical rationality, giving the agent a reason to act. According to Solomon (2007), Nietzsche argued that every emotion or passion involves its quantum reason and that the emotions and passions help us in making decisions. According to Nietzsche (1974), reason is just another emotion or passion, because reason is never really dispassionate and free from the concerns and perspectives of the self. Prinz (2007) maintains that Hume conceives of emotion as *arational*, being caused neither by rational nor irrational ideas. This means that being emotional does not necessarily entail irrationality. Some emotions, like fear, can be reasonable and non-reasonable as well. For instance, a person who fears bungee jumping might be considered irrational since it is done in a controlled and safe environment. However, it is very rational for an agent to fear falling off a bridge without any form of security since it is apparent to rational judgment that this may result in serious injury or death.

From these observations one thing is very clear. The rational autonomy and actions of human agents are based not only on reason alone, but on emotions as well. In scenario three discussed in section 1.2.3, Mr Robinson acted out of fear that his family would be killed if he did not comply with the demands of the kidnappers. Hence his decision to kill Mr Smith was in part due to his emotion of fear. Manipulators of other human beings usually use fear as a weapon to make people do something. If a political dictator, for example, wishes to manipulate people, the dictator will simply incite fear in their minds such that the people's theoretical and practical

rationality will be informed by this fear. As such, it is important to note that part of what it means to be a human agent is that agents are emotional, and perhaps this is what separates human agents from other things that have some semblance of rationality in them. However, it should at the same time be emphasised, in line with what Plato advocated for in the *Republic*, that reason is usually and ought to be in control of the emotions or passions if actions are to be considered as caused by the agent and based on the notion of rational autonomy. As the name suggests, rational autonomy appears to be more informed by rationality or reason.

1.10.   Agents and moral responsibility

The notion of agency is closely connected to moral responsibility. Because agents are deemed to be the cause of their actions and because they deliberately choose a means to the achievement of some action in their practical rationality, it is often believed that they are morally responsible for their actions. In fact, if a person was not in control of their action-creator status, then it would be difficult to either give them praise or punishment for their actions. Human agents are therefore thought to be moral agents since their actions stem from their rational autonomies. According to Erskin (2003), to say that an individual human being is a moral agent is to say that this individual has the capacity to both understand and respond to ethical reasoning. It is also to say that the individual can incur moral responsibilities. The fundamental defining criteria for the moral agent is that they have the capacity for both moral deliberation and moral action. As hinted by Erskin (2003), the agent must first be able to understand and reflect upon moral requirements in their theoretical rationality. This means that people who generally cannot understand general moral precepts as well as reflect upon them—like infants and the mentally challenged—cannot be seriously granted moral responsibility. No one, for example, would expect a two year old child to be able to reflect upon moral principles.

An agent must also have the capacity to then act in such a way as to conform to these requirements. To exercise moral agency, one must not only have the capacity to act, but also the freedom to do so. It therefore makes sense that the exercise of moral agency requires that one enjoys some degree of independence from other agents and forces. In our third scenario outlined in section 1.2.3, the moral responsibility of Mr Smith in killing Mr Robinson can be seen to be a result of exterior influences which limited his practical rationality and subsequent courses of action and not as a result of his own personal volition. The condition for acting freely was missing from the person and his actions were fully controlled by external forces who

threatened his life if he had acted otherwise. The agent did not really have a choice since all his options amounted to one, which was committing the crime so that he could save his family. From this reasoning, it can be seen that for a person to count as a rationally autonomous and morally responsible agent, they should act freely and not under the compulsion of external forces. Bad actions done intentionally are morally worse than bad acts done unintentionally. For example, a person who intentionally breaks the law is morally worse than one who breaks the law out of ignorance and not intentionally. From this it can be seen that the notion of morality presupposes morally responsible agents who create their actions freely with the consequences of such actions clearly in their minds.

1.11. Rational agency distilled

Having outlined so far various notions of agency I will in this section summarise what I take a rationally autonomous agent/rational agent to be and this understanding will be intended throughout this investigation. First and foremost, a rationally autonomous agent is one who is capable of purposefully, wilfully and intentionally producing actions. These actions are usually directed at fulfilling one goal or the other. Such actions are those that stem from the principle of rational autonomy. By rational autonomy is meant the rational agent's freedom to interpret and organise information presented by the world into coherent propositions as well as recognising and avoiding inconsistencies between such propositions. From such an organised body of propositions the rational agent can independently construct inferences about the current state of the world based mostly on reason, but also to some degree on emotions. This is what I have called the theoretical rationality aspect of rational autonomy.

Further, the rational agent has to also have practical rationality by which I mean the rational agent's freedom to choose the means or actions they deem to be the best to achieve their ends, which are mostly desirable ends as well as actualising such actions. There has to be a wide range of possible alternative actions that the rational agent can choose from, without this freedom to choose being constrained heavily by external influences to such a degree that the agent is only left with no alternatives at all. When this happens, the agent's rational autonomy becomes limited.

Because the rational agent's actions stem from this principle of rational autonomy, it appears that when the rational agent acts their actions can be subjected to moral scrutiny since such

actions would have been freely produced by the agents themselves in their unconstrained activity. That being the case, I argued for a conception of rational agents as moral beings, whose actions are to be judged as morally good or bad.

1.12. Conclusion

From the foregoing, it is apparent that being a rational agent entails being something that acts or a creator of actions. I have argued that actions do not have existence independently of their agents and agents become agents insofar as they have this ability to act. Such actions do not come about randomly or by some stroke of chance but are the product of the agent's rational autonomy, being capable of interpreting and making inferences about the various pieces of information presented by the world. It was also observed that the actions of the rational agent strive toward some goal, making agents purposive beings, whose actions are intentionally directed towards the achievement of a particular goal or set of goals. Rational agency is diminished or taken away completely if the agent's rational autonomy is constrained and the agent has no alternative options to choose from. When this is the case, the rational agent is not responsible for the creation of their own actions diminishing their moral responsibility. As such, rational agents are not only purposive beings but also moral beings, whose actions can be judged to be good or bad based on the conception that the rational agent deliberately and wilfully creates their actions for some purpose or goal.

Chapter 2: The possibility of group agents

2.1. Preamble

In the previous chapter I have demonstrated that rational agency involves individual human beings who are able to wilfully and intentionally bring about actions based on a principle of rational autonomy. In this chapter, it is my intention to determine whether such a concept of agency as outlined in chapter one can be applied to a conglomerate of individuals. Specifically, my intention is to answer the question: can groups possess the same qualities that the individual agents who compose them possess, such that the group as a whole can be considered a rational agent? If so, then what criteria are needed for the groups to count as such? To achieve this end, the chapter shall proceed in the following manner: in the first sections I will outline what I understand the term 'group' to mean. From this, I will then define the concept of 'group agent' and determine its possibility and challenges. Pertinent to this discussion is an analysis of emergence. From this analysis I intend to demonstrate the rational operations of a collective of individual agents. Finally, I will then discuss the criteria relevant for group agency.

2.2. Groups and mere collections

Before any talk of group agents can be made, it is important to define what I mean by the word 'group'. Generally, a group is a collection of people having some characteristic in common (Sheely, 2006). For instance, we can have a group of environmentalists, whose common characteristic is that they all care in some way about the environment. We can also have football supporters as a group whose common characteristic is their love for football or a particular football team. This is the general sense in which a group is understood. It is apparent from this definition that any collection of people with a characteristic in common can count as a group. For instance, people born in the same year can count as a group for they have at least one common characteristic; the year in which they were born. Or people who like junk food may fall into the same group for they have a unifying characteristic in their love for fatty foods. It can be seen here that even though such collections of individuals can legitimately be called 'groups' their constituency is so loosely connected that often-times the people belonging to such groups are not even aware of each other's existence. In other words, there is a loose connection between the members of the groups in question. For purposes of this study I will depart from this general definition of a group and outline further how a group is supposed to be understood in this context.

Hess (2007) adds another characteristic on how a group should be conceived. She argues that a group is not merely a collection of people with some characteristic in common, but that the constituent members have to meet often and engage in what she calls "face to face contact" (2007:3), which she believes will create an emotional connection between the members of such groups. According to Bion (1968) for the individual, the task of establishing emotional contact with the group is a primitive and formidable act that involves both regression and loss of individual distinctiveness. According to this view, human beings naturally seek to belong to a group and in the process are immersed into group practices such that they become one with the group. Even in the modern age where interactions between people take place in the virtual on-line world, it still remains true that people who belong to what I would like to call a group ought to have frequent interactions through video and picture messages and even text messages. Such communication strengthens the emotional contact between the people who constitute such a group and gives them a sense of belonging to the group.

Hunt (2003) supports this point, arguing that members of the group ought to be in frequent contact, interacting with each other and having a psychological awareness of each other just as members of a team would. According to Levine and Moreland (1996) groups constitute a number of regularly interacting people who have a sentimental attachment to each other. Such group membership often involves sharing a common vision, common goals and members usually behave in reciprocal ways to ensure the accomplishment of these goals. This is corroborated by Haynes (2012:3), who defines a group as, "an entity comprised of individuals who come together for a common purpose and whose behaviours in the group are guided by a set of shared values and norms." It could be argued that the best way to ensure that members of a group possess some shared values and norms as Haynes suggests is only if they are in frequent contact with each other. In the absence of this frequent contact and interaction it would be difficult for the members of the group to possess such shared traits.

From these observations, it is apparent that a group is to be distinguished from a mere collection of people in the sense that members of the groups in question frequently interact with each other and in the process they come to be aware of their common goals or objectives rather than casual encounters of people who have no shared set of objectives or goals and whose membership is loosely connected. Commenting on this, Adamatzky (2005:2) gives an example of a crowd, which he defines as "too many people in too little space." A crowd is different from a group in that it lacks a clear structure, a hierarchy or a clear leader. So a large number of

people does not necessarily constitute the kind of group I am particularly interested in. From this it is appears that mere collections of people cannot count as groups.

Apart from the group members being in frequent contact with each other, the groups I am interested in have some objectives that they seek to advance. As highlighted by Olson (1971) the main characteristic of a group is that it seeks to further the interests of its members at the same time having the members helping the group to achieve its own goals. As Festinger (1953) corroborates, people are attracted to joining groups not only because they simply want to belong, but that they also perceive some benefit associated in becoming members of such groups. Even the classical Greek writer Aristotle thought that people come together to form a group with a view to get some sort of advantage, citing a political association which "seems to have come together originally, and to continue in existence, for the sake of the general advantage it brings" (*Ethics* VIII.9.1160a). The groups I am interested in, then, exist to fulfil some purpose and at the same time offering some advantages to their individual members.

Olson (1971) cites various groups that have the end of furthering the interests of their members. He writes:

> Labour unions are expected to strive for higher wages and better working conditions for their members; the corporation is expected to further the interests of its stockholders; and the state is expected to further the common interests of its citizens (1971:6).

A question could be asked: can individuals not pursue their own interests and achieve their own goals as individuals and not a part of a group? To answer this question, Olson (1971) notes that to some degree, it is true that unorganised individual actions may achieve a person's individual ends.

To give an example, let us assume that the individual wants to construct a house. There are some tasks that the individual can do to ensure that the objective of completing the house is achieved but the individual may not be able to do all the tasks involved. For instance, the individual may not be able to be the builder, carpenter and plumber all at the same time. In principle it is possible that the individual may actually be in a position to carry out all these tasks. However, either this may become a heavy burden on the part of the individual or it may take a long time to complete the construction of the house. But when the individual is part of a group that shares the same objective of completing the house, the job becomes lighter since different members of the group do different tasks (some are builders, some carpenters and

others plumbers) and not one individual doing everything. Most groups bring with them a variety of expertise such that one task can be completed from a variety of angles and more efficiently. If the group is comprised of such experts the goal of completing the house becomes much easier and will likely take a shorter period of time to complete than if the individual was doing it all alone. In this case, it can be observed that joining a group makes individuals more efficient in achieving their own ends than if the individual was doing it all alone.

Further, when a person joins a group with a collective interest or purpose, the individual may become unable to achieve a collective goal, or may not be able to adequately advance the group's purpose (Olson, 1971). Put in another way, if a person becomes part of a group, it is less likely that they can achieve the group's tasks as individuals in themselves. Because such groups may assign tasks to individuals that ensure that the overall task of the group is achieved, some tasks may not be achievable by individuals in isolation. In turn, the group ensures that the needs of the individual are met by some sort of compensation for the fulfilment of the tasks assigned by the group (for instance wages to the builders, plumbers and carpenters from house construction example above).

People generally join groups so that they can have their own ends achieved. Although the group has specific goals, the satisfaction of which it was created for, its survival also depends on the satisfaction of its members' ends. For example, a university (understood in the sense of a group) comprises of a number of individuals who help in advancing the university's goal of, perhaps, providing higher education to the citizens. All the members of the university group—that is, students, lecturers, researchers and even hostel janitors—help the institution achieve this end. However, let us assume that the lecturers are not given their salaries for a period of time. The university will not continue to survive for the lecturers may feel that their ends are not being advanced by the group. Or, if the students feel that they are being unjustly treated by the university, or not getting what the university offered, then the university will not survive (as evidenced by the demonstrations that usually ensue). Evidently, individuals join groups, not only to satisfy the group's ends, but also under the impression that the group can satisfy their own ends as individuals. Although such ends can sometimes be achieved on an individual basis, it is usually in a group context that people typically get their ends satisfied more easily and efficiently.

According to Gannerson (2010), group decisions are usually preferable to those made by an individual. For one thing, groups generate more complete information and knowledge. Because there are a variety of different individuals with different talents within the group, they tend to offer increased diversity of views and solutions to problems. Decisions made by groups have a tendency to be more accurate and better accepted by individuals in the group. As Bion (2007:23) puts it, "the individual is a political animal who cannot find fulfilment outside a group and cannot satisfy any emotional drive without expression of its social component." The adage 'two heads are better than one' succinctly expresses this position, though in this case it should be properly rephrased 'many heads (the group) are better than one.'

In general, then, people join groups to achieve more successful personal and group outcomes. Groups are more successful at achieving tasks than their individual components. Group member participation leads to greater commitment and success. People also join groups to achieve shared objectives as well as personal objectives. Also, individuals join groups to address a social need through the group process (Bion, 2007). In experimental problem-solving situations it is observed that groups perform better than the average member in numerical estimation-type tasks. In an experiment carried out by Bloom and Johnson (1982), it was observed that when individual high school students were given difficult mathematical problems to solve, they struggled to come up with precise answers or took longer to come up with the correct response. However, when the same individuals were put into groups, and given similar mathematical problems, precision levels increased by more than seventy percent and the time taken to solve the problem decreased radically. Indeed, groups generally perform to the level of the best individual members, since such people generate solutions which other members may recognise as being better to solve the problem at hand.

For example, in a soccer team, the nature of the game of soccer is such that it is largely a team effort endeavour and a lone player cannot fulfil the demands of the game. Even if individual players are excellent players, this excellence only makes sense when they are well coordinated with other players. If the group's purpose is achieved, ideally, all members of the group are to benefit from that achievement. Hence generally, although it is possible for individuals to achieve some ends in their capacity as individuals, there are some ends that can be better achieved when they are part of a functional group. It can be observed here that by joining a group the individual helps that group in achieving group ends and in turn the individual benefits

through some form of benefit that they get from the successful achievement of such ends or by simply belonging to such a group.

The groups I am primarily interested in work in similar fashion to how teams work although it should be noted that the difference between a group and a team is not very clear. According to Overbeck (2011), a team may be defined as a small group in which the members distribute functions for the achievement of some goal. For example, in a soccer team, there are specific players with specific roles. The goal-keeper is there to keep the ball from getting in the net, the striker is there to shoot the ball into the opponent's net and the defender's role is to guard against the opponents' strikers. Although such roles are sometimes interchanged (as in where the goal-keeper assumes the role of striker and actually scores in the opponent's net in the manner of the famous Uruguay goalkeeper Rene Higuita, famous for being the goal keeper who was a good striker at the same time) the group dynamics are such that all members of the team know their specific role and position when they become members of the team.

Some writers, such as Hunt (2003) take the words 'group' and 'team' to be synonyms. However, Overbeck (2011) has argued that although a team is surely a group of some sort, it is not the case that all groups qualify to be teams. For example, some collections of individuals, which come in many forms, are often considered and spoken of as groups, but are not necessarily teams. Some groups are always morphing, changing their identity with any shift in their constituent membership. An example is the collection of passengers in an aeroplane. On all flights, this group assumes a new identity and is never the same throughout. From this example it is apparent that although such passengers in a plane count as a group of some sort, they do not necessarily become a team.

However, the flight crew may be considered both as a group and as a team. In the flight crew you find different people with a variety of expertise (such as the pilots, flight engineers, flight stewardesses) who are in frequent contact with each other and who work in liaison with each other so that their efforts help achieve the group's goal; in this case that of getting passengers where they are going. Each of them does their designated role so that the group's goal is achieved in similar fashion with a team. My primary focus is on groups that have an identity that transcends changes in their individual composition. For instance, an institution such as a business organisation, a state or an academic institution still maintain their identities despite any changes in their individual composition.

A wide variety of factors may be considered in what distinguishes one group from another. According to List and Pettit (2011), a group can be formed by people who are unified by a feature that is epistemically salient as well as behaviourally influential. Belonging to one ethnicity or the other, for example, is a key characteristic that members of a group share, but at the same time this 'belonging' influences their behaviour. For instance, it is commonplace to hear people arguing 'when in Rome do what the Romans do'. This adage demonstrates that by belonging to a particular group (being Roman in this case) there are certain behavioural expectations and stereotypes associated with being Roman. If being Roman is behaviourally associated with drinking lots of wine, for example, then group membership has a tendency of influencing such behavioural traits. The British, for example, are stereotypically known to be drinkers of tea, with Fromer (2008:26) describing tea in the British world not only as an absolute necessity, but also as a unifying characteristic, helping the English to define "…English identity, character and values." The moment one is identified as British, such stereotypical overtones are almost automatically granted to the individual.

The unifying property may also be a pre-existing marker or one created by the members, for example by signing up to some commitment (as in the case of a person joining an organisation and signing a contract), the members may construe themselves around the identity provided by that property, though not necessarily in exclusion of other identities (List and Pettit, 2011). On top of this, another key characteristics of the groups I will focus on is that they possess a clear and highly organised structure. This structure outlines which roles and tasks are to be carried out by which individuals or sub-groups of people within the broader group. There ought to be a clear leadership structure specifying the roles of such leaders and the extent of their duties. Such structures should ideally be known to all members of the group such that each member is at least aware of their designated role.

My working understanding of a group, then, according to these viewpoints and observations, is a collection of highly organised individuals typically in frequent contact with each other who come together for the achievement of some goal or objective. In turn, the individuals that comprise the group get some form of benefit from their membership in such groups. The members of such groups are unified by a salient feature that gives it an identity which does not change even when membership changes, and this membership influences certain ways of thinking and behaviour.

2.3. The possibility and nature of Group agents

The question I seek to address in this section is whether it makes sense to speak of groups as rational agents. But before any talk of group agency may be attempted it is important to outline what is meant by 'group agent.' A group agent is to be defined as a group of people that exhibits the traits analogous to human agency, that is, representational states, motivational states, and a capacity to process them and to act on that basis in the manner of a rational agent (List and Pettit, 2011). Such groups are organized in order to seek the realization of certain motivations in the world and to do so on the basis of certain representations about what that world is like.

A good way to answering the question on whether such group agents exist, as well as understanding their nature, would be to outline the conditions that are necessary for such agency to exist, then determine whether there are groups that can fit such characteristics. In order to understand how a group agent comes to be in existence from a number of individuals there is need to examine some theories that have been offered to account for the relationships between parts and wholes which can help to understand whether groups can be considered as entities in themselves separate from their constituent parts. To achieve this end, I will discuss the notion of emergence and how it should be understood in the context of formulating how rational group agents come into existence.

2.4. Emergence

The dictionary definition of the term emergence comes from the Latin word equivalent with 'to bring to light' (Fang, 2008). In this sense emergence means the process of becoming visible. The 17th century Latin meaning of the word meant something similar to 'unforeseen occurrence', in this sense meaning something that emerges from other elements ought to be novel. In its most abstract and metaphysical sense, emergence describes the universal process of creation that is both a fundamental and pervasive feature of the world as it plays out in all types of systems. According to Chalmers (2006), emergence involves the creation of something new that could have not been expected from a description of the parts prior to its creation. In other words, emergence is the idea that certain complex properties of wholes emerge from the interaction of the parts.

Classical examples of emergence can be found in the collective behaviour of social insects like ants and bees as they create swarms and colonies. Many other examples have been identified

in human social organization and human cognition. The solvent property of water is an often cited example of emergence. Neither hydrogen atoms nor oxygen atoms in isolation possesses this property and neither do they possess the scaled down versions of the property. This solvent action seems to emerge from a non-linear combination of the properties of hydrogen and oxygen.

Because emerging properties are a result of the interactions between the parts, they cannot be observed locally in the subsystems, but only as a global structure of an integrated network. In such a way, emergence creates a system with two or more distinct patterns of organization called integrated levels (Auyang, 1998). Thus new descriptive categories are necessary for the different levels when referring to phenomena that involve emergence. As emerging macro-level phenomena cannot be described within the vocabulary applicable to the parts, the emergent features require new terms and new concepts to categorize them, as an emergent property is thought to be irreducible simply to an account of its elementary parts.

Emergence, then, describes a process whereby component parts interact to form synergies. These synergies then add value to the combined organization which gives rise to the emergence of a new macro-level or organization that is a product of the interrelations between the parts, not simply the properties of the parts themselves. Emergent properties are attributed to whole structured collections of elements where the emergent property is not an additive function of the properties of the elements of the collection taken individually. For example, the mass of the human body is a simple summation of all its parts (such as the kidneys, lungs, heart and so on) taken in isolation, thus it is not an emergent feature. However, the human digestive system would appear to be an emergent property since it arises through the interaction of parts that alone do not exhibit certain properties. That is, single cells come together to form tissues and the tissues in turn come together to form organs like the small and large intestines and the pancreas. The interactions of these organs form the digestive system. What the digestive system can do is far greater than what its cellular parts can do alone hence the digestive system can be considered an emergent phenomenon (Castle, 2015). The behaviour of the system as a whole results more from the interaction of the parts than from the behaviour of the components themselves. The added value of the whole that exists above and beyond the parts and their properties is a product of the way they interact.

Emergence is then a product of synergistic interactions of the parts in the system. Positive synergies arise when two or more elements both differentiate their states and activity with respect to each other and coordinate them. Differentiation enables the parts to specialise while integration enables them to coordinate their different capabilities towards an overall outcome (Auyang, 1998). In so doing, the interaction adds value to the overall system and we get some combined organisation that is greater than the sum of its parts.

Due to the rise of different levels of organisation within the same single overall system, emergence gives rise to a complex dynamic between the different levels, most notably between the micro and macro-levels of the system. Systems that engender an emergence have some specific micro-macro feedback dynamic that becomes important in understanding their overall behaviour. This dynamic where the higher levels affect the interactions of the lower levels is a key part of emergence in the sense that emergence is to be understood as the various causal powers the things can have when acting together to form a whole that are not straightforwardly explained (or predicted) in terms of how each acts individually, where the explanation of individual behaviour can be explained in terms of constraints placed upon them by the whole to which they belong.

This interaction can be seen in biological organisms as individual organs and tissues create the whole organism, but then the organism as a whole feeds back to regulate the parts. Within societies, individuals create institutions, but then institutions feedback to constrain the individual towards the end of the institution as a whole. Here it can be seen that the behaviour and relations of lower level parts can be understood in terms of the whole entity to which they are part and in turn the operations of the whole can be explained by reference to the interactions of the constituent parts.

In all cases emergence involves new descriptions of the system being used when we go from the micro-levels to the macro-levels and this can be seen in many cases. In the study of society, the micro and macro are divided into two different domains with their own separate lexicon. Psychology, if we are talking about the individual and sociology if we are talking about macro-level patterns within social systems. This is because phenomena like social movements only emerge out of the synchronised activities of the many individuals and thus will not form part of the study of the individual, but will only form part of the study of the whole social group.

A primary distinction is often made between strong and weak emergence. Weak emergence is the idea that some systems cannot be described as a matter of practice in terms of their component units because of the limits to our knowledge, that is, our inability to obtain all relevant information and do all the computations (Auyang, 1998). Strong emergence means how the world is irrespective of our understanding of it. In theory, a full understanding of the operation of the system is not possible not just because of practical constraints but because new and fundamentally irreducible levels of organization appear at the higher levels.

The question that both try to respond to is whether we form different descriptions on different levels out of expediency and lack of knowledge (weak emergence) or do we do it because on a fundamental level it is not possible to fully derive an account of the macro-level from the micro-level (strong emergence). Weak emergence describes an emergent process that, given enough information, it can theoretically be predicted or even simulated by a computer. With the process of weak emergence, novel features and properties may emerge within a system that could have not been predicted *a priori* (Chalmers, 2006). The weak emergentist would argue that when certain things act together they act in ways that are not easily predictable based on their individual actions. However, once they have emerged, it is possible, at least theoretically, to derive them from their underlying component parts, even if in practice this is not computationally viable. In the case of weak emergence the emergent properties are in principle explainable in terms of the interactions of the parts. That is, the presence of these properties is in principle deducible from the interactions of the parts, even though in fact this may be difficult.

However, strongly emergent properties are ones that cannot be derived, even in principle from a full understanding of the properties and interactions of the component parts. Strongly emergent properties would be metaphysically distinct from the interactions of the parts. The higher level emergent properties and features must then be understood as a whole in terms of the macro-level dynamics with only limited reference to micro-level mechanics (Murphy, 2011). Weak emergence on the other hand can be described as when complex high-level functions are perceived as a product of the simple combination of lower-level mechanisms.

Central to weak emergence is the supervenience of these emergent properties on the properties and relations of the parts. Supervenience is a relation of modal dependence between certain kinds of things and other things. The core idea of supervenience is that if A supervenes on B

then there cannot be an A difference without a B difference which captures the idea that A depends upon B. For example, if the mass of an object supervenes upon the properties of its parts, then there can be no change in the mass of that object without there being a change in the mass of the parts. With weak emergence, the complex emergent properties of the whole supervene upon the properties and interrelation of the parts, capturing the dependence between the emergent whole and the parts. And it is because the emergent properties of the whole supervene upon the properties and interrelations of the parts that the emergent properties can be explained (at least in principle) in terms of the parts and their interrelations. This contrasts with strong emergentism where the lack of explanation of the strongly emergent in terms of its parts is typically seen to be underpinned by a lack of such supervenience.

The picture we get from weak emergentism is that of a complex whole that has certain properties that constrain the behaviour of its parts (as the behaviour of any individual part is explained in terms of its interactions with the other part), even though the properties of the complex whole ultimately supervene upon (and so are in principle explainable in terms of) the properties and interrelations of the parts. As I will demonstrate in subsequent sections, group agents are to be considered as weakly emergent from their members.

2.5. Groups and actions

Now that the notion of emergence has been laid out, it remains to be seen how such a notion can be used to explain the possibility and nature of group agents. It was observed in section 1.4 that a salient feature of what it means to be a rational agent is to perform deliberate or intentional actions. Rational agents by their very definition were seen to be producers of rationally calculated action and without this production of action agency ceases to be. That being the case, in this section I will determine whether the action-production criterion can be applied to groups. By using the notion of emergence discussed in section 2.4 I will determine what it would mean when action is taken in the group's name either from members or leaders. To make clear what this means, an example from ordinary life may suffice. The information from this example will then be analysed and the inferences drawn from it will be used to determine if groups (as collective entities) can actually produce actions as rational agents.

According to a 2016 Fortune.com report, Walmart, an international retail corporation based in the United States, 'helped the needy in America by donating food' (http://fortune.com/2016/06/22/fortune-500-most-charitable-companies/). In this instance,

although the corporate is not like the biological human being, we see the corporate performing an action, in this case that of giving to charity. Oftentimes such newspaper headlines as "Walmart helps the needy" give the impression that an action has been done by a group. But what exactly does this mean? There are many possible answers to this question. To begin with, this could be an appeal to the view that it was the individual people from Walmart who actually did the actions and not Walmart as a whole entity.

In contrast to the notion of emergence it can be argued that the operation of wholes is a function of distinct individual component parts or particular individuals, where the behaviour of each of these individuals can be understood in some sense independently of the other individuals in the group. In such a view, any actions performed in the name of the group are explainable in terms of the distinct actions of the individuals performing that task. This is known as individualism and comes in two forms, that is, methodological and ontological individualism. Ontological individualism states that individuals are the only real material entities who take priority over the groups to which they belong, while methodological individualism requires that causal accounts of group phenomena can be explicable in terms of how they result from the motives and actions of individual agents who comprise them (Sheely, 2006). All group actions, according to this view, can be viewed as the activity of distinct constituent individual members and are not to be considered as actions of the whole entities in themselves. On the surface, viewing groups this way would suggest that there are no 'group agents' distinct from their individual membership as such, but there are only individual agents that act in "…concert like the individual members of a choral group who do not become a single entity simply because their voices are in harmony" (List and Pettit, 2011:74). Such a view would seem to suggest that to assign collectives of people as rational agents is a function of the imagination.

Proponents of the view that group actions are nothing but those of the individuals who comprise them would then argue that it is indeed the individuals in groups that are responsible for rationalising various bits of information and making decisions within the group. According to such a worldview, the problem of assigning agent status to groups stems from the metaphorical misconceptions that ascribe agency to groups of people. Such misconceptions make it appear as though a conglomerate of people or things can act as human beings do. For example, many people view organizations operating as bee-hives, with the minds of the people in such organisations connected by strange high-bandwidth connections (McCullers, 1943).

We imagine small groups that "act in unison, not from thought or from the will of any one man, but as though their instincts had merged together so that the decision belongs to no single one of them, but to the group as a whole" (McCullers, 1943:29). If, for example, Carol was the lady responsible for the actual distribution of the food on behalf of Walmart, then Carol is the one who actually performed the action, and not the conglomerate 'Walmart'. If the view that group actions are to be perceived as individual members' distinct actions is anything to go by, then it would seem true that in the absence of such individuals, such actions could not be performed. In this view, the actions or behaviour of a conglomerate can best be explained, not as actions of the whole, but as those of individual members of the group as they individually carry out their designated roles as distinct individuals. In essence, the group's actions are simply the actions of particular individual members in their lone capacities as distinct individuals. Implicit in this kind of perspective is the view that groups cannot be viewed as distinct entities from the individuals that comprise them but are to be viewed as the activities of distinct individuals within a group setup.

Such implications become apparent when members of organisations such as Walmart do something deemed against company policy, something out of their designated role or something deemed generally wrong. For example, a newspaper headline from July 17th 2013 read "Walmart employee knocks out store manager in break room fistfight" (http://www.opposingviews.com). Regardless of the circumstances surrounding the actual story, it appears from this headline that the employee was acting on their own behalf, although they were clearly part of the group Walmart. However, in this case, the individual (perhaps because they did something wrong) was not considered to be acting on behalf of Walmart, otherwise the headline could have read "Walmart knocks out store manager." Hence the view that group actions are nothing but actions of the individuals comprising the group often appears when individual members of the groups do something that does not promote the group's interests or when a member acts against the group's expectations and the group distances itself from the individual's actions.

However, there appears to be some problems with this sort of reasoning. For one thing, Carol (or any other individual members of the group) will not be doing the actions (such as donating food to charity) on her own behalf, but on behalf of the group or as a representative of the group (in this case Walmart). Perhaps Carol cannot afford (as an individual and from her individual income) to donate food to charity. However, Carol was authorised by Walmart (as a group) to

execute actions on its behalf. In essence, it is the group doing the action through Carol. To give an allegorical parallel with an individual rational agent, although the mind rationalises and decides that a particular path of action has to be followed, it is not the mind that executes the actual actions. Rather, it is the arms, legs and other parts of the body that do the execution. Each part of the body does its own designated role, but it does this only on behalf of the individual as a whole and not according to its own accord.

It would be wrong to assume that because the legs (designated for the role of walking) are not the mind (designated for the role of deciding) and hence not responsible for deciding to walk, then when they do walk they should be given a mind of their own. When legs walk they have been authorised by the whole to be the best for executing the task at hand. So the legs walk on behalf of the whole body as they are best suited to achieving this task. In the same way, just because an individual person has been authorised to execute actions on behalf of a group does not mean that the group's actions are to be perceived as the actions of such individuals.

According to Hardy (1985) it is apparent that when people become part of a functional and highly organised group, there emerges a new entity that cannot be explained simply by reference to the uncoordinated activities of its individual members in their individual capacities but the behaviour of the group is to be understood in terms of the various individuals and how they interact with one another or where the behaviour of individuals is interdependent with other members of the group. In other words, the behaviour of the group cannot be ascribed to the activity of particular individuals acting independently of other members of the group. This is in line with weak emergentism, which allows that the properties of the group can be explained in terms of the individuals and relations between them. From this perspective, the behaviour of particular individuals in a group cannot be understood or explained in isolation from the rest of the group as the group constrains, in certain ways, the behaviour of such individuals. These constraints to be found in the complex properties of the group are properties that ultimately depend upon all the individuals in the group and how they relate and/or interact.

