PERSONHOOD AND EPISTEMIC INTERACTIVISM
IN INDIGENOUS ESAN THOUGHT

BY

ODIA, SYLVESTER IDEMUDIA
(MATRIC. NO. 84456)

BEING A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF

PHILOSOPHY, FACULTY OF ARTS, UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN,

IBADAN, IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR

THE AWARD OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (PH.D) IN PHILOSOPHY

MARCH 2016

DEDICATION

To Onuwabhagbe, Ibhalukholor, Osekpemhenokan, and Erhonmwonsele.

And

To the memory of my late father, Pius Ibhalukholor Odia.

CERTIFICATION

I certify that this research work was carried out by Sylvester Idemudia Odia under my supervision in the Department of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, University of Ibadan, Ibadan.

,,,
Supervisor
Prof. I. E. Ukpokolo.
Department of Philosophy,
University of Ibadan, Ibadan.

……………………………

Date.

ABSTRACT

Epistemic interactivism, an aspect of the epistemology of representation, is a cognitive intercourse between the subject and person-object of knowledge that underlies the conception of a person in Esan thought. Earlier studies separated the subject from the object of knowledge, and classified persons and non-persons as object of knowledge. This separation ignored the cognitive and moral values of persons, thereby creating a dehumanised relationship between the subject and person-object of knowledge. This study, therefore, employed epistemic interactivism in re-constructing the relationship between the subject and person-object of knowledge. This is with a view to re-establishing the cognitive and moral values that distinguish persons from non-persons upon which personhood is grounded in Esan thought.

This study adopted Hegel's dialectics which unified the subject and object of knowledge at the "Absolute". Major works on epistemology, specifically Hegel's *The Phenomenology of Mind* (TPM), Descartes' *A Discourse on Method* (ADM)*,* Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (ECHU), and works on Esan culture, particularly Okojie's *Words of Wisdom from Ishan Elders* (WWIE)*,* and *Esan Native Laws and Customs* (ENLC), were purposively selected. These works articulated the traditional theories of representation, personhood and epistemic interactivism. The conceptual method was used to clarify concepts such as representation, personhood and epistemic interactivism. Critical analysis was employed to explain the dehumanising problems in the traditional theories of representation, and the re-constructive method was used to re-establish the cognitive and moral values of a person in epistemic interactivism.

Traditional theories of representation separated subject and person-object of knowledge, grouping person-object and non-person-object (ADM, ECHU). This separation ignored the cognitive and moral values of persons, creating propositional knowledge that dehumanised the relationship between the subject and person-object of knowledge (ADM), and the possible unity of the subject and object of knowledge at the "Absolute" (TPM). However, Esan culture distinguishes persons from non-persons, bonding the subject and person-object of knowledge to arrive at an epistemic intercourse as captured by the Esan dictum: *ai yole abha len oria* (we never say we do not know someone) (ENLC, WWIE). Critical interrogation revealed that conventional theories of representation were influenced by the materialism of Western science that described persons and non-persons impersonally, ignoring the human values of cognition and morality. These cognitive and moral values formed the basis of personhood in Esan thought, such that the subject engages in an epistemic intercourse with the person-object of knowledge in a way that sustains the dignity of persons, creating the grounds for a humane relationship between the subject and person-object of knowledge.

Conventional theories of representation separated the subject and person-object of knowledge, ignoring the cognitive and moral values of persons and creating a dehumanised relationship between the subject and person-object of knowledge. Epistemic interactivism of Esan thought, which unified the subject and person-object of knowledge on cognitive and moral grounds, provides adequate basis for personhood and resolving the dehumanised relationship between the subject and person-object of knowledge.

Keywords: Traditional theories of representation, Epistemic interactivism, Indigenous Esan thought, Personhood.

Word count: 481.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the University of Benin, Benin City, who, under the administration of Prof. G. Oshodin, granted me training leave which enabled me complete the Ph.D. degree programme in the University of Ibadan, Ibadan.

I am full of gratitude to my amiable, thought-provoking and diligent supervisor, Prof. I. E. Ukpokolo for his unflinching support towards the success of this thesis. The intellectual sagacity that gave birth to the initial ideas on Esan thought from which proceed this work began with him. Sir, all your spiritual and material contributions towards this work and humanity in general will be richly blessed by God, now and always. And, by extension, I am also grateful to all the lecturers of the Department of Philosophy who taught me right from my undergraduate days, and who have assisted me in modifying the ideas in this work: Professors O. Oladipo, K. Owolabi, and Msgr. F. A. Adeigbo (of blessed memory); Professors J. O. Irele, O. A. Oyeshile, A. B. Ekanola, and L. O. Agunlana; and Doctors C. A. Udefi, F. N. Offor, B. A. Lanre-Abass, A. L. Afolayan, T. Adegbindin and all the lecturers and staff of the department.

Mr unreserved gratitude also goes to my external examiner, Prof. Jack Aigbodioh and my internal external examiner, Dr. Victor Edo for their painstaking corrections and contributions to this thesis.

Many thanks go to Don Bosco Community, Ibadan, who housed me, cared for me, and allowed me to use their library and other resources towards the success of this thesis. I specially thank Frs M. Vincenzo, C. Riccardo, R. Castiglione, F. Kuzhandaieasu, E. Obi, A. Okonkwo; Brs P. Vaschetto, B. Olukanni; and all the students of Don Bosco Institute of Philosophy (Sept. 2011 – July 2015) as well as the non-academic staff. May your mission and vision in Nigeria be realised.

I wholeheartedly thank my wife, Francisca Onuwabhagbe Odia, for all the sacrifices she made during the course of my training leave in the University of Ibadan, Ibadan. I

remember vividly those days and nights of praying and caring alone for our children – Ibhalukholor, Osekpemhenokan and Erhonmwonsele, as well as those moments of stress with her own academic work in the University of Benin. May God bless these sacrifices of yours by making our family lovely, peaceful, prosperous, and an example for many.

Finally, I am immensely grateful to *Osenobulua* (the Supreme Being, God) who brought me into existence in post-colonial Africa, and in sub-Sahara Africa. This made it possible for me to be conversant with indigenous African thoughts as well as Western or European thoughts whose world-views formed the basis of this work. In addition, I am profoundly grateful to my parents: Pius Ibhalukholor Odia (of blessed memory) and Theresa Imatitikua Odia for bringing me up acquainted with Esan and Bini cultural beliefs and practices. Dad, continue to be at peace with *Osenobulua*. As for you, Mum, may you live long in peace, health of mind and body, and find joy in us your children up to a ripe old age.

<div align="right">Sylvester Idemudia Odia.</div>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 TRADITIONAL EPISTEMOLOGICAL THEORIES OF REPRESENTATION

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 HEGELIAN EPISTEMOLOGICAL INTERACTIVISM

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 PERSONHOOD IN INDIGENOUS ESAN THOUGHT

0. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

0.1 Background to the study.

Taking a clue from Pythagoras in the 6th century B.C who first called himself a *philosophos* – lover of wisdom, philosophy came to mean "a love of thinking about things and the possession of a thoughtful and reflective attitude towards life in general."[1] Plato assigns to the philosopher the task of attaining reality – the essence of things –, rather than appearance – things as they seem to be. Since Plato's time, philosophy has meant "a reflective and reasoned attempt to infer the character and content of the universe, taken in its entirety and as a single whole, from an observation and study of the data presented by all its aspects."[2]

Epistemology is one of the branches of philosophy. Kim and Sosa define it as "a philosophical inquiry into the nature, condition, and extent of human knowledge".[3] Kaphagawani and Malherbe also define it as "the study of theories about the nature and scope of knowledge, the evaluation of the presuppositions and bases of knowledge, and the scrutiny of knowledge claims."[4] All humans, irrespective of race or colour, have the capacity to know and to learn; so knowledge is universal. But disputes do arise over knowledge claims due to differences in world-views or presuppositions from one culture or location to another. One implication that can be drawn from this is that "although epistemology as the study of knowledge is universal, the ways of acquiring knowledge vary according to the socio-cultural contexts within which knowledge claims are formulated and articulated."[5] Hence, epistemology can also be seen as the theory of justification of knowledge claims.[6]

In the history of Western philosophy, the possibility of attaining knowledge using human reason and senses began with Thales, and this possibility was taken for granted until the advent of the sophists in the 5th century B.C. The sophists argue against objective knowledge and settle for relativism. The scepticism over human knowledge introduced

by the sophists was challenged by Socrates and, subsequently, by Plato and Aristotle. The views of these three prominent ancient Greek philosophers gave birth to what is commonly called the 'traditional epistemological approach' to the study of epistemology. This approach essentially perceives knowledge as "justified true belief" (JTB) and makes a sharp distinction between the subject of knowledge and the object of knowledge {other persons (person-object), and other living and non-living things (nonperson-objects)}.

Knowledge in the Western tradition separates the subject of knowledge from the object of knowledge, thus creating a gap between the subject of knowledge and the object of knowledge. Traditional theories of representation are picture or mirror views of the object known since there is now a gap or separation between the subject and the object of knowledge. Knowledge becomes propositional; that is, a statement asserting or declaring something about the world or states of affairs, and the declaration or assertion may be true or false.[7] Propositional knowledge that is thus produced has the following characteristics: (1) for knowledge to be possible, the subject of knowledge must be asocial and completely cut off from bodily feelings and emotions; that is, asocial and impersonal, (2) there must be a strict divide between the subject of knowledge (the knower, that is, the knowing human person) and the object of knowledge (the known, that is, the person-object and the nonperson-object); and (3) the knowledge produced must be propositional.

Now, the representational view of knowledge that 'mirrors' nature, especially as postulated by Descartes and Locke, is constructed by the individual who is uninfluenced by others and social realities. The knowledge produced or constructed by the solitary individual uninfluenced by the personal, socio-cultural and historical contexts of knowledge production grounds representation solely on reason, the mind or self, and makes a sharp distinction between the subject of knowledge and the object of knowledge. It further alienates the self, the mind, the subject of knowledge from socio-cultural and historical contexts as well as morality. And, as pointed out by Sandra Jovchelovitch, these representations are deprived of "pathos and ethos."[8] Descartes' construction of

2

representation requires both the disengagement of the self from the world, and of the subject from himself. John Locke continued this disengagement. This disengagement of the self from the world and the subject from himself "radically dehumanised the subject of representation"[9], burdened the 'self' with solitude and isolation, and the 'other' becomes alien and foreign.[10] This representational (picture or mirror) view of knowledge was central to the modernist project such that the failure of the modernist project led some philosophers like Richard Rorty to reject the whole idea of epistemology.[11]

Furthermore, since the person-object is classified alongside the nonperson-object as object of knowledge, the person-object also becomes dehumanised, and this further strengthens subjectivism and individualism.

Thus a two-fold deficiency of the traditional theories of representation, as captured by Descartes and Locke, can be observed. The first part of the two-fold deficiency is the ideal asocial self or subject that produces knowledge impersonally. The second part of the two-fold deficiency is the grouping together of the person-object of knowledge (that possesses cognitive and moral values) and the nonperson-object of knowledge (animals, plants, animate and inanimate beings or things) as object of knowledge. This two-fold deficiency has been considered by some scholars as dehumanising both to the subject of knowledge and the person-object of knowledge.

Social and feminist, as well as virtue and moral epistemology have all responded to the first part of the two-fold deficiency, that is, the problem of the asocial subject of knowledge. They have not yet addressed the second part of the two-fold deficiency, that is, the dehumanising relationship created between the subject of knowledge and the person-object of knowledge as a result of the grouping together of the person-object and the nonperson-object of knowledge as object of knowledge.

There is, therefore, the need for a new approach to knowledge that will take care of the dehumanised subject of knowledge, as well as the dehumanised person-object of knowledge. Such an approach will concretise the subject of knowledge with the ethos and

pathos of his or her socio-cultural and historical milieu which was ignored by the solitary individual of the traditional theories of representation; thus stressing that humans are essentially social, cognitive and moral beings. By so doing it will rescue the isolated and solitary individual from being alienated from himself or herself, or from other knowledge producers. Also, the new approach that is called for here will differentiate knowing the person-object from knowing the nonperson-object on the basis of the distinct qualities of the human person. Such an approach will produce a humanistic knowledge of the person-object.

This new approach can be found among the Edo-speaking people of Edo State and the Gboko people of Benue State who linguistically belong to the same KWA group of languages. According to linguists, the languages of the Edo speaking people belong to the Edoid family which is "a branch of the KWA group of languages."[12] Wescott in his footnote divides the Edo languages of southern Nigeria into six (6): "a northern group, consisting of Bini, Ishan [Esan], and Kukuruku [Afemai], and a southern group, consisting of Urhobo, Isoko, and Deltaic."[13]

The Edo speaking people (Bini, Esan, Esako, Akoko-Edo) of Edo State, and the Gboko people of Benue State differentiate between the person-object and the nonperson-object of knowledge. For the Esan people of Edo State, for example, knowledge of the 'other' (person-object) is essentially interactivist in a Hegelian sense, and also highly personal in a Bownean sense. Thus, it has some affinity with Hegelian interactivism and the personalism of Borden Parker Bowne in the Western philosophical tradition. Also, it is grounded on the idea of personhood that is further based on African ontology and communalism (of which the Esan world-view share significant characteristics). When properly construed, this alternative approach to epistemology can take care of the dehumanising two-fold deficiency of the traditional approach to epistemology.

This research critically examines the two-fold deficiency of the traditional theories of representation and analyses the interactivist way of knowing of the indigenous Esan

4

people towards resolving the dehumanising problems of the traditional theories of representation.

0.2   Statement of the problem.

The research problem this study identifies derives from a two-point observation with regards to the traditional epistemological theories of representation: (1) The theories make strict dichotomy between subject and object of knowledge requiring the disengagement of the subject from the world. This disengagement burdens the self with solitude and isolation, while the 'other' becomes alien and foreign. (2) The grouping together as object of knowledge the person-object (possessing social, cognitive and moral values) and the nonperson-object thereby producing propositional knowledge that does not discriminate between the person-object and the nonperson-object. These epistemological theories of representation radically dehumanize the relationship between the subject of knowledge on the one hand, and the person-object of knowledge on the other hand.   The deficiency in the subject – object relationship of traditional epistemological theories of representation constitutes the research problem – the gap – which the thesis of this work addresses based on a critical analysis of the Esan dictum: *ai yole abha len oria* (which literally translates as "we never say we do not know someone").

The Esan dictum, *ai yole abha len oria* (which literally translates as "we never say we do not know someone") gives enough attention to the epistemological conception of the human person, and takes care of individualism, horizontal relationship and, above all, the 'humanness' in our personality. It emphasises an epistemic interactivism between the subject of knowledge and the person-object of knowledge. This epistemic interactivism takes the form of an epistemic intercourse underpinned by a unity that makes the subject – object dichotomy of the subject of knowledge and the person-object of knowledge of the traditional theories of representation non-existent. It also brings into human personality the ideas of regard, honour, respect and recognition, modesty, rationality,

morality and virtue, communion, freedom, community-dependent, and power (force)–connectedness. Some of these qualities of human personality have been highlighted: Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Descartes and the rationalists, Locke and the empiricists define the human person in terms of rationality and sensuality. Christian Smith refers to human persons as "fundamentally moral, believing animals"[14], and Bert Hamminga also presents the ideal self-image of the classical African as a "holistic, community-dependent, power-connected personality"[15]. The Esan people ascribe these qualities of human personality to all adult human persons irrespective of gender, class, race, colour, religious affiliation, and socio-cultural and historical contexts. Knowledge in this context is not an individual construct (devoid of any relationship or experience with the other) that mirrors nature; rather it becomes interactivist and engaging in a Hegelian sense.