Chalmers (2006) also corroborates this view, suggesting that societies emerge from the individuals making the individuals behave in ways that they would not behave in isolation. This is apparent in the world of sport, where for example, a soccer team is more than just the sum of its individual players. When Manchester United or Orlando Pirates wins a soccer match, this success is not attributed to the individual players, but to the team as a whole. It is because

of the various interactions between the members of the soccer team that the team can be considered to be acting as one whole. The idea is that the actions of the whole are to be explained by reference to the organised, interdependent and coordinated interactions of the parts. This perspective makes the emergence notion a desirable paradigm to understanding the possibility and nature of group agents.

Applying the emergentist perspective on the relationship between individual members and groups, List and Pettit (2011) argue that when individuals join a well-structured and well-coordinated group, there emerges a new entity that acts as a whole group and not just as a mere collection of its distinct members. Such emergentist thinking resonates the philosophy of Hegel (1956) on the nature of the relationship between the individual and the group. For Hegel, conceiving individuals as entities independent of the group to which they belong is just part of human imagination since all individual human beings are embedded in groups to which they belong.

According to Bradley (1876), human beings are not to be thought of as isolated human beings but as part of the embeddedness of group structures. As such, because of such interconnectedness, a new entity is created when individuals form a group that is not to be identified as the sum total of its separate individual members, but as a distinct entity arising from the interactions of its constituent members. From this, it follows that for both Hegel and Bradley, talking of an individual in abstraction from the group to which they belong is inconceivable and at best part of wishful thinking. What this means is that when individuals join certain highly organised groups, any actions that the individuals perform on behalf of such a group can be considered group actions. Hence, in the Walmart example, Carol does not perform actions as herself, but as a representative and under the directive of Walmart as a group.

There are however certain parameters that have to be set in order for the members of these groups to coordinate their activity and fully carry out actions and participate in the decision making, especially when the group structure is such that there is a leader/leaders (whom we shall label decision making members), whose role it is to decide the course of action the group is supposed to take as well as designate who, in the group, is best suited to execute such actions, and other group members (whom we shall call executive members) whose role it is to execute the actions deliberated by the decision-making members. It is plausible to assume that the group

as a whole cannot execute 'group actions' but that there are members within an organisation (such as CEOs, Directors etc.) whose role it is to execute such functions and not all members of the group can decide on which actions the group is to take.

As I highlighted in section 2.2, it is important that all members of the group ought to have a common awareness of their roles within it and each person is to play their coordinated roles for the successful outcomes of the group's actions in line with the argument from emergence that the macro-level pattern is dependent on the interactive organisation at the micro-level. All members of the group, then, play an active role, that is, acting in full awareness for the pursuit of the group's ends. It may mean performing some part within the group or acting in its name in dealing with outside parties or fellow members, as in Carol's donating food to charity on behalf of Walmart given in an earlier example.

According to List and Pettit (2011), the members' authorization or activity in relation to a group agent is always licensed authorization or activity. Bearing in mind that emergence implies that any macro-level phenomena emerge from the interactions and organisation of its micro-level patterns, individual members of the group must be organised in such a way as to produce this emergence. To this end, individual members of the group either must be licensed or authorised (in the sense of being allowed) by the group as being adequate enough to act on behalf of the group. The license may be given explicitly by the group's charter or a contract of affiliation, or implicitly through the informal acceptance by others. Individual members do not act for a group just by virtue of trying to help; they must be licensed by the group, formally or informally, as being fit to act on its behalf.

There is an implicit (or explicit in the case of contracts) expectation from the group that when an individual joins the group and becomes a member, the member will align their actions in accordance with the group's organisation. Hence, all the actions the individual will do will be on behalf of the organisation, and not on their own behalf (Elster, 1986). This will ensure that all actions that the individual does are those that further the group's interests. Failure to carry out or execute actions that are in line with group expectations would be akin to metaphorically saying that a neuron, as part of the body, can do its own actions that do not further the body's interests. From this, it is apparent that group actions arise out of a coordinated effort between decision making individuals of the group and the active members of the group that ensure that the group's actions are performed successfully.

2.6. Group rationality

It appears from the previous section that indeed, groups, through the interactions of their various component members, can perform intentional actions just like individual rational agents can. But I have argued in the previous chapter that individual rational agents do not just produce intentional actions randomly. Rational agents are *homo calculus* or calculating beings that produce actions intentionally and deliberately after a rational analysis of propositions. But can the same be said of groups? One challenge to the group agency theory is demonstrating that groups can be rational just like individual human agents. To count as a rational agent, a group must demonstrate some form of rational autonomy akin to individual human rational autonomy. Its members must find a form of organization that ensures, as far as possible, that the group meets various standards of rationality as outlined in section 1.8 of the previous chapter. As Pettit notes:

> [group] agents have to display a modicum of rationality in the formation and enactment of their [actions], else they will not pass as agents at all; their performance will be too random or erratic to count as action (Pettit 2007:495).

To begin with the group agent must possess theoretical and practical rationality both of which constitute what I have called rational autonomy in section 1.8. Theoretical rationality has to do with the ability to analyse propositions in the world into a coherent whole and avoiding inconsistencies between propositions. As far as theoretical rationality is concerned, the group must ensure that it has consistent beliefs that are true about the world it inhabits and that its desires are achievable. This attitude-to-fact perspective assumes that the group gets its information from its individual members who act as its eyes and ears (List and Pettit, 2011) and this information is somehow deliberated upon based on the principles of theoretical rationality outlined in section 1.8. Groups form and enact their attitudes towards a certain proposition on the basis of communication among the members, and this requires a method for communicating the proposed or accepted group attitudes and it is from such interactions that group rationality emerges.

There are various ways in which a group can be said to 'theoretically rationalise' on various ideas. One is deliberation among group members or among those in a relevant subgroup that has been authorized to perform this task. Another is voting among some or all of the members, whether majoritarian or otherwise. A third is 'dictatorship,' as when a particular individual is authorized to determine the group's judgments or preferences. When group members deliberate

together, they offer each other the kinds of considerations that come up in theoretical rationality: for example, if the group is considering whether to adopt proposition *p* or *q* theoretical rationality suggests an analysis that would check for contradictions between *p* and *q*. If the evidence suggests that proposition *p* is inconsistent with *q* which has already judged or preferred to be the case then the group will adjust its position accordingly judging that *p* and *q* are inconsistent.

When the group accepts the judgements or pronouncements of the relevant authorised people, for example the chairperson or director, these pronouncements are likely to take the form of a rational judgment that something is or is not the case, or a preference that something should or should not be the case. According to List and Pettit (2011), feedback is important in the group's theoretical reasoning in that it ensures that the group does not violate the constraints of rationality. Organizational structures with feedback at a micro-level often give rise to macro-level theoretical reasoning. Individuals who notice an actual or potential inconsistency in the group's positions are likely to draw this to the other members' attention rather than adjusting covertly so as to compensate. But if group members address such issues together, analysing inconsistencies in received propositions as a group, then in effect the group addresses them. And when the group adjusts its position in order to avoid the inconsistency, this is naturally explained as a case of the group reasoning its way out of the difficulty through the rational interactions of its individual members.

In turn, when the group has rationally deliberated on propositions about the world in the manner just described, this then informs its practical rationality. After assessing which propositions to adopt and which ones to reject, the group then decides on which course of action to take which is what I have called practical rationality in section 1.8.2. The group ought to have at its disposal a range of alternative courses of actions from which to choose based on its analysis of propositions about the world in order for it to adequately possess practical rationality. Once these two (theoretical and practical) aspects of rationality are satisfied, the group can then be considered a rationally autonomous group agent.

This rationality of the group is based, amongst many other theories, on the social choice theory. According to Gaertner (2009), social choice theory is an analysis of collective decision making. The social choice theory starts out from the articulated opinions or values of the members of a group and attempts to derive a collective verdict or statement. Such a situation can be called

direct democracy, where group actions are determined directly by the members of that group. Another form of rationalising procedure is also possible, that is, representations, wherein group opinions lie in the hands of officials who are authorised by other group members — the decision-making members of the group. Individuals of such groups are aggregated into a group preference that is claimed to reflect the general opinion or will of the group such that the group's decisions follow immediately from that of their individual members.

Given this understanding of social choice theory I will now make explicit how a group that has a number of distinct individual members can be expected to operate in an organised manner so that their attitudes, actions, or dispositions to act are aligned to form the group agent. It is apparent that the things a group agent does are influenced by, and not independent from, the things its members do. Because group agents are comprised of individuals, it is difficult to envisage how the group agent can form intentional attitudes without these being influenced, in one way or other, by certain contributions of its members. Further, no group agent can act without one or more of its members acting.

It was noted in section 2.4 that a new entity emerges when a number of individuals come to form a certain group. If the group is going to count as an agent, then some input from the members who comprise it is an inevitable condition; that is, the group's thought patterns somehow come from the individual members who comprise it. The macro-level patterns of the new emergent entity follow immediately from the interactions of the members who comprise it at a micro-level. Though the group is a distinct entity, it draws its lifeline from its members in their various roles. When applied to groups, this can be summed up as follows: the attitudes and actions of a group agent supervene on the contributions of its members. In other words, 'lower-level' patterns influence 'higher-level' patterns (List and Pettit, 2011). In turn, these higher level patterns also place some constraints on the individual components resulting in a continuous cycle wherein the micro-level interactions influence the macro-level patterns and the high level patters constrain the lower level patterns. Accordingly, any individual-level duplicate of the group agent will be a group level duplicate as well. Supervenience does not side-line the role of the group agent's organizational structure, that is, whether one is democratically oriented or authoritarian. However, the difference in the two organizational structures will show up in some individual-level differences between the two groups; their different forms of organization mean that their members will act and be disposed to act in different ways. If one group is democratically organized while the other is authoritarian, this

difference will show up in different dispositions among members with regard to counting votes. This brings about two variants of the supervenience view, that is, the authoritarian and majoritarian supervenience views.

According to majoritarian supervenience, as defended by Hayneman and Kay (2006), the group's reasoning and actions follow immediately from the majority's voice in the group, at least the majority of those authorised to perform the function of deliberating on group issues. If an issue arises in the group that needs acting upon, then upon deliberation, if the majority of the group members decide that a particular motion is the way forward, then the group follows the action plan chosen by the majority of the group. In this way, the group's action is representative of the popular or majority position held by members of the group. The majoritarian kind of supervenience works well in large group agents like corporates, in which the members of the group whose role it is to deliberate over the group's decisions (like board members) usually take a majoritarian or democratic stance on the actions that the group is supposed to take.

However, the major weakness of this type of supervenience is that it does not allow for the voice of the minority to be acted upon. Sometimes the minority views in the group are suppressed by the majority and this can be detrimental to the survival of the group. There are cases in history where disasters could have been averted if the voice of the minority had been taken into consideration. A good example is the Challenger space shuttle disaster of 28 January 1986 where lives were lost because of the failure by group members to take heed of the minority's view that warned against launching the spaceship Challenger into space. It should be noted however that it is not always the case that members of the group can reach a unanimous consensus on various issues confronting the group, so majoritarian supervenience may be preferred where the group cannot reach a unanimous consensus, since it represents at least the perspective of more members in the group.

The authoritarian supervenience view suggests that the group agent's reasoning and subsequent actions follow immediately from the leader of the group. The thought patterns of the group supervene on the thought patterns of the individual leader since the leader has been authorised to perform such a role within the group. The groups in question either authorise the leader to do the decision-making on behalf of the group or the group structures (such as its laws and codes of conduct) may suggest that such leaders assume this role. In this case, whatever

decision the leader reasons is the most appropriate action for the group to take is the action that the group will take. This kind of supervenience works well in military type groups or groups that have a top-down structure where leaders are at the top and all other members cascade downwards in their various ranks. Although the authoritarian supervenience view appears to be a one-person show (with some advisors in some cases), it does have its merits over the majoritarian supervenience view. For one thing, it avoids, as Hobbes (1994) notes, factionalism between the minority and majority members of one position. It eliminates this by ensuring that the decision making abilities of the group lie in the hands of one person who is most likely to be undivided on the decision that the group is supposed to take.

In an army, for example, if the decision-making aspect of the group was up to all the members of the army's unit, then such a group would not function as a disciplined unit since all the members would have varying opinions on the action the group is supposed to take. Perhaps this is why armies, by their very nature, are not democratic in orientation. The discipline that is required in the army requires that rational deliberation of one person who decides on what action the group is supposed to take. However, it should be cautioned that groups that have an authoritarian kind of supervenience can degenerate into a situation where the leader simply makes decisions on behalf of the group without regard to whether this will advance the aims of the group or not, in which case it becomes a dictatorship. However, notwithstanding this discrepancy, for a group agent to function properly, a sort of authoritarian supervenience ought to be in place. Even the majoritarian supervenience view amounts to a dictatorship of the majority. This is not to say that if the group agent's decisions supervene on a non-dictatorial structure then the group would not function properly. Most group agents indeed function on a majoritarian basis. The point here is that it is likely that if some sort of authoritarian leadership (either of a single person or of the majority members in the group) is not present within the group's decision making structures, then the group will unlikely function properly. This kind of setting makes it easier for a group agent to perform its functions since it is usually difficult to have unanimous decisions on an issue within the group.

The claim that group decisions and actions supervene on the contributions of its members, be it on a majoritarian or authoritarian basis, is a result of the fact that group thought patterns and actions are a product of the members' thought patterns and actions, be it the majority or the leader. In other words, the group's decisions are informed by the rational decisions of their constituent members and group actions follow the same pattern, i.e., group actions follow

immediately from individual members' actions. Coming back to the Walmart example, the group acts because Carol, an individual member of the group, has acted. This finding supports the logical possibility of group agency in the sense that the supervenience relation demonstrates how a group agent performs its various functions and actions.

Important examples of organizational structures giving rise to a supervenience relation between individual and group rationality and actions, while ensuring robust group rationality, are those that implement a premise-based or sequential priority procedure (List and Pettit, 2011). Under such a structure, the set of group attitudes across the propositions on the agenda is determined by, and thus supervenient on, the individual sets of attitudes on these propositions; and by the given organizational design, consistent and complete group attitudes are guaranteed. From the supervenience understanding of group agency, it appears as though collective decisions can be read as claims about the properties that are likely to be expressed by members of a group. We assume that group members will behave similarly and have similar properties, and perceived likenesses between group members are likely to increase the likelihood that the group will be perceived as unified.

However, some objections have been raised to perceiving groups this way. One objection runs as follows: ascriptions of rationality to groups in this way may appear to be just metaphorical illusions created by the cohesiveness that we observe in the behaviour of group members. Because the group members behave and respond to their environment alike, we assume that the group to which they belong must be an agent in itself. However, in response to this objection I argue that when the group is created in a highly organised way, then it exerts some constraints on its members such that they behave in ways that are consistent with group dictates as observed in the emergence paradigm. The group does not merely become cohesive, nor does it act randomly. Ascriptions of agency to highly organised groups are as legitimate as ascribing agency to individual human beings. To deny such ascriptions is tantamount to denying the agency of a human being. If we accept that individual human action is the result of the coordinated activity of the different parts of the body, then it also appears legitimate to accept that group action is a result of the coordinated activities of the various individual members. A group that engages in goal-directed and rationally explicable behaviour, in the various senses just described, can legitimately be seen as *an agent*.

It is worth noting here that the supervenience relation between members of the group and the group agent itself can explain how the group comes up with rational decisions. From the discussion so far, it appears that for a group to count as rational, it needs to conform to certain standards of rationality such as analysing and deliberating over propositions, getting rid of inconsistencies and acting accordingly. This can be achieved at a group level when we find members of the group deliberating on a certain course of action. Board meetings (and other meetings in general) are held to deliberate on an issue confronting the group, say proposition p. After the deliberations of those members of the group whose job it is to carry out such types of deliberations (bearing in mind that each person in the group has their designated roles as outlined earlier), they will adopt either p, not p, or q, which is a new position based on the findings of the group. Whatever decision these members are going to come up with, this becomes the decision of the group since, as the supervenience thesis has shown, the group agent's thinking follows immediately from that of its constituent members (or those members whose job it is to deliberate and make decisions of this nature within the group).

An example here will be necessary to outline the possibility of groups being able to *rationalise* according to a supervenience pattern and produce calculated actions. On December 3, 1996, the *New York Times* carried a headline on how the aerospace company Boeing was to *buy* another aerospace company MacDonnell Douglas. (http://www.nytimes.com/1996/12/16/news/boeing-to-buy-mcdonnell-douglas.html) In the report, MacDonnell Douglas was to merge with Boeing as a strategic move that would see the merger being rivalled only by European aerospace company Airbus. Besides, MacDonnell Douglas was struggling in the industry and the move to merge with Boeing would prevent the company from going bankrupt. According to the report, the new conglomerate would be the "largest, strongest, broadest, most admired aerospace corporation in the world and by far the largest U.S. exporter," said John McDonnell, then chairman of McDonnell Douglas (http://www.nytimes.com/1996/12/16/news/boeing-to-buy-mcdonnell-douglas.html).

This example can shed light on some aspects of group rationality, but first, it is important to review the emergentist theory of group rationality in order to better understand how group rationality operates. Emergentists assume that group agency arises out of the interaction of the individual members. Rationality at group level is to be considered as following from the reasoning of its members due to the supervenience relation between the group and its individual components as outlined earlier in section 2.4. Proponents of this approach (such as Gierke in

the *German Law of fellowship*, 1934) argue that such collective entities can be viewed as having a life and mind of their own similar to that of individual human agents, hence having group agent status (List and Pettit, 2011).

When individuals become part of a group, a new overriding being is created, in whose name and purpose all individual actions are performed. Group agents become new entities that stand over and above the individuals that constitute them. That being the case, in the MacDonnell Douglas and Boeing merger example, it can be seen that the two companies made some calculations on which path of action to follow. The merger was not an instant or random act, but was a well calculated action that both parties saw as creating some benefits. According to the report, Boeing, being the party buying MacDonnell Douglas saw greater productivity in the merger by utilising the infrastructure that the struggling MacDonnell Douglas was underutilising. On the other hand, MacDonnell Douglas saw in the deal a way out of potential bankruptcy as it had been struggling to keep running in light of competitors like Boeing and Airbus. So each party in the merger had some benefits which are to be considered as reasons for the action of merging.

From this example, it can be seen that the two companies made the calculated action of signing the merger after weighing the benefits and disadvantages of the deal. They were not compelled by outside forces in any way to do the merger but were compelled by a rational analysis of possible and actual outcomes. Obviously, a number of individual people were authorised to do the job of calculating the future outcomes of the deal, but it is important to highlight that they were only doing this on behalf of their different groups. In the end, it is the *groups* (MacDonnell Douglas and Boeing) that entered the deal and not the individuals that worked for them and it is the groups that benefitted, in one way or the other, from the deal. In other words, the actions of both groups supervened on that of their individual decision-making members. Hence it suffices to say that the groups *deliberated* on the various propositions that informed the deal and made rational and free decisions to enter the deal in light of the benefits that would accrue to both parties. Boeing did not force MacDonnell Douglas into the deal and the reverse is also true, but both parties intentionally entered into the deal, which is a necessary condition for agency. Both parties acted as rational agents.

From the emergence point of view it appears that group agents exist. As individual human agents come to form a group of a certain kind, a new 'individual' is created giving rise to a

single centre of agency. The group agent that members constitute emerges at the moment they come together, but it appears as an extra reality over and above anything they themselves contribute. Group rationality then occurs when the group's decisions supervene on or follow immediately from those of their individual members. This supervenience guarantees that the group is rational since its rationality follows from the rational interactions and deliberations of its individual members (or at least those who have been authorised to carry out this task).

According to Mathiesen (2011), to understand the supervenience relation between a group and its members we could imagine two parents being asked by their daughter at what age it would be right to start dating. The mother may be of the opinion that fourteen would be the ideal age, yet the father may think that eighteen is the ideal age. They agree that they ought to meet half way and settle for sixteen as the ideal age for starting dating. They then present this decision to their daughter as a collective decision, rather than as individual decisions. This is a group decision made by both parents as a group. From an emergence perspective, it can be seen that when the parents join together there emerges a new entity that is more than just being two individuals. When this new entity has emerged, it is then their task to rationally deliberate on courses of action to take in light of the problem at hand. Through such deliberations, an agreement is reached and the parents have a solution forward. This solution is representative of supervenience, where the parents' decision (as a group) follows immediately from their rational deliberations. Just as was demonstrated in the MacDonnell Douglas-Boeing example above, it is also clear that it was the companies (and not the individuals who work for them) who *rationalised* and entered into the deal.

However, Huebner (2014) warns against positing group mentality this way. He argues that it is important to bear in mind the distinction between genuine collective mentality and situations where such joint mentality could be better explained by reference to the leaders of the group. For instance, an illusion could be created that a reached decision is a group decision when in actual fact it is a dictator's decision. However, as highlighted above, if majoritarian or even authoritarian supervenience is to be followed, then it appears that the leader will be acting in a manner that is consistent with the authorisation of other group members. Group agency collapses in this case when such decisions are not authorised by the group but just by that individual alone. It is true that the decisions of the group (as a whole) are in the hands of a few leaders or are directed by the leader(s) of the group but this does not take away the element of collective mentality if such leaders have been authorised to perform such roles and within their

specified parameters. Hence, inasmuch as Huebner makes that observation, it remains true that groups can exhibit collective mentality and achieve group goals even if decision making is in the hands of a few, or even one person. Again, each member of the group simply performs their designated roles. If this role is to think on behalf of the group or rationalise over strategies to be employed in ensuring that the group's goals are met, then this certainly will not be a problem when the members who are chosen to do this rationalisation on behalf of the group actually carry out this task.

Supervenience augments the emergence of group rationality by explaining how rationality in the group actually occurs. It is not the case that the minds of the individual members who comprise this group entity α are joined together mysteriously to form one mind. Rather, the thinking of the group and its subsequent actions follow immediately from the rational interactions the individual members who comprise them. If Boeing decides to buy MacDonnell Douglas, for example, it is not because Boeing has a metaphysical mind that we find in individual human agents which would then be a case of strong emergence. This decision is at best the product of the numerous individuals in the company whose task it is to analyse information and map a way forward for the group. The group's decision, then, comes from the interconnected rational calculations of the members who comprise the group. As group rationality supervenes on the rational interactions of the individual members of the group, when individuals form a group they become part of a new entity. Granted that the group's decisions follows from the individuals who comprise them, it remains true that such decisions are *group* decisions (being made on behalf of the group by the individual designated to carry out this role).

Going back to the MacDonnell Douglas-Boeing example, saying that MacDonnell Douglas and Boeing entered a deal may be seen as some to be shorthand for saying that the individuals in the companies made the deal. It was seen that the decisions made to enter into the merger were made by, for example, CEOs, legal advisors and financial managers/advisors of both companies. However, it is important to note that these individuals were making decisions on behalf of their respective companies such that in the agreement documents, it would not say that Mr Smith, who is the legal representative or CEO of Boeing, entered into the deal with Mr Robinson from MacDonnell Douglas. Instead, it would read that Boeing and MacDonnell Douglas have entered into the deal through their representative people, Mr Smith and Mr Robinson. In this way, the emergence and supervenience relations would suggest that the

groups' decisions followed immediately from the rational interactions of the individual members that comprise them.

2.7. Group agents, rationality and rational autonomy

In the previous chapter, I argued that one of the most distinguishing characteristics of agents was their ability to reason, especially their having rational autonomy. This means that agents are able to form beliefs in propositions and also beliefs about propositions — that is, metalanguage beliefs. Metalanguage beliefs constitute beliefs that a particular proposition is true, well evidenced, or desirable as well as the consistency between one belief and another. According to List and Pettit (2011), agents that are able to formulate metalanguage beliefs may use them to put rational checks on their object language beliefs and desires. For example, coming to believe that 'p' and 'q' are inconsistent the agent is rationally led to suspend any beliefs that involve p and q in conjunction. For example, the belief that a person was born in 2014 is inconsistent with a belief that the same person is 30 years old in 2016. Thus, the statement that 'the person was born in 2014 and is 30 years old in 2016' becomes, according to reason, incoherent. The agent can thus take intentional steps, by asking itself suitable metalanguage questions, to enhance its own rational performance by eliminating such inconsistencies.

The question to be asked then becomes: does a group with an organised structure become a reasoning agent in the sense just described? This question can be answered by an analogy. Suppose a group of individuals in an organisation are going to decide whether or not to accept proposition X. They may decide to do this through a voting process, where the voice of the majority takes the day (what I have called majoritarian supervenience). Suppose also that in this group, diverging opinions occur and three out of four of the constituent members vote against proposition X. Does this mean that the group has 'rationally' decided against X? Coming from the supervenience perspective outlined in earlier sections of this chapter, it appears that a majoritarian approval from the members of the group would be representative of the decision of the group as a whole. However, since there are diverging opinions, it does seem like the group is at conflict with itself. The worry here is that for a group's decision to properly count as such, one may think that there needs to be some sort of unanimity of opinions where it pertains various positions.

Because there is usually no unanimity of opinions, rationality seems to have broken down since in a rational human agent-there seems to be some form of unanimity when a decision to act is made. However, a lack of uniformity does not necessarily take away the group's agent status. This is because even in individual rational agents there can be internal conflict between two propositions; what we can call a dilemma. Let us assume that the individual rational agent is stuck between accepting proposition p and accepting proposition q, where p is inconsistent with q. At the end of the day the agent usually takes the proposition that appeals most to theoretical reason, or perhaps that which is better supported by evidence. The reasoning group agent is like the reasoning individual. It forms metalanguage beliefs intentionally, asking itself suitable questions and adjusting in light of them to advance its own rationality. The adjustment is ensured by the group's members' rational interactions and deliberations just as the rational adjustment of an individual is ensured by the sub-personal mechanisms in his or her cognitive make-up. In the same way, this can be viewed as an analogous form of majoritarian voting at a macro-level.

Although diverging opinions can be considered as an inconsistency within an agent's own metalanguage beliefs, unanimity of opinions is not a necessary condition for group agency to exist since at times this is difficult to achieve. In fact, diverging opinions could be said to be necessary. As highlighted in the discussion of theoretical rationality in section 1.8.1 there should be a range of different alternative options available to the rational agent to choose from. That there are diverging opinions would actually be a symptom that the group is rationalising over many possibilities. It would not make much sense if there is just one option to choose from, in which case the group would not have rational autonomy. Further, it was noted that when an agent acts it should be possible to conceive of the agent having acted otherwise, what was highlighted as counterfactual reasoning in section 1.8. So diverging opinions are a sign that the group agent could actually have acted otherwise.

From this, I adopt what is known as the majoritarian supervenience relation between individual and group attitudes. Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau all agree that the majority's voice should be taken as the voice of the whole group. Hobbes (1994, Ch. 16) argued that "the voice of the greater number must be considered as the voice of them all"; Locke (1960, Bk. 2, Ch. 8.96) held that "the act of the majority passes for the act of the whole . . . and determines as having . . . the power of the whole"; and Rousseau (1997, Bk. 4, Ch. 2) maintained that "the tally of the votes yields the declaration of the general will [in a majoritarian way]". The group attitude on

each proposition generally is the majority attitude on that proposition. Hence, diverging opinions within the group should be conceived of as the group's exhibition of rational autonomy.

An important aspect of group agents that can be perceived from this is that the group agent has a mind of its own, somehow explaining and interpreting information about the world, forming judgements and executing actions based on that judgement. In other words, the group organises its members in such a way as to achieve both theoretical and practical rationality as I have discussed in section 1.8. If this is the case, it brings to the fore a key characteristic of group agents. When the group has its own rational autonomy, it appears that the group would place various constraints on its individual members so that this collective rationalisation process can occur. This will ensure that the individuals in the group align their modes of thinking and subsequent actions to those of the group.

2.8. Critique

According to Huebner (2014), although the supervenience and social choice models are generally applicable, they do not provide an adequate account of decision-making strategies in large groups like political parties, NGOs, multinational corporations, churches, or states. The social choice models might be applicable to smaller groups with institutionalized deliberative practices, but they are likely to be rare. At best, the theory developed by List and Pettit offers a clear characterization of collective rationality in small cooperative groups whose members share a commitment to a set of shared values and shared goal. Yet even if we suppose that they are right to claim that group agency must supervene on deliberative practices in this way, the tendency of a group to arrive at formally rational decisions provides little support for claims about collective mentality.

Huebner notes that the justification for such theories requires accepting an implausible analogy between the supervenience of group attitudes on individual attitudes and the supervenience of individual attitudes on neural processes. As Rupert (2005) argues,

> …there are deep differences between these relations: an individual's attitudes are meaningful both to an individual and to the groups to which she belongs; neural networks, by contrast, consist of electrical, chemical, and hemodynamic processes that can be specified exclusively in physical and mechanistic terms, without recourse to any claims about semantic content (2005:28).

However, inasmuch as Huebner makes an important observation, it still remains plausible that an analogy between individuals in a group and neurons in a body can explain the group agent's relationship to its individual members. It is important to note that there is indeed a disanalogy between neurons and individuals. However, a close look at the nervous system as a whole can shed more light into the analogy that I would like to bring forward. When my hand is burnt, the sensory neurons in the hand generate electrical signals known as action potentials which allows them to transmit information to the motor neurons which then transmit commands to the muscles in the hand allowing me to move my hand. Other neurons known as interneurons then transmit some signals to the brain so that this can be perceived as pain. Granted that there is a difference between neurons and human beings and the individualistic interpretation of group agency may appear plausible, it can be seen here that the group agent performs in similar fashion to neurons. First, the neurons are divided into various types that play various roles just as we see the various members of the group being assigned various tasks to perform within the group. Second, each neuron plays a coordinated role with other neurons to ensure that the organism executes various actions. But, in this analogy, it can also be seen that for a group to count as an agent, members of the group must either have their agency diminished or completely lose their agency.

A look at the analogy suggests that neurons, as part of the nervous system as a whole, do not depart from their prescribed roles and their operations are essential to the survival of the organism. As I highlighted in section 2.4, when individual entities come to form a weakly emergent entity, for the entity to function well there have to be various constraints on its individual members so that these members can align themselves with the emergent entity's goals. When we apply this analogy to the human case, it appears that the individual members of the group may not, in principle, act outside of their designated roles which are already predetermined. To have a group agent then, it does seem that the members of the group may not act on their own accord except according to the expectations of the group. From this observation, an important insight comes into perspective. A rational group agent would require the individuals to in some very real sense align their individual judgements with the rationalizations of the group agent in order to advance the group's goal and in order for the group to be genuinely called a rational group agent.

2.9. Group personality

From the preceding perspectives two things have emerged as apparent. It is apparent that group agents can produce actions and such group agents rationalise information from their surroundings, calculating a variety of options before such actions can be produced. These are seen as salient features of what it means to be a rational agent. But human agency goes beyond merely calculating and producing actions. Individual rational agents have traditionally been given the attribute of being persons. The task here is not to dwell on what personhood entails, but from the literature available, it does appear that personhood is part of what agency entails. A person cannot be designated such a title if they are not an agent. Some writers, for example Stout (2005), use the words agent and person interchangeably. However, I take the position of O'Connor (2009) who distinguishes between an agent and a person as follows:

> A person and an agent differ in that while personhood is a more holistic description of the connotations of what it means to be human, agency entails the notions associated with human actions and the appropriate conditions for the production of such actions. Agency is a part of personhood (2009:3).

From this, agency appears to be an essential aspect of personhood for it is within the holistic concept of personhood that we find agency. So a question may be asked, can rational group agents be considered persons? One quick response to this question is that indeed such group agents ideally ought to be persons. In the legal sphere is where this discussion becomes more apparent. The previous example of MacDonnell Douglas and Boeing clearly shows that the two groups were recognised by law as legal 'persons' who could enter into legal agreements just like individual human persons. It is also commonplace to hear that a corporation has taken an individual to court or vice versa.

In November 2016, for example, *The Herald*, a newspaper in Zimbabwe, carried the story of Econet wireless, a telecommunications company in Zimbabwe losing a legal battle against and individual in court and having to pay the individual an amount of money as compensation (http://www.herald.co.zw/econet-wireless-loses-250k-labour-case/). According to the report, the conglomerate lost an appeal in the labour court to a former employee who had been unfairly dismissed. Although Econet was being represented by individual members, it remains true that the aggrieved was not suing those individual persons but the company they represented. Econet, in this regard is being recognised by law as a person.

But, can groups be considered as persons? Or can individual person relate with a group in the same way they would with another individual person? Klein (2013) seems to think otherwise. According to her, we cannot come to relate with groups as we would with individuals because of the complicatedness of human relations. She argues:

> As human beings, we rapidly form perceptions of the people we relate with, drawing inferences on the basis of these impressions, and treating them as entities who reason from stable deliberative perspective…. (2013:15).

From this perspective, individual human beings come to form relations through knowing each other at a personal level. Knowing another person's individual traits over time leads to the possibility of predicting a person's behaviour in the future or under given circumstances. For example, when individual human beings become friends, they can know each other to such an extent that they can predict each other's behaviour or defend each other from claims that contradict this behaviour. For example I can defend my friend from the claim that she has shot someone, since I know from the friendship relation that she is not capable of using a gun and would not harm any person in the first place. Such value claims come from years of experience in knowing the person.

It is from this information that that we have learned about a person that we often make the claim that we 'know' the person. If the person starts behaving inconsistently from this known past behaviour, individual human agents have the capacity to update their knowledge base in order to be able to predict better the person's future behaviour. For instance, if it was not part of the person's character traits that the person is capable of shooting someone with a gun, if the person actually kills someone with a gun, then the belief that they were not capable of doing such acts would have to be revised in light of this new information. Or as Zawidzki puts it:

> Such perceived breakdowns in predictions lead us to deploy socio-political mechanisms, like practices of justification, assignment of blame, and provision of compensation, for repairing coordinative breakdowns that are inevitable given human social complexity (Zawidzki 2008:206).

Critics of groups as agents are quick to point out that it is more difficult to attribute behavioural traits to collectivities than to individual human persons. They contend that we do not tend to see collectivities as possessing stable character traits and that it doesn't make sense—from the perspective of common sense psychology—to treat them as *persons* or *agents* who can take responsibility for their actions. However, this objection can be explained away by making reference to the position that group agents can actually be perceived as persons since they are

responsible for what they do. Some corporates, for instance banks, have reputations that give them certain character traits just like human beings. In fact, one of the reasons why people would decide to put their money in a particular bank over others is because of the bank's reputation that has been built over the years. In this way, it does appear that group agents can have character traits just like individual persons.

Effectively, this means that a human being can actually engage with a corporate like McDonald's as they would with a friend or family member, since they would know so much about McDonald's reputation as a person. Such reputations are built on how the corporates deal with customers as we hear from newspapers or reviews on how McDonald's is operating and responding to its customers. There is a long established history of interaction on how McDonald's operates that would make a person actually predict McDonald's actions and decide to dine there.

Although the claim that a person cannot relate to a group agent in the same way they relate to individuals may be good evidence against the existence of group agents, this is not sufficient to dismiss such groups' existence. Persons are to be conceived of as entities with whom we can have personal relationships with. A question may be posed**:** is it *possible* to have personal relations with groups? In their ordinary day lives individual rational agents appear to have some sort of personal knowledge of, or relationships with, some groups. In some cases we can even predict accurately how the group will behave or the decisions the group will make in the near or distant future based on our experiences of the group in the past. For example, individual rational agents often update their beliefs in light of the perceived or known behaviour of stock markets, tenure committees, and political parties and this affects the way such individuals associate with such groups. For example, if a certain group agent is known to be involved in acts damaging to the environment then individuals concerned with the environment will take more precautionary measures when dealing with such groups.

If the emergentist view discussed earlier is anything to go by, then it remains true that our relationship with the group agent and our knowledge of the behaviour of the group agent is largely based on our relationships with individual members from that group. Although it may appear from this that such relationships can be translated to mean that it is mainly distinct individuals of the groups that we interact with rather than the actual group agent, I would argue that such individual members of the groups we interact with are only doing so on behalf of

their groups and not on their own behalf. At the end of the day, it is with such members of the groups that we have a relationship with the group. Belonging to the group agent predisposes its members to be representative of the interests of their respective groups such that their actions towards or interaction with external individuals would be best explained as being done in the name of the group agent. Further, when part of the group agent, the individual members exhibit those traits that characterise the group agent since the emergent group agent constrains the behaviour of the constituent members of the group. From this, it does seem plausible that from the relationships we derive from the individuals within a group agent we can get to know how the character traits of the group as a whole or even predict how it may behave in the future just as we do with individual persons. This stems from the fact that members of a group are often thought to behave in a consistent way or to be similar to one another, and at the group level all the individual members are assimilated into the ideals of the group (Moscovici, 1976). In a way, 'person' is a legal term that recognises the agent status of an entity.

Perhaps the most prominent feature of personhood is that ascriptions of morality are given to persons stemming from the fact that individual rational agents act intentionally. A salient feature of agency is that persons are moral beings whose actions can be judged to be either good or bad. For Auhayen et al. (2002), responsible behaviour involves self-imposed constraints of action, which include fairness expectancies and social rules. According to Held (2008) when a group such as a corporation has a relatively clear structure and a set of decision-making procedures, it certainly seems that it is capable of acting and, one can well argue, that it should be considered morally, as well as legally, responsible. As Oelofsen (2010) also corroborates, the notion of collective responsibility is premised on the assumption that groups can count as moral agents in their own right and that groups can act intentionally, which warrants them either praise or blameworthiness.

Assigning responsibility is undeniably a human practice, but there are good reasons to adopt the practice of assigning responsibility to such groups. Regardless of the fact that it is the individual member of the groups who perform actions on behalf of the group, it still remains true that groups perform actions. Because actions are thought to proceed from a calculated, voluntary and free background for them to be truly the actions of the rational agent, then it follows that rational agents are generally responsible for their actions. What this effectively means is that rational agents are given praise or blame for their actions from the fact that the acts are done freely without any external compulsion.

In this chapter several examples were given, but two may explain this position better. It was seen in the Walmart example that the group as a whole acted in a way that could be described as 'charitable.' This act may be considered by many as a moral virtue, such that the group can be said to have done a moral action. In the world of business, corporates are always being urged to behave responsibly (in a moral way) to their consumers through such acts as fair pricing, avoiding exploitative labour practices and doing business in a manner that will not harm consumers or the environment. When Walmart, for example, indulges in activities that result in environmental pollution, it will be morally responsible for that pollution and calls may be made for the conglomerate, as a whole, to change its production methods.

For another example, if Econet Wireless is overpricing its tariffs, its customers may view this as fraudulent behaviour and may even decide to switch service providers. From these examples it is plausible to assume that for groups to count as rational agents, such groups should generally to be held accountable for their actions. It should be noted, however, that there are some schools of thought that contend that collective responsibility is a pernicious notion and that employing it has evil effects. They conclude from this that it should be rejected on moral grounds. Cushman and Mestrovic (2010:15), for example, demonstrate that Serbian propaganda used "the principle of intergenerational guilt as a legitimation for aggression." They report on how Serbian arguments for ethnic cleansing often relied on claims about the "collective guilt" of Croats and Muslims. They warn of "the dangers of the doctrine of collective guilt" and thus reject the notion of group responsibility (Cushman and Mestrovic, 2010:15).

In addition, Lewis (1998:25) rejects "the barbarous notion of collective or group responsibility" because of what he takes to be the morally pernicious consequences of using this notion, especially the way it encourages individuals, he believes, to escape responsibility as they blame their group but not themselves for its misdeeds. The danger exists that individual wrongdoers may unjustifiably escape moral criticism or fail to take responsibility by blaming others and not themselves for wrongs attributed to the whole group of which they are members. For example, in the case of the corporation, it would be unreasonable to hold every worker responsible for the pollution a company has produced, but if it is the corporation that is to blame, individual executives may consider themselves not individually responsible for the harms it caused (Held, 2008).

Notwithstanding these criticisms, it appears true that groups that count as agents clearly can be considered as moral agents, whose actions supervene from the calculated efforts of their individual components. For groups to count as agents they surely deserve either moral praise or blame for their actions since they are deemed responsible for such actions.

2.10. Conclusion

From the above analysis, it can be seen that although there are several arguments against the existence of rational group agents, it does seem plausible that such agents actually do exist. I have argued that when a number of individuals organise themselves into a highly organised group a new entity emerges with properties that follow from the rational interactions of its individual constituents. With the group's decisions supervening on those of the rational interactions of their constituent members (on a majoritarian basis at least), it follows that when such decisions are made, they are in effect the group's point of view, not that of its particular members. Analogies were drawn from how a human agent operates translated into how a group of individual human beings operates. This analogy is based on the assumption that an individual agent's points of view are derived from their biological neurons such that their actions supervene on these neurological functions. In the same manner, individual members of the group are like these neurones such that the actions of the group as a whole follows from its individual members. Although such analogies have their own weaknesses as highlighted in this chapter, they at least provided a good basis for our conceptual understanding of how group agents operate. In turn, the emergent whole entity places various constraints on its individual members so as to ensure coordinated activity at macro-level. It was also noted that not all groups can count as agents, some being mere aggregations of individuals. It now remains the business of the next chapter to unearth specific details of the relationships that occur between group agents and their individual members to ensure the sustainability of the group agent thesis.

Chapter 3: The notion of freedom and autonomy in groups

3.1. Preamble

Having established the possibility and nature of rational group agency in the previous chapter, I will now investigate whether members of a group that counts as a rational agent still remain agents in their individual capacity. In the previous chapter, it was observed that when individuals form a rational group agent there emerges a new entity whose thought patterns supervene on the rational interactions of the group's individual components. It was also noted that groups that count as group agents place various constraints on their individual members to ensure coordination at group agent level. However, what was not made explicit in the discussion is *how* this coordination of members occurs or the kinds of constraints the group places on its individual members. In other words, in this chapter I intend to explore what happens to the rational autonomy of the individual members who comprise such rational group agents since it has become apparent that the rationality of a group agent at the macro-level stems from the rational interactions of the individual members at the micro-level.

As I highlighted in the first chapter, a rational agent is one whose actions spring from a principle of rational autonomy. The question I seek to answer in this chapter is as follows: if by joining a rational group agent the individual now has a shared intention (with other group members) to achieve the group agent's goal, do they lose their own rational agency in order to partake of collective group agency? Put in another way, if there emerges a new entity when a group of people form a highly organised rational group agent, and we take it for granted that the rational group agent has its own rational autonomy which supervenes on the rational interactions of the constituent members, what happens to the 'rational agent' status of the individual member as an individual? Does the group's agent status supersede that of the individuals who comprise it, bearing in mind that collective activity at a macro-level follows from interactions at a micro-level? In essence, do individual rational agents lose their rational autonomy when they are part of a rational group agent?

To answer this question I will proceed as follows in this chapter: first I will give a brief overview of the concept of a rational group agent and how the 'agency' aspect occurs within that group. I will then provide an analysis of how co-ordination between members at a micro level within the group occurs to give rise to a rational group agent at a macro-level. To this end, I will discuss theories such as the group polarization theory amongst others to determine

how coordination at a micro-level can be achieved. I will then analyse whether individuals in the groups that count as group agents still retain their rational autonomy or have it diminished or completely stripped from them as long as they are part of that group.

3.2. Rational Choice theory

In the previous chapter I argued that groups that meet certain rational criteria can count as rational group agents. From the discussion of the emergence of a new macro-entity from the interaction of micro-entities and supervenience relations between the macro and micro-levels, wherein a new entity was seen to be formed when a group of individual rational agents have intentionally come together to form an entity with its own set of goals and values, the assumption was that a fully rational entity emerges. From this discussion, it was made apparent that from the rational interactions of its individual members, the rational group agent makes rationally calculated decisions to advance the group agent's goals, just like individual rational agents were seen as capable of achieving the same in chapter one. Close analysis of the literature surrounding group decision-making processes has long been dominated by what has come to be called the rational choice viewpoint. According to this view, group decisions are to be conceived of as a rational or calculated attempt at solving a given problem by members of the group who have been designated this role in order to ensure that the group's goals are met (Smith, 1996). The rational choice view has been instrumental in understanding the fundamental principles underlying policy-making. From a rational choice perspective, members of the group devise elaborate tasks that aim at diagnosing problems through the gathering of relevant information, and from this alternative courses of action can be come up with which will be implemented accordingly.

According to Chai (2010), an important aspect of the rational choice view is the idea of rational optimization. Rational optimization is premised on various assumptions. First, members of the group are conceived of as having a uniform set of beliefs, especially concerning the consequences that may arise from planned course of action. Although the results may come out differently than expected, it still remains true that the decisions that the group makes are based on the assumption that the chosen course of action will most likely result in the achievement of the group agent's goal. For instance, if the rational group agent seeks to maximise profits, then the agent in principle believes that its chosen course of action will achieve profit maximisation.

Second, it is generally assumed that members in the deliberating group will have a range of choices to choose from after having calculated the risks and gains in the information provided to the group concerning the issue at hand (Smith, 1996). For instance, in the maximisation of profits scenario, it will be in order to assume that the group has observed the market and has carefully analysed all possible alternatives that may enhance their goal. To this end, there will be a variety of choices to choose from, lest the actions of the group appear uncalculated. Uncalculated in this sense means that the group's decisions will appear pre-determined or randomly caused, since it was highlighted in section 1.8 that the hallmark of agency is that the rational agent needs to have a range of alternative courses of action if their actions are to be deemed 'free' or deliberate.

When the group members have gathered the relevant information concerning the attainment of their intended goals and have calculated the risks and gains that each alternative course of action will accrue in line with the demands of theoretical rationality as outlined in section 1.8.1, the group will then choose that action whose outcome will provide the greatest utility to the group as a whole in accordance with the dictates of practical rationality as outlined in section 1.8.2. Danielson (1998) contends that in the rational choice view, it is imperative that the members of the group freely exchange ideas so that the most rationally acceptable decision based on the information available to the group is chosen. This will secure what he calls "mutual gains" (1998:21).

The assumption behind this kind of thinking is that the group ought not to resort to coercive actions to ensure that the group members accept the decision of the group. For instance, in a jury, if the majority of people in the group believe that the convicted person should be given a death sentence, that one juror who believes otherwise should remain as the 'check' of the group and should be free to hold their position rather than the group to coerce them (through force, bribery or other means) to also hold a similar position. Generally, then, according to the rational choice theory, for a group agent's decision to be deemed rational, it has to be informed by free non-coerced decisions of its individual constituent members. Ideally, the rational interactions of the individual members of the group agent that produce group rationality are premised on the ideals of rational choice theory. There is, however, significant discrepancy between this ideal state of affairs that people generally view group agents as possessing—namely, that individuals within the group are free to make their decisions ensuring a purely rational action

of the group—and the results that have been obtained in various experiments that have tried to analyse group interaction processes.

The antagonism stems from the fact that when a person becomes part of a group that qualifies as a rational group agent, their individual rational thought patterns ceases to operate in isolation. Instead, these thought patterns operate amidst the thought patterns of other group members who may not share the same perspective as that particular member in the group. This necessitates the major question that I seek to address in this chapter: what then happens to the rational autonomy of the individual member when they become members of a group agent? Do they continue to be the same individual or do they assume new thought patterns losing their rational agent status in the process, or do they retain their rational agent status as an individual and still remain a member of the group agent? Various group relation theories have been advanced by scholars such as Asch (1956), Janis (1972) and others. It is from an analysis of these group relation theories that answers to this question can be formulated.

It is important to understand how coordination between group members within the group agent occurs. It is only from this understanding that an assessment of the rational agent status of the individual members in the group can be done. Several theories and experiments have been brought forward pertaining to how interactions between members within a group agent occur such that group agency occurs at the macro-level. Important are the following theories that I intend to analyse in subsequent sections of this chapter: the social identity theory, the social categorization view, the groupthink theory and the group polarization theory.

3.3. Social Identity Theory

As I have highlighted so far, rational group agents are composed of individuals. However, as I have argued in the previous chapter and corroborated by Sanaria (2009) such group agents emerge as distinct entities from the rational interactions of their members and have identities and unique character traits that follow from this interaction of their constituent members. In turn, the group agent places various constraints on the behaviour and rationality of its members so that these can be aligned with those of the group. The implication is that individual members of a group agent have behaviours, and other traits such as attitudes and values, that are alike or at least agreeable in the eyes of other group members. According to Korostelina (2007), within a group agent, an individual's personality is not something innate but something that is socially built through the influence of existing group structures. Novotny (1998) goes further to explain

that conceptions of individual identity acknowledge that personal identity is socially constructed by the group in which the individual finds themselves as a member. Social identity grants individual members of a group a sense of fortification from the opposition of both insiders and outsiders. Group membership relieves the individual of solitude by providing the individual with a sense of commonality and established affinities between individuals.

Friedman (1999) argues that in today's globalised world established boundaries have been destroyed opening up the possibility of people belonging to any group that they find desirable. This creates the possibility of creating new social groups with their own peculiar identities, identities which in turn shape the identities of their constituent members. According to Barth, social identity is a consequence of the process of boundary formation: it is created when borders are set up and a creation of a "them" and "us" mind-set (1981:3). In other words, according to the social identity view, when groups emerge as distinct entities from their individual components a dichotomy is thereupon also created between in-group and out-group members of the group.

According to the social identity theory as presented by Stephen (1997), affiliation with a particular group or to a particular social class is one of the most important defining characteristics of an individual. The social identity theory suggests that in a situation where members belonging to two distinct groups interact, members of the groups will act in terms of their in-group membership and an inter-group categorization. Group members' actions are typically aimed at favouring their own groups rather than other groups despite the fact that acting otherwise may be the best possible decision (Tajfel et al., 1971). For instance, in a drowning boat in which there are members of different groups, say group A and group B, members of group A will likely be inclined to help members of their own group who may be further away than helping members of group B, which may be the most logical and possible thing to do. To get a fuller understanding of this example, we could imagine group A and group B as rival political party groups. Other individuals may even allow members of the other party to drown while they attempt a rescue of their own group members because loyalty to one's group will be a prized (as well as rewarded) state of mind.

Social identity creates poles which ensure that people with different backgrounds, beliefs or epistemological positions will be socialised into belonging to one social category. Members of a group agent in the end have certain similarities that enable them to partake of group

membership. However, it should be noted that this observance of a similarity between members of one group and the feelings of belonging to that particular group only makes sense when members of one group are aware of, or come into contact with, members of a different group. In other words, one can only be aware of one's similarity to others when one come into contact with members from other different groups with different ideals. Without such interaction the dichotomy between 'them' and 'us' may not be so apparent. According to the social identity view, individuals of one group identify themselves as members of that group not only because of the similarity they perceive amongst members of their own group or the shared beliefs and goals that they possess, but also because they perceive a difference with members of other groups, be it a difference in goals or beliefs.

According to McGarty et al. (2002), social categorization only makes sense when there is a combination of both in-group similarities as well as a recognition of inter-group or categorical differences. When individuals strongly identify with the group, they tend to emphasise their differences with other groups even more. Social identity refers to a feeling of similarity to others within a group created when a person becomes a member of a group and at the same time a difference to others who do not belong to that group. According to Kellner, "there is [in the world] still a structure of interaction with socially defined and available norms, customs, and expectations, among which one must choose, appropriate and reduce in order to gain identity" (1992:33). Inter-group behaviour is influenced by various groups categorizing themselves into distinct entities. How individuals perceive themselves within a group is representative of group ideals. In this case, when part of a rational group agent, individual utility is inseparable from group utility. In-group members usually have what Leondar-Wright (2014) has termed 'motivated cognition' and 'cold cognition'. Motivated cognition is when members of the rational group agent perceive their own group as being superior relative to other groups. Cold cognition on the other hand is to be understood as a guideline or an instructions manual as to how individuals within the rational group agent ought to behave. When these two cognitive processes are put together, the social identity theory emerges.

According to the social identity theory the individual group member's self-perception derives from the knowledge that they belong to that particular group coupled with the emotional significance attached to that membership. According to Tajfel et al. (1971), social identity can be viewed as the individual's awareness that they belong to a particular social group and the benefits as well as the significance of being part of such a group. Belonging to a particular

group influences the development of positive perceptions of the group if the qualities of that particular group are perceived as favourable compared to other groups. Hence, members of groups typically have favourable attitudes towards their own groups.

According to Reid and Deaux (1996) as well as Rosenberg and Gara (1985), social identity is a group membership ideal. According to such schools of thought, social identity has to do with how the individual perceives themselves and how being a member of one group influences the behaviour and thought patterns of the individual member which inevitably creates a set of shared beliefs among members of the same group. The individual member perceives the group as an extension of themselves and the group's personality becomes part of the person's personality. Collective identity therefore includes a set of shared beliefs, experiences and attitudes. There is a tendency of creating positive self-images of the group and its members as well as a commitment to the group's goals (Korostelina, 2007).

This being the case, it is important at this juncture to analyse whether the social identity theory leaves room for the individual belonging to that particular group to exercise their agency in their capacity as an individual rational agent. It is important to note from this discussion of the social identity theory that the defining characteristic of being part of the group, especially a rational group agent, is that individual members identify themselves with the group. The social identity theory is especially important when analysing inter-group behaviour between members of different groups. From this discussion of the social identity theory, it is apparent that the cold cognition view prescribes for members of the group a set of behaviour and thought patterns from which to base and direct their actions so that these can result in collective agency at the macro-level.

It is here that the problem of agency starts to arise. If the group agent expects its members to behave in a certain way in relation to other groups, then it is apparent that belonging to that group naturally means giving up one's freedom to deliberate on *some* actions, at least. For instance, in a cartel of organised crime, if the group prescribes that all individual members ought to be hostile to police authorities (hostile in the sense of 'us' the group members against 'them' the police), then an individual member would not be friendly with the police, even when such 'friendliness' would accumulate a higher utility, as in when the police come to respond to a break-in call at the individual member's house. Or to give an example in the political sphere, if members of one political party X-are generally expected by their own group to be hostile to

members of another political party Y then even when such hostility is unwarranted, members of group X will always be hostile to group Y (as evidenced by some parliamentary debates in countries such as Zimbabwe and South Africa where hostility between members of rival parties typically leads to opposition of some meaningful positions argued for by members of a rival party simply because they belong to a rival party). Perhaps this could even be the basis of having 'opposition' parties in the first place—their social identity instructs that they 'oppose' the other parties and that their own group is superior to the other group.

From this understanding and assessment of the social identity theory, it can be seen that individuals belonging to a particular group are expected by in-group 'rules' to behave in a certain way. This codification, as it were, of behavioural patterns becomes an obvious obstacle to an individual's rational autonomy. In section 2.7 it was noted that group agents place various constraints on their individual members. According to the social identity view, the rational group agent exerts a cognitive influence on its members such that the members view their group as superior to others as well as making the individuals conform the rational group agent's prescribed codes of behaviour. In essence, according to the social identity view, it would appear that in a typical rational group agent members lose either part or all their own rational autonomy in favour of adopting in-group attitudes.

From the discussion in chapter one on the nature of human agency, it is generally assumed that for a person to be a rational agent, their actions need to be voluntary and non-coerced. In the social identity theory, it appears that a significant proportion of an individual's rational autonomy is stripped from them when they are part of a group. A similar view to the social identity theory which corroborates this finding is the social categorization theory.

3.4. Social Categorization Theory

As observed in the social identity theory, a group agent can be viewed as an enclave of individuals who conceive of themselves as belonging to the same group and hence perceive themselves as sharing an emotional attachment to that group, and also perceive of themselves as partaking of the decisions that the group agent makes (Knotnerrus, 2010). Any behaviour displayed by the group's members is based on their identification of themselves and the others as belonging to different social categories. Generally, social categorization relates to the division of human entities into distinct groups. Individual members of such groups have a sense of identity and belonging without necessarily comparing their group with other groups to which

they do not belong like what the social identity theory suggests. According to Knottnerus (2010) individuals who belong to the same group perceive of themselves as having more similarities than differences, and other people are seen as being exaggeratedly different from them and hence are viewed as outsiders.

The perceived importance of another person's view of the world—and the motivation to ascertain and act on his or her view—depends on how that person is categorized relative to self. When others are seen as sharing social self-category membership with a perceiver, they are perceived to be qualified to inform him or her about aspects of social reality relevant to the in-group. For instance, a member of one political party may follow the action plan of other members within this group, regardless of how irrational it may seem, rather than follow a well rationalised course of action from members of an opposition political party. Social categorization involves three distinct stages (Capozza et al., 2000). In the preliminary stage, individuals simply perceive of themselves as members of the group; when we get to the second stage, individual members adapt to, and internalise, the group's norms and values; in the final stage, individual members now perceive of themselves as a distinct group or category and perceive all situations from the group's perspective.

According to Korostelina (2007), social categorization makes an individual lose their personality in favour of the group. This creates a strong similarity and uniformity between members of the group. From this perspective, it is apparent that the group's personality now supersedes that of its individual members. According to this theory members of the group see differences with other groups because of the internalisation of their own group's ideals. As was seen in the social identity theory outlined in section 3.3, the social categorization theory also suggests a constraint on the rational autonomy of the individual member of the group, since it prescribes that for a person to be a member of that group they have to be 'like others' or conform to the behavioural standards of the group, contrary to the view that rational agents ought to be autonomous agents. In-group norms are socialised into the person such that even if the norms deviate from those of the individual member's own convictions, the individual member has to conform to the social categorical expectations created by the group in which they belong. It is in this way that the rational autonomy of the group supervenes on the rational interactions of its members. Internalising and adhering to these norms at micro-level ensures a smooth rational process at the macro-level and deviating from these norms may disturb this

rational process and may result in the loss of group membership on the part of the individual member.

3.5. Rationality and Group polarization

Thus far, it appears that belonging to groups that count as group agents places some constraint on the rational autonomy of the individual members who comprise the group so that rational agency can be achieved at group-agent level. Another theory that explains in-group dynamics between members in a group agent is the group polarization theory. To get a better understanding of how the theory proceeds, let us imagine a hypothetical scenario wherein an individual group member, Mary, is of the moderate opinion that homosexuality is wrong. If a discussion on the morality of homosexuality arises in the group and Mary figures out that other group members have a passionate hatred for people of a homosexual orientation, then her moderate reservation towards people of such a sexual orientation is likely to become more extreme. In other words, because Mary has discovered that other group members hold a particular position, she will likely be moved to that extreme position if a discussion concerning such an issue arises. The key issue in polarization is that a member's initial position becomes more extreme when other group members discuss the issue with them and a revelation is made that they all share the same viewpoints. This is another way in which the group agent exerts constraints on the rational autonomy of its constituent members so that it can achieve rational agency at a macro-level.

Because the group agent's rational patterns supervene on the rational interactions of their individual components as highlighted in section 2.4, it also follows that the group's decision also becomes more extreme. If the members of the group in our example are polarized towards hatred of people of a homosexual orientation, then it can safely be said that the group agent itself, as an entity, also adopts such a position. In brief, group polarization is said to arise when members of a group agent shift to a more extreme position in whatever direction is indicated by the members' pre-deliberation/discussion tendency as demonstrated in the Mary example above. According to Sunstein (2009) polarization occurs when an initial position of individuals in groups, which may be less extreme or moderate, moves towards an extreme position after a group discussion. The implication of this is that group agents often constrain the rational autonomies of their individual members by making them develop the tendency to take more extreme positions than the individuals would in their lone capacities.

It is some of these extreme positions that, according to the social identity and social identification theories, become expected norms of behaviour for group members. For instance, in terrorist groups, individuals may have some reservations on the idea of blowing themselves up in a public place killing and injuring many people in the process. But when they become part of a group whose norms instruct that individual members are at times expected to adopt such extreme positions, then such previous reservations are polarised to an extreme. In essence, whatever position that individual member initially held will change in accordance with the direction that the group takes. But how does polarisation occur? Answers are to be found in two chief justifications for group polarization, namely, the social comparison theory and the persuasive arguments theory.

3.5.1. Social comparison theory

The social comparison theory asserts that group members prefer to be perceived positively by other group members, as a way of gaining the group's acceptance (Leyens et al., 2000). This being the case, when the individual members get other group members' opinions, they adjust their initial positions in the direction of the dominant position. The picture they may want to give to other group members is that they are capable of taking such an extreme position and should be viewed as such by other group members. As Ros et al. (2000) suggest, individuals in groups may wish to be viewed in a certain light by other members of the group and to be seen as sharing similar characteristics in comparison with other group members. Before they hear what others in the group think, they generally assume that other members of the group feel the same way or perceive the issue in the same way that they do as individuals. This is buttressed when they actually hear what other group members think on the same issue. They may discover that other group members have different opinions than theirs. Hence, they may be forced to shift their mode of thought and align their frame of reference with that of other group members. The result is that the group sways its members into holding a particular position in order for such members to be desirable members of the group, thereby placing a constraint on the individual members' rational autonomy.

The basic assumption in the social comparison theory is that most group members want to take a position that will make them acceptable before other group members. This is where the importance of discussion comes in. Other group members only get to know which position is socially preferred when discussions take place and the group's preferred positions are revealed.

Thus, according to the social comparison view, individual group members shift their positions so that they present a good image to other group members. It is also possible that without discussion individual members can still shift their position to one which is more preferred by the group. According to Ros et al. (2000), gathering information alone, without necessarily engaging in a discussion, will most likely induce a shift in a person's initial decision. Hence, according to this view, group members will often make decisions based on preserving their image within the group and not for the sake of doing what is right. In either case, it appears that in order to preserve a good image with other group members the individual is willing to suspend either part or all of their rational autonomy. Decisions by such a member will not be based on rational calculation and an openness to alternatives, but on the need to be seen as similar to others.

3.5.2. Persuasive arguments theory

The persuasive arguments theory is based on the view that a group member's perspective on any issue is largely influenced by the validity and soundness of the arguments presented either for, or against the case. Explaining how the theory works, Korostelina (2007) highlights that the individual's decision shifts in accordance with the most convincing and well argued for position within the group. Most members in the group would already have a certain inclination towards a certain position, and when arguments that support their initial inclination are presented, they are likely to follow that position to its extremes. The persuasive arguments theory assumes that when a group deliberates on a sticky issue, the arguments presented for or against that position will likely produce a shift in inclinations, even when the shift is towards an unpopular view, but which is nevertheless well argued for.

The general assumption gathered from the rational choice theory highlighted in section 3.2 is that deliberation within groups produces movements toward the best course of action for the group. According to Korostelina (2007), the main thing to bear in mind is that within the group, people with convincing arguments have the power to sway other group members in the direction of an extreme position. Well-presented extreme positions that are logically consistent and that make valid and sound claims, are more likely to sway members of the group towards such extremes. Also, bearing in mind that other group members would have some sort of arguments for their initial positions and have perhaps even deliberated on the same issue, when such arguments are presented for such extreme positions in a clearer and convincing fashion,

the individual will most likely shift either to or against their initial inclination. Valid arguments that are perceived by group members as well presented are likely to cause a shift in group members' viewpoints as they have a lasting impression in the minds of the group members since they may buttress an individual's initial inclinations.

3.5.3. Analysis of group polarization

From this perspective, it is important to observe that when polarization occurs, a significant amount of 'pressure' is put on the individual members of the group agent to refocus their initial position. This 'pressure' comes not in the form of criticism, but in the form of reinforcement of a decision that could have otherwise been rejected by the group. What is key to understand here is that there is a shift in a person's perspective from a moderate position to an extreme position that the person would have not thought of in their individual capacity except as part of the group agent. It is the group agent which redirects the member's initial disposition towards a more radical position, hence placing a limitation to their rational autonomy. It is not something they thought of themselves, but something that the group thought of on their behalf. And because of the need to be socially acceptable to other group members, the individual member either loses their rational autonomy or has it diminished.

In other words, the ability of an individual to freely rationalise over a range of possible alternative courses of action and being able to choose the course of action that the agent themselves see fit, as demanded by the dictates of theoretical and practical rationality as discussed in section 1.8, is either lost or diminished. In the case of polarization, the individual member of the group appears not to be in a position to freely exercise this ability. As Sunstein (2009) notes, polarisation can move otherwise ordinary people to doing things that they would not ordinarily do, such as commit violent acts in a terrorist group. This is because they would have lost, in the case of terrorist groups at least, their rational autonomy in the process of polarization. This is corroborated by Gopnik (2017), who argues that sometimes people in groups are influenced into committing violent acts and when questioned on their motive, they simply cite that they were simply doing what the group would have done. This demonstrates that the issue of polarisation is very important in understanding the rational constraints placed on the rational autonomy of individuals in group agents so that the group agent achieves its goals.

3.6. Group agents and leadership

It is slowly emerging from the analysis thus far that group agents have a tendency of suppressing the rational autonomy so that their individual members can contribute to rational agency at a macro-level. However, it is also important to note that many groups that count as agents have different leadership structures which may also have a bearing on the loss of individual rational autonomy when part of a group agent. It is from these structures that the individual members of the group agents assume their roles within the group.

The group agent's organisational structure is what Haynes (2012) refers to as 'group climate.' According to Haynes "the group's climate refers to the social-emotional and psychological atmosphere that prevails in the group" (2012:35). A group's climate is characteristic of, or shaped by, the type of leadership or leadership structures that the group has in place. A group's climate is often classified in one of two major ways: it could be group-centred or leader-centred or it could be autocratic, democratic or laissez faire. Groups that are considered group-centred typically favour or exhibit a democratic type of leadership. Groups that are leader-centred typically have characteristics of an autocratic type of leadership. Groups that are considered to be laissez-faire seem to have no clear leadership or structured organization and this too has various constraining effects on the rational autonomy of individuals in the group. These two dichotomies will be discussed below.

3.6.1. Group-centred and leader-centred groups

In group agents with a group-centred climate, group members set the "tone and drive the group's dynamics. Their views, opinions, ideas and suggestions, feelings, perspectives, and perceptions are respected, valued, validated and recognized by the group leader and by one another" (Haynes, 2012:35). This is especially true of groups such as political parties and corporates. Through these exchanges of opinions among group members polarisation can then occur as discussed earlier. There tends to be strong commitment to the group process among group members and a more shared responsibility among group members to achieve the group agent's goals. Members tend to show stronger adherence to the norms of the group agent and tend to identify more strongly with the group agent than they do in non-group-centred groups.