Knowledge in a Hegelian sense is not propositional but interactivist, engaging and rooted in experience; and all experiences – perceptual, scientific, moral and religious – "are discovered and not produced or invented by the mind; they are 'given'" in an immediate way with an implicit unity[16]. So, "nothing is known which does not fall within experience".[17] The perception of an object immediately presents the mind with its property "which is universal, thereby transcending the particularity of the object."[18] And on the account of the universality of the property, Hegel considers the initial perception of the object that isolates it as mistaken; he consequently takes "the object entity as a community (*Gemeinschaft*) in general"[19] which transcends the object perceived. The human 'spirit' or 'mind' (*Geist*) is essentially reason and is capable of closing "the gap between appearance and reality that Kant's 'transcendental idealism' seemed to have left open."[20] It can transcend opposites (thesis and antithesis) and arrive at a synthesis that resolves them with the goal of ultimately arriving at "Absolute Knowledge". So, absolute knowledge is a rational experiential process through dialectics, and not an immediate (intuitive) knowledge unaided by mediation (sense experience). Complete self-knowledge becomes an attainable ideal at the moment when the self is able to overcome dualities in all aspects of life including the duality of thinking and being. At the level of

"Absolute Knowledge", subject and object of knowledge are distinguishable but they are also inseparable and irreducible.[21] Reality ceases to be an isolation of things, or groups, or states of affairs, but a single unified whole with parts interacting with themselves; thus forming an integrated whole. In this totality or wholeness lies truth which is reached through the process of dialectics. The individual mind or spirit becomes the means whereby the Absolute or Infinite thought reflects on itself.[22]

Similarly, in indigenous Esan thought, knowledge of persons is not propositional. It is essentially interactivist, engaging and rooted in experience. The Esan dictum, *ai yole abha len oria* captures the essence of epistemology in indigenous Esan thought, especially as it concerns knowing the 'other', the person-object of knowledge. In a general sense, the human person, called *oria* in Esan, possesses personhood, 'humanness' at birth irrespective of the sex or social class into which the person is born. At birth the child is given a proper name that speaks volumes about his or her family history,[23] environmental contingencies and possible destiny because he or she is believed to be a human being or person who will develop his or her personhood through active participation in the life of the community through time. As the human person matures into adulthood, he or she enhances his or her personhood and becomes fully a communal reality that interacts or engages with other human persons in the community so as to realise himself or herself. Personhood is enhanced through the development of inherent values and the acquisition of some other values as well. These values include rationality, morality, sensuality, regard and honour, community-dependent and power-connectedness in the vital force. Such values coupled with the ontological value of the person who is at the centre of the hierarchy of beings in the vital force,[24] are accorded all persons irrespective of nationality, race, colour, religious affiliations, or socio-cultural and environmental contingencies. These are the essential qualities of the person handed down by the ancestors and preserved by the elders of the community in perpetuity.[25] Hence, the subject of knowledge and the person-object of knowledge are distinguishable (since persons are not lumped together to the extent that they lose their individuality) but they

7

are ontologically and epistemologically inseparable. This bond is an epistemic intercourse, an interactivism of the essential or ontological attributes of persons that makes the subject and person-object dichotomy of traditional theories of representation non-existent in indigenous Esan thought. But this epistemic bond exists for persons alone (subject of knowledge and the person-object of knowledge); it does not exist for the subject of knowledge and the nonperson-object of knowledge in the visible-material world. Also, this epistemic bond captures the essence of the person; and this essence of the person is believed to be eternally true. From this dictum, propositional statements about the person-object like the name, occupation, social status, marital status, and so on proceed.

Furthermore, epistemic interactivism as it concerns the subject of knowledge and the person-object of knowledge is not based on the senses or empirical or scientific process. The Esan saying, *Ai sun egbe ihien*, (which means "We do not pry into each other's skin") can help in the understanding of the non-empirical nature of knowing the 'other'. To understand this proverb fully, Okojie gives the analogy of prying into a corn cob: "You pry a corn cob open to see if it is strong or ready. You do not do the same to your fellow man before you know he too has blood under his skin."[26] This explicitly points to the non-empirical foundation of knowledge of the person-object, and distinct from the empirical foundation of nonperson-objects. The senses play a large role in the knowledge of things, inanimate and animate objects in the visible-material world. Hence one may not know what one has not experienced concerning nonperson-objects. But this is not the case with knowledge of person-objects which is interactivist in nature. This interactivist knowledge that exists between the subject of knowledge and the person-object of knowledge is such that knowing the 'other' (person-object) is primarily ontological and communal. Knowledge and truth become the property of the community of human persons which each adult person contributes to and participates in. Another Esan saying, *Akha we na sikoko, a bha we na simanman* (which can be translated as "Come together does not mean fuse into one"[27] to the extent of losing one's personality or identity)

8

further explains how the individual person participates in communal knowledge and contributes to it through his or her everyday experiences. It is in this sense, therefore, that the indigenous Esan communalism can be said to be moderate, and not thoroughgoing.

However, on moral grounds, an indigenous Esan can deny knowing the 'other', a person-object, if his or her actions are judged to be morally wrong or bad from the perspective of the communal values. This amounts to saying, *I bha len uwe* (which literally translates as "I do not know you") to an adult human person; and it amounts to disregard and slight to the inherent dignity of the person, strips the person of 'humanness', cuts off the person from the community of persons, and relegates the person to the level of a nonentity (that is, insignificant and nonexistent) disconnected from reality. The underlying reason for saying *I bha len uwe* to an adult person who has performed morally unacceptable acts is that to act as a rational, sentient, and moral being (among other values) is to act in knowledge, and not to act outside of knowledge. And, since the goal of knowledge is wisdom, and wisdom is of the ancestors and elders as preserved by the community, it is expected that the adult person will acquire communal knowledge through time as he or she enhances his or her personhood. Failure to achieve this warrants the preservation of the community from such a person; and in Esan this preservation is not only ontological, it is also epistemological. For morally wrong actions, therefore, one is believed to have been depleted of vital force at the ontological level and consequently becomes a threat to the community. One can then be exiled from the community or ostracized (that is, no paying of visits to the person, and no buying from or selling to the person) by the community. Also, for morally wrong actions one can be cut off from the communal epistemology or relationship in knowledge. What this means, therefore, is that certain morally wrong actions take away the respect and regard accorded a person such that the relationship in knowledge between the subject of knowledge and the person-object of knowledge is severed.

In addition, the relationship between knowledge of person-object and morality can also be explained from the perspective of equating a false proposition with a lie. In indigenous

Esan thought, to make a false proposition (intentionally or unintentionally) is synonymous to having lied. This is because one is not expected to make a categorical statement or proposition of something or an event if one has not witnessed it, or without stating one's source. Hence one needs to have an *elo men se bho* (which can be translated as "my eyes witnessed it" or "I personally experienced it") experience before making a categorical proposition or statement about concrete reality. If one does not have an *elo men se bho* experience, one should simply quote one's informant or state one's source of the proposition or statement; and this makes one's proposition or statement a secondhand knowledge that consequently weakens the strength of one's propositional knowledge or statement. So, the indigenous Esan knowledge of the person-object is overtly moral.

Some of the ideas contained in the epistemic interactivism of indigenous Esan thought are present in the thoughts of Hegel and Bowne. It shares some affinity with Hegel's epistemic interactivism on the one hand, and Bowne's personalism on the other hand. Hegel's "Absolute Spirit" which encompasses both the human person and objects in general, and reflects on itself through individual minds or spirits, can be distinguished from the Esan concept of knowing the person-object which is built on ontological and communal understanding of personhood, and distinct from knowledge of the nonperson-object. Here the indigenous Esan view of the person has some affinity with personalism as used by the American Borden Parker Bowne and his followers. Bowne's personalism reacts against absolute idealism and the idea that the person is an attribute of the "Absolute".[28] Personalism asserts the ultimate realness or valuableness of the human person, emphasizes human experiences – physical, moral, spiritual and substantial – regardless of sex, race or class, and motivate us to put an end to human actions "that demean and crush the dignity of persons as if they were but things or objects to be manipulated and dehumanized."[29] Bowne puts it this way:

> We are not abstract intellects nor abstract wills, but we are living persons, knowing and feeling and having various interests, and in the light of knowledge and under the impulse of our interests trying to find our way, having an order of experience also and seeking to understand it and to guide ourselves so as to extend or enrich that

experience, and thus to build ourselves into larger and fuller and more abundant personal life.[30]

However, the significance of knowing the person-object in indigenous Esan thought lies in its non-differentiation of the subject of knowledge and the person-object of knowledge.

Also, the indigenous Esan view of the person is built on African ontology where, according to Hamminga, everything in the universe, including human persons, is a chain of forces "empowering" and "depowering" each other.[31] When acquainted with an unknown object, the African question is not "what is it?", but "what does it do?" Hence all "knowledge acquisition is the discovery of the power of forces. To discover what a thing 'does'. What the force is for."[32] The human person in indigenous Esan thought, however, is not classified as a thing and he or she is the knowing subject who, in union with other person-objects (who are also knowing subjects in their own rights), wants to discover what a thing (the nonperson-object) 'does'. As the pivot around which all things revolve, therefore, the human person is valuable unto himself or herself and not in relation to other things or objects. Things or objects are valuable, not unto themselves, but in relation to what they 'do' for human persons and the community in general. Hence, to know the person-object in relation to his or her value to nonperson-objects or the status of other person-objects is dehumanising. It is to relegate a person to the level of an object or a thing. So, while Hegel's epistemological interactivism captures the essence of knowing a human person in indigenous Esan thought, indigenous Esan thought differs from it by limiting it only to knowing the person-object and in treating the human person not as an attribute of the "Absolute". Human persons are of worth in themselves with equal dignity and respect.

This concept of knowing a human person in indigenous Esan thought which grounds knowledge of the human person on human personhood gives sufficient attention to the epistemic interactivism of the human person, especially now that "we are presently living in an age in which little value is placed on the worth of persons as such."[33] It sufficiently

11

affirms human personality conditions – personhood, 'humanness' and community, and takes care of individualism and horizontal relationships.

0.3 Statement of the thesis of study.

The thesis of this study presents an interactivist epistemological programme whereby the subject of knowledge engages in an epistemic intercourse with the person-object of knowledge in a Hegelian sense but maintaining affinity with Bowne's personalism. In the epistemic intercourse the thesis draws a bond between the subject of knowledge and the person-object of knowledge such that the gap created between them in the traditional theories of representation as articulated by Descartes and Locke does not exist. This bond is based on the idea of personhood in indigenous Esan thought further built on African ontology and communalism. This is captured by the Esan dictum *ai yole abha len oria* (which literally translates as "we never say we do not know someone").

This thesis further argues that the two-fold deficiency in the traditional theories of representation can be solved if adequate attention is given to the epistemological attitude towards the person-object of knowledge that affirms the social, cognitive and moral values of persons as captured by the epistemological analysis of the concept of knowing the person-object in indigenous Esan thought.

0.4   Method of study.

This research work used the conceptual, critical and analytical methods. Library and internet sources (books and journals) in epistemology and Esan culture, as well as the language of the Esan people were critically and systematically analysed. Also, it critically analysed the theories of representation, highlighting the two-fold deficiency in them and showing how the interactivist approach to knowledge of the indigenous Esan people helped in resolving the two-fold deficiency.

0.5   Justification of study.

The traditional theories of representation are saddled with a two-fold deficiency resulting from the strict dichotomy made between the subject of knowledge and the object of knowledge, and have created an asocial self as the subject of knowledge. To be known (either as a person-object or a nonperson-object) is for the asocial subject of knowledge to have a picture, a mirror, or a mental representation that corresponds to the object known. Also, knowledge of the object of knowledge, which includes both the person-object and the nonperson-object, becomes propositional, individualistic or subjective, and non-differentiated. The 'other' (the person-object) becomes alien to the subject of knowledge and dehumanised.

Different schools of thought in epistemology have responded to the two-fold deficiency in the traditional theories of representation as captured by Rene Descartes (a rationalist) and John Locke (an empiricist). In the *Critique of pure reason,* Immanuel Kant reiterates that all knowledge proceeds from experience. Experience here means "the first product that our understanding brings forth as it works on the raw material of sensible sensations."[34] In addition, Kant argues that, "although all our cognition commences with experience, yet it does not on that account all arise from experience."[35] This is because experience is disordered, and disordered experience needs some order before it can fully be knowledge. This order comes from reason which is *a priori,* and, by nature, desires universality. Thus, Kant attempts a synthesis of the views of the rationalists and the empiricists towards arriving at an acceptable foundation of knowledge.

The statements of some philosophers like W. V. Quine that epistemology should now become a branch of psychology, and the view of Rorty that epistemology has no future as a result of the failure of the modernist project, led some scholars to find ways of rescuing epistemology from the analytic tradition that takes the Cartesian individual as the ideal knower. Herein comes social epistemology as a school of thought that rejects the idea of the production of knowledge by an asocial subjective individual, an idea that is found in

Descartes and Locke. For Fuller, the Cartesian attempt to reduce knowledge to a variant of 'justified true belief' is artificial. It has the ontological assumption of the 'belief' condition having ideal "privileged creatures with a conscience, or consciousness, as knowledge-bearers"[36] – an assumption that the analytic epistemologist rarely questions; thus ignoring or distancing self from the 'consensus theory of truth,' "which works by some weighted aggregation of beliefs."[37] Knowledge cannot be produced by an individual who operates in a social vacuum;[38] and human inquiry involves a social and a historical process[39] without which there cannot be knowledge. This idea of the social and historical process of knowledge production has been demonstrated by Thomas Kuhn's *The structure of scientific revolutions*,[40] where paradigm shift is a social process.

Another response to the deficiency of the traditional theories of representation is virtue epistemology. Virtue epistemology is one of the oldest views in epistemology as a version of it can be traced to Aristotle.[41] However, in recent times, it can be conceived as a theory in epistemology "that focus epistemic evaluation on properties of persons rather than properties of beliefs or propositions."[42] It speaks of an epistemic virtue or intellectual capacity as "a competence by which one would mostly attain the intellectual end of believing the truth and avoiding error."[43] In other words, being proficient in a given field makes one virtuous in relation to that field. To be virtuous in judging some propositions correctly demands some conditions to be met or present. These conditions are "accuracy: reaching the aim; adroitness: manifesting skill or competence; and aptness: reaching the aim *through* the adroitness manifest."[44] To the above conditions Fairweather adds epistemic motivation, Linda Zagzebski adds wisdom and understanding, while James Montuarquet adds open-mindedness and conscientiousness. However, attaining truth remains the main goal of epistemic motivation.[45]

Epistemic or intellectual virtues, therefore, are properties of persons which enable them distinguish true propositions from false propositions under certain conditions. These virtues can be innate (the senses, brain, nervous system) or acquired over time (proficiency in a given field, conscientiousness, accuracy, adroitness, aptness, endurance

in finding truth, reliability, motivation, wisdom and understanding, and open-mindedness). Focus is now on the capacity or competence of a subject of knowledge to be able to attain truth and avoid falsehood given certain conditions. Its main contribution to epistemology will be the shift from the preoccupation of traditional epistemology to produce propositions that will mimic, copy, or mirror nature to the disposition of the subject of knowledge to be able to attain true propositions and avoid false propositions. Another contribution of virtue epistemology is the acknowledgement of the lack of perfection in intellectual or epistemic virtues of the subject of knowledge. So it suggests an openness on the part of the subject of knowledge to a continuous improvement in epistemic or intellectual virtue. This requires a conscientiousness analogous to that of sports men or women, or artists in achieving a goal.