In leader-centred or authoritarian groups, the leader tends to control the process and group members tend to align their behaviour and participation in favour of the leader's position and

decisions rather than other members of the group. There may be more uncertainty, tentativeness, lack of commitment to group norms, and dissatisfaction among group members. It may be argued that for most, if not for all groups, during early stages of a group's development the group is likely to have a leader centred climate and as the group development progresses it may become more group-centred (Haynes, 2012). This is because during the early stages of the group's formation, the group's vision largely lies within the vision of the founder. As the group progresses, this vision will become shared among more members of the group agent and may end up being open to democratic space.

In groups with a leader-centred climate, the leader tends to be aloof from group members, takes control of setting the norms, methods and tone of the group agent and, in general, seeks to instil and impose his or her values on the members of the group. It may be argued that in certain situations this kind of group leadership and group climate are expected, warranted and may lead to desired outcomes. In military type groups, for example, the group dynamics are such that authoritarian leadership is practiced. In the military-type groups, a leader-centred group climate prevails and leads to the desired results, which are strict discipline and a high degree of conformity among the rank and file. However, the abundance of evidence in counselling literature supports the notion that a non-autocratic climate better serves the interests of group members and the overall purpose of the group agent. In groups of a democratic orientation there appears to be open communication between members and the leaders. In this setup, other members of the group are assimilated into discussions, freely sharing opinions and ideas with the leadership. Each group member feels that he or she is respected, accepted, valued and an important member of the group. The group norms are established together and there are clear expectations for group participation and standards for group interactions. From this, it can be inferred that the group agent's decision in a leader-centred type of group agent can in some instances be reduced to nothing more than the leader's actions transferred to the whole group.

3.6.2. Analysis

From these different leadership styles, various inferences on the status of the rational autonomy of individual members within the group agent can be drawn. Although the democratic or laissez faire group climates may appear to favour individual rational autonomy, since they allow the individual some space to express themselves freely, this may well be just an illusion. Given that the group agent is formed to advance some goals, individual members ought to ensure that

these goals are achieved through collective action. Let us assume that there is a deadlock within our democratic group amongst members who are for and others who are against a particular course of action that the group is supposed to take. The very concept of democracy will assume that the majority will have the final say. Hence, given the understanding of the concept of group polarisation as discussed in section 3.5.3, it would appear as though the voice of the minority will be swayed or polarised towards the direction of the majority, which limits their ability to exercise their rational autonomy in their individual capacity.

The same can be argued for group agents that have a leader-centred climate, although in this case it would be more apparent. In a leader-centred group agent, the voice of the leader almost always carries the day. Even if a majority of people in the group are against a particular proposition or course of action, the leader will do their will even if it is against popular consensus. Hence it is apparent that the agent status of members in an authoritarian-led group agent are not at liberty to exercise their rational autonomy in their individual capacity, since the leader always makes the decisions on their behalf and the leader decides the course of action that they deem most appropriate for the group.

But, I have argued in section 1.8 that rational autonomy involves two aspects; theoretical rationality and practical rationality. When people in the group agent express different opinions this could be interpreted as an expression of theoretical rationality on the part of the group agent as a whole. However, individual members are still bound to act in accordance with group dictates, even where such actions conflict with their own judgments, which is a violation of practical rationality. It is in such a way that their rational autonomy is diminished. An example would be the military type groups that was mentioned earlier on. In a military situation, it would appear as total indiscipline if an individual soldier would decide to reject the decision of their superiors. Even if the leader's decision is leading them to certain death, the group member simply has to follow the orders of the leader. Hence, all actions of the individual member of the group agent are determined by the leader, diminishing their rational autonomy in the process.

3.7. Groups and conformity

What is becoming apparent at this stage is that group members in a group agent tend to conform to group norms as their decisions are polarised into those of the other members of the group, which creates the social identity that was discussed in section 3.3. But what exactly does

conformity entail? Conformity is defined as a "behavioural or attitudinal change that occurs as a result of some real or imagined group pressure" (Walker and Heyns, 1962:82). Conformity is an important construct necessary for identification and categorization of individuals into groups. Robbins (1989:51) defines conformity as "adjusting one's behaviour to align with the norms of the group." Conformity has connotations of going along with the group, regardless of whether what the group does runs counter to what the individual would do outside of the group.

When part of a group agent, individuals often 'go with the flow' even though they may have some private objections or reservations concerning the activities or beliefs of the group. They temporarily suspend their rational autonomy by not going against group dictates even when their theoretical rationality is advising otherwise in order to satisfy group demands. According to Wren (2013), in such groups, individuals are compelled to conform to the behavioural standards set by the group, as was also seen in the polarisation discussion in section 3.5. In this respect the individual's behaviour and thought patterns (that is, practical and theoretical rationality respectively) are governed by group influences of which obedience and conformity to group expectations are expected norms which ensure collective rationality.

According to Haynes (2012), conforming to group norms is a reflection of the commitment and dedication that members have to the group agent. Norms help in regulating the group members' practical rationality, thereby ensuring group cohesion, group bonds as well as group identity. Group members who go against the group agent's norms and expected standards of behaviour put themselves at odds with the group. In accordance with the social identity and polarisation views, it appears that members who desire group acceptance, affiliation and connection to the group tend to conform. Members who follow group norms faithfully are called conformists. In conforming, they avoid the negative consequences of rejection and ostracism or whatever other sanctions the group may impose.

However, some group members move continually between conforming to group norms and not conforming or violating group norms. These members are referred to as sliders or dissidents. Other group members defy and violate group norms continually and do not fear or shy away from retribution in the form of rejection, ostracism or imposition of sanctions by the group. They are referred to as non-conformists. Sliders and non-conformists may be seeking to satisfy individual needs that may not be pertinent to the group. In this way, non-conformists can be

said to be rationally autonomous since their thinking and actions flows from the demands of theoretical and practical rationality, wherein their thoughts and subsequent actions are free from the group agent's influence.

However, it is imperative to note that sliders or dissidents usually do not get acceptance by the group and usually end up either being rejected by the group or leaving the group to join (or form) groups that adhere to their beliefs. In this case, it should be emphasised that such non-conformists would have expressed themselves in their rational capacity as rationally autonomous agents. But for the group agent, such an exercise of individual rational autonomy that may run counter to the group agent's expectations is not acceptable. This is because by becoming part of the group the members would have explicitly or implicitly agreed to follow the group agent's rules, codes of behaviour and decisions. Again, it was seen in section 2.5 that group members are to do only those actions that they have been authorised to do by the group agent. If the member starts to digress from this implicit or explicit agreement then their actions may not be suitable in achieving the group agent's goals or may even run counter to the group agent's goals thereby disturbing the process of rationality at group-agent level. In this way, such members become undesirable members of the group agent.

From this characterisation of conformity, it appears that there is a certain element of pressure from the group agent on individual members to adhere to group norms, perhaps coming from the fact that group rationality is supposed to stem from the coordinated rational interactions of its members. According to my characterisation of rational agency in section 1.8, it is imperative to note that a rational agent is one who exercises deliberative actions (practical rationality) without their actions being limited to only one by external influences. Hence the moment such pressure seems to be exerted on them by the group, this is akin to saying that the individual is 'forced' by the group to behave and think in a certain way, hence losing either part or all of their rational autonomy in the process.

In the case that the pressure to conform is too intense in such a way that the individual members of the group merely follow orders without questioning, it would appear that the members completely lose their rational autonomy. In the case that the pressure from the group is such that it leaves some room for the individual to freely rationalise outside of group constraints this amounts to a diminished rational autonomy. That being the case, it appears that because of the need to conform and the pressure from the group to do the same in order to get acceptance as

a true group member either is stripped completely of their rational autonomy or have it diminished when part of a group agent.

3.8. Groupthink

A consequence of the need to conform to group standards and norms of behaviour is what has come to be known as the groupthink phenomenon. According to Haynes (2012), groupthink occurs when group members surrender their critical and evaluative reasoning in order to align their beliefs with those of the group. Groupthink can be perceived as a radical form of group conformity. Three major ideals can be observed in groupthink. These are: unrealistic beliefs about the group's power, close-mindedness and pressure to agree. Group members may come to believe that their group possesses immense power and is therefore invincible. They internalize the mistaken notion that the group's collective power can protect them from external threats. As a result, group members may take great risks as their decisions become polarised in the group.

They may tend to do risky things when they are with members of the group, things that they may not do when they are alone. This phenomenon is called risky shift (Thye et al., 2014) and it is a shift in the level and degree of risk that the group member is willing to take because of the unrealistic belief in the group's power. In the case of some military type group agents like terrorist groups, for example, members are willing to commit extremely terrible acts without regard to the consequences, that as individuals they may not do, because of their allegiance to and belief in the power of the terrorist group. Similarly, soldiers on the battlefield perform acts of bravery and heroism that, as individuals, they may not perform.

Group members may also disregard and discount warnings and indications of negative outcomes or adverse consequences of acting in a certain way (Thye et al., 2014). There seems to be a quality of single-mindedness about following through on an action sanctioned by the group regardless of information that should cause group members to rethink, reconsider and revise their actions. In situations when someone else outside of the group is being victimized as a result of groupthink, the tendency is to rationalize behaviour, and if necessary, vilify and stereotype the perceived enemy to justify actions against the victim. For example, in the situation in which a terrorist group may attack a certain part of the world, members of the group may justify their actions by labelling the victims in ways that may suggest that the victim invited or deserved the negative treatment.

According to groupthink ideals, the group also demands loyalty from members and does not tolerate dissent (Charlan et al., 2010). Group members apply pressure to other group members to conform to the group's norms and expectations when such members appear to be drifting away from the group's expected ways of thinking and behaving. Members yield to the group's pressure to gain acceptance and favour with the group and to avoid rejection and ostracism by the group. When faced with a unanimous majority, group members abdicate information from their own senses and agree with the majority even when the majority is wrong.

Group members who have high affiliation needs are most vulnerable to this pressure by the group to conform. While groupthink is often viewed as a negative phenomenon because it is frequently associated with group coercion to do undesirable things or think in undesirable ways, it sometimes can be positive and can result in desirable outcomes. The three major factors to conform apply to the positive view of groupthink just as they apply to the negative view. For example, a child or teenager who is unmotivated and underachieving in school, but who wishes to join the basketball or hockey team, may be granted membership only if he or she conforms to the academic standards set by the team (Charlan, 2010). In the child's or teenager's mind, the requirement to meet the high academic standards while practicing enough to win may seem unrealistic (unrealistic beliefs about the group's power). The child or teenager may protest and complain about fatigue and stress but the team may continue to insist on very high academic performance. The team may strengthen its resolve to promote each player's unrealistic belief in the group's power. According to Janis (1972), groupthink causes the individual members of the group to have an uncritical unanimity on various issues that confront the group.

A famous example of the negative consequences that may result from the groupthink phenomenon is the Challenger Spaceship disaster of January 1986. Challenger was a space craft that was destined to orbit the earth on the twenty eighth of the same month. An engineer in the Challenger team, Roger Boisjoly, had advised against the launch of the shuttle citing that the weather conditions were not conducive for the launch to take place that day (http://www.spacesafetymagazine.com). However, popular consensus within the group was that the shuttle was going to launch and there was a closed-mindedness on the part of the group to what the engineer was saying. The group felt a sense of invulnerability after having successfully launched other space craft in the past. To abandon the launch was not seen as an option. The launch went ahead with disastrous consequences when the space craft blew up into pieces moments after take-off, killing all on board in full view of the whole world. Had

members of the group been exercising their theoretical rationality freely and taken time to critically evaluate the signals that the engineer was giving, the disaster could have been averted. From this example, it is important to note that members of the group were plagued by the group think mentality and closed out all other possible outcomes. In this sense, they lost their rational autonomy as agents and gave up their agent status to be controlled by the group.

Another example, this time of a fundamentalist religious sect, is the infamous Jonestown massacre of 1978. The town was led by clergyman Jim Jones in Guyana (Wunrow, 2011). It was a religious sect and its members were closely knit such that they could be considered as a family. However, despite appearances to the outside world that the town was a paradise on earth, Jim Jones held suicidal ideals, occasionally asking members of his town to test their faith and show their allegiance to the group by drinking a dose of poisoned drinks. Although members were fully aware that such an act could end their lives, they continued to partake of such activities, irrationally putting their lives on the line for the sake of group loyalty. Although these poison-drinking episodes were just Jim Jones' way of testing the loyalty of his members (since there was no actual poison in the drinks), this changed when the town came under the threat of being exposed to the world as being an abusive place which faced potential closure and the arrest of the town founder and leader Jim Jones.

When United States congressman Leo Ryan visited Jonestown he became a threat to the town's existence (in Jones' eyes at least) since he could expose the inhuman activities that were taking place in the isolated town. After shooting the senator and other members of his group who were thinking of leaving the town, he once more called on his town members to drink the poisoned drink, asking that the poison be administered to children first, then adults (Wunrow, 2011). This time it was not just a drink used to test the faith of the citizens, but it was really poisoned by Jones, leading to the deaths of over nine hundred people. In this case, the town members were in the groupthink mentality, suspending critical judgement for the sake of group ideals. If they had been asked why they committed such acts, one possible answer could have been that they were simply doing what other group members were doing (Gopnik, 2017).

However, groupthink can be averted if certain structural conditions are set up. Specifically, groupthink is more likely to occur when the group is highly isolated from the external world (as in the case of Jonestown), does not have impartial leadership or has no clearly formulated norms for making decisions carefully (Janis, 1972). The phenomenon is more likely to occur

where group members are either too confident of the success of their decision (as in the Challenger disaster design and engineering team) or have very few plausible alternatives than the one currently at hand.

As a corollary to these arguments, one of the ways through which groupthink can be averted is by ensuring that there are mechanisms that keep the group's decision-making activities in rational check. These include encouraging members of the group to have a critical eye on the decisions that the group makes and to be cautious watchdogs (appointment of devil's advocates for example) (Janis, 1972). In short, members of groups should maintain the free exercise of their rational autonomy if the groupthink phenomenon is to be avoided. However, as was observed in both the Challenger disaster and the Jonestown massacre, this was not followed. In these cases, the consequences of groupthink are most apparent in patterns of concurrence-seeking decision making. In order to preserve the sanctity of the group decision, and their faith in it, group members restrict the options and goals they consider and then fail to reappraise them later, focus on the benefits rather than the risks associated with their decision, fail to solicit as much information as they might and then process the information they do obtain in a manner that favours their decision and, finally, fail to set in place any safety nets or contingency plans to protect against adverse outcomes.

According to Haslam (2004), in the groupthink phenomenon, the group is polarized, its views are consensually shared, its members are sharing information that is relevant to their shared identity (but not that which is of a more idiosyncratic nature and irrelevant to that identity), they are supporting ideas that are in line with the in-group norm and rejecting (or not raising) those aligned with the out-group. As well as this, they have a well-developed sense of 'us' and 'them', and social identity theory's esteem-related principles suggest that they should be motivated to develop a relatively positive view of their in-group and a correspondingly negative view of the outgroup. These are favourable conditions for the groupthink phenomenon to occur. From the groupthink perspective it appears that members of group agents suspend their rational autonomy for the sake of following group dictates. In essence, their theoretical and practical rationality is either diminished or completely taken away for the sake of following the group agent's norms.

3.9. Types of group agents: Strong and Weak Group agents

From these various views it has become apparent that group agents place some form of constraint on the rational autonomy of their individual members in varying degrees. This is primarily because individual rational agents come together to form a group agent that has a distinct set of goals which each member is, at least in principle, aware of and seeks to advance. To ensure that this collective goal is met, it can be argued that members belonging to such groups are bound, either explicitly or implicitly, to pursue such group ends. From the interaction of such members there emerges a new entity with the ability to act at a macro-level and no individual member of such a group acts in their own capacity. The actions of the group agent then supervene on the rational interactions of the individual members. The newly created group agent then exerts some influence on the rationality of its individual members such that members of such group lose much of their own rational autonomy or even completely lose it in the process. This is a necessary condition for group agency to exist.

From this understanding, two further distinctions have to be made between what I would call strong and weak rational group agents. Strong rational group agents are those in which individual members of such groups completely lose their rational autonomy and identity in order as long as they are part of the group. Their thought patterns and explanatory frameworks are completely influenced by the group through the various processes involved in theories such as the groupthink, polarisation and social identity theories as discussed above. On the other hand, weak rational group agents are those in which members belonging to such groups lose only a significant part of their rational autonomy. It is important to note that cases of strong rational group agents are rare but in existence. It is my conviction that terrorist groups and fundamentalist/extremist religious and political groups are cases of strong rational agents where the members of such groups take to extremes in the name of satisfying group ends or have a strict adherence to religious or political doctrines and beliefs. Typically, such groups have a highly bureaucratic or authoritarian kind of leadership which ensures that all members of the group follow a strict chain of hierarchies.

Dictatorships are typically important because there are usually severe punishments on the part of the members if they decide to go against the dictator's decisions. It is important to note that the dictator and his immediate circle of advisors still retain a significant amount of their rational autonomy since it is their duty to rationalise on behalf of the group as well as enforce that other

members of the group follow group dictates. But those members occupying the lower levels of the group in a strong group agent tend to surrender their rational autonomy to the group. This is because strong group agents also typically involve a high level of brainwashing on its members and their perspective of the world is unidirectional. We can imagine teenage boys being conscripted into a terrorist group and certain beliefs are inculcated into their minds in such a way that they now have a unitary conception of the operations of the world. Going against group ideals or commands is considered as treasonous and typically attracts severe punishment, including death. If the terrorist group leader, who happens to still maintain a high degree of their rational autonomy, instructs, for example, that a member blows up a certain part of the world, which involves the member dying as well, then such persons have no choice except this sole one, effectively being stripped away of their rational autonomy. An essential aspect of rational autonomy was seen to be that of having a range of options to choose from. In this case, the criteria appears to be absent. When such terrorist acts occur we find terrorist groups claiming responsibility for such acts and the groups continue to survive long after some individual members have either died or been arrested.

Many other examples of group agents in the world that we observe fall into the category of weak group agents. Such weak group agents come in at least three categories, depending on whether they have a political, commercial, or civic character. Political group agents may include town meetings that regularly assemble, form and enforce consistent systems of attitudes as to how things should be done in the locality. They also include non-fundamentalist political parties, and the executives or governments established by them. In each case the members intend that they together espouse and promote consistent policies, as set out in their party programs, campaign or mission statements, or coalition agreements. They could not do their job properly, or avoid electoral failure or ridicule, if they failed to achieve consistency.

Philosophers and political scientists disagree about whether or not they are group agents; the disagreement is precisely on whether inconsistency or irrationality on the part of such entities is a problem or not. By many accounts, however, the state is a group agent, albeit it being a weak one. It is an entity that deals across changes of government with its own members and with other states; and, as befits an agent, it is routinely held to expectations of consistency in legal and other forums (McLean, 2004). Indeed, the 'realist' tradition, is based on modelling states as unitary rational agents. This topic on whether states can count as agents will be the subject of subsequent chapters.

Other weak rational group agents include commercial groups which include partnerships of organised members in which each plays an active role. They include trade unions, professional associations, and industry groupings. Most conspicuously of all, they include firms and corporations. Such entities pursue the financial welfare of their shareholders as their ultimate purpose, at least on common lore, and exhibit the characteristics of agency. Shareholders, directors, managers, and workers combine, often in subsidiary units, to ensure that they pursue the overall goals of their corporations according to a single body of representations; these may bear on which sub-goals to adopt, their relative importance, the best means of attaining them, and so on. Shaped in an environment of commercial competition, corporations are paradigm examples of weak rational group agents.

The civic or cultural world also provides a great variety of entities that count as weak group agents. They include voluntary associations that support popular causes, whether environmental, philanthropic, or more directly political; recreational bodies that run particular activities, such as local athletics organizations, chess clubs, and cycling societies; and more formal bodies like schools, churches, and universities. Even a coherently edited newspaper can count as a group agent if it forms collective judgments and preferences, promotes certain goals, holds itself accountable across time and announces revisions of its views explicitly.

Certain sports teams also fall into the category of weak rational group agents, although it should be noted that it is only those games that require the coordination of team members that may adequately be included in this classification. Such types of sports as rugby, soccer, football, basketball and similar types of games are to be considered here. What is important to note about such games is that the team has an enduring identity regardless of changes in membership. For instance, Chelsea football club has remained the same football club since its inception regardless of changes in its constituent players throughout the years. What is also of interest to note about these games is that they have clear goals that they set to achieve and the achievement of such goals requires team coordination as well as well thought out strategies for winning.

Another type of groups that count as weak rational group agents are military-type groups such as the police, the army, intelligence organisations (such as the FBI in the United States). Such groups are typically highly organised, with a clear chain or hierarchy of command. Those in lower ranks, in the case of the police, army or intelligence organisations, follow the commands of those in higher ranks. Members of such groups may sometimes not be aware of other

members of the whole organisation, but at least they would know their immediate superiors and their roles in achieving the group's goals. Typically, all military-type organisations have goals that are clearly spelt out and each member in the group knows their designated roles, although it should be noted that such roles can change depending on what the superiors have in mind. What is important to note about these groups is that they function as units and not as distinct individuals.

However, the difference with terrorist organisations which I have classified as cases of strong agents is that in such military types of organisations, individuals are sometimes free to express their rational autonomy without negative repercussions, although this has to be within the accepted parameters of the group. For instance, in an intelligence organisation, it is the case that certain decisions and actions have to be improvised for the group to be actually intelligent and information has to be analysed from a variety of angles and not just a unitary mode. This is what makes intelligence organisations a case of weak rational group agents since their individual members still retain a significant amount of their individual rational autonomy, analysing information according to its specific details but still within accepted group parameters.

3.10. Interactive traits and rational autonomy

The various theories I have explored in this chapter can be considered as various features or traits that group agents possess where it pertains explaining the rational interactions of members at the micro-level. I will call the various perspectives I have outlined *interactive traits.* By interactive traits I mean the various interaction models that explain how the group agent exerts an influence on the rational interaction of its members. For instance the groupthink perspective can be considered as an interactive trait in that it explains how members of a group agent adopt a conformist stance at group decisions without giving them the necessary critical appraisal. In this way groupthink explains a certain model of how the group exerts some constrain on the rational autonomy of its members such that the members of the group cannot think outside of expected group norms.

It should be noted that different group agents possess these interactive traits in various degrees. When we consider the social identity and social identity models as interactive traits, it can be seen that the members of the group adopt behaviours, attitudes and values that are agreeable to other group members (see section 3.3 and 3.4). These models explain how individual members

of the group agent interact not only with each other, but with other groups. The social categorization model as an interactive trait explains how members of the group agents perceive themselves as distinct from other members thereby creating an affiliation with the group agent so as to belong. In strong group agents we also find the rationality of the individual members being polarised towards adopting extreme positions and polarisation becomes yet another interactive trait of strong group agents. The group agent exerts an enormous influence on the rational autonomy of the individual members such that the members become non-autonomous beings whose thought patterns and actions are determined by the group agent. All these traits are characteristic of strong group agents wherein the members of such groups completely lose their rational autonomy in order to be desirable members of the group and in order to achieve the group's goals successfully.

Where it pertains weak group agents, however, it can be seen that they possess these interactive traits in varying degrees. A common interactive trait between both strong and weak group agents, however, is that of conformity to group norms. The group agent exerts some constrictions on the rationality of the individual members to such a degree as to 'force' group members to conform to group norms. This will ensure that the group agent achieves a high level of organisation. By making sure that the group members follow group norms as far as possible, this prevents chaos within the group as each person will be harmoniously doing their authorised role. However, it should be noted that within weak group agents, the individual members do not completely lose their rational autonomy but only have it diminished since they retain part of their judgement and in some cases are even permitted to exercise it in order to keep the group agent in check. From these observations it appears that those groups that are group agents have all (or most) of these interactive traits, and as a result, as each interactive trait limits individual rational autonomy to some degree, the rational autonomy of individuals that a part of a group agent is limited to a very high degree, or perhaps lost completely in the case of strong group agents.

From these traits, it appears that when the individual is part of a group agent, they tend to lose their rational autonomy or have it diminished in some sense. They generally find it difficult to rationalise contrary to group norms and expectations, lest they become sliders who are generally not well accepted in the group. Further, they cannot act according to their own will, but rather according to the will of the group. This is clearly exemplified by the soldier who cannot act on their own accord except only under commands from superiors in the group.

Lastly, because of the dichotomy created in the form of 'us' and 'them' individual members of the group would rather conform to norms and be part of 'us' than become one of 'them.' In essence, when individual members are part of a group that counts as an agent, they either completely lose their rational autonomy as an individual (in the case of strong group agents) or have it diminished (in the case of weak group agents), at least for as long as they are part of that group. As was seen in the case of dissidents, those who wish to exercise their rational autonomy in their individual capacity and contrary to the group agent's expectations can only do so when and if they decide to leave the group. Otherwise for as long as they remain part of the group, they relinquish either part or all of their rational autonomy in order to advance that of the group.

3.11. Group agents and moral responsibility

An important note needs to be made at this juncture. It appears that there is a significant link between rational autonomy and moral responsibility. As mentioned in section 1.10, individual rational agents perform actions that stem from their rational autonomies and hence are morally accountable for their decisions and actions. Again, I argued in section 2.6 that groups that count as group agents can be accorded moral responsibility. However, it appears that when an individual agent's rational autonomy is constrained by certain group interactive traits to such a degree that the agent is no longer free to perform certain actions based on their own individual judgement, then their moral responsibility becomes limited. Although the group agent can be accorded collective responsibility since all its members will ideally be aligned towards one goal, it is important to highlight that in the different group agents that have been considered there are various hierarchical levels from the leaders to the lowest member of the group. It is important to note that at these different levels individuals lose different amounts of their rational autonomies. The higher the level a group member occupies within the group, the more of their rational autonomy they are likely to retain.

In an authoritarian kind of group, for example, certain individuals in the group, namely the leader and his/her immediate circle of decision makers or advisors, still retain a significant amount of their rational autonomies, hence still retain a high level of moral responsibility. Those in the immediate circle of the leader and those in ranks immediately below them are there for the purpose of ensuring that the leader's decisions are followed by those in lower ranks of the group and hence have their rational autonomies constrained to some extent, but still retain a higher level of it than those in lower levels. Hence such members who come

immediately below the leader also have higher levels of moral responsibility. As we cascade downwards to those in the lower ranks of the group, rational autonomy is constrained more and more until the lowest person in the group has their rational autonomy extremely constrained. Hence moral responsibility on the part of the individual in such groups diminishes as the rational autonomies of the individuals diminishes as well. The leaders have a high moral responsibility since they still retain a high degree of their rational autonomy, while those in the lower levels of the group have minimal moral responsibility since their rational autonomies will be heavily constrained.

3.12. Conclusion

In summary, I have argued in this chapter that there are many interactive traits that try to explain the rational interactions of members within group agents. Generally, group agents are assumed to make rational decisions based on the merit of the various courses of action on a rational scale which was discussed under the rational choice trait. In the social identity trait, individuals in the group feel the need to belong to the group and hence are identified with the group norms. Polarisation then enables the individuals to take extreme positions that they would not ordinarily take as individuals. Once this has happened, conformity to norms and groupthink may ensue, causing an indifference attitude to alternative courses of action based on the perceived invulnerability and power of the group. These interactive traits ensure that group rationality is achieved at the macro-level. However, in all this, the individual's rational autonomy appears to be either diminished or lost completely depending on which position they occupy within the group. Those in higher positions within the group agent were seen to lose less of their rational autonomy while those in the lower ranks were seen to lose more of the rational autonomy (if not all of it). This was seen to have various implications on the level of moral responsibility that these various individuals within the group possessed. I also argued that various types of group agents possess these traits in varying degrees. Strong group agents were seen to be those that completely stripped the individuals of their rational autonomy for the sake of following group demands. Weak group agents, on the other hand, were seen to be those that only diminished the rational autonomies of their constituent members so that these can be aligned with the objectives of the group. In the end, I argued that because the group agents possess any of these traits, then the rational autonomy of the individual members is diminished, at least.

Chapter 4: Agency and societies as group agents

4.1. Preamble

Thus far, I have explored the concept of rational autonomy where it pertains to individual human agents as well as group agents. As I have argued in the previous chapters, rational autonomy is the capacity to wilfully and deliberately bring about actions based on decisions and choices by free agents. When an individual's rational autonomy is suspended or diminished by heavy influence from the group to which they belong then it appears that this person's agency and moral responsibility is limited or diminished. Depending on whether the individual loses only part or all of their rational autonomy, the group agent can be considered as either weak or strong respectively. Inasmuch as it can be argued that sometimes individuals gain some benefits by losing part of their rational autonomy, for example by conforming to group norms in a company you may get a salary at the end of the month, it remains true that their agency becomes diminished, and may partake of actions that they would not normally make as individuals. For instance, if a person works for a military type organisation and their assigned task is to kill innocent civilians in order to track down a wanted terrorist leader, then the individual is going to follow orders regardless of their personal reservations towards killing. This is important because morally, the blame will go to the group (collective responsibility) rather than the individuals who committed such acts which raises important moral issues about moral responsibility. Because the individuals could not refuse to follow orders, they simply do what they were asked to do in the name of the group. Hence it is important to note that when rational autonomy is diminished then moral responsibility is also diminished.

I have argued that there are some groups that can count as agents, both in a strong and weak sense, with individual persons who compose those groups either completely suspending their own rational autonomy or have it diminished so that the objectives of the group can be met. The aggregate intentions and will of these individuals make the group's agency supersede that of the individuals who compose them. Such groups as corporates, religious groups and sports groups/teams as well as military groups were seen as possessing the qualities necessary for agency with varying degrees, wherein the aggregate intentions of the individual members who compose the groups were aligned with those of the group so that the group's objectives can be met. It was also noted in the section 3.10 that when individuals freely join groups that count as agents, they give up at least part of their rational autonomy while they are part of that group, so that they partake of the group's collective agency. The signing of contracts to that effect

may exemplify this point. I also argued in the previous chapter that the social identity, groupthink, and polarisation views can be seen as interactive traits that explain the interactions among members of the group within the group agent. I argued that it was from an understanding of these interactive traits that we could come to understand how individuals in group agents are 'forced' to align their rational autonomy with those of the group in order to advance the group's objective. As long as they are part of such groups, their thoughts and actions are influenced by group processes to become those that advance the objectives of the group, even if such decisions and actions go against the individual's better judgement.

Thus far, I have argued that groups that count as agents are those that the individuals join freely. There are, however, those groups that individuals join non-voluntarily. A particular case in question here are the groups that individuals are born in or the societies from which they come. Individuals have no power to control which social group they are born in and hence in this sense join such groups involuntarily. The main objective of this chapter is to explore whether societies or states in general can be considered as agents in the same way that a corporate or a terrorist organisation can be an agent as has been the subject of discussion in previous chapters. To achieve this end, I will proceed in this chapter as follows. First, I will outline the hypothetical origins of society through an analysis of the social contract traditions. I will then discuss the realist notion of states in a bid to argue that states and societies in general, can, at least in principle, be considered as group agents in the sense described in the previous chapter. My argument here is that if such societies meet certain conditions for group agency, then in principle it is possible that societies can be group agents.

4.2. The Social Contract Theory

Important to answering the question of whether societies can be group agents is to trace back the history of where 'organised' societies came from in the first place. By 'organised' here is meant having a system of self-governance and regulation together with a code of thinking, explicit or implicit, that regulates behaviour amongst the members of such societies. In political thought, the social contract tradition is generally believed to offer an insight into the origins of organised societies. Although there are various social contract theories that date back to as far as the classical Greeks (such as Plato and Aristotle), they all appear to be premised on the assumption that organised societies were not natural but artificial creations by members of such groups.

According to these theories, there was a time in history when individuals just roamed free on earth, having the liberty to lead their lives as best as they saw fit. During this time, there was no restriction to how they would think or what they could do, except of course, if their natural capabilities did not allow them to. For example, they could certainly roam about collecting or gathering food without regard to anyone else, but they could not fly, since such technology was obviously not present at that time. In essence, they fully exercised their rational autonomies as individual agents. There was no sense of ownership of private property and subsistence was the essence of survival (Cohen, 2008). But as individuals came into constant contact with other human beings, there was a time they decided and agreed to form an organised society. Although the details surrounding the reasons why such individuals decided to form such societies are varied, philosophers such as Plato, Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau generally agree on these assumptions. An examination of these social contract theories is necessary in order to get a picture of the nature of rational autonomy when one is part of a society and in order to determine whether such societies can be considered a group agent in accordance with the criteria outlined in earlier chapters of this investigation.

According to White (2012), the social contract tradition in its multi-facetedness sought to defend the existence of an impartial leader, judge or arbitrator, either in the form of a person, group of persons or the law, which were seen as necessary in ensuring the protection of all of society's members from prejudice by other members in the society. This is perhaps most demonstrated by Locke (1689), who argued that human beings came together in a bid to run away from what he called the state of nature; a state in which each person analysed situations and acted according to their own judgements, in which each person relied on their own moral judgments, to a society which required the rule of an indifferent arbitrator who was fair to all parties in all situations that could arise. In the social contract tradition, the law is often perceived as the decisive opinion of group reason. Commenting on this, Hobbes argues that the law is binding to all members of society, giving a guideline as to what is right or wrong to all (Gaus, 1996). In essence, the laws of any social group play the role of levelling the playing field for all actors in the group, so that all individual members of the group have a collective frame of reference over what is expected of them by being members of that group.