Moral epistemology is another epistemological theory that responded to the deficiency in the traditional theories of representation. Moral epistemology is based on the role knowledge plays in making moral judgements. That is, it is interested in the fact that knowing involves truth, beliefs, evidence and justification, reasoning, etcetera, and the role these play in determining moral goodness and badness, and virtues and vices.[46] In fact, to claim to know someone else's moral character is an issue that concerns epistemology, especially as it is "an essential prerequisite to whatever moral values they thereafter attribute to that person (selfish, honorable, unreliable)."[47] Propositions are no more justified by what they represent (something external to the subject of knowledge) but by the moral values of the subject of knowledge (something internal) which enables other persons impute epistemic values of truth, reliability, justification and so on, on the propositions made. Here, knowledge goes beyond the cognition of the solitary individual to embrace the total moral value of the subject of knowledge.

In addition, feminist epistemology specifically challenges the traditional epistemological view, especially as captured by Descartes and Locke, "that knowledge is to be seen in a pure, abstract, universal way, detached from the concrete realities of gender, social class, and other important differences."[48] This creates an ideal male knower as the paradigm of

rationality; thus ignoring the role played by feminine qualities and attributes, social classification, economic power, etcetera, in the acquisition of knowledge. This also creates a dualistic conception of the world in which "one side of duality has been privileged over the other – objective knowledge is superior to subjective opinion, masculinity to femininity, science to other forms of knowledge and theory, reason to emotion, the mind to the body, and so on."[49]

One reason for this error of deducing the ideal knower from masculine attributes is the belief that objectivity (especially in science) can only be attained through a purely rational process devoid of feelings or emotions, and values. But feminists and some philosophers of science and epistemology are of the view that "in any state of science – in every stage of any cognitive activity of any sort that anybody does – there is inevitable influence by that person's values, attitudes, past experiences, emotional state, and so on."[50] So, objectivity, as defined by traditional epistemology, is unattainable and needs to be redefined to incorporate values and other human traits that were hitherto removed from its definition so as to attain a realist objectivity. These traits and values include embodiment (varying body constitutions), personal knowledge of others, *know-how* (to be added to *know-that*), cognitive styles, background beliefs and world-views, knowledge-relations to other inquirers, 'women's intuition', common-sense, anecdotal evidence, and so on.[51] Thus, feminist epistemology is calling for an overhaul of the concept of knowledge, objectivity in scientific methodology, and rationality. Knowledge ceases to be a solitary affair of a particular gender. Other persons are involved (male and female), world-views and other human values are incorporated into the concept of knowledge.

However, these responses to the two-fold deficiency of the traditional theories of representation may have taken care of the first part of the deficiency: the grounding of representation solely on reason, the mind or self, uninfluenced by ethos and pathos, which further alienates the self, the mind, the subject of knowledge from socio-cultural and historical contexts. But it should be noted that these theories of epistemology have

responded only to the first part of the two-fold deficiency of the traditional theories of representation. They have not addressed the second part of the problem: the classification of the person-object alongside the nonperson-object (other objects and things in nature) as object of knowledge. Thus the relationship between the subject of knowledge and the person-object of knowledge remains dehumanised.

The failure of the above responses to address the second part of the two-fold deficiency of the traditional theories of representation may be due to the influence of the impersonal and materialistic nature of Western metaphysics which reflects in Western science. On this Western science, the paradigm of rationality that permeates Western epistemology is grounded. Western science conceives the world (in the current prevailing Newtonian physics) as a great impersonal machine governed by laws, independent of us, indifferent to us and our needs, and to which we are nevertheless subjected.[52] In Western metaphysics, objects are substantial realities and they are taken to be the standard by which things in nature, including humans, are measured. Thus, Western epistemology fundamentally separates the subject of knowledge from the object of knowledge with the aim of achieving the myth of 'objectivity' in science – a separation based on an assumption which has not been argued for in the history of epistemology (thus taken for granted), and which contemporary theories of epistemology have also not yet taken cognisance of. Nassehi puts it this way:

> not even science has direct access to the objective world. Properly speaking science is a symbol for the radical difference between the object and the subject of knowledge because science places methods and methodologies, measuring instruments and technical observers between the recognizing researcher and the recognized object of research.[53]

In addition, this assumption – that there must be a dichotomy between the subject and object of knowledge – is taken to be the universal standard for all claims to knowledge; thus ignoring the point of view of other knowledge systems. Smith explains it like this: "All of our knowledge, rather, is situated within particularistic knowledge systems that

are ultimately based on beliefs and assumptions that are nonuniversal and incapable of being independently and objectively verified."[54]

There is, therefore, the need to develop another approach to knowing the person-object that is not dotted with the problems inherent in a representational theory of knowledge. Knowing the person-object in indigenous Esan thought presents us with an interactivist approach to knowledge that unites the subject of knowledge with the person-object. And this indigenous Esan approach shares significant properties with an aspect of Hegel's epistemology and Bowne's personalism.

In African philosophical tradition, some works have been done in epistemology that dealt with the conception of the human person. Menkiti, in his articulation of the concept of the human person in African traditional thought, for instance, points out the importance of defining the human person in line with moral values acquired in the community.[55] He also mentions the acquisition of personhood over time in the community, and the importance of the moral person for African epistemology. Gyekye, on his part, elaborates on the importance of morality to personhood acquired at birth and enhanced through the acquisition of some values in the community as one matures to adulthood. Similar ideas can be found in Mbiti and Tempels. But they did not go as far as making any inference as to the possibility of uniting the subject of knowledge with the person-object of knowledge.

Also, Barry Hallen in "What's it mean?: 'analytic' African philosophy" highlights the need for an African epistemology to serve as an alternative cognitive system valid in its own right. Emphatically, he opines that "it will be at the battlefield of epistemology that the legitimacy of African philosophy must most importantly be established."[56] And, in chapter two: Moral Epistemology of *The Good, the Bad and the Beautiful*,[57] Hallen elaborates on propositional knowledge in Yoruba Language. He argues that, in Western epistemology, propositional knowledge is second-hand knowledge (more like testimony) accepted on the basis of common sense, correspondence or coherence. But in the Yoruba

18

language propositional knowledge is divided into two: *imo* (putative knowledge based on direct experience, and justified by the morality of the person possessing it) and *igbagbo* (putative belief, and intersubjective in nature). However, he did not make any distinction between knowing the person-object and the nonperson-object.

In addition, John A. I. Bewaji, in the second chapter of *An introduction to the theory of knowledge,* stresses the importance of not limiting knowledge to propositional knowledge alone, and the importance of the socio-cultural construction of the self, prior to the self who in turn now produces knowledge: "knowledge is a social construction whose utility exists within the social context. In fact we must recognise the intrinsic inadequacy of a personal reality unreinforced by social, cultural and community realities."[58] As for the poverty of limiting epistemology to propositional knowledge, he has this to say:

> What we need to determine is not just the case of knowing that relates to propositions … but knowing generally. … In fact, to claim that epistemology should mainly be concerned with propositional knowledge is to abdicate the philosophical responsibility of illuminating concepts, ideas, issues and problems in a way that will facilitate human understanding and existence.[59]

Furthermore, C. A. Udefi rejects the idea of a unique African mode of knowing because it separates Africans conceptually and intellectually from other persons and races in the world, and because it is not supported empirically.[60] He, therefore, recommends that, in so far as there is no view that is not from a given perspective, African epistemologists should work within "a common co-ordinate system on which all human beings accept"[61] so as not to produce an epistemology that suggests that Africans are radically different from other persons and races in the world. Also, A. B. Ekanola notes the unfortunate incidence of African philosophers who in their attempt to defend African personality have contributed to its denigration.[62] He then recommends a comparative approach between African culture and Western culture so as to reveal things peculiar to each culture and things that overlap.[63]

This thesis takes into cognisance the concerns raised above. It affiliates indigenous Esan thought concerning knowing the person-object with an aspect of Hegel's epistemology and Bowne's personalism in Western philosophical tradition. At the same time it grounds the bond or intercourse between the subject of knowledge and the person-object of knowledge on the idea of personhood understood within the context of African ontology and communalism. Thus, the significance of knowing the person-object in indigenous Esan thought lies in its nondifferentiation of the subject of knowledge and the person-object of knowledge.

In the area of African ontology, significant works have also been done on the human person. Emphasis were laid on the three (and, in some cultures, four) dimensional aspects of the human person. Wiredu and Gyekye have both discussed the Akan conception of the human person and the three elements of the human person. Also, Gbadegesin and Olusegun Oladipo have discussed the Yoruba conception of the human person, and Gbadegesin presents us with four elements of the human person. But the role the African metaphysical conception of the human person plays in African epistemology has not been sufficiently explored. In other words, much has been said about a world-view of indigenous African thought that can be distinguished from that of the West. But the significance of this difference in the area of epistemology has not been sufficiently explored.

The indigenous Esan conception of knowledge of the person-object, therefore, which unites the subject of knowledge with the person-object of knowledge, takes into cognisance 'personhood' in human personality. Ontologically, the human person is the pivot around which all things revolve. Unlike the nonperson-object that is valuable in relation to what it 'does' for human persons, the human person is valuable in himself or herself. This creates the possibility of knowing the person-object in a way different from knowing the nonperson-object. Epistemologically, knowing a person-object becomes interactivist and engaging in line with Hegel's epistemological interactivism and Bowne's personalism.

0.6   Aim and objective of study.

The aim and objective of this study is two-fold. First, to critically examine the two-fold deficiency of the traditional theories of representation as it affects both the subject of knowledge and the 'other' (the person-object of knowledge), and evaluate the responses to these theories of representation from other epistemological theories.

Second, to analyse the interactivist epistemology of indigenous Esan thought as an alternative epistemological conception of the 'other' (the person-object of knowledge). The interactivist approach to epistemology of indigenous Esan thought will then be used to resolve the dehumanising deficiency of the traditional theories of representation.

0.7   Contribution to knowledge.

This thesis contributes to knowledge in the area of epistemology. It critically evaluates traditional theories of representation, the two-fold deficiency in them, and the responses to the two-fold deficiency from other epistemological theories.

This thesis also contributes to knowledge in proposing an alternative epistemology, which is, the interactivist epistemology of indigenous Esan thought, as a more comprehensive solution to the two-fold deficiency of the traditional theories of representation.

This thesis also contributes to the concept of personhood upon which the epistemic interactivism of indigenous Esan thought is built. It raises an awareness of the role of moral value in the relationship among knowing persons.

In African epistemological discourse, this thesis also articulates the idea of personhood and knowing the person-object of indigenous Esan thought as an exercise in conceptual decolonisation and as an alternative approach to knowing the person-object in epistemology.

0.8   Chapter outline.

This research is divided into five chapters. The first chapter takes a critical look at the traditional theories of representation, especially as propounded by Descartes and Locke in modern times, within the context of Western philosophy. It also articulates the two-fold deficiency of the traditional theories of representation and further examines the extent to which other epistemological theories like social and feminist, as well as virtue and moral were able to resolve the two-fold deficiency in the traditional theories of representation.

The second chapter takes a look at Hegel's epistemological interactivism within the context of existentialism and his absolute idealism and knowledge. It also further meliorates the absolute idealism of Hegel using the personalism of Borden Parker Bowne; thus arriving at a conception of the person that is not an attribute of the 'Absolute', and that has the potentiality of moving from 'me' (the subject of knowledge) to 'us' (the subject of knowledge that is conscious of the 'other') with the antithesis of the 'not-us' (nonperson-objects).

The third chapter articulates personhood in indigenous Esan thought within the context of African ontology and communalism. It also examines the relationship between personhood and morality, and the acquisition of values that enhance personhood as a person attains maturity in the community.

Chapter four of this research deals with the interactivist epistemology of indigenous Esan thought by critically examining the Esan dictum: *ai yole abha len oria* (which literally translates as "we never say we do not know someone"). Also, it examines the ontological and moral foundations of indigenous Esan people in relation to knowledge of the person-object.

The fifth chapter of this research looks at how the epistemic interactivism of indigenous Esan thought differs from other epistemologies espoused by some African scholars, and how it is a more comprehensive solution to the two-fold deficiency of the traditional

theories of representation when compared to other epistemological theories that have responded to the two-fold deficiency. Towards the end of this chapter, this research makes a critique of epistemic interactivism of indigenous Esan thought towards universalising it.

0.9   Clarification of Concepts.

0.9.1   Indigenous.

The term 'indigenous' is often used simultaneously with the term 'traditional'. Definitions of 'indigenous' and 'tradition' abound with the ideas of that which is customary to a people or a place, that which has been handed down by the founding fathers or ancestors of a people, and that which is original or unique to a given people, place or culture.

However, Kapoor & Shizha in *Indigenous knowledge and learning in Asia/Pacific and Africa,* state that defining the concept 'indigenous' is problematic; and that some scholars feel that "definitions/taxonomies (and their rigidities) are a product/instrument of colonial administration and control."[64] In other words, some scholars are conscious of the fact that definitions are value-laden; that is, they contain moral standards that are often biased towards other people's indigenous beliefs, practices and philosophy.

The reasons above may explain why the UN Working Group on the Declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples did not see any need to define the concept "indigenous peoples". Rather, the group explains what the concept 'indigenous peoples' incorporates:

> being original inhabitants of a land later colonized by others; nondominant sectors of society with unique ethnic identities and cultures; strong ties to land and territory; experiences or threats of dispossession from ancestral territory; the experience of being subjected to culturally foreign governance and institutional structures; and the threat of assimilation and loss of identity vis-à-vis a dominant society (…); that is, indigenous understood as a *location* and a *historical and contemporary* experience with *colonialism as the category of common experience.*[65]

So, any community, society, or group of persons with any of the above characteristics can be said to be an indigenous community, society, or group.

However, when philosophers or researchers use the term 'traditional' they often give it a meaning similar to that of 'indigenous'. For instance, the collection of essays in *African philosophy: new and traditional perspective,* edited by Brown, is on African epistemological and ontological issues before the advent of foreign religions and foreign cultural and conceptual schemes. Hence, Brown defines 'tradition' thus: "By 'tradition' I mean 'without the infusion of foreign influence – most notably without the infusion of Judaic, Islamic, Christian, Greek, and Western conceptual schemes into sub-Saharan cultures.'"[66] Brown's definition of 'traditional' captures the essence of the concept 'indigenous'. This thesis will use the concept 'indigenous' to refer to ways of life, beliefs, philosophies, etc. of the African prior to the incursion or invasion of foreign cultural practices, beliefs, philosophy and colonialism. However, it will retain the concept 'tradition' when it is used by authors or scholars whose works or ideas are being cited during the course of this work.

0.9.2 Personhood.

The term 'personhood' is derived from the word 'person'. The word 'person' is further derived from the Latin word *persona*, which means 'mask' (to hide behind) or 'actor' (to portray or assume another's character or personality). In Western philosophical tradition, the concept 'person' is problematic especially when viewed in relation to the concept 'human being'. Often the concept 'human being' is tied to biological characteristics shared by all human beings; while the concept 'person', especially as espoused by Boethius, Aquinas, Locke and Hume, borders on the idea of rationality, consciousness, and a first-person perspective that connotes freedom of the will.[67] The concept of person, therefore, implies the following characteristics of personhood: "thinking, experiencing, acting, and having moral worth".[68] In other words, the concept of personhood include the following ideas: consciousness (thinking, experiencing), decision making (willing,

acting), and morality (moral worth). However, this concept of personhood has not resolved the perennial problem in Western philosophy of when exactly one becomes a person or attains personhood, as well as the conditions upon which one can cease to be a person. The idea that has been created in the midst of all the problems inherent in the concept of personhood is that one may lose one's personhood from time to time given certain conditions.

Nevertheless, Strawson's concept of a person is of significance in relation to the mind-body problem created by Descartes. Strawson, in *Individuals,* is of the view that the concept 'person' incorporates both the ideas of consciousness and bodily being, and cannot be reduced to either consciousness or bodily being alone.[69] Though Strawson's view is controversial in the Western philosophical tradition, it gives us an insight into the concept of person in some African cultural thoughts.

The controversy over personhood does not seem to be present in African philosophical discourse. In most African languages there is a single word that represents both a person and a human being. In Esan language, for example, the word *oria* stands for both a person and a human being. However, while on the one hand, Menkiti has argued that personhood is acquired in the community as one matures into adulthood (thus creating the impression that at birth one is just a human being who later matures into being a person), Gyekye, on the other hand, has argued that personhood is acquired at birth, and that the values attained within the community as one matures into adulthood only enhance the personhood already acquired at birth.

However, since the Esan people have only a single word, *oria,* that represents both a person and a human being, and the idea of personhood among the Esan people is in close affinity with that of the Akan as articulated by Gyekye, this thesis will use the concept personhood to stand for ontological values acquired at birth and enhanced by some other values developed by the person as he or she matures into adulthood within the

community. Some of these values are cognitive faculties, sense perception, morality, sociality, honour, regard, community-dependent, and power-connectedness.

0.9.3 Interactivism.

The concept "interactivism" is coined to explain the relationship in knowledge that exists between the subject of knowledge and the person-object of knowledge. It is a kind of bond, an epistemic intercourse closely linked with African ontology and communalism. The nature of knowledge in Plato's world of Idea or Form, and an aspect of Hegel's epistemology, will help us in understanding this concept.

From Plato's world of Idea or Form, the following ideas can be deduced: (1) the world of Idea or Form is a community of souls and universals; (2) souls in this world of Idea or Form do not have a body, hence do not have senses to mediate any knowledge to them, and universals are the essences of things devoid of accidentals; (3) these souls in the world of Idea or Form however possess knowledge of universals prior to their being imprisoned in the body; (4) since the souls in the world of Idea or Form do not have bodies and consequently senses, the knowledge they have is immediate or intuitive, clear and distinct, and the way things are in themselves and not the way they will appear to be if they were to be mediated by the senses. This kind of bond or intercourse existing in Plato's world of Idea or Form between souls and universals is what is captured by the term 'interactivism'.

Also, an aspect of Hegel's metaphysics can also help us in understanding the concept 'intractivism'. Hegel's philosophy is replete with triadic dialectics. At the peak of his metaphysics is the 'Absolute Mind or Spirit', and at the peak of his epistemology is 'Absolute Knowledge'. At the level of 'Absolute Idealism', the 'Absolute Mind or Spirit' attains 'Absolute Knowledge' where the subject of knowledge and the object of knowledge are distinguishable, but at the same time they are inseparable and irreducible. At this point knowledge is complete and full (in the sense of not being fragmented or

propositional) and nonpropositional. This bond which is an epistemic intercourse between the subject and object of knowledge is what is captured by the term 'interactivism'.

This thesis adopts Hegel's epistemic interactivism rather than that of Plato because that of Hegel is based on experience, while that of Plato is purely ontological and devoid of experience. But the idea contained in them can help in clarifying the concept 'interactivism'.

0.9.4 Esan people, culture, and language.

Esan is one of the major tribes in Edo State. It is located at Edo Central Senatorial district of Edo State, South-South Nigeria. Geographically, Esan is bounded on the North and North-East by Afemai (Owan, Etsako and Akoko-Edo); on the South by Oshimili, Ika and Aniocha; on the West by Owan, Orhiomwon, and Ohumwode; and on the East by River Alika and River Niger.[70]

The origin of the Esan people is replete with disputes. There are disagreements among linguists, historians and some other scholars in other fields as to the true origin of the Esan people. For most persons, the name 'Esan', initially corrupted by the British colonial administrators to 'Ishan', is believed to have originated from Bini. Historically, a good number of the Esan people are believed to be Bini people who fled from Benin City into the thick forest during the reign of Oba Ewuare the Great in the 15th century. Oba Ewuare the Great became hostile to his people especially after the death of his two sons, and this made some Bini people to flee into the jungle. The Bini people that fled into the jungle were referred to as 'ESAN' ('to jump', 'to flee') coined from the report given to the Oba when he inquired about the whereabouts of some of his subjects: "'Esan fua bhe Oha!' meaning "they have fled into the bush"[71].

The jungle into which fled some of the Bini people who were later addressed as Esan people was not completely bereft of persons inhabiting it. As Okoduwa puts it, "Esan

people did not come suddenly into existence during the reign of Oba Ewuare. People had existed in the Esan geographical area and these people had knowledge of themselves according to Esan extent traditions."[72]

If Okoduwa's submission is taken seriously, the exodus of the 15th century, therefore, is not the origin of the Esan people. Some of the Bini people that fled Benin City were conversant with other smaller groups of persons occupying what was known as Edo land. Among these groups of persons occupying Edo land were the Esan people. So, "there were contacts and interactions between Bini and Esan before the exodus of the 15th century."[73]

Also, some communities owe their origin to places other than Benin. For example, some sections of Irrua community trace their origin to Ifeku, an Island close to Idah, while some other sections trace their origin to Uke (near Benin) and Agbede (in Etsako); and the Otouruwa of Irrua traced their origin to Ife. The Ekpoma people trace their origin to people who lived in the area as far back as the 1st century B. C., with the occupation of constructing moats known as 'Iyala'. [74] It is, therefore, safer to speak of the diverse origin of the Esan people than to limit it to the 15th century migration of some inhabitants of Benin City due to the Oba Ewuare saga.

However, the migration of the 15th century is significant. It marked "the origin of organized political institutions in the area and a phase of radical societal restructuring due largely to increased migrations from Benin into the area."[75] And this is demonstrated by "the uniformity of their features, language and custom"[76].

Furthermore, indigenous Esan people, partly as a result of their victory over Oba Ewuare, "are proud even up to the point of being arrogant, self-confident, vindictive and despite their warlike origins as a whole Esan people are pacifists … fatalistic, … [and] Given a chance, they are intelligent, forthright and easily assert leadership in any community."[77]

28

Furthermore, the Esan language is very rich as a means of communicating the whole of the Esan experience. Essentially, language is a tool of communication. According to Prah, "Language is a package of culture. It structurizes the way we perceive and relate to reality. It carries values and standards of taste. It mediates in our interventions in nature and culture; and set limits in the structure of our perception of the external world."[78] And communication can be understood as "the transference of a thought-content from one person or group of persons to another person or group of persons."[79] The content of human communication include "thought, imagination, creativity, aspirations, desires, emotions, indeed the entire human need and capacity."[80] Without language, knowledge, science, development, technology and philosophy will be impossible.[81] In addition, Wiredu states the importance of communication to the community and the human person thus:

> No human society or community is possible without communication, for a community is not just an aggregation of individuals existing as windowless monads but of individuals as interacting persons, and an interaction of persons can only be on the basis of shared meanings. Indeed, without communication there is not even a human person. A human being deprived of the socializing influence of communication will remain human biologically, but mentally is bound to be subhuman.[82]

Also, the language of a people (indigenous languages, or mother tongue) help to foster unity and a balanced personality. Omo-Ojugo puts it this way: "Apart from fostering unity among a given people, the use of the mother-tongue provides for the child, psychological, sociological, cultural and mental resource base for an all round personality development".[83] This may explain why language is of serious concern to the philosopher.

African languages are classified into four groups: Afroasianic, Khoisan, Niger-Kordofanian, and Nilo-Saharan. Niger-Kordofanian is divided into two groups: Niger-Congo and Kordofanian. "The Niger-Congo is further divided into West Atlantic, Mande, Gur, Kwa, Benue-Congo and Adamawa – Ubanguian families."[84]

29

The Edo language belongs to the Kwa family of the Niger-Congo. The Niger-Congo began its process of separation "about 4,500 years ago, the same time as Esan origin in the first century B. C."[85] It is spoken by Esan people as well as some other tribes like the Bini people from which some persons migrated to Esan land. In other words, the languages of the Edo speaking people belong to the Edoid family which is "a branch of the KWA group of languages."[86] In his footnote, Wescott divides the Edo languages of southern Nigeria into six (6): "a northern group, consisting of Bini, Ishan [Esan], and Kukuruku [Afemai], and a southern group, consisting of Urhobo, Isoko, and Deltaic."[87]

So, the Esan language can be said to be a branch of the Kwa group of languages in the Edoid family. There are thirty-five (35) dialects in Esan language. However, Irrua dialect is more blended among all the dialects and, consequently, considered the central Esan language.

Endnotes

[1] B. A. G. Fuller, 1945, *A history of philosophy,* revised ed., New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1.

[2] B. A. G. Fuller, 1945, *A history of philosophy,* 1.

[3] J. Kim, & E. Sosa, Eds., 2000, *Epistemology: an anthology,* Malden, MA: Blackwell publishing, ix.

[4] D. N. Kaphagawani, & J. G. Malherbe, 2003, African epistemology, Eds. P. H. Coetzee, & A. P. J. Roux, *The African philosophy reader,* 2nd ed., London: Routledge, 220.

[5] D. N. Kaphagawani, & J. G. Malherbe, 2003, African epistemology, 220.

[6] J. Hospers, 1997, *An introduction to philosophical analysis,* 4th ed., London: Routledge, 5.

[7] For an analysis of what a proposition is, see R. M. Chisholm, 1977, *Theory of knowledge*, 2nd Ed., New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 6, 87 – 88; R. Audi, 2003, *Epistemology: a contemporary introduction,* 2nd Ed., New York & London: Routledge, 157; D. Pritchard, 2006, *What is this thing called knowledge?* London & New York: Routledge, 179; and R. M. Martin, 2010, *Epistemology: a beginner's guide,* Oxford: Oneworld Publication, 4 – 5.

[8] S. Jovchelovitch, 2007, *Knowledge in context: representations, community and culture,* London & New York: Routledge, 2.

[9] S. Jovchelovitch, 2007, *Knowledge in context*, 19.

[10] S. Jovchelovitch, 2007, *Knowledge in context*, 18 – 19.

[11] R. Rorty, 1979, *Philosophy and the mirror of nature*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

[12] M. O. Omo-Ojugo, 2004, *Esan language endangered? Implication for the teaching and learning of indigenous languages in Nigeria,* 21st Inaugural Lecture, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Nigeria, 25th November, 3.

[13] R. W. Wescott, 1974, Benin names in Nigeria and Georgia, *Linguistics, no. 124,* 21.

[14] C. Smith, 2003, *Moral, believing animals: human personhood and culture*, New York: Oxford University Press, 4

[15] B. Hamminga, 2005, Epistemology from the African point of view, Ed. B. Hamminga, *Knowledge cultures. Comparative Western and African epistemology*. Poznan studies in the philosophy of the sciences and humanities, Amsterdam-New York, NY: Rodopi, 79.

[16] J. B. Baillie, 1967, Translators introduction, G. W. F. Hegel, *The phenomenology of mind*, translated with an introduction and notes by J. B. Baillie, New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Incorporated, 54.

[17] G. W. F. Hegel, 1967, *The phenomenology of mind*, translated with an introduction and notes by J. B. Baillie, New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Incorporated, 800.

[18] G. W. F. Hegel, 1967, *The phenomenology of mind*, 167.

[19] G. W. F. Hegel, *The phenomenology of mind*, 167.

[20] P. Stokes, 2002, *Philosophy: 100 essential thinkers,* London: Arcturus Publishing Limited, 103.

[21] J. B. Baillie, 1967, G. W. F. Hegel, *The phenomenology of mind*, 54.

[22] B. N. Moore, & K. Bruder, 2002, *Philosophy, the power of ideas,* 5th Ed., Boston: MaGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 131.

[23] C. G. Okojie, 1994, *Esan native laws and customs with ethnographic studies of the Esan people,* New edition, Benin City: Ilupeju Press, 31.

[24] J. E. Ekoh, 2014, *Life, death and life after death: an Esan-Christian response,* Benin City: Floreat Systems Publications, 75.

[25] A. Onobhayedo, 1999, Western education and social change in Esan land, *IRORO: Journal of Arts,* vol. 7, nos. 1 & 2, Aug, 270 – 271.

[26] C. G. Okojie, 1992, *Words of wisdom from Ishan elders*, Benin City: Ilupeju Press, prov. 76, 18.

[27] C. G. Okojie, 1992, *Words of wisdom from Ishan elders*, prov. 304, 51.

[28] R. Burrow, Jr. 1999, *Personalism: a critical introduction,* Missouri, St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1.

[29] R. Burrow, Jr. 1999, *Personalism: a critical introduction*, 2.

[30] B. P. Bowne, 1908, *Personalism*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 263.

[31] B. Hamminga, 2005, Epistemology from the African point of view, 63.

[32] B. Hamminga, 2005, Epistemology from the African point of view, 63.

[33] R. Burrow, Jr. 1999, *Personalism: a critical introduction*, 4.

[34] I. Kant, 1998, *Critique of pure reason,* 2nd ed., Trans. & Ed. P. Guyer, & A. W. Wood, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 127.

[35] I. Kant, 1998, *Critique of pure reason*, 136.

[36] S. Fuller, 2002, *Social epistemology*, 2nd ed., Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, x.

[37] S. Fuller, 2002, *Social epistemology*, x.

[38] S. Fuller, 2002, *Social epistemology*, xxviii.

[39] T. Nickles, 2002, Foreword, in S. Fuller, *Social Epistemology,* 2nd ed., xxv.

[40] T. S. Kuhn, 1970, *The structure of scientific revolutions,* 2nd ed., enlarged, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

[41] D. Pritchard, 2010, *What is this thing called knowledge?* 2nd ed., London & New York: Routledge, 59.

[42] L. Zagzebski, & A. Fairweather, Eds., 2001, *Virtue epistemology: essays in epistemic virtues and responsibility,* New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.

[43] N. Lemos, 2007, *An introduction to the theory of knowledge*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 99.

[44] E. Sosa, 2007, *A virtue epistemology: apt belief and reflective knowledge,* Vol. 1, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 23.

[45] A. Fairweather, 2001, Epistemic motivation, Eds, L. Zagzebski, & A. Fairweather, *Virtue epistemology: essays in epistemic virtues and responsibility,* New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 69.

[46] A. Zimmerman, 2010, *Moral epistemology,* London & New York: Routledge, 2.

[47] B. Hallen, 2000. *The good, the bad and the beautiful*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 13.