The social contract theory, then, not only explains the origins of organised societies, but also outlines important insights into how such societies operate and, more importantly, the extent to which individuals within such societies can exercise their rational autonomy (and their

limitations) within such societies. From the social contract theory it will also be possible to infer the objectives that a society intends its members to achieve. This is important in helping us understand the nature of rational autonomy in societies and determining whether societies can count as agents.

At this juncture, it is important to look at the social contract theories from classical antiquity to modern times. Although there are many theories that can be looked at from this historical time frame, in this chapter the focus will be on the social contract theories of Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau. I have singled out these theories as I believe they represent the spirit of what most of the other social contract theorists said and as such, they are representative of what is called the social contract tradition. From an analysis of these theories, it is my intention to demonstrate that the nature of group agency at a societal level can be validly inferred.

4.2.1. Plato on the origins of society

My first port of call is the classical Greek philosopher Plato, who flourished around the 3rd century BC in Athens. In Plato's work, the *Republic*, we find the character of Socrates formulating an account of what he believed to be the origins of society. According to Socrates' account, organised society, what he called the *polis* or city state, comes into being because no human being is self-sufficient in satisfying all their needs (Cohen, 2008). The state is a place for the mutual exchange of goods, services and talents since no person is everything of these at once. Therefore the society, according to Socrates, is founded upon a principle of sharing, giving and taking as it were, between and among the members of the state.

According to Socrates, each person was born endowed with different abilities such that one person will be better disposed to one kind of work while another will be better disposed at a different kind of work. In other words, each person within a society is born endowed with a different kind of speciality or specialisation (Cohen, 2008). In the *Republic*, through the mouth of Socrates, Plato advocates a system of group cooperation based upon division of labour and mutual exchange of the surpluses produced by each person concentrating on one type of task. As human beings lack individual self-sufficiency and have different talents and abilities, a system of mutually advantageous economic specialization and exchange of talents and surpluses is thus required to ensure that the individual's needs are met in conjunction with the effort of other members of the societal group.

It is clear that the kind of societal organisation outlined by Socrates is one which appears to be egalitarian and meritocratic in nature. Though each individual in the social group is endowed with different abilities, they are nonetheless equal. It being a meritocratic society, each member will eventually find themselves in their proper place in society through an exercise of their various talents and through a rigorous education system which puts people in their proper place in the state (White, 2012). Plato divided the state into three classes or three groups of specialization. At the helm of the state there is the class of rulers, or Philosopher kings whose job is to make well calculated political and economic decisions for the common good of the group. Just below these are the auxiliaries whose job is to ensure a committed implementation of the decisions made by the rulers. This includes the soldiers whose task is to ensure both internal and external security of the state. The remaining members of the state belong to the group of artisans or tradesmen who can be conceived of as the producers of the basic goods and services to be used by members of the group.

It is important to note that each of the classes has its own product or commodity to offer to other members of the community, and each receives in turn from members of the other classes. The rulers provide the political decision-making for the *polis* and the auxiliaries the implementation of those decisions; and each of these classes receives the material support needed for the physical sustenance of its members (White, 2012). The producers or artisans provide physical sustenance for themselves and the group. It is important to bear in mind that the three classes are not castes, in the sense that the descendants of members of one class are forever consigned to membership in it. The elaborate education system of the republic outlined by Plato is in large part devoted to the attempt to place each person in the class for which he or she has the aptitude. Those with higher aptitudes go through the education system to become the rulers, while the rest fall along the way into their respective classes.

It can be argued that the fundamental principle that Plato seeks to outline in the *Republic* is that the state is formed so that the citizens or the group members of the *polis* receive the rational direction that they require. For Plato, it is only those members of the group that have demonstrated and proven that they have a higher aptitude in reasoning abilities that ought to lead the group. Because the other classes are led more by their physical desires, it is only desirable that those with higher reasoning capabilities be allowed to lead the group. This is perhaps for the benefit of the rest of the group who are deemed incapable of this ability (Cudworth, 2011).

To understand what Plato was trying to achieve, it is important to get a picture of his idea of one of the important purposes of establishing a *polis* in the first place. In Plato's view, the purpose of establishing a *polis*, and of political organization in general, would be to enable its citizens best to live up to the distinctively human endeavour for knowing the truth, since that function is the sum and substance of what human life is all about. According to such a conception, the better a *polis* is at fulfilling this task, the better *polis* it will be (White, 2012). However, contrary to the view that the aim of political organisation is solely for the satisfaction of non-physical needs as Plato suggests, it could be argued that political organization typically seems to be devoted primarily to enabling its citizens to satisfy their physical needs more than the rational needs of its citizens. That is, at the end of the day, what the members of the group are mostly interested in is the satisfaction of their day to day physiological needs. In the absence of these or in the failure of the leader class to have these needs satisfied, especially in a typical contemporary group, a revolt might ensue. However, the furtherance of rational endeavours of the members of the group still remains an important function of the creation of the group.

For Plato, then, ruling or political decision-making is restricted to the most rational individuals, those persons in whom the capacity for reason is the strongest and whose education has fully developed that capacity (Cohen, 2008). They are not only philosophers ("lovers of wisdom") but persons who possess wisdom to a greater degree than their fellow citizens in the other two classes. This rationality is directed toward action or what the rulers see as fit for practical action within the group. This kind of rationality ideally objectively determines what is best for each citizen and determines the most efficient way for bringing about what is best for each member of the group. In essence, then, according to Plato, political groups are established for having this goal of practical direction met.

An important parallel with why individuals join groups as discussed in section 2.2 can be observed here. I have argued that individuals join groups because they believe it is within the group that they can have their goals more efficiently satisfied. Again, from this brief outline of Plato's 'social contract' it appears that when individuals are born in a social group or a state, they are already exposed to the standards set by the leadership, in whom the society believes (or ought to believe according to Plato) resides the knowledge of what is best for its citizens. In principle, it is the leaders' job to 'dictate' what should be considered just, fair, good, right or wrong for the individual members of the group since they are to be considered the bearers of 'collective' wisdom. There is an implicit sense in the *Republic*, in which individuals who

came together to form the *polis* 'agreed' to have those best endowed with both theoretical and practical reason to do the 'reasoning' on their behalf. Such individuals would ensure that the rational and physiological needs of all the other members of the group, who fell systematically in the other classes of the group, were met. It is here that the notion of rational autonomy comes into question.

It is important to bear in mind the discussion in section 1.8 that individual thought and actions must be originated by the individual without heavy influence from external forces limiting their actions to a bare few or just one. Also bearing in mind also the discussion in section 3.6, where it was observed that groups that have leader-centred kind of organisation are the most likely candidates for group agency, it appears that Plato's description of the origins of the state point to the state as a group agent. Let us imagine a hypothetical scenario of an individual born in Plato's *polis*. They have not freely joined this group but find themselves in a group that has an already established norm that the leaders do the 'reasoning' for them in the sense that the group's decisions supervene on the rational decisions of the leaders. Let us also assume that the individual then goes on to become part of the guardian class, whose job is to implement what the rulers have 'rationally' decided as being best for the whole *polis*, as outlined earlier. If the individual perceives of the rulers' decisions as contrary to their own judgement, then the individual will not have the power to exercise their full rational autonomy, since they can be punished for doing what is contrary to the rulers' dictates.

In Plato's meritocratic state, it appears that the majority of the individuals in the state, who occupy the classes apart from the rulers, cannot freely express their rational autonomy contrary to the rulers or 'philosopher kings', since, as it was observed in section 1.8, a rationally autonomous agent is one who not only makes judgments about what to do, but also one who is in a position to freely execute actions based on such decisions. These rulers have the mandate to exercise rationality on behalf of the rest of the citizenry and seem to exercise their rational autonomy to a greater degree. This appears to automatically at least diminish the rational autonomy of the other members of the state and leaving this key element of agency in the hands of the rulers. In this sense, it is the rulers who make decisions on behalf of their citizens thereby diminishing their rational autonomy (since the leader is the one who is actually doing the thinking and not the individual member) and non-ruling citizens do not have an influence on the course that the group is supposed to take.

In this sense also, the *polis*/state can be seen to be operating at a group agent level, since the leaders will be making collective decisions on behalf of the whole group. Although other members of the group appear to have no input in the rational decision making of the group, the leaders are in fact doing this for them, while they play other roles in the group that ensure that the group's survival needs are met (food, shelter and security perhaps). Plato appears to paint a situation in which members of the *polis*, as long as they are not leaders, are not rationally autonomous and whose actions are largely dependent on the rational direction and decision of the leader class. Plato's *polis*, then, can be perceived as a group agent, whose rational direction and subsequent courses of action are determined by those in the ruling class.

This is even further exemplified by Plato in his analogy between the state and the individual human being, whereby Plato argues that the state is the "individual writ large" (Cohen, 2008:11). In essence, Plato takes the state to function like an individual human agent. The rulers, like the mind, possess a higher degree of rational autonomy since they do the rational analysis of possible alternative courses of action. The other members of the group, on the other hand, are like the body parts, which follow the direction of the mind in executing actions. As far as Plato is concerned the group can be understood as a group agent in this sense.

4.2.2. Aristotle

Aristotle continues with Plato's line of thought about the nature of the state, but differs in certain regards. Just like Plato, he describes the *polis* or city state as naturally prior to all individuals within it. He infers, just as we saw Plato advocating for in his *Republic*, that because individuals are not self-sufficient, they need other members of the group in order to survive. For Aristotle, human existence is made sense of only when part of a group, which makes the group naturally prior to the individual. Without the group, the individual, according to Aristotle is "…either a beast or a god" (White, 2012:19). Since the individual is not self-sufficing, the relationship between an individual and the group is that the individual is a part in relation to the whole. Aristotle makes it clear that the chief purpose of establishing the polis is not to provide for the economic or biological welfare of its citizens. However, the *polis*, as a group certainly is constitutive of the very identity of its citizens as human persons and supplies the necessary conditions for their living up to that identity, fulfilling their human function (Wraight, 2008). It would seem that Aristotle believes that there is no aspect of the lives of its

citizens that, in principle, should be excluded from the political realm, that is, from concern of the *polis*.

Miller (1997), argues that for us to get an understanding of Aristotle's concept of the *polis*, there is need to understand his fusion of two notions, that is, a state in the modern sense and a society. A state, understood in the modern sense, is an association which possesses a monopoly over the legitimized use of coercive force within a definite geographical area (Cohen, 2008). It discharges political functions (such as deliberation, officiation, and adjudication), maintains internal order, and defends against external enemies. In contrast, a society includes the full range of associations which human beings need to meet their basic needs and to flourish: including households, personal friendships, fraternal clubs, religious cults, schools (including Plato's Academy and Aristotle's Lyceum), and business organizations. This all-inclusive community contains an intricate web of relationships, voluntary as well as coercive, private as well as public, through which individuals can find sustenance, companionship, and happiness.

Aristotle, however, appears to be of the assumption that for human beings to flourish or fulfil their function, there is need for an overall coordinating social structure which he finds in the *polis*. Although Aristotle does not explicitly say that individuals enter into a social contract, he however emphasises that political organisation is an inevitable, if not natural, occurrence in human beings. Just as we saw with Plato, political organisation seems to be associated with the inability of human beings to achieve their goals in isolation. All of a person's needs, according to Aristotle, can only be met in a group setup. This makes the coming together of individual human beings into a group an inevitable human condition.

In the ideal type of group that Aristotle advocates for, it is important to observe that he follows in Plato's footsteps and comes up with a three-class system: the upper class, the middle class and the lower class. His designation of the classes is based on the wealth that the members possess. The upper class are the rich and wealthy while the lower class are the poor class. The middle class can be said to have moderate wealth and lead a moderate lifestyle (White, 2012). It is in the middle class that Aristotle finds individuals fit to rule the affairs of the state.

Although what Aristotle advocates for is at best ideal, it appears that when individuals are born, they are already bound by group norms, in this case, one of the norms being that those in the middle class are supposed to rule or give rational direction to other citizens. The group, being naturally prior to the individual, in the sense that all individuals are born into a group and

cannot exist except as part of a group, appears to be an entity that supersedes its individual group members. However, unlike in Plato's description, Aristotle's state seems to give citizens more room to be rationally autonomous. For one thing, he advocates that the rulers be taken from the middle class which will ensure that the state is run on a moderate scale. Aristotle assumed that because people in the middle class exhibited moderation, there would be no extreme positions (which he called *vices*) that would be imposed on the citizenry. However, group agents, because of the polarisation interactive trait, were seen to be more akin to taking more extreme positions which would run contrary to what Aristotle was suggesting.

4.2.3. Thomas Hobbes

When we come to Hobbes' social contract theory, we find him having a distrustful view towards human beings. Where Aristotle and Plato had imagined that (at least some) people in a pre-societal condition were virtuous, only lacking self-sufficiency, Hobbes was of the opinion that social life is only a mixture of selfishness, violence, fear as well as deceit (Donnelly, 2000). Chapter 13 of *Leviathan,* published originally in 1657, paints a pessimistic picture of human nature. Assuming that people are naturally equal in their capacities, and that they are driven by competition, diffidence, and glory, and that they interact in the absence of government, Hobbes draws the famous conclusion that the natural condition of man is a state of war.

According to Hobbes, all human beings are naturally inclined to direct their energies selfishly (Donnelly, 2000). He paints a negative picture of human nature where human beings are not capable of acting altruistically, and even apparently benevolent actions are to be considered as self-serving, and perhaps an attempt to make those who act in this way feel good about themselves. Instead, for Hobbes, human beings are in a continuous state of desiring power. This desire for power, according to Hobbes, is the cause of human strife and perpetual conflict. It is only through the appointment of an overarching authority that human beings can overcome this struggle for power over others, and this requires that people abandon their natural freedom in return for protection and stability.

For Hobbes, because people in the state of nature are in a continuous state of fighting, it is a state of constant war. Each person views the other as a mutual enemy, living without any security. The only solace individuals have is to be found in their own physical strength and their own wits; the stronger and/or cleverer the individual is the better their chances of survival. In such conditions, Hobbes observes, there is no place for manufacturing, production and trade

because whatever a person produces will not be secure from other people. Consequently, there will be no culture, no buildings and no scientific knowledge of how the world operates (Cohen, 2008). On top of this, each person lives in perpetual fear and the danger of death. In Hobbes' famous words, "…the life of man, [will be] solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (2008:111).

In this state of perpetual conflict there is nothing that can be considered as an injustice (or conversely something that can be considered just) and nothing can be deemed to be either morally right or wrong. For Hobbes, where there is no common power and no law to regulate the behaviour and conduct of human beings, then there can be no injustice. Talk of what is 'just,' 'fair,' and 'injustice' is, according to Hobbes, only possible for people organised into a society (Cohen, 2008). A society, then, is a pre-requisite for moral concepts to make sense. When human beings are in isolation they are incapable of being moral. Only through the formation of a society can 'the solitary man' achieve any relief from fear, any peace and security, for all individuals are mortal and fallible. For Hobbes, because human beings are afraid of being oppressed and subjugated by other humans, they see it better to form a society which will ensure their safety from such subjugation.

For Hobbes, then, it can be seen that rational autonomy is naturally inclined towards individual choices that promote self-interests. By creating the society, each person gives up their rational autonomy to the whole, or to an individual chosen by the whole, in exchange for the security offered by the group (Hobbehouse, 1998). This 'covenant' (by which the ruled exchange their freedom for security) between individuals in the state of nature creates a social group, whose direction and future lies in the leader, or in Hobbes' terminology the 'Sovereign,' in whom the rational capacity of the group has been vested. Laws are created to ensure that all members of the newly created social group conform to the dictates of the Sovereign. Since the Sovereign wields the control of coercive force, all members in the group are then compelled to follow the society's dictates. Because human beings fear death in the state of nature, they then transfer their right to use force to the sovereign authority.

The only way, Hobbes continues, to reproduce such a virtuous system with people, is to surrender all of the individuals' powers and strength to one person or a group of people within the group, so that all their wills become one will. This will create a concord among them all, having one voice in this chosen person thereby creating a pact or a covenant between them all (Hobbehouse, 1998). Hence, according to Hobbes, the social group, or the Commonwealth,

comes about when individuals in a pre-societal stage agree amongst themselves to submit their rational autonomy to one member of the group, voluntarily, in the hope that they will be protected by this chosen person against all others. This ruler plays the role of umpire or arbitrator, being fair to all parties when conflicts arise. Forming a social group is thus an obligatory covenant, according to Hobbes, for it is a contract wherein one receives the benefit of life. If the contract was not obligatory and binding to all, then there would not be any covenant between the Sovereign and the individual members of the group.

Hobbes is antagonistic to the idea of having a group of people leading the group, but rather favours the idea of one person directing the group (Cohen, 2008). This, he believes, will do away with possibilities for factionalism. Suffice to say, although Hobbes' social contract does not have any actual historical parallel, it does offer a convenient rationalisation into how social groups may have come about.

From this outline of Hobbes' social contract theory a few insights into the nature of rational autonomy in such a society as Hobbes' can be observed. First, before individuals commit themselves to the social contract they are in a natural state of liberty, wherein they have no external impediments in their thought patterns and execution of actions. They are free to think, deliberate, and execute those actions that will ensure their continued existence. In other words, they fully exercise their rational autonomy. As Hobbes suggests, each individual is endowed with rational autonomy, being able to calculate their actions in order to survive the state of nature and the individual in the state of nature is a self-interested subject concerned with survival and self-preservation (Odysseos, 2007). However, this exercise of rational autonomy is directed towards selfish goals and because there is no regulation to the exercise of their individual liberty, individuals become prey to those who are competing for power within the same group.

To escape this situation, they give up their individual liberties in order to be protected from the rest of society while at the same time continuing to survive. By so doing, the individual members of the group give up their rational autonomy to the Sovereign, who will in turn exercise rational agency on behalf of the group. Individual members of society give up their liberty to do as they please in order to submit to the will of the group which they have vested in the hands of one sovereign ruler. It is apparent here that a group agent is formed which supersedes the individuals that compose it. In as much as the individuals have agreed to have

the Sovereign play the role of arbitrator, they have inadvertently also given up their freedom to act without external influences and impediments. Already their rational autonomy appears to be diminished since they can no longer act as they please, as they now have to act in accordance with a set of prescribed rules or in line with the prescriptions of the Sovereign, more so to the subsequent members of the group who may not have partaken of such a contract.

In essence, by entering the contract, just as in entering a business contract, individuals give up their rational autonomy and now assume limited agency. Their agency is limited in the sense that in so far as they can 'freely' rationalise and carry out actions within the group, these rationalisations and actions do not stem from the principles of theoretical and practical rationality as argued for in section 1.8, but instead have to be in line with explicit or implicit group expectations. This is similar to Plato's ideal wherein he says that power should reside in the hands of a few rulers. But unlike Plato, Hobbes believes that power should only reside or be given up to one person. Hobbes' social contract theory can best be understood as a form of authoritarianism in which the Sovereign reigns supreme over their subjects. The Sovereign in such an authoritarian system is vested with complete control of coercive force to keep those members of the group who may stray from expected standards of thought and behavioural patterns in check.

What this translates to is a situation wherein individuals, when part of the group, cannot execute actions that they rationally see fit if they are not in accordance with the prescriptions of the Sovereign. Surely they have various things that they can do within the state, but such activities are limited to the expectations of the Sovereign. To cite an analogy, we could imagine a goat tied to a tree with a string as demonstrated in the diagram below.
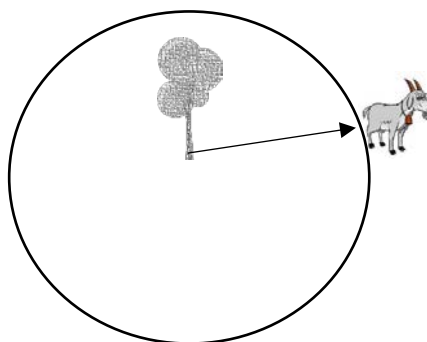
Diagram 4.1

The goat in the above diagram represents the rational autonomy of the citizens in Hobbes state. The goat is free to graze any area within the radius of the rope it is tied with, but clearly this is limited. In the same way, the individuals in the state can be said to have some sort of rational autonomy, but this is limited or has boundaries since there are clearly many ways of thinking and various things that they cannot do contrary to the group's or ruler's expectations. Further, it is the owner of the goat who decides the length of the rope the goat is tied with depending on the area that they would want the goat to graze (or avoid). In this sense, it is the rulers or the group who decide the range and scope of knowledge that the individual members are supposed to have; knowledge which has an implication on the range of actions that the members can carry out. This determines how individuals perceive and interpret the world. For instance, if the rulers want their citizens to believe that it is the gods who control certain phenomena or that human beings are at the mercy of the gods, their expectation would be that the citizens cannot reason contrary to this type of reasoning. This limits their frame of reference and subsequent decisions they make from that view of the world. From the diagram, the implication is that the owner knows what is good for the goat and what the goat is not supposed to do. Hobbes' citizens, just like the goat, are to some extent free to think or act but only insofar as this thinking and acting is in line with the limits set by the Sovereign.

For example, if the Sovereign prescribes that his/her authority cannot be questioned, then already individuals do not have the freedom to speak freely against the Sovereign, even when the Sovereign's actions go against the rational judgments of the citizens. Perhaps the Sovereign may even dictate that it would attract a punishment from the gods if the citizens would go against the judgements of the Sovereign. This is a limitation in the individual's rational autonomy since their options of thought are limited and they ought to be in a position to act freely against what their rational autonomy may consider as injustices on the part of the leadership. In contemporary states, speaking against some leaders may be considered as treason (or some other criminal offence) and can attract penalties that may range from imprisonment to capital punishment (Odysseos, 2007). Hence, it is apparent that when individuals are born into such societies as Hobbes describes, they already have limited rational autonomy, since there are a significant number of ways that they cannot think and a number of things that they cannot just do since all their thinking and actions have to conform to the standards set by the sovereign. It can be noted here that Hobbes' Sovereign, just like Plato's rulers, seems to enjoy a greater degree of rational autonomy since they are tasked with rationalising on behalf of the group and determining what actions the group is supposed to take.

4.2.4. John Locke

Locke, like Hobbes, also gives his own rendition of the state of nature or the state of man before society was formed. Like Hobbes, he imagines this as a situation of lawlessness, where all may do as they will, exercising their full rational autonomy, without their actions being determined by any other person (Shapiro, 2003). However, unlike Hobbes' state of nature, Locke's state of nature is not a state of total chaos with an ever-looming threat of death, but rather it is a state of equality, in which all people are governed by the rule of self-preservation. As Sheridan (2010) puts it, in Locke's state of nature, there is a natural law apparent to all within the group which dictates that no one is to harm another person or take away their possessions or take away their freedom. This law Locke finds in reason. In a sense, Locke believed that the rational autonomy of the individuals in a state of nature would lead them into thinking and executing actions that were for the common good.

Locke believed that all human beings were the product of one creator who had furnished them all with common faculties, the chief one being reason; and reason would advise every person not to harm or subjugate their fellow human beings (Sheridan, 2010). So for Locke, a sense of what was just or fair existed in the state of nature, with reason prohibiting each person from harming another or taking away their liberties. According to Locke, because all persons are born free and with equal mental faculties, they can recognise an injustice and can therefore punish any person who violates the law of reason so that transgressors may be deterred from doing further injustices. So unlike Hobbes' state of nature, we have a situation where there is a regulatory instrument in place which we find in reason which judges the difference between right and wrong.

Locke's state of nature only becomes a state of war when one person in the group decides to overpower others and take their property (Shapiro, 2003). According to Locke, individuals in the state of nature are allowed by the law of reason to use any means necessary, including violence and force to regain their freedom. Human agents are supposed to be rationally autonomous, according to Locke, and are supposed to act according to their own will because all of them are endowed with reason, which allows them to perform this human function. Locke values the ability to follow one's will and volition except where certain rules, binding to all, have been formulated and prohibits such freedom (Sheridan, 2010).

Like Hobbes, Locke suggests that there was a time when individuals in a pre-societal group decided to form a social contract between ruler and ruled (Rickless, 2014). Locke envisions a situation where people voluntarily joined together to form one social group, giving up their natural powers to make laws, or in his words, "executive power of the law of nature" (Rickless, 2014:6). In the *Two Treatises* Locke suggests when people in the state of nature decide to have a government to rule over them, they do so voluntarily. He argues that, when a group of people mutually consent to make a social group they have made that group one body, with the capacity to act as one entity, represented by the will of the majority to carry the society forward (Shapiro, 2003).

Society is thus authorised by each individual to make laws for the common good of the society. Because their rationality would not prefer the chaotic state that might result in the state of nature, individuals find this alternative more desirable. Hence, just like Hobbes' version, the state of nature is succeeded by the laws that are made for the common good. However, this new situation is not to be despotic in the fashion of Hobbes' Sovereign, but it is to be a state where there is an independent judge who ensures that justice is done to all, and this arbitrator is to be seen in the various checks and balances that are characteristic of present day democracies, such as the parliament and congress, whose job it is to make sure that the leaders follow the laws and that they do not become a threat to the citizens' freedom. Where this is not present, people remain in the state of nature, if not worse, according to Locke.

And so, those who would have been given the power to lead the group are to govern by agreed-upon laws which are known to all members of the group and not at the leader's own personal discretion. There should also be impartial judges whose task it is to decide upon controversies that may arise out of these laws, and the leader should also be in a position to protect the members of the group from both internal and external forces that may threaten the common good of the group. The end of forming the group, then, is for the sake of peace and stability.

Locke's social contract is different from Hobbes' in that whereas Hobbes believed that the pact between the Sovereign and the people is a one-off deal, Locke believed that the social contract was to be a continuous bargain between the rulers and the ruled. If a ruler abuses their power and becomes a tyrant ill-using the power of coercive force to their own gain, then the people have the obligation to resist or remove such a ruler.

From this outline of Locke's social contract, a few things concerning rational autonomy and group agency can be discerned. Although at first glance it may appear as though Locke is advocating for a society in which the government has little control over its subjects, save for the protection of their liberties, he seems to buttress the view that the individual's own rational autonomy is limited when they are part of the group. By entering into the social contract with the group, it appears that the individual has now been superseded by the state. However, Locke's view of society seems to allow for the individuals in the groups to maintain a high level of independence to exercise their rational autonomy since they can overthrow the leader through legislative means (for example through an election) if the leader threatens their rational autonomy.

This is unlike the situation we find in Hobbes' version of the social contract theory wherein citizens have limited freedom to exercise their rational autonomy. Coming back to the goat analogy, citizens in Locke's contract have a much wider radius in which to exercise their rational autonomy than in Hobbes' state and can actually determine the size of the rope that binds them. Translating Locke's social contract into group agency terms, it appears that when individuals voluntarily join to form the type of social group he describes, they still maintain a great degree of rational autonomy when they are part of the group only having it diminished. Although they have certain rules and bounds set up for them, which are meant to ensure a smooth running of the state, it remains true that they still enjoy greater freedom within their newly formed state, since they still wield their rational autonomy to decide the best way to lead their lives. Any government that seriously limits this aspect of their lives runs the risk of being overthrown by the citizenry. Hence, Locke's social group can be considered a weak group agent in the sense that its membership still retains a high level of individual rational autonomy when part of the group unlike the situation we find in Hobbes, where the Sovereign get absolute authority from the citizens.

4.2.5. Jean Jacques Rousseau

Rousseau, like Hobbes and Locke, gives a version of the social contract theory in which he begins by outlining what he thinks the state of nature looked like. He paints an optimistic state of nature where pre-societal human beings lived an idyllic kind of life, being happy and free. He notes that originally, human beings were independent of one another. Unlike the inhabitants of complex modern societies, who are dependent on an extensive web of others to provide their

needs, in a simpler past people were more readily able to meet their requirements without the help of others (Wraight, 2008). People living in such a subsistence-based environment, producing what they need to satisfy their basic needs, were not beholden to the vast interconnected matrix of give and take which characterizes the present world. Instead, they were able to provide for themselves in isolation, and had little reason to interact with others unless they wished it. In such a non-coercive environment, human beings were readier to exercise their natural empathy for one another. One reason for this is that everyone was on the same level, each working independently and peaceably on their own projects, and no oppressive hierarchies existed to generate selfish concern for one's station and rights.

Just like in Locke's state of nature, human beings in Rousseau's state of nature were led by reason, which informed them not to use harm on any other member of the group unless it ensured their survival or unless it was an absolute necessity, as is the case in self-defence (Courie, 2012). Individuals were free to exercise their rational autonomy as long as their thinking and actions were not harmful to any other individual. It was only when the first person in that group convinced others that he/she owned a certain piece of property that problems began. Based on the need to own things and envy, people began to judge themselves by how others thought of them. To Rousseau, it was this self-consciousness that made humankind permanently unhappy and resentful or fearful of others. After this, human beings moved further and further away from their natural state of liberty, now being constrained in their rational autonomy by the institutions they were creating (Courie, 2012). According to Rousseau, at this point society necessarily leads people to hate each other, in accordance with their different economic interests.

At some point in human history, he claims, sufficient obstacles to the preservation of the humankind such as scarcity of resources, or the threat of natural disasters, presented themselves so that there were material reasons for associating in greater numbers (Inston, 2010). By conglomerating their natural abilities, groups became more effective than individuals in responding to such challenges. Indeed, conglomerations of this kind were essential to the survival of the species, since the dangers posed by the natural world were significant and deadly.

There was need to come up with a social group in which individuals could help each other in ensuring that all human beings survived. However, the basis of this conglomeration was not

supposed to be one based on compulsion (Inston, 2010). Rousseau reasoned that if the basis of forming a social group is derived from force, then there would be no proper bond of rational obligation between the ruled and the rulers. Though the members of the group may be compelled in such a circumstance to obey the rules of the ruler, this scenario does not merit the term 'political association,' since a legitimate basis for its existence will be lacking. Rousseau is against the idea suggested by Hobbes that people should submit themselves to a monarch or absolute Sovereign, on the grounds that coming up with such an arrangement from the state of nature already presumes a pact between the people amongst themselves, which is some form of prior binding agreement (Grant, 2003). In other words, the covenant which shapes the social order is already in place before a leader is chosen, and the presence of a ruler is a subsequent (and unwelcome) feature of the political order.

The first point to make is that in Rousseau's social contract, an individual does not give up his or her rational autonomy to another individual, as is the case between a master and a slave. The potential citizen of Rousseau's state gives up their rational autonomy to the community as a whole (Qvortap, 2003). No other member of that community, whatever role they may play, has a greater purchase on the freedom given up than any other. Second, everyone in the community has made the same sacrifice. No-one retains a greater level of rational autonomy than anyone else, so there are no comparative winner and losers when it comes to liberty. Because everybody loses their natural right to exercise their individual autonomy, and all are thus on the same level, no-one has any reason to propose or pass onerous or unfair laws and regulations. So the group ideally has a safeguard against degenerating into the despotism Rousseau is so opposed to.

Rousseau emphasizes that his vision for the community involves the complete renunciation of rational autonomy to the whole (Grant, 2003). In a sense, Rousseau seems to be suggesting that the individuals have formed some sort of group agent upon whom they have surrendered all their rational autonomy to allow it to rationalise and act on their behalf. There are no exceptions or extenuating conditions: once an individual has partaken of the social pact, they are bound by it utterly. After all, if natural rights were left to individuals to determine according to their own rational autonomy, then each would naturally attempt to accumulate more than their neighbour, and the pernicious competition and patronage of the tyrannical society would reassert itself. However, the participants in Rousseau's theory would not feel alarmed by this absolute condition of association. Since they do not give up their rational autonomy to any one

person, they need not fear that they will be abused by anyone else (Grant, 2003). In Rousseau's formulation, by giving their rational autonomy to everyone, they give themselves to no-one. And as everyone else is in the same situation, no-one has any interest in turning the community into a repressive state that would limit the members' rational autonomy. If they did, they would be subjecting themselves to despotism.

According to Rousseau, then, the social contract is entered into through an agreement by everyone to relinquish their rational autonomy to the rest, taken as a whole group. Once this has happened, the question of how decisions will subsequently be made immediately arises. No-one is obviously in charge, and if the manifest dangers and challenges of the natural world are to be met, there must be some way of establishing good policies and regulations. Rousseau's answer, logically enough, is that everyone in the community makes the decisions (Grant, 2003). The resolutions of the community are binding on all because they are made by all. So each member is at once (a) subject to the laws of the community and is also (b) an architect of them. When Rousseau uses the term 'state' he is referring to the former condition of the community: its passive role as an entity subject to laws. When he uses the terms 'sovereign' he means the latter condition: its active role as the decision-making body in the community (Grant, 2003).

According to Rousseau, when sovereign power lies in all the members of the society, then they will be obliged to pursue policies for the benefit of all, for two main reasons; first, the group owes its existence to the social contract in which all its constituent members have the same share (Inston, 2010). To violate the position of any individual within the community would be to violate that contract, and hence dissolve the sovereign power itself. When the sovereign acts, it must do so in accordance with the contract from which its power derives. Second, as the sovereign is composed of all members of the community, it will have no motivation to harm them.