[48] R. M. Martin, 2010, *Epistemology: a beginners guide,* Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 158.

[49] T. Honderich, 2005, *The oxford companion to philosophy,* 2nd ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 259.

[50] R. M. Martin, 2010, *Epistemology: a beginners guide,* 159.

[51] R. M. Martin, 2010, *Epistemology: a beginners guide,* 160-161.

[52] G. Zukav, 1980, *The dancing wu li masters: an overview of the new physics, New York: Bantam Books, 29 – 30.*

[53] A. Nassahi, 2004, What do we know about knowledge? An essay on the knowledge society, *Canadian Journal of Sociology,* Vol. 29, No. 3, Summer, 442

[54] C. Smith, 2003. *Moral, believing animals: human personhood and culture,*55.

[55] I. A. Menkiti, 1984, Person and community in African traditional thought, *From wonder to wisdom: an introduction to philosoph,*. Eds. D. Arjo, et al, MA: Pearson Custom Publishing.

[56] B. Hallen, 1996, What's it mean?: 'Analytic' African philosophy, *Quest Philosophical Discussions*: *an International Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. x, No. 2. Dec., 70.

[57] B. Hallen, 2000, *The good, the bad and the beautiful,* Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

[58] J. A. I. Bewaji, 2007, *An introduction to the theory of knowledge: a pluricultural approach,* Ibadan: Hope Publication, 13.

[59] J. A. I. Bewaji, 2007, *An introduction to the theory of knowledge,* 33.

[60] C. A. Udefi, 1999, *A critique of the idea of African epistemology,* Thesis, Philosophy, Arts, University of Ibadan, ii, 16.

[61] C. A. Udefi, 2005, Theoretical foundations for an African epistemology, *Footprints in philosophy,* Ed., R. A. Akanmidu, Ibadan: Hope Publications, 81.

[62] A. B. Ekanola, 2005, Task of the philosopher in contemporary Africa, *Footprints in philosophy,* Ed., R. A. Akanmidu, Ibadan: Hope Publications, 86.

[63] A. B. Ekanola, 2005, Task of the philosopher in contemporary Africa, 89.

[64] D. Kapoor, & E. Shizha, 2010, *Indigenous knowledge and learning in Asia/Pacific and Africa,* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2.

[65] D. Kapoor, & E. Shizha, 2010, *Indigenous knowledge and learning,* 2.

[66] D. Kapoor, & E. Shizha, 2010, *Indigenous knowledge and learning*, vii.

[67] M. F. Goodman, 2005, Persons, Ed. D. M. Borchert, 2006, *Encyclopedia of philosophy*, 2nd ed., Vol. 7, Detroit: Thomas Gate.

[68] N. Bunnin & J. Yu, 2004, Person, *The Blackwell dictionary of Western philosophy*, Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 512.

[69] N. Bunnin & J. Yu, 2004, Person, 512.

[70] C. G. Okojie, 1994, *Esan native laws and customs*, 1.

[71] C. G. Okojie,1992, *Words of wisdom from Ishan elders,* Benin City: Ilupeju Press, 1

[72] A. I. Okoduwa, 2001, In search of Esan Origin, *Iroro: Journal of Arts*, Vol. 8, no. 1 & 2, Sept, 220.

[73] A. I. Okoduwa, 2001, In search of Esan Origin, 220.

[74] A. I. Okoduwa, 2001, In search of Esan Origin, 220 – 221.

[75] A. I. Okoduwa, 2001, In search of Esan Origin, 220.

[76] C. G. Okojie, 1994, *Esan native laws and customs,* 17.

[77] C. G. Okojie, 1994, *Esan native laws and customs*, 30.

[78] K. K. Prah, 1993, African languages, the key to African development: a critique of ideas in development thinking. *Changing paradigms in development – South, East and West: a meeting of minds in Africa,* Ed. M. V. Troil, Uppsala: Mordiska Afrikainstitutet, 74.

[79] K. Wiredu, 1980. A philosophical perspective on the concept of human communication, *International Social Science Journal,* Vol. xxvii, no. 2, 199.

[80] C. G. Okojie, 1992, *Words of wisdom from Ishan elders*, 1.

[81] G. O. Ozumba, 2004, *Introduction to philosophy of language,* Ibadan: Hope Publications Ltd, 119.

[82] K. Wiredu, 1980, A philosophical perspective on the concept of human communication, 199.

[83] M. O. Omo-Ojugo, 2004, *Esan language endangered?* 7.

[84] M. O. Omo-Ojugo, 2004, *Esan language endangered?,* 2.

[85] A. I. Okoduwa, 2001, In search of Esan Origin, 223.

[86] M. O. Omo-Ojugo, 2004, *Esan language endangered?,* 3.

[87] R. W. Wescott, 1974, Benin names in Nigeria and Georgia, 21.

<h1 id="chapter-one">CHAPTER ONE</h1>

1.0 TRADITIONAL EPISTEMOLOGICAL THEORIES OF REPRESENTATION

1.1 Introduction.

This chapter exposes the traditional theories of representation as captured by Descartes and Locke in modern times, and critically evaluates the responses of social, virtue, moral, and feminist epistemologies to the two-fold deficiency of the traditional theories of representation. To successfully achieve this goal it will begin with an exposition of Western metaphysics as the foundation upon which the traditional theories of representation are built.

1.2 Western metaphysics as background to Western epistemology.

Defining the concept 'metaphysics' is difficult. The difficulty arises partly due to the fact that metaphysicians do diverse things and include different things into the scope of metaphysics. From the epistemological angle, we can begin with Aristotle's treatise which he titled 'First Philosophy'. This treatise of Aristotle contains his views on being, knowledge, causality, and so on. Another of his treatise which he titled 'Physics' deals with physical material things. These treatises were edited by his disciple Andronicus of Rhodes. In doing this Andronicus puts the treatise on 'First Philosophy' following another of Aristotle's treatise on 'physics'; thus coining the term 'metaphysics'. However, since the contents of Aristotle's 'First Philosophy' are abstract logical explanations of the fundamental principles behind the physical material world, the term 'metaphysics' later came to be understood as the search for the ultimate principle behind all existing things, which, for some scholars, culminates in the Unmoved Mover, the Supreme Being, or force or motion. In other words, metaphysics searches for ultimate principles beyond what the particular disciplines work with by considering all things "as beings or as

existents and attempts to specify the properties or features they exhibit just insofar as they are beings or existents."[1] With time the scope of metaphysics was expanded by the rationalists and empiricists in the modern period to include the mind-body problem, the problem of freedom and determinism, causality, essence and accidents, etcetera.

From the very beginning of philosophy, the human person was at the centre of philosophical discourse. Although the ancient Greek philosophers were primarily interested in cosmology, emphasis was on the power of the human reason to determine the meaning of reality that was hitherto left for the gods in Greek mythology. The gods of Greek mythology were the repositories of knowledge who used humans as objects to satisfy their whims and caprices. When the gods were dismissed on moral grounds, humans became the repository of knowledge who in turn now treat other persons and things as objects. Socrates later drew the attention of the Athenians to morality and other human values. With time, Aristotle developed a worldview to explain the whole of reality. In the Aristotelian worldview, for instance, the earth is the centre of the universe and the human person, who is the only rational and social animal, is the pivot around which things revolve. This worldview of Aristotle dominated rational discourse from 300BC to about 1600AD. Aristotle's belief or worldview includes the following: the earth is stationary, and is at the centre of the universe; the sun, moon, and the planets all revolve round the earth and complete a revolution in twenty-four hours; between the earth and the moon (sublunar region) are four elements – earth, water, air, and fire; beyond the moon (superlunar region) we have the sun, stars and other planets, and these are made up of a fifth element, ether; each element acts according to its nature – earth and water move downwards, air is above earth, fire is above air, and ether is in perfect circular movement; stationary objects remain stationary unless acted upon by itself (as it takes its natural level) or by external force (from human actions or objects).[2]

The invention of the telescope in early 1600AD proved that the world-view of Aristotle was wrong even though it was justified by the available data at the time. The telescope shows that the sun, and not the earth is the centre of the universe, and, consequently, the

earth moves round the sun. This new discovery ushered in the Newtonian worldview which includes the following beliefs: the earth revolves on its axis and completes a revolution in about twenty-four hours; the earth and the planets' orbit round the sun is elliptical; elements in the world are above one hundred; external forces like gravity influence the movement of objects; the same law that affects the earth also affects other planets.[3]

Although the Aristotelian worldview is wrong in the light of the Newtonian worldview, the Aristotelian worldview before the 1600s was a consistent, coherent and systematic web of beliefs that satisfactorily explained the reality of its time based on the facts available at that time. However, given the current facts and data at our disposal, the Newtonian worldview is still valid. With the sun at the centre of the universe, the human person ceases to be the focal point around which the universe revolves. Emphasis is now laid on matter. And natural laws as discovered by the natural scientist becomes the foundation for explaining reality, including the human person. Plants, animals and the human person are now subjected to the same scientific process of investigation, a process that disengages the self from the object of knowledge (persons and nonpersons) with the goal of attaining objectivity.

The concept 'objectivity' is no more explained from the perspective of the search for the ultimate reality or final cause. Emphasis is now laid on mechanical or efficient causation irrespective of whether the object of knowledge is the human person with cognitive and moral values, or nonhuman persons. The object of knowledge is classified and categorised but nondifferentiated between human persons and objects or things. To know an object of knowledge, irrespective of the category or class of the object, is to know scientifically; that is, impersonally (devoid of passions, prejudices, and idiosyncratic beliefs), objectively (deduced from laws, theories or hypotheses based on facts about the world), specifically (based on the characteristics of the class of the object), and publicly (accessible for others to verify). [4] In this notion of rationality, as Charles Taylor articulates it, "Man is also an object in nature, as well as the subject of knowledge. Hence

the new science breeds a type of understanding of man, mechanistic, atomistic, homogenizing and based on contingency."[5] On this mechanistic view of science the natural sciences are grounded. The social sciences, to be granted the status of 'science', have to mimic the natural sciences and aim at producing laws to explain and govern human social relations.

The scientific notion of objectivity greatly influenced modern philosophers as well as contemporary philosophers who, like logical positivists condemned metaphysics (as defined and practiced by their predecessors), reduced knowledge to language analysis, and verification became a scientific process. However, the rigour of the scientific enterprise, especially that of mathematics, greatly influenced Descartes in his search for clear and distinct ideas in his epistemology. This rigour also greatly influenced Locke's search for the foundation of our ideas. The views of Descartes and Locke capture vividly the theories of representation in modern times.

1.3 Theories of representation.

An exposition of the modernist agenda will further help in the understanding of the Cartesian and Lockean theories of representation. Early modern philosophers had a two-fold agenda. The first was "not to accept any belief unless they could convince themselves of it on their own."[6] This was occasioned by the fall of Aristotle's science that cast doubt on his philosophy, and on traditions and authority in scholarship. The Aristotelian worldview places the earth at the centre of the universe. This view was replaced by the Newtonian worldview that the sun is the centre of the universe. Thus Aristotle's science was brought into disrepute. Kuhn changed his interest in science to philosophy on his reading of Aristotle's *Physics*. He was astonished how wrong Aristotle was in his *Physics*, and wondered: "How could someone who wrote so brilliantly on so many topics be so misguided when it came to physics?"[7] However, interpreted in its own terms, Aristotle's *Physics* was not inferior to, but only different from, Newtonian physics.[8] Second was to find an ideal method upon which to ground knowledge and truth.

Rationalism and empiricism emerged as the two prominent methods from the modernist agenda. While rationalists believe that the foundation of knowledge lies in *a priori* principles innate in the mind, empiricists believe that the foundation of knowledge lies in *a posteriori* (empirical) principles based on experience. This thesis will now examine in detail the Cartesian and Lockean theories of representation as they are both good ambassadors of the rationalist and empiricist traditions respectively.

1.3.1   The Cartesian theory of representation.

Rene Descartes (1596 – 1650) wrote many works, among which are *Discourse on method* (written in French in 1637), *Meditations on the first philosophy* (written in Latin in 1641), and *The principles of philosophy* (written in Latin in 1644). His epistemology is well articulated in his first two works: *Discourse on method,* and *Meditations.*

In Part I of the *Discourse on method,* Descartes affirms reason or sense as something essential to all humans, and distinguishes humans from brutes.[9] Thus he established what he believes is the most natural way to go about any enquiry about the human person.

In Part II of the *Discourse on method,* he begins his search for a method with which he will explore objective knowledge that can withstand scepticism. He rejects the methods of logic (in philosophy), geometrical analysis and algebra (in mathematics) for their shortcomings and invents a new method that adopts the advantages of logic, geometry and algebra.[10] This new method is governed by four laws or precepts: (1) to accept as true only that which is presented to the mind "so clearly and distinctly as to exclude all grounds for doubt"; (2) to separate the issues involve into parts; (3) to think systematically from that which is simplest to know to that which is more complex; and (4) to be very critical in analysis so as not to omit anything.[11]

In Part III of the *Discourse on method*, Descartes composes the following three maxims (alongside the four laws or precepts stated above) to guide him in his search for an

indubitable foundation for knowledge: first, to obey laws and customs of his country with moderation so as to avoid extremes; second, to be firm and resolute in searching for truth acting in line with what is most probable; and third, to conquer self, rather than the order of the world, for only our thoughts are in our power and therein lies the realisation of all desires.[12]

With the above three maxims, Descartes begins his task of scrutinising his opinions by traveling to different nations of the world for nine years. During this period he interacts with learned persons so as to gather experience and have an informed judgment devoid of parochialism. Armed with experience, Descartes begins his methodic doubt of all he hitherto knew; not like the sceptics "who doubt only that they may doubt, and seek nothing beyond uncertainty itself", but with the design "simply to find ground of assurance, and cast aside the loose earth and sand, that I might reach the rock or the clay."[13]

In Part IV, Descartes observes that the thoughts one experiences at wakeful state are similar to those one experiences at dream state. But he has been deceived in the past by sense experiences at wakeful state; and dream experiences, though similar to wakeful experiences, are illusory. Hence, he concludes that wakeful experiences and dream experiences are both illusory and false. From here he comes to realise that he is but thought; and upon this 'thought', the 'ego', he builds his first principle of philosophy:

> But immediately upon this I observed that, whilst I thus wished to think that all was false, it was absolutely necessary that I, who thus thought, should be somewhat; and as I observed that this truth, *I think, hence I am*, was so certain and of such evidence that no ground of doubt, however extravagant, could be alleged by the sceptics capable of shaking it, I concluded that I might, without scruple, accept it as the first principle of the philosophy of which I was in search.[14]

Descartes observes that this first principle, *I think, hence I am,* is true and he is certain of it because it possesses clearness and distinctness. From this first principle he proceeds to formulate a second principle: "all the things which we very clearly and distinctly conceive are true".[15] But then he was immediately confronted with the problem of

determining rightly what one distinctively conceives. One may delude oneself that one clearly and distinctly conceives something when in actual fact one does not. To resolve this problem, he noticed that his doubt shows that he is not perfect; and to know should be a greater perfection than to doubt. Since he knows clearly and distinctly, *I think, hence I am,* that knowledge (*I think, hence I am)* could not have come from him (an imperfect doubting being) but from something with a nature more perfect than his (that has the perfection of knowing). And this 'something' that possesses this perfection (of knowing) exists, for he, Descartes, could not have been existing alone to produce something perfect. So, the knowledge of some perfection he did not possess (to know that *I think, hence I am)* shows that there is a necessary perfect being that exists, and who bestows some perfection on him. Descartes then proceeded to use the existence of God he has thus established to explain the principle that 'all the things which we clearly and distinctly conceive are true'. He argued that since God is a perfect being from whom we obtain all that we possess, then "it follows that our ideas or notions, which to the extent of their clearness and distinctness are real, and proceed from God, must to that extent be true."[16] Consequently, ideas or notions that contain some falsehood are 'confused and obscure' and proceed from our human imperfect nature that is prone to deception (and not from God's perfect nature). He particularly observed that our senses do deceive us and that our thought in a dream state is not as clear as that of the wakeful state.

In Part V, Descartes observes that God has established natural laws and impressed them in our minds; and this is further proven to be so by sufficient reflection. And in Part VI, he incited 'men of superior genius' to experiment on his opinions before he commits them to writing with the aim of advancing public interest.[17]

Furthermore, Descartes second work, *Meditations on the first philosophy,* contains an elaborate explanation of his epistemology and the proof of God's existence and the existence of the soul. In the "*Dedication*" of the work, he likens his demonstrations to the certain, long and difficult demonstrations in geometry, and expresses no surprise if some persons find his demonstrations difficult to understand (just as some persons find the

demonstrations in geometry difficult to understand) since only few persons are committed to the sincere search for truth.[18] And in the "*Preface*" of the work, he gives two short replies to two objections to the *Discourse on the method* which he later elaborates on in the *Meditations*. The first objection was limiting the thinking being solely to thought (excluding all other qualities). The second objection was the idea that a being more perfect than oneself necessarily implies that such an idea is more perfect than oneself, and also that what the idea stands for exists.[19]

However, since the main focus of this chapter is to expose the traditional theories of representation, it shall focus on Descartes' First, Second, and Sixth Meditations to corroborate his arguments in the *Discourse on method.*

In *Meditation I*, Descartes observes that since the senses which form the bases of all he hitherto believes to be true have deceived him in the past, prudence demands that he should not rely on them. Also he could not rely on the experiences of the wakeful state since they are similar to those of the dream state. And even if the workings of arithmetic and geometry are more certain and seem indubitable compared to those of physics, astronomy and medicine, he may be under deception by a malignant demon on such matters.[20] Thus, once more, Descartes doubts all he had previously known to be true.

In *Meditation II,* Descartes casts aside all that contain some element (no matter how little) of doubt in search of an Archimedean point (firm and solid ground) that is certain and indubitable. His search for this Archimedean point leads him to the fact that he could be deceived, and therefore, he exists. But then what does his existence consist of? Pure thought or thought with some other qualities? Nourishment, walking, perceiving and thought are actions he refers to the soul. But nourishment, walking and perceiving need the collaboration of the body whose ideas contain doubt. Only thinking belongs essentially to the mind, to me. I exist as often as I think. So, I am only a thinking, understanding being, mind or reason.[21] Furthermore, this thinking being or mind has the

following properties: "It is a thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, wills, refuses, that imagines also, and perceives."[22]

Furthermore, though the senses through which he apprehends things can be deceptive or he may be in a dream state, but in all these he is certain that he seems to be experiencing perception, and this seeming is thinking. From this experience Descartes examines extension, flexibility and movement of bodies. Using wax as an example of a sense perception of an object in bits and parts and motion, he argues that imagination cannot fully comprehend all the possible shapes and forms it can take; hence only the mind can comprehend the true nature of the wax as intuition. This intuition of the mind of sense perception of objects is a comprehension by the faculty of judgment in the mind based on what is believed to have being perceived.[23] Objects are what the thinking being or mind says they are.

Finally, in *Meditation VI,* Descartes argues for the existence of material objects on the ground that they are the objects of 'pure mathematics' and can be conceived 'clearly and distinctly.' He distinguishes imagination from conceiving or pure intellection. The mind can exist without imagination. As for the existence of the body, he recognises the fact that his mind is conjoined with some body which exists, and the mind can also imagine corporeal objects. In conceiving (pure intellection) the mind reflects upon itself considering the ideas in itself; in imagining the mind contemplates some objects from the body that conforms to some ideas it has hitherto conceived or apprehended by the senses.[24] Since he is often deceived by the senses, he concludes that he is essentially a thinking thing (unextended) that is closely conjoined to a body thing (extended and unthinking); but the mind can exist without the body. Corporeal or extended objects or substances are often obscure and confused by the senses. However, whatever the mind conceives to be clear and distinct about objects do exist externally.[25]

In a nut shell, Descartes epistemology states that the thinking being (the ego, the self, the mind), is the foundation of knowledge. The existence of the thinking being is arrived at

through the assistance of an existing perfect God that imputes knowing (a perfection) that it is doubting or thinking into the thinking being that naturally doubts (an imperfection). This thinking being is unextended and it is conscious of two things: first, a body that is extended and unthinking, and that it is conjoined to; and, second, through intuition, the apprehension of objects brought to it by sense perception. And, as far as these objects are concerned, the thinking being or mind has the final say as to what their true natures are since the senses are deceptive. Thus there is a strict divide between the subject of knowledge – the solitary, independent, thinking being, or mind, on the one hand, and the object of knowledge – the body that it is conjoined to, other persons, and objects or things in nature, on the other hand.

1.3.2 The Lockean theory of representation.

John Locke (1632 – 1704) developes his epistemological theory of representation in his work: *An essay concerning human understanding* (1690). He begins his essay arguing against the idea of innate principles. The senses, for instance the eyes, bring sensation to us so that we can have some ideas, like that of colour. Though there are universally agreed principles that peoples consent to like the law of identity and noncontradiction, these are not innate since they are not found in children and idiots.[26] It is false that reason discovers innate principles or maxims because reason "is nothing else but the faculty of deducing unknown truths from principles or propositions that are already known".[27] It is also false that there are innate practical principles, for if there were the principles of 'justice, piety, gratitude, equity, chastity' would not have been relative to nations and cultures.[28]

Locke identifies thought as something persons are conscious of; and in thinking, persons make use of ideas. Ideas, therefore, are the objects of thinking. And, assuming the mind to be a blank white paper devoid of all ideas, he asks the question of where all the materials for reason and knowledge come from. "To this I answer, in one word, from *experience*. In that all our knowledge is founded; and from that it ultimately derives

itself."[29] Therefore, our observation of external objects, on the one hand, with our reflections on the workings of our mind, on the other hand, "supplies our understandings with all the materials of thinking", and from these two comes "all the ideas we have, or can naturally have".[30] When the working of the mind is reflected on and considered by the soul, it supplies our understandings with ideas (internal senses) like "perception, thinking, doubting, believing, reasoning, knowing, willing, and all the different actings of our minds;" hence, to the senses (external) belongs 'sensation', while that of the workings of the mind (internal sense) is 'reflection'.[31] However, the soul can only think when furnished with ideas from the senses. And "by compounding these ideas, and reflecting on its own operations, it increases its stock, as well as facility in remembering, imagining, reasoning, and other modes of thinking."[32]

In Book II, Ch. II, Locke explains simple and complex ideas. Simple ideas come from sensation and reflection. The senses, for instance, take different ideas from objects, hence sight takes colour, while touch takes smoothness or hardness. A simple idea has the characteristics of being "uncompounded, contains in it nothing but one uniform appearance, or conception in the mind, and is not distinguishable into different ideas."[33] These simple ideas are stored by the understanding; and the understanding has the power "to repeat, compare, and unite them, even to an almost infinite variety, and so can make at pleasure new complex ideas."[34]

In Bk II, Ch. VIII, Locke discusses the primary qualities of objects (figure, number, motion or rest, and solid parts of an object) and the secondary qualities (produced in our senses through the power in objects the qualities of sound, colour, taste, smell, and so on). And in Bk II, Ch. XII, he further explains how complex ideas are formed. From simple ideas the mind makes or forms complex ideas. The mind passively receives sensations and reflections as simple ideas, and actively does the following three things to the simple ideas it has passively received:

> (1) Combining several simple ideas into one compound one; and thus all complex ideas are made. (2) The second is bringing two ideas,

whether simple or complex, together, and setting them by one another; by which way it gets all its ideas of relations. (3) The third is separating them from all other ideas that accompany them in their real existence: this is called abstraction: and thus all its general ideas are made.[35]

From simple and complex ideas, Locke makes a case for knowledge. To avoid the slow progress and endless work of dwelling on particular things, the mind shortens its way to knowledge through contemplation (of things themselves) or conference (with others about them) and create species or classes, or types of things. By so doing the mind imputes any knowledge it gets of a particular type, species or class into all things in that class, species or type.[36] Thus men assume their ideas corresponding to things. Since complex ideas and ideas of substances are basically the product of the workings of the mind, they are more liable to falsehood.

Furthermore, since the mind has no immediate object of thought or reason apart from simple ideas which is in it through sensation or reflection, then knowledge becomes the output of the workings of the mind. Locke explains this thus:

Knowledge is the perception of the agreement or disagreement of two ideas. Knowledge then seems to me to be nothing but the perception of the connexion of and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy of any of our ideas. In this alone it consists. Where this perception is, there is knowledge, and where it is not, there, though we may fancy, guess, or believe, yet we always come short of knowledge.[37]

And this agreement or disagreement of ideas that knowledge consists of are in four parts: identity, relation, co-existence or necessary connexion, and real existence. In these four parts lie actual knowledge.[38]

In Bk IV, Ch. II, Locke discourses the degree or difference in clearness of our knowledge which depends on the different ways the mind perceives the agreement or disagreement of ideas. In this degree of clearness of our knowledge, Locke gives primacy to intuitive knowledge. Here the agreement or disagreement of two ideas is perceived by the mind "immediately by themselves, without the intervention of any other: … For in this the mind is at no pains of proving or examining, but perceives the truth as the eye doth light, only by being directed towards it."[39] Examples of intuitive knowledge is white is not

black, a circle is not a triangle, three is made up of the combination of one and two. This intuitive knowledge "is the clearest and most certain that human frailty is capable of" and on it "depends all the certainty and evidence of all our knowledge".[40]

Next to intuitive knowledge in the degree of clearness is demonstrative knowledge, which is also known as scientific knowledge or reasoning. This knowledge is inferior to intuitive knowledge although it is very probable. Here the mind perceives the agreement or disagreement of ideas, not intuitively or immediately, but depending on other intervening ideas known as proofs. The mind, through the process of rapt attention, pain and rigour, follows some steps and slowly makes progress by eliminating initial doubt to arrive at certainty. Intuitive evidence accompanies each of the steps of the entire demonstrative evidence to endorse it. This is the process both for mathematical quantity of number, extension and figure, as well as other forms of demonstrative knowledge.[41]

The least in the degree of clearness is sensitive knowledge. This is knowledge of the existence of finite beings that are independent of us. Sensitive knowledge is less certain than that of demonstrative knowledge. We are only intuitively certain that "the idea we receive from an external object is in our minds."[42] But of the existence of anything other than the ideas in our minds, or the existence of anything independent of us "which corresponds to that idea" in our minds, we cannot be certain. So, particular external objects exist "by that perception and consciousness we have of the actual entrance of ideas from them," and of them we are least certain.[43]

Furthermore, since knowledge is nothing more than "the perception of the agreement or disagreement of any of our ideas", then it follows that it cannot extend beyond the ideas that we have or beyond our perceiving their agreement or disagreement via intuition, reason (demonstration), or sensation (of particular things).[44] However, since the mind knows things not immediately at first, but through simple sensation, it follows that our knowledge of things "is real only so far as there is a conformity between our ideas and the reality of things."[45] And, since the mind perceives nothing but its ideas, it also follows

that only simple ideas are conformed to things, while complex ideas (except ideas of substance) are archetypes of the mind and may not have any connexion with nature; hence we cannot be infallibly certain of complex ideas.[46]

In addition, while knowledge of our own existence is by intuition derived from our experiences of sensation, thought, doubt etcetera, our knowledge of material things is by sensation; and sensual knowledge is inferior to rational knowledge of demonstration.[47] The function of reason is to enlarge our knowledge and regulate our assent in four degrees: the first and the highest is to discover truth; the second is to dispose truth methodically; the third is to perceive the connexion of truth; and the fourth is to make right conclusions.[48]

In summary, for Locke knowledge is based essentially on experience. It is the perception of the mind of the agreement or disagreement of ideas that come in simple forms of sensation (of the senses) and reflection (of the mind), and made complex by the mind. Intuitive knowledge is the clearest of knowledge for finite persons. From it proceeds knowledge of the existence of the self. Demonstrative or scientific knowledge depends on proof (other ideas) and is therefore highly probable. As for knowledge of objects, these are nothing more than ideas of the mind forming a representation of objects whose independent existence from humans we cannot ascertain. However to the extent that these representations mimic those of objects as presented by sensation, to that extent our knowledge of object is true.

1.4 The two-fold deficiency of the theories of representation.

The traditional theories of representation, especially as captured by the rationalist Descartes, and the empiricist Locke, are still dominant approaches to epistemology in contemporary times. These theories of representation essentially stress the primacy of reason, or the primacy of the senses in the acquisition of knowledge. Experience plays a large role in the acquisition of knowledge. Actually, Dougherty and Rysiew note that

experience is first "in the order of immediacy: in fact, experience is where we begin (which is not to say that it is what we know best)."[49] With experience beliefs are justified, rational claims are judged, truths are better known, and disputes are resolved on a neutral ground.[50] Experience was, however, reduce by Descartes and Locke to sense perception and the internal workings of the mind. This view of experience is too narrow. Broadly construed, experience includes all human ways of engaging with the world – intuition, imagination, insights, feelings, and so on. This broad view of experience will be reflected on later when examining the feminist position on epistemology.

Also, Descartes and Locke make a strict divide between the subject of knowledge (the self, the ego, the mind, or the soul) and the object of knowledge (the body conjoined with the soul, other persons and objects and things in nature). Added to this, they make knowledge the sole prerogative of the subject uninfluenced by other persons, his or her own biological traits, or any socio-cultural or historical contingencies; and, whatever clear representation or distinct judgment about an object the subject of knowledge makes concerning an object, is what the object is.

These views of Descartes and Locke capture the traditional theories of representation in modern times, and make a sharp distinction between the subject of knowledge (the self, the ego, the mind, or the soul) and the object of knowledge (the body conjoined with the soul, other persons, objects and things in nature), and see knowledge as a product of reason, the mind, or the senses of the solitary individual uninfluenced by personal traits and attitudes, socio-cultural and historical contexts of the subject of knowledge (the knower) and the object known (other persons, objects, or things). Such knowledge produced is believed to be a 'mirror', or a representation of nature.