Some problems arise from this characterisation of the social contract. Even if decisions are made by everyone with an equal share in the process, there is the danger that a majority can come together and dominate the proceedings. Another danger is that there could be individuals who may rationally decide that their own private interests are more important than the common good (Cohen, 2008). These are obvious objections, and Rousseau is fully aware of them. Rousseau argues that each individual has a 'general will', insofar as they are a citizen of the state. The general will, as it applies to individuals, is the motivation to do what is in the interests

of the community as a whole, as opposed to what is in the interests of the individuals themselves. So even though all the members of the sovereign no doubt have their own private desires and wants, Rousseau claims that there is also an impersonal general will which must be followed. If everyone does this, then the sovereign will always govern the community in a just and impartial manner.

An analysis of Rousseau's social contract theory appears to suggest that when individuals come together to form a group, they do so with a group agent implicit in their minds. When Rousseau talks of a general will, it appears that there is a transference of the rational autonomy of individuals from themselves to the group. When this happens, the group will then supersedes that of the individuals who comprise it. In essence, the group becomes a rational group agent whose activity follows from the rational interactions of its individual members. By so doing, the group then assumes a new identity and other properties that supervene upon the rational interactions of its individual members.

Rousseau's social contract theory reveals significant traits of a group agent. First, the group is created to ensure a shared goal, that of the maintenance of the common good. Second, all individual members give up their rational autonomy to the group so that a general will is created. They surrender their ability to think freely and act freely so that the group can do this for them, under the presumption, of course, that the newly created group agent will rationalise and act in their best interests. Thirdly, all members are supposed to act in accordance with the rules set by the group and deviating from these norms may disturb the general will. Unlike Hobbes' sovereign being the leader, Rousseau's sovereign is the collective group.

In section 2.6 I argued that a group agent emerges when the group's rationality follows immediately from or supervenes upon the rational interaction of its constituent members. In Rousseau's discussion of the general will, he appears to be pointing out to this phenomenon where the group's will supervenes upon the rational interactions of the individuals who compose the group. A group agent seems to be created in this case, since the group is surely authorised by all members of the group to act on their behalf. It is the group that will rationalise and decide which actions would be in the best interests of its members according to the dictates of both theoretical and practical rationality as discussed in section 1.8.

This being the case, it appears that individual members in Rousseau's newly formed group have a limited rational autonomy. This is because they have surrendered their own rational

autonomy to the general will. Whatever the individual is going to think as well as the actions the individual is going to do has to be in line with the general will. In other words, the group regulates and controls individual thought patterns and actions, thereby limiting the person's rational autonomy.

It could be argued that perhaps individuals in such a group get to experience more freedom, since they would be benefiting from being part of the group in terms of their lives being protected and their future being secured by the group. However, in analysing Rousseau's social contract, especially his notion of the general will, it does appear that individuals in social groups that run on the basis of the general will have limited agency, since they would have given up their rational autonomy to the group's will. To explain this further let us assume that the group was an individual person. According to Rousseau's description of the general will, individuals surrender their rational autonomy to the group in exchange for certain protections. If the group in this case was to be conceived of as some sort of person, then it would appear that this person would be in control of the members' rational autonomy to a great degree. The actions and thought patterns of the individuals would be shaped or heavily influenced by this person's will.

It does not appear to matter whether individuals find the group's dictates contrary to their own rationalisations. Individual freedom, so the social contract theory of Rousseau goes, lies in the surrender of our own decision-making ability, or even in the stifling of our own conscience, for individuals are said to be part of the group only as they conform to the legal and moral tradition embodied in and supported by the state. Rational autonomy is self-determination, yet for a person being part of the society that Rousseau describes can only be realized in the submission of the self to something which may at any time conflict with all that is strongest and all that is deepest in the individuals themselves. Although Rousseau suggests that the group would not run counter to what the individual would will (since it is the individuals performing this task), it is difficult to perceive how such a society where no one would run counter to what they individually willed would be different from the state of nature where there are no common regulations or laws that regulate human thinking and conduct. Submitting to the general will means that everyone would in principle be willing what everyone else would will. But this is difficult to perceive since people have different perspectives on how they ought to lead their lives and hence would possibly will different things. There ought to be, in any functional group

or society, some regulations in place binding to all and these may conflict with individual preferences.

According to the social contract theory as just outlined, when such conflicts arise, we ought to surrender our judgment to the greater power that is the group's will, thereby making the social group a group agent that controls the rational autonomy of individual members. However, if Rousseau's social contract is true or if such a society as the one he describes actually existed, then it would seem that in submitting themselves to the group's will, there emerges a new entity (the group agent) whose rationality supervenes upon the rational interactions of the individuals that compose it. By contributing their own will to this general will and in turn submitting to it, they have their own rational autonomy diminished at the same time.

4.3. Realism and idealism

From the social contract understanding of how societies came to be formed, it has emerged that they possess some characteristics of group agency in varying degrees and in principle can be considered group agents. If it is granted that societies can in principle be considered as group agents it is also important to understand how these societies relate amongst themselves, especially in modern day global state relations. The assumption to be argued for here is that if states can relate in the way that individuals do, then they can be considered as agents in themselves that govern and rule over their individual constituent members.

Attributing agency to an entity such as a state results in certain rights and responsibilities being granted to that entity. For instance, if states are agents in the international system, they can be said to have a right to be free from interference (sovereignty) (Donnelly, 2000). More controversially, they might also be held responsible for outcomes in legal and even moral terms. The idea of state agency and responsibility has been the subject of numerous legal debates, some of which culminated in the passage of the Articles on State Responsibility by the International Law Commission in 2001. These Articles have contributed to international law such that states can now be considered liable for countermeasures, including financial countermeasures, for violations of international legal norms. Various international and national courts have begun to draw upon these provisions in their judgments such as the International Court of Justice (ICJ) founded in 1945 in the aftermath of World War two.

In the discipline of international relations, there are many theories that try to explain how states relate to each other or how they can best be described as agents. Of particular interest for our purposes here is the realist tradition. But first, it is important to note that we have already conceded to the group agent status of the society in our discussion of the social contract tradition, especially that of Hobbes, Rousseau and Plato. It is difficult to deny the reality of the group-agent status of the social group. That is, it is possible to conceive it as a distinct entity rather than insisting on conceiving it as the activity of its component individuals as though these individuals were unaffected by the fact of association. From the discussion of the social contract theories above, we are inclined to regard society as an emergent entity (albeit it being a weakly emergent phenomenon as described in section 2.4) distinct from the individuals, not merely in the sense that it is an aggregate of individuals viewed in some special relation, but in the sense that it is a whole which in some way stands outside them, or in which they are merged to the prejudice of their individual agency. By conceiving of the social group as being a super-personal entity in which individuals are submerged, we are inclined to consider such an entity as a particular form of association which presents itself as a whole to which the individual must belong as an element. Writers such as Cudworth (2011) have assumed that states can be conceived of as actors that are unitary and whose interests drive the behaviour of their individual members.

Political realism corroborates this view. Various observations have led realists to conceive of the state as a rational agent, acting on behalf of its citizens. They argue that the very conception of moral concepts, such as duty, imply that the individual lives not for herself but for a greater whole to which her own claims must be subordinated. An individualist might regard the individual as possessing certain rights, but rights are a function of the social group, since rights involve demands made upon others either for positive services or for negative forbearances. The rights of A impose obligations on B, A here being the individual and B being understood as the state. They are obligations incident to and arising out of social relations, and can only be justified if their fulfilment is held to be for the good of the society for which they are prescribed (Brown, 2001). Thus perceiving group decisions and actions as the activities of their members defeats itself and leads us back to the group and the duties rendered to the group by each of its members. Hence realists argue that organized society is something more than the individuals that compose it. Some associations of people, as argued for thus far, can be legitimately regarded as entities possessing traits unique to them, traits which do not belong to the

individuals apart from their membership of that association. In any human association it is true, in a sense, that the whole is something more than a sum of its parts

For example, the whole can do things which the parts ~~separately~~ cannot. For example, if two people in succession move a heavy body, they may be wholly unable to move it. If they however work together, they can get the work done. The association of the two individuals therefore has obvious effects which without the association could not be achieved. However, this was seen to be an example of just a mere collection of people rather than actual group agency. For the state to emerge as a group agent there has to be something more. It is important to understand that an organised association of people involves some modification in the people themselves, specifically in their rational autonomy.

This understanding of states as entities more than the individuals who comprise them leads us to our discussion of realism on the international arena. Realism offers a state-centric account of the world and gives us some insight into the purpose that drives states as well as how states 'think' (Brown, 2001). The first thing to note is that all states are considered sovereign, that is, they have the freedom to rationalise and take certain actions within their own confines. The international system, that is, the system in which nation-states recognize the sovereignty of other nation-states, deals with one another through ambassadors whose immunity they guarantee. This system of the recognition of the sovereignty of states dates back to the 1648 treaties of Westphalia, which ended the wars of the Reformation by pledging mutual non-interference in internal affairs (Codevilla, 2010). Insofar as an international system exists, it does so by virtue of each government's recognition of the absolute freedom of choice of other governments; that is, in principle, states are considered to have some sort of agency and rational autonomy. The fact that nations can enter into agreements, treaties and conventions is testimony to this fact. This web of agreements creates international law which binds any given government only insofar as it wants to be bound.

According to Welsh (2006), sovereignty is about each state's doing entirely as its current government pleases, at least within what it itself defines as its own territory. In Welsh's view, not only may the state sometimes do wrong, it may decide for itself what wrong it may do, without restriction. The principle of sovereignty can also be seen in the internationally observed principle of non-intervention. This principle imposes duties that also constrain the sovereignty of the states that bear the duty. It protects mine by constraining everyone else's and protects

everyone else's by constraining mine. This means that the rule of non-intervention protects a state from harm by other states by imposing that other states do not intervene, and it also protects other states from intervention or harm by a particular state by preventing such states from intervening in the first place.

The realist tradition in international relations is perhaps best understood as deriving from Hobbes' view of mankind as described in section 4.2.3. According to Hobbes' pessimistic nature of human beings, human beings are selfish and always in pursuit of self-interests (Wells, 2007). This greed for power and authority is seen by realists as the key factor in understanding state relations. The world arena is viewed as a sort of state of nature as there is no world government and no system of world law and law enforcement. The realist tradition denies the existence of an international society, depicting international relations as states being agents in a pre-social state of nature which is equivalent to a state of war (Wilkinson, 2007). In this situation, the state is master of its own fate, freely exercising its rational autonomy. It is through 'the personal creativity of a strong leader' that the state's external security is to be guaranteed and its national interest unerringly perceived. Here, the implication is that states that are more authoritarian in orientation are better candidates for group agency, since the leader of such states is the one who makes state decisions, eliminating the possibility of diverging opinions that may put the state at risk of attack by external foes. For instance, if the leader feels they have to go to war with their neighbours for the sake of their country then they will not consult their citizenry who, as Plato contends, do not have the rational discretion of what is in the best interests of the state.

According to realist ideals, states are not enjoined to observe a common morality because no such universal order exists. Rather the task of statesmanship is to protect the insular political order of the state from the anarchic seas which surround it. All states, so the realists assume, have the purpose of protecting themselves from external foes, amassing as much power as possible and maximising state interests (Clark, 1999). Such order as exists in international relations is fragile and temporary and must be understood against a background of the constant potentiality for warfare.

The state, the basic unit of our modern global state system, is a complex political and legal concept of crucial importance in the understanding of the nature of group agency at state level. According to international law, all states have a legal personality and even the smallest and

least powerful state has to meet certain basic criteria in order to obtain recognition as a member of the state system by other states in the global system of states (Wilkinson, 2007). For instance, it must have a defined territory, a permanent population, and a government which is capable of maintaining effective control over its territory and conducting international relations with other states.

In the real world of international relations there is enormous variation in the degree to which states meet these criteria. For example, many states struggle to maintain effective sovereign control over even part of their defined territory. Many states do not have a monopoly of control of armed force within their frontiers and find themselves confronted by civil wars and insurgents, which leave whole areas of their countries under the control of rebel leaders and war lords (for example, Afghanistan, Angola, Burma, Colombia, Somalia, and Sudan) (Wilkinson, 2007). Yet despite experiencing such fundamental challenges to their sovereignty, such states still receive international recognition, sign agreements with other states, send delegates to the United Nations and other international bodies, and enjoy the outward (if only symbolic) appearance of full membership of the global community of states, now numbering almost 200.

Even external recognition is not an absolute criterion of statehood. For decades US governments withheld diplomatic recognition from communist China, and many countries refused to recognize the state of Israel. Thus it is clear that external recognition does not have to be universally accorded before the status of statehood can be achieved. Generally we can say that it is enough to have external recognition from a considerable number of states, including most major powers, and most important of all, from the United Nations. Recognition by the United Nations is today the *sine qua non* of achieving full statehood. It thereby makes sense to speak of an international society in which states are actors.

Unlike the realist tradition, the idealist school of thought is more optimistic of human nature and the subsequent purpose of states. According to idealism, states are not out to maximise power and advance state interests only. Rather, states are altruistic and are always looking out to get mutual benefits from each other. States share common interests and cooperate in the achievement of these interests. Idealism assumes that even if the international society is imperfect, it does exist. It is a true society, but institutionally deficient; lacking a common superior or judiciary (Odysseos, 2007). There is, though, cooperation and it is manifested in

the institutions of international society such as diplomacy and international law. Even war is an institution of international society because the principal function of international law is to regulate, and not to outlaw, this particular activity.

In brief, according to the idealist tradition international relations is characterised by shared rules and norms, reflecting a 'solidarist' conception of society. Preservation of the bases of international society becomes itself a principal task of statesmanship, and customary behaviour allows for the development of sufficient trust for genuinely cooperative approaches to emerge (Clark, 1999).

4.4. Analysis

From these two schools of thought it can be seen that states are indeed considered as actors in the international arena, having distinct personalities and various goals. Whether one is coming from a realist or idealist background, it still remains true that both accounts view the state as the main actor in world politics. However, despite this observation that states can be considered as actors, it does not follow that they are all group agents in the sense that I am primarily focusing on. Granted that the capacity to act is one of the key characteristics of group agents, this is not a sufficient condition for states to be considered as group agents. Although some states can count as group agents, it remains true that there are relatively few societies in the world that can count as group agents. My contention is that it is only in those states that diminish or completely take away their citizens' rational autonomy that can count as the group agents I am primarily concerned with.

For a state to count as a group agent, it has to conform to various standards of rationality, standards which may either completely take away or diminish the individual members' rational autonomy. It is predominantly those states that have an authoritarian kind of governance, typically with a dictator and his/her cronies at its helm, which are the likely candidates for group agency. I argued in section 3.6 that groups with an authoritarian kind of organisation are likely to exhibit traits for group agency since it is in such groups that members typically have their rational autonomy either constrained or completely removed so that rational agency at group level can be achieved. In states that have an authoritarian kind of government there is usually limited freedom of expression. Publicly expressing certain opinions that reason may see as good judgements may be difficult because of the punishments that may ensue. But I have argued that for an individual to have rational autonomy they have to be in a position not only

121

to rationalise over propositions and make judgements, but also to act on them. If either of these conditions is not satisfied then the individual's rational autonomy is either taken away completely or diminished. Further, dictators usually use propaganda to influence people's mind-sets and the threat of coercive force to intimidate those who may think otherwise and force them into accepting certain views that may be contrary to their own rational judgements. In such societies, individuals lose their rational autonomy, giving it up to the state (or the dictator).

An important clarification needs to be made at this juncture between rational autonomy, group structure and moral responsibility. In section 1.10 I argued that the more an agent is rationally autonomous, the more they are morally responsible for their actions. It is generally the case that when a group agent is formed then whatever actions that stem from it can be judged on moral grounds as good or bad as I argued in section 2.6. As I highlighted in section 3.9, in authoritarian centred group agents, although moral responsibility can be given to the group as a collective agent, more responsibility lies in those members of the group who still retain a higher portion of their rational autonomies. Specifically, the leaders of the group still retain a high level of rational autonomy, as well as their immediate circle of advisors whose job is to ensure that those in the lower levels of the group structures follow the dictator's decisions. For example, if we consider Plato's hierarchy of social organisation, it can be seen that the leaders of the group still retain a significant amount of their rational autonomies since it is their job to rationalise on what is best for the group. As we go down the group ranks to the ordinary artisans rational autonomy seems to be heavily diminished since their actions are directed by the philosopher kings and the guardians, whose job it is to make sure that the artisans follow such dictates.

A similar scenario can also be observed in Hobbes' picture of the ideal state wherein the Sovereign reigns supreme. The Sovereign seems to enjoy a higher degree of rational autonomy while those in lower ranks of the group have a diminished rational autonomy since they are supposed to follow what the Sovereign dictates for them. In this case, although moral responsibility is attributed to the group agent as a whole, more of this responsibility lies in the hands of the leader and their advisors and this responsibility diminishes as we cascade to those in the lower ranks of the group.

As an example in history, we could imagine World War 2 German society which was led by Adolf Hitler, his circle of advisors and army in the 1930s. Hitler used propaganda and good oratory skills to polarise the citizen's opinions to extremes of hatred for Jews and deem his reign infallible. Hitler even went to the extent of burning books that were considered as 'un-German' in order to keep his people under his influence and not have them influenced by his perceived enemies— the Jews (www.ushmm.org). If a citizen was against such dictates then they would not be able to publicly declare or express their resentment towards the ill treatment of the Jews even though their rational judgements would be for such a position. Either they would have been imprisoned or killed for going against the demands of the dictator. In such a situation, it is apparent that Germany at this time was acting in a strong group agent fashion, it being led by one man at its helm. The group's decisions had a heavy influence on the rational autonomy of the individual members to such a degree that they either followed Hitler or faced severe punishments. In other words, their rational autonomy was completely taken away from them since they could not think and act according to their own rational judgements, but only according to the demands of the dictator. Those individual members who felt the need to exercise their unconstrained rational autonomy either had to leave the group or face unpleasant consequences. In this way, their rational options were limited to a bare minimum making them lose their rational autonomy.

However, it should be noted that although moral responsibility can be attributed to the Germans of that era as a collective group, more responsibility lay in the hands of Hitler and his immediate league of advisors and followers such as Joseph Goebbels, Hermann Goering and Heinrich Himmler (http://alphahistory.com), who still maintained a high level of their rational autonomies while the ordinary citizens were not really responsible for the collective actions at this time since they had diminished rational autonomies and could not think and act freely. What is important to note in these various cases is that at various levels of the group agent there are differences in how much rational autonomy is given up, with those at the lower levels giving up most if not all of it, while those in the higher levels surrender less of their rational autonomy to the group. Because of this, it follows that the individuals at the helm of the group are more morally accountable for actions done in the name of the group than those at the lower levels of the group who appear to have a diminished rational autonomy.

From these findings various insights on the nature of the group agent status of the state can be inferred. First, there appears to be consensus among the social contract theorists that the state

is some sort of actor since at its inception the members of the state give up their freedoms to the state so that it acts on their behalf. However, it is apparent that it is not all states that can be considered as group agents, since some lack the necessary conditions for group agency. Some, as the one that Locke and Aristotle describe, could be seen as nothing more than a group of individuals coming to form a mutually beneficial society through adhering to group norms and expected standards of behaviour. In such situations, the group has too loose a control mechanism on its citizens such that the citizens are largely free to pursue their own lives within the confines of what the state expects from them. As such, democratic societies in general appear to be poor candidates for group agent status since their citizens enjoy rational autonomy with minimal interference from the government or those in power. In fact, the citizens of such states actually keep the government in check by retaining the power to change the government at any time through legal means, if the government threatens this rational autonomy of the citizens. In such cases there will be too many checks and balances upon the government so that it does not heavily influence the kind of decisions that its citizens make.

However, the same cannot be said of authoritarian states or societies wherein complete power resides in the hand of one individual or at most a few individuals. Societies that are founded on a principle of authoritarianism (explicit or implicit) such as the one described by Hobbes (and to some extent Plato and Rousseau) appear to exhibit more characteristics of a group agent than their democratic counterparts, though such characteristics may not be enough to warrant them as group agents. In such societies, the rational direction or rational autonomy of the state lies in the hands of the leader (or the group as a collective entity implicit in Rousseau's description of the general will), and not the citizenry, who have given up a large part of their rational autonomy for the sake of the group. And we see that individuals in contemporary dictatorships tend to have less freedoms than their counterparts in more democratic societies which I translate to mean that they have limited rational autonomy.

These freedoms are supposed to be a manifestation of rational autonomy, wherein citizens ought to be free to think and act as their rational judgments see fit. Instead, dictatorships usually use propaganda tools to influence their citizens' theoretical rationality or ways of thinking in general. Propaganda limits a person's explanatory framework which is key to an individual's autonomous reasoning. Their explanation of the world becomes too restricted and cannot perceive explanations of events contrary to that limited view. The citizens may even develop certain attitudes and biases because of such propaganda tools to such a degree that they are

complacent with the dictatorship. In this way, dictatorships or societies that are generally run upon such a principle, exert an enormous influence on the rational autonomy of their members, to such a degree that they either lose it completely or have it significantly diminished.

Bearing in mind the discussion in section 1.8.1, that a necessary condition for theoretical rationality is dependent on the accuracy and variedness of the information available to the person, it would appear that in a dictatorship, citizens are only supposed to be exposed to limited information (for propaganda reasons on the part of the leader), and this will limit their theoretical rationality and subsequent actions. When individuals are asked why they hold some positions in such a situation, a very common answer would be that they are not free to think otherwise, since they are not allowed to think contrary to state expectations. This is a limitation on their rational autonomy since a necessary aspect of rational autonomy is that individuals have to be in a position to form judgements based on their own understanding and interpretation of the information presented by the world, form inferences based on this understanding, and be in a position to execute actions based on their own judgements.

4.5. Conclusion

From the foregoing chapter, it was observed that various features of different social contract theories are helpful in understanding the ways in which a social group can become a group agent. From Plato's theory of political organisation in the *Republic*, to Rousseau's general will, it was observed that a common feature amongst all these theories was an implicit or explicit giving up of individual freedom in exchange for the leadership of the group, which in a sense has been authorised to act on behalf of the constituent individual members. A necessary condition for group agency was seen to be that individuals in such groups give up a significant portion of their rational autonomy (or completely lose it) to the group such that they think and act in ways that are predominantly prescribed and accepted by the group agent so that group rationality can be achieved. In a sense, the individual's thought patterns, conceptual schemes as well as behavioural patterns have to be heavily influenced by the group such that the individuals conform to the demands of the group. However, it was observed that the loss of rational autonomy varies within the group as those members occupying higher levels of the group lose less of their rational autonomies while those in lower levels of the group lose more of their rational autonomies.

It was also observed that there are few social groups in the world that can count as group agents, since many of them fell short of the sufficient conditions for group agency as discussed in the previous chapter. However, social groups that follow an authoritarian kind of leadership were seen to be more likely candidates for group agency and it was observed that although collective moral responsibility could be accorded to such states, more responsibility lay in the hands of those in higher positions of the society who retained a higher degree of their rational autonomy.

It was also observed from the discussion of such theories as realism and idealism on the international political scene that most states can be considered as sovereign actors but this alone was not a sufficient condition for group agency. Partaking in pacts with other states and being part of international organisations was seen as alluding to states as actors but not necessarily agents. It was observed that many states lacked the necessary control of their members to such a degree that they would lose their rational autonomy. In the next chapter I will then carry out a case study on a given state to check the veracity of the findings I have made in this chapter.

Chapter 5: Group Agency and traditional groups: The Shona case study

5.1. Preamble

In the previous chapter I argued that individuals at some point in time come together to form a society run on agreed upon rules and regulations. By so doing, they give up part (or all) of their rational autonomy so that the social group acts on their behalf in exchange for some benefits. I have also argued that indeed some social groups can be considered as being group agents. But I have also argued that there are few such groups in the world. In this chapter, my task is to analyse whether such a characterisation of social groups as group agents can be applied to a specific group. Of particular interest are those societies which can be considered as traditional. Although some modern societies exhibit some traits for group agency in the sense described in previous chapters, it is my conviction that it is in traditional societies that the concept of societies as group agents becomes more apparent. I will analyse certain characteristics that traditional societies possess and determine whether such societies become cases of group agents. Analysing the concepts of group agency in this way will make apparent what actually happens within the group to make it a group agent at the same time revealing what happens to the rational autonomy of constituent members of the group. I will proceed as follows: an outline of what traditional societies are and their characteristics will be made, then a specific group, namely the Shona group of Zimbabwe, will be analysed against the concept of group agency as discussed in previous chapters.

5.2. Traditional societies

The notion of a traditional society is not easy to define. One problem is that there is the danger of linking what is 'traditional' with what is 'underdeveloped.' In this misunderstood sense, a traditional society is one which is underdeveloped (Lushaba, 2009). Although it is true that some underdeveloped societies are traditional in orientation, it also remains true that some developed countries also have traditional characteristics as shall be discussed below, and hence can also be perceived as 'traditional.' It is important to understand that there is not a single definition of what a traditional society is and misunderstandings such as the one just outlined abound. To avoid such misunderstandings, there is need to formulate characteristics that can be identified as belonging to societies that can be called 'traditional.' The intention is that if a society meets most (if not all) the characteristics, then it qualifies to be called a traditional society.

5.2.1. Communitarian in orientation

The first characteristic of traditional societies to be considered is the relationship that exists between the individual and the group. Traditional societies are largely communalistic or communitarian in orientation as opposed to individualistic societies. Communitarianism is the view that the society in which an individual finds themselves is in some sense prior to the individual themselves and has dominance over the individual (Masolo, 2004). Some communitarian thinkers get their inspiration from the writings of such people as Hegel. For Hegel (1956), the state contains three distinct characteristics which are all interconnected into one. According to Hegel, although these three are conceptually distinct, they nevertheless belong to one entity. On the one hand, the state can be understood in the political sense, as those institutions of government and legislation making. On the other hand, there is the state in its civil sense, consisting usually of the mass agreements and arrangements that individuals enter into among each other such as contracts, marriages, and the establishment of corporations. Finally, the state can be understood as the total of ethical values, shared experiences and responses, the consciousness of belonging together through history, reinforced by religious and cultural homogeneity.

Contemporary Western communitarians, such as Taylor (as cited in Masolo, 2004), claim to uphold this threefold Hegelian concept of the state. They maintain that the individual is only a constituent part of a larger group or whole. The general assumption is that societies sustain themselves over time through a process of communication by which consensus on values, as manifested in individuals' conscious behavioural content, is kept alive through negotiations that lead to common understandings of and acceptance of cultural norms. According to Taylor, individuals are to be understood as participants in group rational discourses aimed at producing the norms to direct their lives. In my discussion of emergence in section 2.3.2 I argued that when individuals come together in a highly organised way there emerges a new entity that amounts to something more than just the sum of its parts. This is the reasoning that resonates in communitarian thinking and generally, in communitarian thinking, the society is prior to the individual and a person exists only as a part of a society.

A variety of African writers such as Mbiti (1971), Gyekye (1997), Matolino (2009) and Wiredu (1980) have given their own versions of what they take to be communitarianism in Africa. Although some writers such as Gyekye and Menkiti have tried to make a distinction between

what they call radical communitarianism (Menkiti, 1984), wherein the individual is inseparable from the group, and moderate communitarianism, wherein the individual enjoys more freedom from the group than in radical communitarianism (Gyekye, 1997), other writers such as Matolino (2009) are of the view that there is no real or significant difference between the two. From Matolino's findings, it is implicit that communitarianism in Africa is to be understood in the radical communitarianism sense, since he contends that there is no real or convincing basis for accepting the distinction between radical and moderate communitarianism. If Matolino's findings are true, then in African communitarianism the individual is inextricably bound to the group such that they cannot be conceived of as a separate entity from the group.

According to Wiredu (1980), traditional African societies are to be considered as having been communitarian in nature. He continues that to find an African society not founded on the principle of communitarianism is rare. African societies, according to Wiredu, are grounded in close-knit kinship ties which start at the household level and extend to the whole clan. This is achieved from an early age where children are inculcated into having a sense of affective interconnectedness with other members of the group. Through this process of bonding, a person gets to understand their role in society as well as their duties and obligations towards other members of the group.

Through an understanding of their obligations towards society, all members of the group have a sense of reciprocity in their association with other members of the group. Because of this reciprocal nature of these interconnected individuals, it becomes inevitable that all the members of the group have obligations and at the same time have rights (to be received from other obliged people to offer such). The group, then, becomes the place where the individual's rights are fulfilled from the obligations that other people have towards the individual and the obligations that the individual has towards other members of the group. For Wiredu (1980), this is what African communitarianism is about.

Key to understanding communitarian thinking in Africa is the conception of personhood. For communitarian thinkers such as Mbiti (1971), personhood is to be understood in a participatory sense. By participatory here is to be understood as the view that becoming a person is a gradual moral process by which an individual becomes a person through how they interact with other members of society. Hence the famous maxim by Mbiti "I am because we are" (1971:141), meaning that the individual is only a person through their interaction and interconnectedness

with other people. Personhood, in this sense, is something that is granted through participation and is conferred upon a person by the group depending on how they conform or depart from the society's expected norms— the more they conform to society's norms and expectations, the more they become a person and vice versa (Menkiti, 1984). It is important to note here that since being considered a person is something that is dependent on the judgement of other members of the group, then the group in a sense, imposes its norms, values, and beliefs on an individual and expects the individual to think and execute actions in a specific way. The more an individual conforms to such norms, the more they become a person. This is akin to the sort of conformity that occurs in a group agent as discussed in section 3.7. For the sake of being recognised as part of the group, the individual has to conform to group dictates, even when it seems that the group's expectations are at odds with the individual's rationalisations.

It appears obvious to communitarians that all individuals are born into an already existing society which has already established traditions. When part of such societies, individuals are initiated into the status quo of the society and are acculturated into the society's traditions and values. Individuals do not come into the world with already existing beliefs but these are imparted into the individual as they are acculturated into their society's belief systems. As a consequence of this understanding of communitarianism, it becomes apparent that the explanatory frameworks, conceptual schemes and thought patterns of individuals from such societies, at very early stages of their lives, are shaped by their groups (Wiredu, 2008). For example, our ideas of God, of where the world came from, of what makes the sky blue, what causes rainfall, or of where children come from are usually the product of the group into which we are born. The societal group, then, has the responsibility of making sure that societal values are imparted into the minds of its members.

Because individuals have not chosen to be in that particular group, it follows naturally that they have no control for the beliefs and values that they are going to form during the course of their lifetime and it is important to emphasise the observation made by Zimunya and Mlambo (2016) that most of the beliefs and thought patterns that an individual holds throughout their lifetime are largely inculcated in their mind in their early years. Traditional societies emphasize those values that belong to the society over and above those of the individual. This is akin to what Schwartz (2006) labels cultural embeddedness. By cultural embeddedness is meant a situation where the individual's explanatory frameworks, thought patterns and actions are a result of one's culture. In such societies, individuals are inextricably bound up in the collective. Social

relationships reign supreme and individuals identify with the group. All individuals in such groups participate in the group's shared way of life and ensure that the group's shared goals are reached.

Unlike individualistic societies, where the individual is deemed to take precedence over the society, communitarian societies do not consider the community as a conglomerate of distinct individuals (Chimuka, 2002). Rather, society is said to be ontologically prior to the individual. Saying that the group is ontologically prior to the individual is to be understood here as the claim that the existence of the individual depends in some sense on the existence of the group. In its strongest sense, that the group is ontologically prior to the individual means that the individual cannot exist if the group does not exist. Understood in a weaker sense, what this means is that no individual is born 'societyless.' All individuals are born into one social group or another which means that necessarily the individual's existence as a person is dependent on the existence of the group in the first place, since personhood is only gained through membership in a particular group. The group becomes the place where the individual not only gets born in, but one in which they get their identity. According to this view, without a group, the individual does not have an identity.

As such, traditional societies have, as one of their key responsibilities, the responsibility of moulding the individual into the kind of person that places great priority on the larger society than on the individuals themselves. Consideration for others is held to be of utmost importance and egoistic tendencies are, in principle, kept in constant check. In a famous dictum by many African writers who believe in this view of the world (such as Mbiti and a host of others), the individual is only made whole by an affirmation of the existence of others (Mbiti, 1971)

In such communitarian groups, there is a tight connection between the self and society. The self is merged with society and one psychologically identifies oneself with the group rather than one's biological self. In this regard, it is important to consider Durkheim's (as cited in Douglas and Ney, 1998) distinction between the egoism and altruism. Egoism can be equated to 'selfism.' According to Durkheim, egoism is a psychological emphasis upon the reality status of the individual self. In a very strong sense in which egoism can be understood, an egoist views themselves as reality and views all other human beings as essentially unimportant, but generally, an egoist is understood as someone who believes that their own well-being is more important than that of others. Egoists, then, are typical of individualistic societies. Altruism,

on the other hand, is the view that the well-being of society is more important than the individual's own well-being. The emphasis of altruism is a psychological focus upon the welfare of the group or of society. An altruistic person will, in principle, engage in self-sacrificing actions to help the group survive.

Traditional societies often depend on this tight connection between the self and society and a willingness on the part of individuals to give one's self up to the group. Individualistic societies lack such kind of high level emotional and psychological identification with the group. As highlighted in section 2.2, one of the key characteristics of a group agent is that there has to be in place a close emotional tie between members of the group. Ideally, in a traditional group, one works for the group because one is at one with the group. People work in coordination without much emphasis on incentives or contracts because they have a shared identification (Sialdini, 1999). The members of the group are people that an individual lives with, works with, gets merry and grieves with, or worships with. Everyone knows each other, or at least identifies with most people in the group creating a strong bond between the members of the group which remains more or less the same (in terms of membership) for long periods of time.