The traditional theories of representation, especially as captured by Descartes and Locke in modern times, have generated reactions from philosophers, anthropologists, and social scientists. Kant attempts a reconciliation between rationalists and empiricists as to the foundation of knowledge. Also, some scholars have argued that these theories of

representation have disengaged the self, the mind, or the subject of knowledge from the influence of personal traits and attitudes, as well as socio-cultural and historical contexts of knowledge production. And, as Jovchelovitch rightly points out, these representations are deprived of "pathos and ethos."[51] Descartes begins this disengagement, and Locke continues it. Jovchelovitch explains the consequences of this disengagement by Descartes and Locke thus:

> The double separation between self and world and self from itself operated a double split: it not only deprived representation from its human sources and its context of production but also, and equally important, radically dehumanised the subject of representation. The theory of representation based on certainty and correspondence was constructed on the basis of a double isolation: it isolated self from the world and self from itself.[52]

In addition, this disengagement further burdens the 'self' with solitude and isolation, and the 'other' becomes alien and foreign.[53] This representational (picture or mirror) view of knowledge is central to the modernist project such that the failure of the modernist project led some philosophers like W. V. O. Quine to call for a rejection of traditional theories of representation in favour of naturalised epistemology built on psychology. He reasoned that since our picture view of the world comes from the stimulation of our sensory receptors, "Why not settle for psychology?"[54] After all, Quine argues, psychology studies a physical human subject who is "accorded a certain experimentally controlled input – certain patterns of irradiation in assorted frequencies, for instance – and in the fullness of time the subject delivers as output a description of the three-dimensional external world and its history."[55] However, Quine's position that epistemology, due to the failure of the modernist project as well as those of the logical positivists to implement the modernist project to the full, should be reduced to a chapter in psychology has been criticised by Jaegwon Kim on the grounds that knowledge is essentially normative and Quine's naturalised epistemology is nonnormative; hence Quine's talk of 'input' and 'output' in terms of causal relations[56]. Also Hilary Putnam criticises Quine on the grounds that the elimination of the normative from epistemology reduces our statements to noise-making and our thoughts mere subvocalization.[57] In

addition, the failure of the modernist agenda also made Rorty to reject the whole idea of epistemology. [58] However, recent trends in epistemology have tried to savage epistemology from the limitations imposed on it by the theories of representation.

Furthermore, since the person-object is classified alongside nonperson-objects (other objects and things in nature) as object of knowledge, the person-object also becomes dehumanised, and this further strengthens subjectivism and individualism.

The two-fold deficiency in the traditional theories of representation can be captured thus:

(a) The theories make strict dichotomy between subject and object of knowledge requiring the disengagement of the subject from the world. This disengagement burdens the self with solitude and isolation, while the 'other' becomes alien and foreign.

(b) The theories group together, as object of knowledge, other persons (possessing cognitive and moral values) and objects or things (nonpersons) thereby producing propositional knowledge that does not discriminate between persons and nonperson. This radically dehumanizes the relationship between the subject of knowledge (the human person; the knower), on the one hand, and other persons as object of knowledge, on the other hand.

Responses to the two-fold deficiency in the traditional theories of representation have given birth to some recent epistemological schools of thought like social epistemology, virtue epistemology, moral epistemology, and feminist epistemology. These responses will now be examined.

1.5 Responses to the two-fold deficiency of the theories of representation.

1.5.1 Kant and the foundation of knowledge.

The rationalist tradition, represented by Descartes, placed the foundation of genuine knowledge in the rational (thinking) mind with *a priori* principles and categories. The empiricist tradition, also represented by Locke, placed the foundation of knowledge in experience which writes on the mind and from which intuitive knowledge, demonstrative knowledge, and sensual knowledge of objects are derived. Kant attempted a reconciliation of the conflicting positions of the rationalists and empiricists.

In the second edition of the *Critique of pure reason* (1787) Kant attempted a synthesis of the views of rationalists and the empiricists towards arriving at an acceptable foundation of knowledge, thus putting an end to the dispute between the rationalists and the empiricists on the matter, thereby securing metaphysics.

Kant reiterates that all knowledge proceed from experience. Experience here means "the first product that our understanding brings forth as it works on the raw material of sensible sensations." [59] Experience is, therefore, of the senses and it is made up of particular (not universal) phenomenon. Experience is also empirical or *a posteriori,* and in a state of disorder. This disordered state of experience is not sufficient on its own to produce knowledge. Disordered experience needs some order before it can fully be knowledge. This order comes from reason which is *a priori,* and, by nature, desires universality. So, although reason is *a priori,* it needs experience to furnish it with raw materials; hence, experience, as the raw material of reason contains *a priori* content. Also, as in mathematics, for instance, certain cognition transcend experience and cannot be contradicted by experience. This explains why reason "consists in analyses of the concepts that we already have of objects" using its categories; thus it adds something alien to the concepts that it already has. [60]

To further explain the difference between knowledge based solely on experience and that based on pure reason (reasoning devoid of experience or sensation, and thereby transcendental), Kant makes an analytic and synthetic distinction of statements. An analytic statement is one in which the predicate is an essential part of the subject; thus the

predicate adds nothing new to the subject, but simply clarifies the subject. Examples of analytic statements are "all bodies are extended", and "everything that happens has its cause". A synthetic statement, on the contrary, is one in which the predicate adds something new or something more to the subject, something that is not an essential part of the subject; thus the predicate simply amplifies the subject. An example is "all bodies are heavy".[61]

In addition, Kant argues that, "although all our cognition commences with experience, yet it does not on that account all arise from experience."[62] The reason for this view is that "if a judgment is thought in strict universality, i.e., in such a way that no exception at all is allowed to be possible, then it is not derived from experience, but is rather valid absolutely *a priori*."[63] In other words, a judgment of an object is *a priori* when we successfully remove from the object everything empirical about the object leaving behind that by which you think of the object as a substance or dependent on a substance.[64]

Thus for Kant the dispute of the rationalists and empiricists over the foundation of knowledge is resolved in the synthesis of reason and of senses. Though knowledge begins with experience (of the senses) it needs the categories of reason to give meaning to the chaotic and meaningless sense data of experience for there to be both analytic knowledge and synthetic knowledge. Thus Kant resolves to a large extent the problem of the foundation of knowledge.

1.5.2 Social and feminist epistemology.

The concept 'social epistemology' has been described in some quarters as an oxymoron in the sense that sociology deals with particular instances, while philosophy is a universal discipline. However, the statements of some philosophers like W. V. O. Quine that epistemology should now become a branch of psychology, and the view of Rorty that epistemology has no future as a result of the failure of the modernist project, led some scholars to find ways of rescuing epistemology from the analytic tradition that takes the

Cartesian individual as the ideal knower. Fuller's work *Social epistemology*[65] is a detailed argument for a social epistemology where the future of epistemology lies not in analytic epistemology, but in the intrinsic nature of knowledge which is social with a multicultural and public setting. It aligns with the French and German philosophical traditions, influenced by Comtean positivism or neo-Kantianism, which have stressed the shared and systematic character of episteme in epistemology, rather than the evidential support of the beliefs possessed by the individual knower; thus focusing on the distinctive methods of the special sciences as they reveal or reflect basic value differences in society at large.[66]

Social epistemology is, therefore, one of the post-modern theories of epistemology that takes into cognizance what other disciplines that are involved in the production of knowledge have to say about knowledge. It also considers how knowledge is produced by different cultures of the world. So it is a movement that cuts across disciplines and cultures with emphasis on the social construction of knowledge.

Social epistemology contends with the traditional theories of representation, especially as espoused by Descartes and Locke. It rejects the idea of the production of knowledge by an asocial subjective individual, an idea that is found in Descartes and Locke. For Fuller, the Cartesian attempt to reduce knowledge to a variant of 'justified true belief' is artificial. It has the ontological assumption of the 'belief' condition having ideal "privileged creatures with a conscience, or consciousness, as knowledge-bearers"[67] – an assumption that the analytic epistemologist rarely questions; thus ignoring or distancing the self from the 'consensus theory of truth,' "which works by some weighted aggregation of beliefs."[68] Knowledge cannot be produced by an individual who operates in a social vacuum;[69] and human inquiry involves a social and a historical process [70] without which there cannot be knowledge. This idea of the social and historical processes of knowledge production has been demonstrated in Thomas Kuhn's *The structure of scientific revolutions*,[71] where paradigm shift is a social process.

Knowledge as a social process leads to a scientific study of the different historical epochs and socio-cultural contexts of the subject of knowledge and how these epochs and contexts influence his or her knowledge production. Hence a shift or change in social relations of knowledge producers produces a different form of knowledge. This approach negates the epistemological perspective that views knowledge from 'inside-out' (the product of the solitary individual uninfluenced by socio-cultural and historical contexts), and adopts the perspective that views knowledge from 'outside-in'. The 'outside-in' perspective portrays the cognitive agent "as choosing between one or two or more alternative research trajectories, fully realizing that resources are limited and that other agents will be making similar decisions at roughly the same time."[72]

DeWitt, in *Worldviews: an introduction to the history and philosophy of science,* explains how socio-cultural and historical contexts influence knowledge production. These contexts produce worldviews from which we interpret reality. For instance, the Aristotelian worldview that the earth is the centre of the universe dominated the world from the time of Aristotle to about 1600 AD. This was replaced by that of Newton that the sun is the centre of the universe, not for any direct evidence (for we do not feel or see the earth moving round the sun), but indirect evidence coming from our reasonable beliefs in experts (scientists) whose explanations seem to answer more current questions than those Aristotle's worldview can answer. These experts do not themselves have direct evidence though they may have good evidence from scientific experiments, which is much more indirect than it is presented to be.[73] So, different worldviews of different cultures will produce different interpretations of the world.

Also, Smith, in *Moral, believing animals,* has argued that indubitable and universal knowledge for all human beings irrespective of culture, race or age is humanly not possible. This is because humans are fundamentally believers with deep-rooted sets of assumptions and beliefs (cultural ontologies) that are empirically unverifiable, and that vary from one epoch to another. The examples given below will help buttress his point.

> The Aztecs willingly engaged in the human sacrifice of many
> thousands of their own people every year on the altar of the sun god
> Tenochtitlan, believing that the victims' blood contain an energy
> needed to nourish the gods and the universe. Contemporary Americans
> willingly sacrifive about five thousand of our teenagers every year in
> large steelboxes propelled rapidly through space, because, finally, we
> believe in the reality and moral worth of individual freedom, mobility,
> and self-direction.[74]
>
> Certain ancient Hebrews believed that God spoke to them in dreams
> and through angels – indeed they experienced it and recorded it in
> writing. Certain contemporary Americans believe that their 'innerchild'
> (or unresolved parental relationships or repressed instincts, etc) speak
> to them through dreams and intuitions – they too experienced it and
> record it in writing.[75]

One major contribution of social epistemology is its emphasis of the role socio-cultural and historical contexts play in knowledge production; thus meliorating the excesses in Plato's and Aristotle's views on rationality as the only essential characteristic of humans. Aristotle's definition of human beings as essentially rational, for instance, is the foundation upon which the analytic tradition is built. This view is also echoed by Descartes when he says that reason or sense is the only thing "which constitutes us men, and distinguishes us from the brutes"[76]; and Locke when he says that reason is a faculty in man "whereby man is supposed to be distinguished from beasts, and wherein it is evident he must surpass them."[77] This emphasis on reason alone, in the view of social epistemology is myopic because humans are also essentially social, and they are social before being rational.

Another contribution of social epistemology is the recognition of the 'other' (person-object) as a co-social producer of knowledge who engages in knowledge with imperfect cognitive tools. However, this recognition is not accorded nonperson objects.

In addition, another post-modern theory of epistemology that has many things in common with social epistemology is feminist epistemology. Feminism is a movement that accuses academic disciplines, including philosophy, of being patriarchal and insensitive to the values and contributions of women to scholarship. Feminist epistemology accuses traditional epistemology, for instance, of being overtly masculine. It specifically

challenges the traditional epistemological view, especially as captured by Descartes and Locke, "that knowledge is to be seen in a pure, abstract, universal way, detached from the concrete realities of gender, social class, and other important differences."[78] This creates an ideal male knower as the paradigm of rationality; thus ignoring the role played by feminine qualities and attributes, social classification, economic power, etcetera, in the acquisition of knowledge.

Also, feminist epistemologists challenge the dualistic conception of the world in which "one side of duality has been privileged over the other – objective knowledge is superior to subjective opinion, masculinity to femininity, science to other forms of knowledge and theory, reason to emotion, the mind to the body, and so on."[79]

One reason for this error of deducing the ideal knower from masculine attributes is the belief that objectivity (especially in science) can only be attained through a purely rational process devoid of feelings or emotions, and values. But feminists and some philosophers of science and epistemology are of the view that "in any state of science – in every stage of any cognitive activity of any sort that anybody does – there is inevitable influence by that person's values, attitudes, past experiences, emotional state, and so on.[80] So, objectivity, as defined by traditional epistemology, is unattainable.

The implication of the above view is that objectivity needs to be redefined to incorporate values and other human traits that were hitherto removed from its definition so as to attain a realist objectivity. "Many [feminist epistemologists] argue that a true epistemic universality could be achieved only when characteristically female values, attitudes, experience, and so on, have been added to the determinants of epistemic activity and results." [81] Other characteristics of knowledge to be taken into cognisance are embodiments (varying body constitutions), personal knowledge of others, *know-how* (to be added to *know-that*), cognitive styles, background beliefs and world-views, knowledge-relations to other inquirers, 'women's intuition', common-sense, anecdotal evidence, and so on.[82] The position of feminist epistemologists is summarised below:

> First, that 'knowledge' is actually constructed and understood from a particular social standpoint. … We must therefore consider the implications of thinking about knowledge from alternative standpoints. Second, that we should focus on relations between subjectivity and objectivity, or reason and emotion, not see them as oppositions. Third, that we take seriously the place – which has tended to be erased in conventional epistemology – of emotion, subjectivity, and the body in knowledge. Fourth, that we cease to think of reason and emotion as normatively the province of men and women respectively. Fifth, … revaluing the 'feminine' sides of the dualisms…[83]

The response of feminist epistemology to the two-fold deficiency of the traditional theories of representation is enormous. It calls for an overhaul of the concept of knowledge, objectivity in scientific methodology, and rationality. Knowledge ceases to be a solitary affair of a particular gender. Other persons are involved (male and female), world-views and other human values are incorporated into the concept of knowledge.