5.2.2. Importance of the family and family ties

In traditional groups, the nuclear family has the responsibility of shaping the conceptual schemes of an individual born into that family. It is apparent that most of the beliefs and values individuals find difficult to dispense with are those that their families put into them from birth to adulthood. For example, an individual's view of the causes of problems and how to solve them depends mostly on what sources were considered by the family and what solutions the family adopted to solve such problems. If, for instance the family was a typical traditional family whose conceptual schemes were influenced heavily by religion, then most problems that the family, and subsequently the individual, would face would appear at first glance to be of a religious nature. According to Chitando (2010) a person's immediate explanatory framework when things such as disease strikes is shaped by what they have been taught from childhood. If they have been taught that diseases are caused by witches or evil spirits, then this will likely be what they consider to be the cause of any disease when it strikes. Consequently, the solutions for the problems would also follow to be of a religious nature.

For example, suppose a person, Ms Smith, has several strokes of what she would call "bad luck." She would ascribe the cause of this bad luck to supernatural forces or evil spirits. The

solution to this would be to seek the help of a greater spiritual force to get rid of the bad luck. Such thought patterns are as a result of belonging to a particular group in the following sense: the group has certain beliefs (in this case religious beliefs) that are inculcated into the individual through the family in which they belong. Hence, when the individual seeks to explain the phenomena they encounter in the world, their background beliefs that are influenced by the families from which they come, come into play; the family here being a representative of the social group as a whole.

On the contrary, suppose another individual Ms Robinson was born into a family whose beliefs emphasised that there is no such thing as "bad luck", but that all things that happen to the person are as a result of the person's good or bad choices, not some spiritual forces. Her explanatory framework, also shaped by the group to which she belongs, would entail that the range of solutions that she would seek are within her own means and not up to some spiritual or religious mediation. It is apparent here that the family, as the medium through which the group inculcates its values in its members, has played an important part in shaping both Ms Smith and Ms Robinson's conceptual schemes and ways of thinking such that it becomes difficult at adulthood stages to have the individuals in question think contrary to what their respective families have taught them.

What is important in family values in traditional societies is that they align almost perfectly with what society expects of individual members. The family unit, in traditional societies especially, has the task of imparting society's values, beliefs and norms into individuals so that they become 'desirable' or ideal members of society who conform to society's norms and standards, bearing in mind that communitarian ideals suggest that an individual becomes a person depending on how they approximate the desirable societal standards set by the group. In other words, it is from the family that an individual's theoretical and practical rationality are shaped. The kind of thinking that the individual engages in and the means through which they decide to solve certain problems, as well as the subsequent actions they execute, would be heavily shaped by the family.

Traditional societies view the family as greatly important. As highlighted earlier, the family, as a nuclear group, represents the interests of the group and helps in shaping new members into ideal members of the society. It is then imperative to realise that one of the most important elements of traditional groups is the family from which one comes. Children are considered as

owing their lives to their parents and the parents typically have great influence over the rational autonomy of their children (Chimuka, 2002). In a typical traditional society, people are often identified by the families from which they come. Depending on whether such families uphold group values or not, a person belonging to a particular family can be deemed a desirable member of the group, not because they personally merit such a title, but because their family, as a unit, deserves it.

It is typical for people in traditional groups to ask of a person, 'whose child is this?' depending on whether the actions of the person in question warrant praises or scorn (Samkange and Samkange, 1980). The understanding here is that the more a person exhibits good social values, the more their family is deemed to be doing a good job in upholding societal values and the more a person departs from expected social norms, the more their family is considered as failing in this endeavour. The behaviour of individuals in such traditional groups is usually attributed to the families from which they come. This goes to show that the family is viewed by members in the group to be more important than the individual, and at a larger scale, the society then becomes more important than the individual as outlined in earlier sections.

All members of the group are seen as belonging to a common ancestry and hence consider themselves as related or as members of one common family. People are tied together by areas from which they come as well as totems. A person of one totem is automatically related to other people of the same totem, even if they are not biologically related. Such people even consider themselves as sisters and brothers (Zimunya and Mlambo, 2016). The extended family becomes key, as various members of this family unit are designated various roles that ensure the survival of the family and the larger society. Aunts, uncles, grandparents, nephews and nieces all have important roles to play in the family unit. For example, aunts and uncles in a typical traditional society occupy the role of counsellor for the young members of the family, teaching those things that their parents would ordinarily not be able to say. The extended family is as important as one's biological family for it is considered to be the place where an individual is 'made' into a desirable member of the larger group. In a typical traditional society, relationships such as 'cousins' do not exist for such are considered either as brothers or sisters (Chimuka, 2002).

Because parents are viewed as figures of authority, they usually influence important decisions that the individual makes in life. Such decision as the career a person seeks to take to the

marriage partner that the individual seeks to have, or general ways of perceiving the world and responding to it are all heavily influenced by parents as authoritative figures in the individual's life. To disregard the advice of a parent, especially the maternal parent, is considered a sign of great deviance and a wide range of repercussions are believed to follow. Hence, in a traditional society, parents occupy an authoritative role in the family unit, governing most of the important decisions that an individual makes throughout their life. The family unit is therefore to be seen as an important characteristic of a typical traditional society since it is the family which has the primary function of moulding the individual into a desirable and acceptable member of the group.

5.2.3. Adherence to norms and values

It is true that all societies have their own norms and values, but it is the importance placed on, and pervasive adherence to these norms and values in traditional societies that is important for our purposes. Norms can be considered to be those guidelines that govern an individual's behaviour and responses to particular situations (Sialdini, 1999). Values, usually of ethical conduct and aesthetic judgements, are inculcated into the young members of the group, and as they persist over time, they become norms, or what can be deemed to be 'normal' in that particular society. Members of traditional societies have a set of defined norms that they get from the family unit as they are socialised into the culture of their group. Such norms as how to dress, talk, walk and eat at different times are just some of the values that an individual learns from infancy. Norms such as how to mourn for a dead relative, to show gratitude and even norms of thinking modes are engrained in the individuals as they grow into the society.

In a traditional society, people have normal ways of doing things and deviance is not greatly appreciated. In such groups, conforming to what is deemed to be normal reigns supreme. Group values take precedence over individual values. Although individuals in principle can override group norms, it is often very difficult to do so because of the psychological shaping that occurs during earlier stages of life when children are inculcated into the group's norms. If, for example, the norm is that dead people are buried in that group, then cremating them may be viewed as a huge deviance (Zimunya and Mlambo, 2016). Sticking to the norm, or sticking to what is normal, or to what everyone else does is considered as being of great importance in a traditional society. This perhaps stems from the belief that what is normal is believed to be what has been 'tried and tested' and has worked for generations.

Norms also maintain social cohesion and avoid chaos (Brooks and Rose, 2013). This stems from the fact that norms have a regulatory effect, which ensures that all individuals do not infringe on another person's path, unless the norm is such that they have to. Norms in this way, oil the many parts of the traditional society so that there are at best minimal conflicts. In the case that such conflicts between individuals arise, then norms are once again invoked so that they determine the best way for the conflict to be resolved. The numerous examples from the past offer guidelines to present generations for behaviour and responses to certain behaviour that diverts from the norm. Modifying or departing from established group norms into something the group might find unfamiliar is not encouraged. Because the belief in a traditional society is that the purpose of being part of the group is to ensure the perpetual existence of the group, it becomes imperative that everyone in the group follows that 'tradition' or established norms of the group (Shoko, 2008). Strict adherence to these norms is believed to ensure the survival and continuance of the group as a whole. Trying new things that the group is not familiar with is usually viewed as a potential disturbance to the survival of the group. Sticking to the norm and doing what everyone else is expected to do becomes a key characteristic of traditional societies.

Because people in a traditional group often stick to what is normal, and as deviating from this is not a celebrated quality, traditional societies tend to be very conservative, giving priority to how things have always been done. This has a tendency of stifling creativity, with minor changes in the way things are done appearing after long intervals. For example, if people in the group have always been led by a certain family of chiefs, then trying out a democratic system where the ruling position is open to all may create tensions and possibly conflicts amongst members of the group, stifling the goal of the group which is continuance (Wamala, 2004). Traditional groups are therefore not very keen on having many changes to their ways of doing things, since ordinarily, members of the group have to conform to the norm and be the same, ensuring the group's survival.

Because creativity (in the sense of doing things differently) is not encouraged in a typical traditional group, then it follows that inventions are few in these groups. If farming has been done by cows and manual wooden ploughs and this has yielded results for generations, then there will not be inventions that cause dramatic changes. People are less responsive to their creative side for fear of being labelled 'different' (Pacho, 2013). As mentioned earlier on, people who divert from established norms are not considered desirable members of such

societies. Instead, old ways of doing things, which encourage the non-invention of better things, becomes the norm. Creativity and new inventions in such groups are therefore almost non-existent. The few inventions that do come from within the group are usually viewed with suspicion and take time to be appreciated. To give a modern day example, it is typical that foreigners (usually tourists) are the ones more keenly interested in artefacts created by members of some traditional groups in the world. The members of such groups may not appreciate the creativity that goes in such artefacts, which becomes a norm in itself. If, for instance, a member of the traditional group decides to buy such artefacts and displays them at their house, then they might be viewed with suspicion, the artefacts themselves being considered as wealth-creating goblins. Because thinking outside what the group prescribes is not encouraged and conformity is expected from individual members, it becomes difficult to change any practice in the group. Any form of innovations are viewed with suspicion, unless they do not go against the norm.

Traditional societies are those whose members place great importance on traditional values. Traditional values, in turn, are those values that have been known to be part of a society's tradition, usually handed down from generation to generation through oral tradition, or in some few cases, written literature (Schwartz, 2006). Traditional, then, means the long-established actions or patterns of behaviour in a community or group of people, often those that have been handed down from generation to generation. Traditional values, then, are in some sense immune to change for they characterise a people's belief system. As Schwartz notes,

> [traditional societies] emphasize maintaining the status quo and restraining actions that might disrupt in-group solidarity or the traditional order. Important values in such [societies] are social order, respect for tradition, security, obedience and wisdom (2006:46).

This ensures that the conservative aspect mentioned earlier stays in place. From this it appears that different ways of thinking and acting are not welcome. In this sense, a person's theoretical rationality and practical rationality as discussed in section 1.8 seems to be diminished since it will be difficult for the individual to come up with alternative modes of thought. Bearing in mind that rational autonomy entails that the individual member ought to be in a position to have as many alternative options as possible, a conservative environment which does not promote alternative ways of acting that depart from what is considered normal seems to diminish this capacity.

5.2.4. Emphasis on spiritistic reasoning

To ensure that all members of the group adhere to the group's norms, traditional groups usually have an elaborate system of religious beliefs that regulate the behaviour of the members of the group and ensure that all members of the group adhere to group norms (Zimunya and Mlambo, 2016). Though varying from place to place, at the core, traditional groups believe in the existence of a spiritual world in which the departed ancestors of the group dwell (Shoko, 2008). These spiritual beings are believed to be responsible for both the good and the harm that comes to an individual. Because older members, if not the founding members of the group, are deemed to be important in the creation of the group's norms (adherence to which has been highlighted as very important in such groups), certain rituals have to be elaborately and carefully carried out when they die. Death is viewed as a transition from the physical world to the spiritual world (Shoko, 2008). A specified set of rituals and rites are performed to 'escort' the dead individual safely into the spiritual world.

It is believed that the spirits are responsible for safeguarding the interests of family members who have been left behind. They are believed to be responsible for protecting the family from harm. They are also believed to cause harm, especially to those individuals who choose to ignore following norms. If, for example, a person decides to marry a person that their parents do not approve of, and they proceed all the same, this may bring about bad luck to the individual, since the members of the spiritual world will not be happy with the broken norm. Or when the parent dies in this state of affairs, especially the mother of the individual, the individual is believed to be vulnerable to a host of calamities ranging from barrenness, death of children, or some other misfortunes. The spiritual world, then, acts as the guardians of norms, ensuring that all individuals who follow the norms are rewarded and those who deviate are punished.

Because of this profound belief in the supernatural, nothing in traditional societies happens without a cause. This cause is usually not considered in scientific terms, but is understood to be spiritual in nature. This echoes the sentiments expressed by Chitando (2012) that the individual's immediate explanatory framework of events in a typical traditional group is spiritual in nature. When an individual falls mysteriously sick and dies, for example, a post-mortem diagnosis is sought, not from a college-trained physician (whose explanatory framework is scientific in orientation), but from a traditional spiritual specialist. The diagnosis

is usually that it was some member of the group who killed the person through spiritual means or it was the spirits themselves punishing the individual for a transgression they would have committed or a diversion from a norm. One may ask where this spiritistic outlook comes from.

The answer is to be found in the conceptual schemes that the individual gathers in the process of socialisation. In a typical traditional group, from an early stage in their life, the individual is taught that everything has a spiritual cause, similar to the ancient Greeks who also believed that there was a god responsible for all events in life. The norm is that all events in life are to be explained by reference to a spiritual cause. Hence, if the rainfall patterns change, it is not because of climate change affecting weather patterns. Rather, a cause is to be found in one or more members of the group who have violated a norm. For example, if the norm says that people of the same totem should not marry, and they do after strong advice from the elders of the group not to, this might be cited as the reason for the change in rainfall patterns. This will be just a vent of anger coming from the members of the spiritual community who would have noticed a transgression in a norm. But all hope is not lost for such people, for there are also a host of rituals in place for a person to be forgiven for their violations, restoring a balance that was otherwise lost (Shoko, 2008).

The spiritual world also acts as a corrections unit, punishing offenders for a variety of crimes. In a typical traditional society, it is not up to a legislative court to decide the punishment for a person who has committed a crime such as murder. It is the job of the spiritual world to punish as they see fit. Belief in avenging spirits in this regard takes centre stage, with murderers believed to be tormented by the spirits for their crimes until they confess and pay the necessary reparations (Mangena, 2012). Even when the offender has been tried and convicted in a modern legislative courtroom, their family has to carry out certain rituals to appease the dead. It is believed that failure to do so may result in madness or even death. Hence, from this, an important characteristic of traditional societies to be observed is that life is generally respected and protected for fear of punishment from the spiritual world, rather than a modern court, whose punishment may be deemed better (perhaps life imprisonment may be deemed more desirable than going insane in this instance).

It is also important to note that the spiritual world is believed to be part of the lives of the living members of the group, hence they are given such a title as 'the living dead' (Shoko, 2008). As such, these spirits can be manipulated either for good or for evil by the living members of the

group. For instance, a person seeking good fortune or a good harvest may consult traditional experts so that the spiritual world can assist them in getting their desires met. Through a variety of offerings and rituals, the individual can solicit the spiritual world to their favour and get their desires granted. In the same way, individuals can also manipulate the same spirits to bring harm to another person, which brings about the topic of witchcraft. A person may solicit the help of the spiritual world to protect themselves against a real or perceived enemy. This help may come in the form of harming the perceived enemy or even killing that person. Some people in traditional groups are even considered to be in possession of special charms and medicines that can spiritually harm other members of the group, or spiritually alter the destiny of those members.

Belief in witchcraft, then, becomes yet another core feature of a traditional group founded on spiritistic reasoning. Belief in witchcraft activities is an important feature of traditional group as it forms the basis for most members of the group of understanding and explaining the cause of certain occurrences (Bucher, 1980). The significance of beliefs in witchcraft is that such beliefs constitute a person's conceptual scheme or how they perceive and interpret the world around them. These beliefs are inculcated in the individual from an early age by the group, contrary to modern societies which inculcate in young children a scientific orientation of understanding the world. Such beliefs become inextricably bound to the individual's conceptual scheme that it becomes difficult to dispense of them even in adult life or when new evidence to the contrary avails itself.

Generally, then, traditional societies strongly believe that there is a spiritual realm in which members of the group that have died dwell. It is the duty of these 'living dead' to ensure that the group's norms are followed. Any deviations from what the group expects may warrant punishment from these spiritual actors. The fear of the repercussions that may follow a person who decides to deviate from the norm is usually the reason why members of traditional groups conform to the norm and remain conservative.

Scientific reasoning and the acceptance of propositions based on sound logical reasoning is not a big part of traditional societies. Certain propositions are true because they have simply been true for generations and that's it. As cited above, traditional societies are conservative in nature and change comes very slowly. For example, in traditional societies, nocturnal animals are almost always associated with witchcraft activities since it is believed that witches operate at

night. Such animals as the owl, the hyena and the bat are too often associated with the activity of witches. Some people in traditional societies are even claimed to possess powers to manufacture lightning. If scientific reasoning was to be incorporated into this scheme of thought patterns, then science would possibly conclude the contrary view that there is nothing supernatural about the activity of an owl or a hyena because its biological makeup is such that it operates at its optimum at night just like day animals operate better during the day.

Science would also explain the cause of lightning as electrons jumping from one cloud to another (Wood, 2011). It would be very difficult for a human being to create the conditions necessary for lightning to take place without sophisticated machines and computers. But to a person in traditional societies, such contrary reasoning is not very welcome as it is thought to disturb the natural order that the forefathers of the society put in place. If a person claims to be able to create lightning then that is all it takes for people in this society to believe such propositions. Verification is not very important where it pertains spiritual and witchcraft-related activities. The significance of this is that when conservative beliefs are challenged by new evidence, members of traditional groups would rather ignore such evidence and stick to what they are familiar with. No matter how convincing scientific or logical proof may appear, as long as they are contrary to group beliefs, such proofs may be difficult to change a person's conceptual scheme. But I have argued in section 1.8 that rational autonomy means that a person be in a position to form inferences from which to act in light of evidence and as much information as possible. It appears that in traditional groups there is a unitary mode of thinking and there are not many alternative ways of explaining the world which tends to limit their rational autonomy.

5.2.5. Esoteric knowledge

In traditional societies there are people who are claimed to possess certain knowledge that all other people do not have access to. Traditional societies, in this regard, are esoteric in nature, meaning that they are highly secretive in their dissemination of information (Zimunya and Mlambo, 2016). As highlighted in the preceding section (5.3.4), there are people who are claimed to perform certain actions that can either bring harm or good to a person's life. Such people are usually deemed spiritual experts and they can communicate with the dead. If such an expert in spiritual matters was to be asked how they perform these supernatural acts, they would never divulge such information to anyone.

Lack of written documentation only worsens the situation. Knowledge of certain important things, then, resides in the mind of the knower and is not shared with anyone else. Perhaps this is to maintain the social order, for if everyone in the society knew how to manipulate the members of the spiritual world, then the specialists would lose their status and it will end up being a situation of "spiritual warfare." Although it can be argued that even non-esoteric cultures have a lot of information that is hidden from the general public (for example the recipe or formula for Coca-Cola), it remains true that the extent to which such things are truly hidden is greater in esoteric cultures. For example, in societies which are not esoteric in nature, blueprints of sophisticated things (including imitation recipes for Coca-Cola) are available such that a replica of the same can be created by future generations. For example, a sophisticated machine like an aeroplane can be created by anyone with the necessary resources since there are written documents that are readily available to anyone who wants them.

However, the same is not true for traditional societies. Knowledge of sophisticated things resides in the minds of the 'experts' and it is up to them to share such knowledge with whoever they see fit, usually a successor. For instance, no one in such traditional societies can openly declare how lightning is manufactured. Such information is not readily available to the general members of the group.

5.2.6. Authoritarian leadership

Most traditional groups believe in traditional ways of doing things as highlighted earlier and traditional ways of ruling are the most common. Because of the profound belief in the existence of the spiritual world, rulers are generally believed to be put in place by the members of the spiritual community (Chimuka, 2002). These rulers usually come from a particular 'chosen' family which rules for generations. The ruler's voice is taken to be one with the authority of the spiritual community and as such all members of the group take special care not to go against the ruler, lest they attract the wrath of the spiritual world. Authoritarian types of leadership are the order of the day in traditional groups, with people ruling until death removes them from power.

Because such leadership is usually believed to be placed by the spiritual world, challenging them is tantamount to challenging the spiritual world. Because this is undesirable, many freedoms are not available, such as the freedom of speech or the freedom of expression. As the mouthpiece of the spiritual world, the role of the ruler is to ensure that the norms and values of

the group are maintained and adhered to. Those people who deviate from the norms are treated as outcasts and it is the duty of the ruler to identify and deal with such outcasts.

It is important to note that it is this feature of traditional societies that makes their agent status more explicit above all others or upon which all others are founded. As I argued in section 3.6 and section 3.9, the more a group follows an authoritarian kind of orientation the more likely it is a group agent. This is because individual members of the group are more inclined to follow the dictates of the leader either blindly or out of fear since the dictator would have brainwashed the members through systematic propaganda or would be wielding coercive force of some sort (including backing from the spiritual world). Groups with an authoritarian climate as discussed in section 3.6.1 were seen to be helpful in understanding the rational operation of groups that are too large in size, since it is difficult for there to be many members authorised to do the thinking on behalf of the group. Having one person leading, and perhaps a few advisors (whose opinion can be ignored at times), ensures that there is no confusion on which position the group is supposed to follow.

Although a group-centred climate could equally do the task, it will be difficult to follow in traditional groups mainly for two reasons. First, that the majority should have a say in the affairs of the state is seen a deviance from the norm of having the leader do the decision making as in the days of the founding fathers. Bearing in mind that in traditional societies members of the group are supposed to follow norms, the norm is such that leaders are not elected by a majority, but are pre-selected from a family that is considered to be sanctioned by the spiritual world to rule. The voting system where the voice of the majority carries the day is not a part of traditional society. Second, adherence to norms ensures that the group follows the norm that the decision of the group lies in the hands of one person. Even where members of the group may perceive a flaw in the leader's reasoning or decision, they will simply adhere to that since going against the leader's opinion may attract some form of repercussions. So members of the traditional group typically self-sensor any diverging opinion they may have from the leader such that an illusion of unanimity is created within the group.

Further, the norms that are to be followed also take an authoritarian orientation since they impose on the members of the group the range of possibilities from which to act. Members of traditional groups are not at liberty to explore alternative modes of thought and are inclined to follow a specified range of options from which they cannot depart. However, as I have argued

in section 1.8, rational autonomy entails that there is a wide range (not just a single expected mode) of how the individual can perceive and interpret the world and in traditional groups this seems to be lacking resulting in a constrain on the rational autonomy of the individuals.

It is also important to note that although the rational autonomies of the individuals at lower levels of such societies are heavily constrained, the leaders usually enjoy a higher degree of rational autonomy, since they consider it their task to carry out some rationalisations and choice of actions on behalf of the group. Those immediately below the leaders, such as the advisors, also enjoy a higher degree of rational autonomy, as long as this autonomy is in line with the leader's expectations. The more one moves from the higher to the lower ranks of the traditional autonomy, the more rational autonomy is diminished.

5.2.7. Lack of exposure to the existence of other cultures

People in traditional societies do not travel a lot. They remain in more or less the same space throughout their lifetimes and hence are not exposed to other ways of doing things. Their world and ways of doing things is essentially all that there is. Coupled with the fact that their economies are generally subsistent in nature, people in traditional groups cannot afford to travel to other parts of the world to get a comparative view of how other people view the world and react to it. This non-exposure to other cultures and other ways of doing things is significant in that it ensures that the members of the group remain the same and do not attempt to change the way things are done in their society. It takes time for new ideas to be accepted in traditional societies, if they ever do, since foreign ideas are thought of as not being part of 'the ways of our forefathers.' Conservatism, then, becomes the order of the day in traditional societies, as mentioned in section 5.2.3. Because people in traditional societies do not travel to other parts of the world, new ways of doing things, new political ideologies, economic policies and technological developments may not be readily available or acceptable. Already this limits rational autonomy on the part of the individual since the range of information that will inform alternative modes of thinking or perceiving the world will be limited.

5.2.8. Summary of the characteristics of traditional groups

Insofar as traditional societies are concerned, thus far, it remains true that the following are the characteristics that define a traditional society:

- they are communalistic in nature

- they are conservative in orientation

- religion and authority maintain social order

- the family (in both its nuclear and extended form) is key

- autocratic leadership ideologies reign supreme

- lack of exposure to other cultures

For a group to count as a traditional society it has to possess at least most of these characteristics. It is important at this juncture to determine if traditional groups that possess these characteristics can be considered as group agents. My focus will be on determining whether the Shona group of Zimbabwe can be considered a group agent.

5.3. Traditional groups as agents: The Shona case study

Having outlined the characteristics that make up a traditional society, for the remainder of the chapter I will offer a comparative analysis of the characteristics mentioned above and the Shona people of Zimbabwe, a landlocked country in Southern Africa. I will also analyse whether the Shona group can count as a rational agent. Zimbabwe is a heterogeneous country made up of about sixteen and a half million people (http://countrymeters.info/en/Zimbabwe) coming from a variety of tribes and clans such as the Ndebele, the Shona and the Venda people (https://www.geni.com/projects/Zimbabwe-Tribes-and-People/23140). Important to this study is the Shona people, who constitute the majority of people in Zimbabwe, with various sub-groups based on linguistic dialects being recognised, such as the Karanga, Zezuru, Ndau, Manyika and Korekore, among others. The Zezuru occupy central Zimbabwe, the Korekore occupy the North, the Karanga the South, and the Manyika and Ndau the East (Bourdillon, 1976). All these people have interrelated histories that make them part of a single unified culture known as the Shona culture. Although variations can be observed in minor areas such as the tones of the dialects, the cultural beliefs and practices of the Shona people remain consistent. As such, it should be noted that when I make reference to the Shona group in subsequent sections, I primarily refer to any of these sub-groups since their beliefs are largely

consistent and information about one group can be generalised as representative of all the sub-groups.

It was noted in section 5.2.3 that norms are a significant aspect of traditional societies and adherence to such norms is of utmost importance. When it comes societies such as the Shona, it is important to note that legislature is not the ordering system which ensures coordinated activities. Instead, it is the norms and values that guide and regulate people's thinking and actions. Adhering to these norms seems to point to a goal and some shared intentions on the part of the members of the group. It was noted in section 2.6 that individual members of a group that can count as a rational group agent must possess some shared intentions. These intentions seek to advance some goal, similar to individual rational agents who were noted in section 1.6 as having some goal or purpose towards which their thinking and acting is directed. It can be argued that their ultimate goal is the survival of the group. As such people have the shared intention of ensuring that the group survives and people who engage in destructive behaviour are usually deemed undesirable members of society and may even be cast out of society.

For instance, in the Shona society, if a person is claimed to engage in witchcraft activities that destroy human lives, then such people are thrown out of society or made to pay reparations which restore the imbalance created (Mangena, 2012). It appears that the major goal of traditional Shona society is the preservation of life. Hence all actions of its members have to be coordinated in such a way that life is respected. Any modes of thought or actions that are perceived as contrary to this goal are seen to contrary to the norm and are not appreciated. Alternative modes of thinking that are not part of the group's norms are seen as being a threat to the goal of promoting life. For instance, relying solely on the physician's diagnosis of a disease without seeking the spiritual cause (and diagnosis) of the disease is seen as life-threatening (Shoko, 2008). Such modes of thinking as this are perceived as a divergence from the norm and are not greatly appreciated.

The spiritual world is believed to ensure that all members of the society play their part and do not disrupt the normal order of things. As such, an elaborate system of taboos exist, that ensure that all members of the Shona community are kept in check (Bourdillon, 1976). As I argued in section 1.8, an important aspect of rational autonomy is that there be a range of alternative ways of perceiving and interpreting information about the world and freely forming inferences based on that individual judgment. Further, I also argued that it is also important that the

individual be in a position to freely execute actions based on this judgment without heavy influences from external forces that limit either their actions or thought patterns. Such constraints on both theoretical and practical rationality are a limitation to an individual's rational autonomy. In the Shona society, any deviation from the norm is dealt with accordingly by the members of the spiritual community through the various mediums and experts mentioned in section 5.2.4. As such, members of the Shona community are expected to have similar worldviews as to how the world operates. Deviating from the norm is not encouraged. This ensures a high level of coordination in the thinking and actions of the members of the group.

In this regard, the aggregate intentions and thought patterns of the members of the Shona society are aligned in such a way that ensures that the group's objective is met. Occasionally, those members who go against the group's objective are brought back in line by the spiritual community through some calamities or misfortunes (Chimuka, 2002) and those who promote the group's objectives are rewarded by good fortune from the spiritual world. Individuality of thought, which is believed to be antagonistic to the achievement of the social order, is not encouraged. Ideas of members are supposed to be aligned to the overall group's objective. Members of the group who may decide to go against norms may be deemed responsible for bad things that happen to the group. For example, it is generally believed that if individuals go against the dictates of the leader then the members of the spiritual realm may prevent the rain from falling. This has the overall effect of threatening the survival of the group going against the group's objective of preserving life.

Another characteristic of traditional societies discussed in section 5.2.6 is that traditional societies have an authoritarian type of leadership. In the Shona society, it is the role of chiefs, who are deemed to be 'ordained' and sanctioned by the spiritual world to ensure that the Shona people do not stray from the norms (Chimuka, 2002). Chiefs are typically the more senior members of their lineages, in terms of either chronological age or genealogical reckoning (Bourdillon, 1976). The senior status of leading or chiefly lineages is typically based on claims that their ancestors were the first to settle the land or community, and the chiefs of senior lineages serve as principal leaders of their entire communities. Thus a community's leading chief is among the individuals within his or her own lineage thought to have the closest connections to that lineage's ancestors, and by the act of recognising someone as chief, both the lineage and the community endow him or her with the authority to act as their link with

these ancestors. These are the ancestors thought to have the closest connections to the spirits of the land that the community occupies. Paramount and community chiefs embody the spiritual power of both the community's leading lineage and the place itself and are consequently able to serve as intermediaries with precisely those spirits of nature who have the most influence on the quality of life in any particular place (Bourdillon, 1976).

It is imperative to note here that democratic ways of governance are not in place. The chieftainship family is thought to be specially chosen by the founding fathers of the land and hence are not removable by democratic means such as voting. This is because the early chiefs who founded the clan are thought to have had extraordinary powers, "whether it came from natural leadership, cunningness, a knowledge of medicines or a combination of these" (Bourdillon, 1976:104). The legendary power of early members of the chiefly families is further expressed in the belief that their spirits remain the powerful guardians of the chiefdom. They are believed to continue their rule through the chiefs, their successors, whom they protect and support.

Leaders occupy a significant role in the activities played by the members of the group. Leaders are not chosen by the people randomly, but come from special chieftain families. This inability to choose leaders seems to point to a diminished rational autonomy in the sense that when the individual members' rationalisations and judgements inform them that the current leader (or the next in line) is not promoting group but self-interests, they should be in a position, at least in principle, to express this and actually execute the action of changing the leader and putting another they may deem more fit. But because this is not possible, then it appears their rational autonomy is limited.

Because seniors are deemed to embody the group's traditional wisdom, their word on important matters usually takes the day in Shona society. Being educated or specialised in a particular area does not make one's voice heard. Age matters. For instance a 30 year old professor of meteorology's voice on how weather phenomena occurs is less likely to be heard than a 70 year old uneducated 'rainmaker' from a rural area. Similarly, because the Shona societies are largely patriarchal, the voice of women is less likely to be heard than that of the male members of the group (Bourdillon, 1976).

As such, authoritarian leadership styles are in place, wherein the chiefs, who are deemed to be spiritual leaders themselves, cannot be replaced by a democratically elected persons. The

choice of ruler lies in the spiritual world and the founding fathers of the group. Perhaps this even extends to the Zimbabwean state as a whole, wherein democracy is still failing to take full charge. But then again, as mentioned in section 5.2.3, new ideologies are usually viewed with suspicion and change is slow. The chiefs and rulers therefore make sure that people indulge in coordinated activities that advance the goals of the group. In this regard, the chiefs will be acting as the authorised members of the group to perform this function, just as I argued in section 2.5 and 2.6 that a rational group agent ideally ought to have group members who are authorised to perform certain functions.

It is the chiefs' authorised activity to rationalise and act on behalf of the group or to designate members of the group who will act on behalf of the group ensuring that the group performs some form of group action. It is also the chiefs' role to ensure that the group members indulge in activities that advance the group's goals. These coordinated activities of the members of the Shona group, the leadership style, as well as the fact that most members of the Shona group have similar conceptual schemes, implies that the Shona group meets a necessary condition for group agency in the sense that the members seem to have some form of mechanism in place that ensures that the group as a whole 'rationalises' over certain propositions about the world. As highlighted in section 3.6, a group with an authoritarian kind of leadership is more likely to achieve group agency and this kind of leadership we find in the Shona group. Further, the group seems to constrain the range of alternative modes of thinking available to its members. This implies that the group members, especially those in lower levels of the group, have a diminished rational autonomy since their range of options both in thinking and acting appear to be limited. The leaders, on the other hand, seem to exercise a greater proportion of their rational autonomy since they are the authorised members of the group to think on behalf of the ordinary members of the group and to choose action options that they see fit for the group.

Another important aspect to note about the Shona people is that they are communalistic in orientation, another important characteristic of traditional groups. Shona culture emphasises solidarity and togetherness. As noted by Samkange and Samkange (1980), the Shona people follow dictates similar to those found in the Xhosa and Zulu theory of *Ubuntu* (the Shona derivative being *hunhu*) whose main attributes are love and compassion for one's fellow human beings. Brotherhood and solidarity of purpose are important values in this society. This is seen in such practices as *nhimbe*, or as Bourdillon calls it "*work party*" (Bourdillon, 1976:74) in which people of the community help each other with work and then have some beer after the

work is completed. A person brews some millet beer, then invites members of the community to

> …help with his work (which apart from agricultural work may involve such tasks as building or roofing a house) for which they can enjoy the beer…. Such work parties involve reciprocal obligations: a man is expected to attend the work parties of all who attend his own (1976:74).

Mangena (2012) corroborates the communalistic worldview of the Shona people arguing that the group takes precedence over the individual. Whatever the member does is supposed to ensure group solidarity. From an early age children are taught by their families to put societal values first above all other things and not to entertain alternative modes of thought. As such, as they become adults, they are supposed to live up to group expectations, that is, they are supposed to become ideal members of the group. Moral standards are at best very strict and various taboos exist to ensure that such standards are followed. In this way, from an early age, an individual in the Shona society has a diminished rational autonomy since they do not have as many alternative options of thinking as possible. This is worsened by the fact that they are not free to question or challenge existing norms since this may result in some form of punishment from the spiritual world.

Spiritistic reasoning, a characteristic of traditional societies as discussed in section 5.2.4, is also part of the communitarian structure of the Shona people. The communitarian structure of the Shona people is buttressed by a highly complex religious system (Shoko, 2008). A pyramid-like hierarchy can be observed which comprises of *Mwari* or God at the apex, followed by ancestral spirits who have various hierarchies, then the living at the bottom of the pyramid. It is believed that when a person dies, their soul (*mweya*) goes on a spiritual journey into the world of the spirits (Shoko, 2008). The period shortly after death is a time of tension in which 'steps' in the form of rituals, which can be dangerous to the living, are taken to encourage the soul to leave the vicinity of the body and move on to its ultimate destination in the spiritual world. Various rituals, such as *kurova guva* (bringing the soul of the dead back) ceremonies, ensure a smooth transition of the soul of the person into the spiritual world (Shoko, 2008). Such funeral practices are for the greater part meant to pacify the souls of the dead and send them on this journey, lest they endanger the living. On the other hand the spirits of the deceased are assumed to sustain their deep concern with the living and continue interacting with them, sometimes in benign ways, sometimes malevolently.

It was also noted in section 5.2.5 that a characteristic of traditional groups is that certain fundamental knowledge is esoteric in nature. Across the Shona society there are spirit mediums— esoteric individuals through whom the spirits of the dead are able to communicate with the living, while the living are, in turn, able to petition ancestral spirits for information and assistance. Such individuals are claimed to possess knowledge about the group and its behaviour that cannot be known by most people in the group, especially the process of communicating with the spiritual world.

Much of Shona life is focused, then, on the conjunction of spirits' ongoing involvement with their lineages, lineage ties to land, and the spirits' links to God (Bourdillon, 1976). The spirits of the ancestral spirits in the Shona worldview also have a role to maintain social order in the community. It is generally believed that if people follow the status quo, as set out by the founding fathers of the land, then the members of the spiritual world will 'bless' them in the form of good rains and good harvests and this will promote the overall group objective of preserving life. In the event that people break the norms of the land, then the spirits play the role of punisher, punishing the whole community on the 'sins' of its individual members.

For example, it is the norm that people of the same totem should not marry each other since the common totem makes them a brother and a sister. If they do, then special rituals have to be performed, known as *kucheka ukama* (to cut the relation that exists) (Shoko, 2008). If these rituals are not performed, the ancestral spirits may decide to withhold the rains and disturb the overall objective of preserving life. It is the job of the living spiritual experts/mediums to diagnose the situation, identify the anomaly (*makunakuna*) then propose what rituals have to be performed for the spirits to revoke their punishment. To the individuals in question, great misfortune may befall them if the rituals are not performed. The society then pressurises the transgressors to perform the rituals so that a balance can be restored.

Already it can be seen here that conformity to norms, as discussed in section 3.7, reigns supreme in Shona society. People are expected to live by the codes which are imparted into their minds from infancy. Their conceptual schemes are centred on these spiritual beliefs which are meant to maintain social order which limits their theoretical rationality and the subsequent actions they will perform. As such, members of the Shona society typically follow the dictates of society in fear that the spiritual world may bring them harm or misfortune. Any misfortunes that a person encounters, whether in their physical health or in other areas of their lives are

usually explained in reference to a spiritual, not a scientific, cause. For example, if a person's house is struck by lightning twice, it is not the case that they will assume that their house is tragically located in an area that is naturally prone to being struck by lightning. Instead, the person will look for spiritual explanations (from a spiritual expert) that will most likely point out a potential witch responsible for the lightning strikes, or some previous deviance from the norm prescribed by the ancestors (Bourdillon, 1976). Members of the Shona society, then, are not in a position to question some of their beliefs, lest this act of 'rationalising' and going against what is deemed to be normal, attracts the vengeance of the spiritual realm. Conformity to what is normal is then the order of the day in this society similar to the discussion in section 3.7 where conformity to group norms was seen to be an important interactive trait explaining how members of group agents interact to produce collective or group rationality. This severely limits the range of alternative thought patterns through which the individual members of the Shona group can interpret and explain the world around them which in turn limits their rational autonomy.

People who depart from conventional methods of doing things are usually viewed with suspicion and any calamities that befall them are seen to be the result of this deviance. For example, in a world where land for burying the dead is fast becoming scarce, it is not common to hear anyone in the Shona society to suggest donating the body of a deceased relative to scientific inquiry then cremating it afterwards. Performing such acts, no matter what benefits come from them, is deemed to be out of the ordinary and hence disturbing the natural order of things. People in the Shona society, then, exercise great care to ensure that they follow the norms of the group which, in turn, is seen to diminish their rational autonomy.

Another important characteristic of traditional societies was seen to be an emphasis on the importance of family ties as discussed in section 5.2.2. The parents occupy a significant role and children are expected to follow their parents' decisions. Failure to listen to the advice of a parent is thought to lead to misfortune since the spiritual world will not be pleased with such an act. Hence most decisions that people make ideally have to be in line with parental expectations. A case in question is on a person's choice of marriage partners. Marriage in Shona society is not only between the two consenting individuals, but is considered the coming together of two families (in their extended sense) (Bourdillon, 1976). The bride becomes a new addition to the clan of the groom and likewise for the groom to the family of the bride. It is important therefore that parents must ensure that their children marry into families which are

deemed to follow the norms of Shona society. If a child decides to marry a person of their choice, who happens not to be their parents' choice, there is a danger that the spiritual world will intervene on behalf of the parents. This may result in barrenness, giving birth to deformed babies, miscarriages, or other misfortunes that may act as punishment for the non-listeners.

Children then take great care in following the advice of their parents in this regard. Thinking outside of family norms, which typically reflect societal norms, is generally not encouraged. It is the role of the members of the extended family to make sure that children are kept in check when they stray from norms. In this scheme of things, it does appear that the individual has little room to think outside of the norms of the society in the Shona worldview. Deviating from the norm has repercussions that come from not only the spiritual world, but also members of the family.

This has various implications on the rational autonomy of individuals in the group for their theoretical rationality is heavily influenced by the need to follow societal norms to such an extent that their scope of forming inferences about the world becomes limited. Their explanation and interpretation of the world around them is narrowed down by the group because of its conservative nature and the reluctance to explore and appreciate alternative ways of thinking. This also has the implication of limiting the practical rationality of the individual member of the group since they have a confined set of choices of means to performing certain actions; actions which are informed by their theoretical rationality. For instance, in the face of a problem that could be solved in a variety of ways the individual in this group will analyse the situation predominantly in spiritual terms. Their means of solving the problem then becomes predominantly spiritual in nature too.

Further, their actions are constrained since clearly the scope of actions they can execute without some negative consequence resulting is narrow. They cannot resort to actions that go contrary to societal expectations. All this amounts to the fact that individuals in this group have a diminished rational autonomy since they have a limited frame of reference from which to explain events in the world. Bearing in mind the discussion in section 1.8, that for individuals to have rational autonomy implies that they have a variety of ways to interpret and react to the world, it appears here that members of the Shona group have limited rational autonomy, since the fundamental principles that govern world events are reduced to a limited worldview which is not very open to alternatives. Because their explanatory frameworks are limited to the

confines of what is deemed to be the norm, the members appear to have limited agency. The scope of their understanding of the operation of the world is limited hence their agency in turn is limited

Another characteristic of traditional societies is that they have limited exposure to other cultures. It should be noted here that although times are changing and the world is fast becoming a global village, these characteristics of the Shona group of people remain largely unchanged and common to almost all members of the Shona group. Alternative modes of thinking that may run contrary to group norms take time to penetrate the already established traditions, norms and values of the Shona group. In an economy that is performing badly at present, most Shona people have not travelled outside of their borders to get an experience of what the world is like in other people's cultures. This lack of exposure to other people's worldviews creates a gap in that people do not have a comparison basis of their own beliefs against other people's beliefs. This is important in that it is only when beliefs are put to the test of reason that coherent thinking occurs and a progression towards what can be considered true about the world and its operation is achieved. Any beliefs that are not adequately supported by evidence and those that have not produced any desirable or progressive results will be discarded giving way to improved ways of thinking and doing things. Perhaps exposure to the outside world will bring about a change in the conservative state of mind of the Shona people.

This lack of exposure to the external world ensures that the traditions of the Shona people, as a traditional group, remain static at best. Change is very slow and creativity remains low as well. Religion imposes certain kinds of thinking on people and threatens certain types of punishment if such prescribed behaviour is not conformed to. This limits the individual members' rational autonomies.

From these characteristics, the question to be answered is whether the Shona group meets the sufficient conditions for group agency such that the group can be considered a rational group agent. First, it can be noted that the group exhibits some form of group objective towards which its members align their actions. As I argued in section 1.5, individual rational agents typically produce actions for a purpose and group agents were seen to possess the same characteristic in sections 2.5 and 2.6. The goal in the Shona society towards which members were seen to align their actions was the goal of preserving life. With this goal in place, members of the Shona group can be seen to have the shared intention of achieving the goal of preserving life. Again,

the group, through the activity of its authorised members, performs some actions that it deems necessary to ensure that the group fulfils its objective.

I also highlighted in section 2.7 that group agents are supposed to have some form of rationalisation process in place, so that the group's actions can be seen as stemming from a rationally calculative process. The interactive traits discussed in section 3.10 were seen as providing a framework upon which such rationalisations would emerge from the rational interactions of the individual members of the group. From the characteristics of the Shona group discussed in this section, it appears that some form of rationalisation process is in place. The chiefs, in conjunction with some close advisors, appear to have been authorised by the group to perform the task of rationalising over various propositions and then making group decisions and judgments, hence retaining a significant proportion of their rational autonomies. At the micro-level, dissenting opinions and actions from individual group members that may be seen as contrary to the group's objective are constrained by the perceived activity of the spiritual world as well as the punishment from the chiefs themselves. This ensures that the group has some form of quasi-unanimous decision regarding fundamental issues affecting the group and its objectives. This in turn places a constraint on the rational autonomies of the individual members at the lower levels of the group since they are not really free to think and act as their rationality judges.

From my discussion of the necessary characteristics for group agency in section 2.6, it appears that a group agent ought to in some sense constrain both the thinking and acting of its members to ensure that the group's goals are met. This is so because the rational operations of the group as a whole supervene upon the rational interactions of its individual members. In other words, for such rationalisation to take place at group-agent level it is imperative that the group agent puts some form of constraint on the two components that make up an individual's rational autonomy, that is, theoretical and practical rationality. As I have argued in section 2.6, this will ensure that the individual member's own thinking and actions are aligned with those of the group minimising conflicts of interest. From my analysis of the Shona group, it appears that this necessary condition is satisfied to a greater extent. Because of the great emphasis placed upon following norms, traditions and values, as well as repercussion mechanisms that are believed to befall any individual who may decide to depart from these norms, it appears that individual members suspend their rational autonomy for group oriented modes of thought and actions. Their thought patterns and subsequent actions are so heavily influenced by the group

to such a degree that their view of the world is unitary and alternatives are at best not welcome. Because of this constraint of their rational autonomy, it does appear that the Shona group can count as a group agent.

From this, the Shona group, at least at sub-group level as mentioned in the beginning of this section, seems to possess the following necessary conditions for agency: first, there is some form of organisational hierarchy with the spiritual world at the helm through the authoritarian leadership of the chiefs. Second, the group appears to have an objective of preserving life. Third, group members have the joint intention of making sure that this goal is met. Through the various norms and values that the members are expected to follow, the group ensures that the individual members' intentions, thinking and actions are directed towards the achievement of this goal. Various mechanisms are in place, especially from the activity of the members of the spiritual world, to ensure that the members of the group adhere to the group's norms and ensure that the group's objective of the preservation of life is followed. Again, the authoritarian kind of leadership ensures that the group's decision-making at the macro-level lies in the hands of a few individuals who have been authorised to perform this task, specifically, the chiefs and their advisors who retain a higher proportion of their rational autonomies.

From this a fourth condition can be observed. The lower level individual members' thinking and acting is seems to be aligned with group dictates. Even when the individual members' own judgement has reservations towards some mode of thinking or actions prescribed by the group they suppress this in order to align themselves with group expectations. This is because of the undesirable consequences that may follow if they decide to follow their own individual judgements that may be at odds with the group's expectations. From this, a fifth condition follows; that the rational autonomies of the group's members seems to be constrained by the group since the members appear not to be free to think and act outside of expected group norms.

At sub-group level, it appears that the Shona group seems to operate as a rational group agent since it possesses the necessary conditions for group agency. The satisfaction of these necessary conditions is then a sufficient reason to consider the group as a weak rational group agent. In section 3.9 I argued that weak group agents are those that have their members losing a greater part of their rational autonomy as opposed to losing all of their rational autonomy, in which case they would be strong group agents. Because members of the Shona group still retain some degree of rational autonomy, the Shona group is to be perceived as a weak group agent.

It was observed in my discussion of the Shona group that diverging from the group's prescribed norms based on the individual's own judgement is possible. Individuals are free to choose their modes of thought. However, they only do this with full awareness of the repercussions that may ensue because of such divergence. It appears that the members do not completely lose their rational autonomy (in the manner of being brainwashed or in robot-like fashion) but rather have it diminished. In this sense, the Shona group counts as a weak group agent.

However, emphasis should be made that this designation of the Shona group as a group agent ends at sub-group level. The various sub-groups who constitute the Shona group of Zimbabwe such as the Manyika, Korekore and Ndau seem to possess these conditions in varying degrees. It would be difficult to designate the collective of the sub-groups as group agents because of the distance between them. In section 2.2 I argued that members of groups that can count as agents are ideally supposed to be in frequent contact with each other and have some emotional ties. At sub-group level this appears to be the case. Hence attributing group-agency to the whole collectivity of sub-groups called the Shona may be difficult in this regard since the members of the various sub-groups may not frequently interact with each other. But at sub-group level, the sufficient conditions for group agency seem to be in place making each of these sub-groups cases of weak rational group agents.

Certain objections can be made to attributing the Shona group with group agency. I argued in section 2.9 that rational group-agents are deemed to be persons of some sort and that agency was an aspect of what it meant to be a person. It appears that attributing personhood to the Shona group may be difficult. A look at the legal sphere may provide a reason for this difficulty. The law in Zimbabwe does not recognise the Shona group as a legal person that can, for example, be taken before a judicial hearing. We cannot find instances when an individual person, in their capacity as legally recognised persons, took the Shona group in its capacity as a legal person before a court hearing. In the corporate world this was seen to be possible as individual persons could take a corporate like Econet Wireless, in its capacity as a legally recognised person, before a court of law.

This has another implication on issues of collective responsibility. I argued in section 1.10 that agents have moral responsibility and can be held accountable for their actions. A corporate like Econet can be taken before a court of law demonstrating that it has some form of responsibility attached to it. But the same cannot be said of the Shona group as a whole, even at sub-group

level. Perhaps the only instance when an element of attributing collective responsibility to the Shona group would be implied is when reference is made to the group as a whole in its relations with other groups. For example, according to World Wide History Online, the Ndebele and Shona groups have historically had bad relations. One of these groups can place collective moral responsibility on the other for past injustices. But when it comes to taking the whole group before a court of law this does not appear feasible. For example, it is difficult to imagine a situation where the whole Ndelele group would take the whole Shona group before a court of law for some past injustice much like it would be difficult for the whole of the Tutsi's to take the whole of the Hutu's for the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. Instead, specific individuals within the groups can take each other before a court for some past wrongs, making responsibility in this case lie in specific individuals within the group. Typically, it is the members who occupy higher ranks of the group that are responsible for rationalising and making decisions on behalf of the group (leaders, advisors etc.,) that bear the greatest responsibility, rather than the lower members of the group who seem to be forced by group constraints to follow the dictates of their leaders.

From these objections, it would appear that attributing group agent status to the collective Shona group may be difficult since the two conditions of personhood and responsibility which are necessary for agency appear to be lacking. However, notwithstanding these objections it can be argued that the Shona group meets some conditions that are necessary for group agency as described above and these are sufficient to warrant group-agent status. Again, because responsibility can actually be attributed to the whole collective of the Shona group from another group such as the Ndebele group, then it does appear that elements of personhood are implied. In essence, the Shona group, in its sub-group level sense at least, can be considered a rational group agent.

5.4. Conclusion

In this chapter I have highlighted various characteristics of a traditional group that are important to my discussion of group agency and the rational autonomy of the members of the group. Such traditional groups are of particular importance to this investigation because their characteristics make group agency in societies a little more apparent than modern sophisticated societies. Belief in communitarian ideals is seen as key and it is from this key element that all other elements followed. A religious belief system that ensures that all members of the society

follow the norms of the group and give priority to group values rather than individual values was seen to also be an important feature of traditional society. Once the religious aspect is established, then the family has the role of imparting societal norms to the new members born into the society. The most senior members of the society are deemed to be authorities in the norms of the group and hence their voice carries more weight. I have argued that the Shona group satisfies the necessary condition for group agency, that is, the rational autonomy of its members be in some way diminished so that collective rationality can take place. I demonstrated that alternative modes of thinking, key to a person's rational autonomy, such as rational explanations and scientific reasoning patterns, have little place in such societies with members of the group being taught to simply accept the status quo of following spiritistic explanations of the world without much questioning, lest the social order, established and outlined by the founding fathers of the group, is disturbed.

The Shona group was also seen as possessing the various characteristics that make up a traditional society and having a huge influence on its members' conceptual schemes and in a way the group directs the thinking and actions of the individual, leaving little room for the individual to exercise their unconstrained rational autonomy. It was established that members of this group follow dictates of the group as a whole, rather than go about their business as rationally autonomous agents. Communitarian ideals reign supreme and the individual's explanatory frameworks, thought patterns and conceptual schemes all of which constitute an individual's rational autonomy are heavily influenced by, and dependent on, the group. Notwithstanding some objections on issues to do with personhood and responsibility, I demonstrated that the Shona group, at least at sub-group level, can be seen as possessing various necessary conditions for group agency which are sufficient to making it a weak rational group agent. I argued that the members of these sub-groups are in frequent contact with each other and have emotional ties with one another and also that they appear to have the common objective of preserving life. I also argued that the group seems to have mechanisms in place that not only ensure group rationality from the rational interactions of its individual members but also mechanisms that constrain the free rational activities of their individual members. These were seen to be sufficient conditions for group agency making the Shona sub-groups cases of weak group agents since individual members were seen to still retain some portions of their rational autonomies rather than lose it completely.

Chapter 6: Conclusions, observations and recommendations

I have argued that the concept of human agency is multi-faceted and comprises of a complex web of various related notions. I demonstrated that for a person to be considered an agent, they have to be in a position to produce wilful and deliberate actions. Such actions were seen to result from a calculated and deliberating mind-set of the agent, without force or coercion. I have also argued that the most important aspect of human agency is that the individual ought to be rationally autonomous. By rationally autonomous is to be understood as the individual's capacity to freely interpret the world according to their own reason, form inferences from the relations between propositions in the world, choose an appropriate means to achieving their goals and then acting based on these rationalisations. Rationally autonomous agents were also seen to be open to a variety of explanatory frameworks on how the world operates not just a unitary conception of the world and its operations. When actions spring from this unconstrained rational autonomy the individual is said to be rationally autonomous.

Confronted with a situation that requires action, the agent's rational autonomy will come at play, carefully analysing the propositions for or against the alternatives based on how they interpret the events that happen in the world, two aspects of rational autonomy that I have called theoretical and practical rationality. The course of action that appeals more to reason ought to be the one that the agent takes. From this deliberation the agent can produce an action that is in line with their judgement. So, in the discussion of agency, it was observed that agents are those human beings who are capable of autonomously bringing about a change in the world through their wilful actions which stem from their rational autonomy.

Having characterised agents as such, I also argued in the second chapter that agent status can be extended to groups. I argued that group agents are weakly emergent in that when individual members become part of a group, a new entity emerges that has a new identity distinct from the individual members that compose it and its properties supervene upon the interactions of its members. Key to understanding the nature of group agency was that the emergent group agent then places various constraints on the rationality and behaviour of its individual members so that collective rationality can take place. Supervenience in both its majoritarian and authoritarian sense, suggested the ways in which the rationality of the group depends upon the rational interactions of its members.

From this understanding, the group agent 'reasoned' in the sense that this rational process followed immediately from the rational interactions of its constituent members. This means that when a group is said to have rational autonomy this can be understood in the sense that the conglomerate rational decisions of the group members, taken in either the majoritarian or authoritarian sense, was the decision of the group. Even in cases of a dictatorship, the decision of the group was that agreed upon by the members of the group even if it was imposed on them by the leader. When the outside world analyses such decisions, the decision will not be considered as those of individual members, but of the conglomerate as a whole.

It was also noted that not all groups counted as group agents. From this understanding, various criteria that are necessary for a group to be considered as a group agent were formulated and analysed. Groups that can be considered as such were seen to have goals and desires to advance, and the individual members that constituted the group had the mandate to see to it that group's goals were met. It is from these goals and desires that the group charts courses of action to better achieve their goals. From rationalisations by the members over these different goals, the group agent produces actions that ensure the group achieve its goals. It was also imperative that the group members be coordinated in such a way that their actions can be perceived not as distinct individual actions, but as group actions. However, this had various implications on the rational autonomy of the individuals comprising the group. I argued that it the most important characteristic of a group agent was that its constituent members either have their individual rational autonomy completely taken away or heavily diminished by the group's influence. This was so because for a group to achieve the kind of higher level organisation and coordination needed for group agency, it must, in a significant way, constrain the rational autonomies of its constituent members. Without this aspect, group agency was seen to be difficult to achieve.

I then explored the various interactive traits between members of the group agent that tried to explain the rational interactions of the members within the group agent. These traits specifically targeted at unearthing what happens to the individual's rational autonomy when they become part of a group agent and how the groups influenced the rational autonomy of the individuals in question. From the various interactive traits identified by the social identity and polarisation theories discussed in sections 3.4 and 3.5, it was observed that when individuals are part of a group, their rational autonomies are heavily influenced by the group so that they align their actions to the groups' goals otherwise there would be a conflict of goals between the individual and the group. To get recognition as a member of a group agent was seen to require that the

individual suspends part or all of their rational autonomy so that they can be identified as a member of that group.

According to the social identity theory, because individuals do not want to be seen as rebels or outsiders, they are compelled to agree with the dictates of the group, even if this is against the judgement of their rational autonomy. If the individual rationally holds some moderate position about a proposition, then through the process of polarisation, the person will adopt a much stronger viewpoint, in line with the dictates of the group. To give an example, if an individual has moderate resentment towards non-white people, if such individuals join groups such as the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), which holds extreme resentment towards non-white people, then the individual will also have a stronger hatred towards non-white people.

Further, according to the group-think theory, when individuals are part of a group that counts as an agent, then they are likely to self-sensor their antagonism towards some group decisions so that they may not be seen as rebels. Even if the individual's own rational judgements views such decisions as having negative consequences for the group as a whole, according to the groupthink view, such individuals will likely support rather than criticise the group lest various repercussions follow them. For example, it will be difficult for an individual member of the KKK to advise other group members against staging a demonstration against non-white people. Such individuals may be considered non-conformists or non-ideal members of the group and may be cast out of the group.

It is apparent from all this that when individuals become part of a group agent, their agent status is either diminished or lost in the sense that they lose their ability to freely make judgements about certain propositions as well as have various constraints on their choice of actions. They lose their rational autonomy so that they can partake of group agency at the macro-level. Rational autonomy is also lost or diminished so that the individual members get acceptance from other group members and also that they get to achieve group goals in solidarity with others. Further, their thought patterns become heavily influenced by the group such that the decisions they make when part of the group may not be the ones they will make as individuals outside the group. Hence, I made the observation that when individuals become part of a group agent, they either lose their rational autonomy completely or have it severely diminished, since they can no longer exercise their unconstrained rational autonomy as rational agents. From this, I argued that two categories of group agents can be observed, that is, strong and weak group

agents depending on whether the rational autonomies of the individual members were completely taken away or significantly diminished respectively. Strong agents were observed to be rare while the more common group agents were weak group agents.

Having established the rational interactions of the members of the group within the group agent, it was necessary to determine whether social groups can be identified as group agents. Through a discussion of the social contract theories of Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau, it was observed that when individuals come together to form a society, for one reason or the other, the society is first and foremost created to satisfy some end, thereby giving the newly formed group some objectives to fulfil. For instance, it was observed that the social group in Plato and Aristotle's views had the purpose of satisfying those needs that individuals could not provide for themselves, be they material or intellectual. In Hobbes' and Locke's social contract theories the social group is formed to ensure the safety of, either the group members themselves, or their property, through the surrender of individual right to some arbitrator (s) or Sovereign who would be in a position to institute and enforce laws for the common good of the group members.

By forming such pacts and contracts, it was observed that individuals surrendered part or all of their rational autonomy to the group (or some member(s) of the group) so that the group can act on behalf of its members in a manner similar to what happens when individuals join a group agent. By being part of the social contract a new entity emerges, whose decisions and actions supervene upon those of the individual members who constitute the group. Though it was noted that not all groups that are described in the social contracts end up as group agents, it was seen that those groups that adopt an authoritarian leadership climate were more viable candidates for group agency. Individuals were seen as giving up their rational autonomy to the group and agreeing to follow the dictates of the leaders of the group so that they could be considered part of the group. Rousseau succinctly put this when he argued that human beings were truly free in their pre-societal stage before they had given up their rational autonomy to everyone and they freely assessed information about the world without any heavy constraints on this capacity. They were also free to choose the means through which their judgements reasoned to be the best and executed actions based on that principle. Although society gives the illusion that people are free to exercise their rational autonomy, they are actually bound up in chains by the institutions such as laws that society has come up with to direct how individuals ought to think, behave and act.

A further elaboration on the nature of social groups came from the discussion of the realist tradition in international relations. It was observed in this theory that at a global level, states are viewed as international actors, with the mandate of representing their country's interests on the international arena laying solely in the hands of the leaders. The international political arena was seen as lacking a common government to regulate the behaviour of world states, or has a few super powers that try to manipulate and control the state of affairs of other countries through such actions as sanctions and loans from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). The realist tradition paints a picture of states as calculating entities that have the protection of their country's territory as their main objective/goal that they seek to advance. Hence, all states take necessary actions and steps in ensuring that this objective is met. However, it was observed that although states could be considered as some form of international actors, not all states could be considered as group agents although they possessed some characteristic traits for group agency. I argued that for societies to be considered as group agents such societies either have to totally take away their individual members' rational autonomy or have it significantly diminished. It was in societies that had a strong authoritarian kind of structure that were seen to be likely candidates for group agency.

From this, it became necessary to determine whether these findings could be applied to a real world society. A traditional society in particular was to be examined, since it was observed that traditional societies were not too complicated to analyse, having simple structural patterns that could be easier to study. That being the case, various criteria of what a traditional society was were formulated and it was observed that if a state met most of the criteria then it could easily be identified as a traditional society. An African group in Zimbabwe, specifically the Shona group (in the sense of any of the key sub-groups led by a chief), was seen to meet most of the criteria to be considered a traditional group, hence it was considered as such. I argued that the Shona group met some necessary conditions for group agency, which constituted a sufficient reason to consider it as such. There were certain mechanisms in the Shona group that placed restrictions on the individual members' rational autonomies within this group so as to ensure that collective rationality was achieved.

Specifically, it was observed that the group placed great importance on adhering to norms and established ways of doing things rather than departing from them which significantly limited the members of the group's rational autonomy by giving them a limited frame of reference or explanatory framework. Because of an elaborate religious system that involves some spiritual

actors, there were various repercussions that were seen to befall individual members not adhering to norms. Further, because the nature of the group structure is such that it has an authoritarian style of leadership, believing in the view that rulers are put on the throne by the living dead and whose job it was to ensure that norms are followed, then it was seen to follow that individuals at the lower spectrum of the group's hierarchy had limited rational autonomy to depart from established traditions even if their rational judgments pointed otherwise. This consequently results in the individual members of the Shona group having a diminished rational autonomy since the group structure and its intricate systems of beliefs, especially those beliefs of a religious nature, heavily influence their explanatory frameworks and conceptual schemes such that they have a rigid or conservative unitary scope of understanding the world.

It was seen to be difficult for members of the group to dispense of those beliefs that were inculcated into their minds from early childhood into adulthood, beliefs which helped in understanding how the world operated and how they respond to it. Because such individuals have a limited conceptual scheme and frame of reference from which to explain what happens in the world and cannot easily accept new ways of explaining reality, then such individuals have limited rational autonomy, specifically by virtue of belonging to this particular group. On top of this, because much importance is placed on the roles of the living dead in meting out punishment and rewards, it appears that the spiritual world 'controls' the lives of the individuals in the group hence making them non-free and consequently limited agents.

If, for example, it is believed that the spiritual realm can alter the life of a person for worse if the person decides to ignore the advice of elders, even when such advice is in conflict with the individual's own rational judgements, then it appears the individual has a diminished rational autonomy as the concept of practical rationality entails that the individual ought to have the autonomy to choose between alternative courses of action from a variety of viewpoints, facts and assumptions. But, if in the face of sound logical reasoning and new scientific proof that may claim something contrary to what the person has grown to believe, the individual still cannot dispense with their initial point of view, then that person's rational autonomy is severely limited. This stems from the fact that it is a fundamental element of rational autonomy that the agent has to be open to other sources of knowledge that may better help them understand how the world operates and better shape their response to it. From all these restrictions placed on the individual's rational autonomy in the group I came to the conclusion that the Shona group

can be considered as a weak group agent, since it does not take away all of the individual's rational autonomy but heavily diminishes it.

From these observations I have come to the conclusion that as long as human beings are part of a group that counts as an agent, then that person has limited rational autonomy or no rational autonomy at all (in the case of strong group agents) or at least suspends their rational autonomy so that they not only advance the group agent's goals, but also become desirable members of such groups. In the absence of such a suspension of the individual's rational autonomy, conflicts between the individual's own rational ideals and the group agent's ideals may ensue. When this happens, usually the group agent's decision takes the day, since the member is 'forced' to adhere to group dictates when they join the group. Other members of the group may redirect the individual's dissenting opinion so that it may be in-line with group's own ideals. This is what it means to be part of the group agent. If the individual feels that the group's decisions are so much at odds with their own perceptions of the world, then the individual can leave the group and reassume their rational autonomy outside the group, bearing such titles as ex-group member, rebel, insurgent, non-conformist, radical, renegade, misfit, dissenter or group antagonist. As long as they are part of the group, they have to accept the fate of limited rational autonomy.

I also observed that the loss of rational autonomy in groups that can count as group agents varies with the position that the individual member occupies and depending on the groups' leadership climate. In groups that are authoritarian in nature, it was observed that the higher up the position the member occupies within the group, the more rational autonomy they exercised. Leaders of group agents, whether weak or strong, were observed to retain a significant degree of their rational autonomy as compared to the lower members of the group who surrendered most of their rational autonomy to the group. The implication of this is that those individuals occupying higher positions of the group agent were more morally responsible for the group agent's decisions, since they exercised a greater degree of their rational autonomy. On the other hand, since those occupying lower positions in the group agent were seen to lose a significant portion of their rational autonomy, they were less morally responsible because they had a limited range of options from which to act.

Unfortunately this situation does not seem to be confined to groups that individuals voluntarily join, but those that the individuals are born in. Specifically, the society from which the

individual comes, especially if it is traditional in orientation, can be a limiting factor in their rational autonomy. Such groups emphasise that their members strictly adhere to norms and do not easily entertain alternatives to established norms. This being the case, the individual is compelled to follow the norms, even against their better judgement, lest they get some form of punishment. By virtue of belonging to such groups individuals find themselves having a limited rational autonomy, since they have limited a limited conceptual scheme and explanatory framework of the world from which to analyse propositions and make necessary inferences, unless if they are the leaders of the group. They also have a limited range of alternative actions options which have to be in line with group norms of action which does not permit them to perform their own chosen courses of action according to their own rational autonomy.

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173

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