1.5.3 Virtue and moral epistemology.

The concept virtue has many meanings. It can mean excellence of character (in an Aristotelian sense), skill, or power.[84] It can also be seen as an innate or acquired excellence, "a disposition, skill, or competence that makes one good at achieving some goal."[85] Virtue epistemology, therefore, is one of the oldest views in epistemology as a version of it can be traced to Aristotle.[86] However, in recent times it can be conceived as a theory in epistemology "that focus epistemic evaluation on properties of persons rather than properties of beliefs or propositions."[87] It is a reaction to the traditional debate of foundationalism and coherentism as to the concept of justification built on an understanding of knowledge as 'justified true belief.' It speaks of an epistemic virtue or intellectual capacity as "a competence by which one would mostly attain the intellectual end of believing the truth and avoiding error. …To have an intellectual virtue is to have an inner nature, **I**, in virtue of which one would mostly attain true belief and avoid error in a certain range of propositions in a certain set of conditions."[88] In other words, being proficient in a given field makes one virtuous in relation to that field. To be virtuous in judging some propositions correctly demands some conditions to be met or present. Hence, "Relative to the pitch blackness of a coal mine or a world of demonic deception **I**

provides us with no intellectual virtue."[89] Another way of explaining epistemic virtue or intellectual virtue is conscientiousness, and Pritchard explains it thus: "An agent who is conscientious in the way in which she forms her beliefs (i.e., she is careful to avoid error and takes all available evidence into account), will be more likely to form true beliefs than someone who is unconscientious."[90]

Sosa gives some traits one should have in virtue epistemology. He buttresses his view with the example of performance aimed at three attainments: "accuracy: reaching the aim; adroitness: manifesting skill or competence; and aptness: reaching the aim *through* the adroitness manifest."[91] So, for a belief to constitute knowledge, it should have the characteristic stated below:

> What is required of one's belief, if it is to constitute knowledge, is at most its having some basis that it would not easily have had unless true, some basis that it would (likely) have had only if true. When your belief that you are in pain is based on your excruciating pain, it satisfies this requirement: it would not have been so based unless true, it would (likely) have been so based only if true.[92]

In addition, Fairweather gives the following conditions for one to be in a state of virtue:

> A state of a person is a virtue if and only if it is (i) enduring, (ii) acquired, (iii) a power that allows its possessor to reliably succeed in bringing about a certain end, (iv) a motivation to bring about an end appropriate to the end in (iii). A virtue is a complex state that has a motivation and a disposition to reliably reach a certain end as components.[93]

A motivational power is a desire, passion, feeling, and emotion; thus a person has epistemic motivation (EM) "if and only if he has a desire for truth and this state influences his conduct."[94] To the trait of epistemic motivation Linda Zagzebski adds wisdom and understanding, while James Montuarquet adds open-mindedness and conscientiousness. However, attaining truth remains the main goal of epistemic motivation.[95]

Epistemic or intellectual virtues, therefore, are properties of persons which enable them distinguish true propositions from false propositions under certain conditions. These

virtues can be innate (the senses, brain, nervous system) or acquired over time (proficiency in a given field, conscientiousness, accuracy, adroitness, aptness, endurance in finding truth, reliability, motivation, wisdom and understanding, and open-mindedness). Focus is now on the capacity or competence of a subject of knowledge to be able to attain truth and avoid falsehood given certain conditions. Its main contribution to epistemology will be the shift from the preoccupation of traditional epistemology to produce propositions that will mimic, copy, or mirror nature to the disposition of the subject of knowledge to be able to attain true propositions and avoid false propositions.

Another contribution of virtue epistemology is the acknowledgement of the lack of perfection in intellectual or epistemic virtues of the subject of knowledge. So it suggests an openness on the part of the subject of knowledge to a continuous improvement in epistemic or intellectual virtue. This requires a conscientiousness analogous to that of sports men or women, or artists in achieving a goal.

Another epistemological theory that emphasises the properties of a person is moral epistemology. Moral epistemology is interested in the acquisition, scope and limit of human knowledge. Morality deals with doing good (the virtuous) and avoiding evil (the vice) as much as we possibly can. But we need to know and understand the good (the virtuous) to be done and the evil (the vice) to be avoided. Knowing involves truth, beliefs, evidence and justification, reasoning, etcetera, and the role these play in determining moral goodness and badness, and virtues and vices.[96]

To claim to know someone else's moral character is an issue that concerns epistemology, especially as it is "an essential prerequisite to whatever moral values they thereafter attribute to that person (selfish, honorable, unreliable)."[97] Hallen, in chapter two: "moral epistemology" of *The good, the bad and the beautiful,* stresses the importance of the moral attributes of a person to the person's statements. When a Yoruba attributes truthfulness to a person, for example, it is implied that "statements made, information conveyed, by that person to others can be relied upon and used as 'true' for whatever

more mundane purposes to which it may prove relevant".[98] So, in Yoruba culture the moral and the cognitive or epistemological are intertwined to the extent that

> any speaker's reputation, their moral character, as defined by others becomes one prominent consideration to the epistemological rating of their statements. Reciprocally, the statements made by an individual, in principle on any subject, may be treated as firsthand evidence of the individual's moral character.[99]

So, moral epistemology, like virtue epistemology, is also a shift form justifying propositions with what they represent (something external to the subject of knowledge) to justifying propositions with the moral values of the subject of knowledge (something internal) which enables other persons impute epistemic values of truth, reliability, justification and so on, on the propositions made. Here, knowledge goes beyond the cognition of the solitary individual to embrace the total moral value of the subject of knowledge.

1.6 Conclusion

These responses of Kant, social and feminist epistemology, as well as virtue and moral epistemology to the two-fold deficiency of the traditional theories of representation as captured by Descartes and Locke have achieved some success. Kant's Copernican revolution in epistemology is commendable. Social and feminist epistemology have noted the value of the socio-cultural and historical contexts of knowledge production, as well as feminine qualities, ignored by the solitary individual of the traditional theories of representation; thus stressing that humans are primarily social before being rational. By so doing they have rescued the isolated and solitary individual from being alienated from human natural traits, as well as from other knowledge producers. They have also noted the role played by other persons in the production of knowledge, even though these other persons will be person-objects to one another. However, they did not push the argument to the logical conclusion that the person-object, by virtue of being recognised as a co-social producer of knowledge, possesses some values which necessitate his or her being

separated from the nonperson-object that is not a co-social producer of knowledge. In other words, social and feminist epistemology did not address the dehumanising effect in classifying and treating the person-object (who is a co-social producer of knowledge) in union with the nonperson-object (which is an animate or inanimate object) as object of knowledge.

Virtue epistemology has stressed the importance of some innate or acquired epistemic or intellectual values in the pursuit of true propositions and the avoidance of false propositions, thus moving away from justifying knowledge externally in terms of representation. However, it has not considered demanding these same epistemic or intellectual values of person-objects. So, it has not addressed the dehumanising effect of grouping the person-object with the nonperson-object as object of knowledge.

Also, moral epistemology, like virtue epistemology, has moved away from emphasising the ability of propositions to copy objects they represent to emphasising the moral rectitude of the subject of knowledge which will help other persons to accept propositions to be possibly true or false. However, just as in the case of virtue epistemology, it has not considered the possible influence of the moral rectitude of the person-object in determining knowledge of the person-object, and thus separate the person-object from the nonperson-object in relation to epistemology.

At this juncture, it should be noted that these theories of epistemology that have responded to the two-fold deficiency of the traditional theories of representation have not adequately taken care of the problem of classifying the person-object alongside the nonperson-object as object of knowledge. Thus the relationship between the subject of knowledge and the person-object as object of knowledge remains dehumanized.

The Western scientific paradigm of rationality which separates the subject of knowledge from the object of knowledge towards attaining objectivity is the underlying influence of the traditional theories of representation as captured by Descartes and Locke. Its influence also on other theories of epistemology is also enormous, such that it is taken for

granted that there must be a dichotomy between the subject and object of knowledge to the extent that the person-object and the nonperson-object of knowledge must be grouped together as object of knowledge. Western science conceives the world, in the current prevailing Newtonian physics, as a great impersonal machine based on force or motion of matter. In this idea of a great and impersonal machine, nature is believed to be evolving, and persons and nonpersons are more or less part of evolving nature. Persons and nonpersons are grouped together and studied and known in the same way, thus producing propositional knowledge that does not discriminate between persons and nonpersons.

Furthermore, Fuller has noted that the asocial subject that produces knowledge in Descartes is based on the ontological assumption of privileged asocial persons with a consciousness as knowledge bearers.[100] In addition to Fuller's observation, this thesis also observes that the separation made between the subject and object of knowledge, and the nondifferentiation of the person-object and the nonperson-object of knowledge is also an assumption taken for granted both by the rationalists and the empiricists in Western epistemology; hence they are considered a 'given' that is hardly questioned.

However, given the failure of the responses to the two-fold deficiency of the traditional theories of representation, there is the need for a new approach to knowledge that will take care of the relationship between the subject of knowledge and person-object of knowledge. Such an approach will have the onerous task of differentiating knowing the person-object from knowing the nonperson-object, and produce a humanistic knowledge of the person-object. This approach can be found among the Edo-speaking people (Bini, Esan, Etsako, Akoko-Edo) of Edo State and the Gboko people of Benue State; and this approach has some affinity with Hegelian interactivism and the personalism of Borden Parker Bowne in the Western philosophical tradition.

This thesis will critically evaluate this new approach from the Esan perspective using Hegel as its theoretical framework. It shall now examine Hegel's epistemological interactivism which is an aspect of Hegel's epistemology.

ENDNOTES.

[1] M. J. Loux, 2006, *Metaphysics: a contemporary introduction,* New York & London: Routledge, 3.

[2] R. DeWith, 2004, *Worldviews: an introduction to the history and philosophy of science,* Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 4.

[3] R. DeWith, 2004, *Worldviews*, 9 – 10.

[4] J. A. Aigbodioh, 1997, *Philosophy of science: issues and problems,* Ibadan: Hope publications, 3 – 5.

[5] C. Taylor, 1975, *Hegel,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[6] W. F. Lawhead, 2002, *The voyage of discovery: a historical introduction to philosophy,* 2nd ed., Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 209.

[7] J. Horgan, 1998, *The end of science: facing the limits of knowledge in the twilight of the scientific age,* London: Abacus, 42.

[8] J. Horgan, 1998, *The end of science*, 42.

[9] R. Descartes, 1912. *A discourse on method, meditations on the first philosophy, principles of philosophy,* Trans. J. Veitch, Introd. A. D. Lindsay, London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 3 – 4.

[10] R. Descartes, 1912, *A discourse on method, meditations on the first philosophy, principles of philosophy*, 14-15.

[11] R. Descartes, 1912, 1912. *A discourse on method, meditations on the first philosophy, principles of philosophy*, 15-16.

[12] R. Descartes, 1912, *A discourse on method, meditations on the first philosophy, principles of philosophy*, 19-22.

[13] R. Descartes, 1912, *A discourse on method, meditations on the first philosophy, principles of philosophy*, 23.

[14] R. Descartes, 1912, *A discourse on method, meditations on the first philosophy, principles of philosophy*, 26-27.

[15] R. Descartes, 1912, *A discourse on method, meditations on the first philosophy, principles of philosophy*, 27.

[16] R. Descartes, 1912, *A discourse on method, meditations on the first philosophy, principles of philosophy*, 31.

[17] R. Descartes, 1912, *A discourse on method, meditations on the first philosophy, principles of philosophy*, 52.

[18] R. Descartes, 1912, *A discourse on method, meditations on the first philosophy, principles of philosophy*, 67-68.

[19] R. Descartes, 1912, *A discourse on method, meditations on the first philosophy, principles of philosophy*, 71-72.

[20] R. Descartes, 1912, *A discourse on method, meditations on the first philosophy, principles of philosophy*, 80-84.

[21] R. Descartes, 1912, *A discourse on method, meditations on the first philosophy, principles of philosophy*, 85-88.

[22] R. Descartes, 1912, *A discourse on method, meditations on the first philosophy, principles of philosophy*, 88.

[23] R. Descartes, 1912, *A discourse on method, meditations on the first philosophy, principles of philosophy*, 90-94.

[24] R. Descartes, 1912, *A discourse on method, meditations on the first philosophy, principles of philosophy*, 127-129

[25] R. Descartes, 1912, *A discourse on method, meditations on the first philosophy, principles of philosophy*, 129-134.

[26] J. Locke, 1999, *An essay concerning human understanding,* Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University, 27-31.

[27] J. Locke, 1999, *An essay concerning human understanding,* Bk I, Ch. I, No. 9, 31.

[28] J. Locke, 1999, *An essay concerning human understanding,* Bk I, Ch. II, No. 10, 53.

[29] J. Locke, 1999, *An essay concerning human understanding,* Bk II, Ch. I, No. 2, 87.

[30] J. Locke, 1999, *An essay concerning human understanding,* Bk II, Ch. I, No. 2, 87.

[31] J. Locke, 1999, *An essay concerning human understanding,* Bk II, Ch. I, No. 4, 87-88.

[32] J. Locke, 1999, *An essay concerning human understanding,* Bk II, Ch. I, No. 20, 99.

[33] J. Locke, 1999, *An essay concerning human understanding,* Bk II, Ch. II, No. 1, 102.

[34] J. Locke, 1999, *An essay concerning human understanding,* Bk II, Ch. II, No. 2, 102.

[35] J. Locke, 1999, *An essay concerning human understanding,* Bk II, Ch. XII, No. 1, 147.

[36] J. Locke, 1999, *An essay concerning human understanding,* Bk II, Ch. XXXII, No. 6, 370.

[37] J. Locke, 1999, *An essay concerning human understanding,* Bk IV, Ch. I, No. 2, 515.

[38] J. Locke, 1999, *An essay concerning human understanding,* Bk IV, Ch. I, No. 3-8, 515-518.

[39] J. Locke, 1999, *An essay concerning human understanding,* Bk IV, Ch. II, No. 1, 520-521.

[40] J. Locke, 1999, *An essay concerning human understanding,* Bk IV, Ch. II, No. I, 521.

[41] J. Locke, 1999, *An essay concerning human understanding,* Bk IV, Ch. II, No. 2-9, 521-524.

[42] J. Locke, 1999, *An essay concerning human understanding,* Bk IV, Ch. II, No. 14, 527.

[43] J. Locke, 1999, *An essay concerning human understanding,* Bk IV, Ch. II, No. 14, 528.

[44] J. Locke, 1999, *An essay concerning human understanding,* Bk IV, Ch. III, No. 1-2, 529.

[45] J. Locke, 1999, *An essay concerning human understanding,* Bk IV, Ch. IV, No. 3, 554.

[46] J. Locke, 1999, *An essay concerning human understanding,* Bk IV, Ch. IV, No. 5, 555.

[47] J. Locke, 1999, *An essay concerning human understanding,* Bk IV, Ch. IX, No. 1-3, 611-612.

[48] J. Locke, 1999, *An essay concerning human understanding,* Bk IV, Ch. XVII, No. 2-3, 664-665.

[49] T. Dougherty, & P. Rysiew, 2014, Experience first, Ed. M. Steup, J. Turri, & E. Sosa, *Contemporary debates in epistemology*, 2nd ed., West Sussex: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 17.

[50] T. Dougherty & P. Rysiew, 2014, Experience first, 18-19.

[51] S. Jovchelovitch, 2007, *Knowledge in context: representations, community and culture,* London & New York: Routledge, 2.

[52] S. Jovchelovitch, 2007, *Knowledge in context*, 19.

[53] S. Jovchelovitch, 2007, *Knowledge in context*, 18 – 19.

[54] W. V. Quine, 2000, Epistemology naturalized, Ed. E. Sosa, & J. Kim, *Epistemology: an anthology,* Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, Ltd, 294.

[55] W. V. Quine, 2000, Epistemology naturalized, 297.

[56] J. Kim, 2000, What is 'naturalized epistemology'? Ed. E. Sosa & J. Kim, *Epistemology: an anthology,* Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, Ltd, 305.

[57] H. Putnam, 2000, Why reason can't be naturalized. Ed. E. Sosa & J. Kim, *Epistemology: an anthology,* Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, Ltd, 323.

[58] R. Rorty, 1979, *Philosophy and the mirror of nature*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

[59] I. Kant, 1998, *Critique of pure reason,* 2nd ed., Trans. & Ed. P. Guyer, & A. W. Wood, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 127.

[60] I. Kant, 1998, *Critique of pure reason*, 129.

[61] I. Kant, 1998, *Critique of pure reason*, 130-132

[62] I. Kant, 1998, *Critique of pure reason*, 136.

[63] I. Kant, 1998, *Critique of pure reason*, 137.

[64] I. Kant, 1998, *Critique of pure reason*, 138.

[65] S. Fuller, 2002, *Social epistemology*, 2nd ed., Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

[66] S. Fuller, 2002, *Social epistemology*, 2nd ed., ix.

[67] S. Fuller, 2002, *Social epistemology*, 2nd ed., x.

[68] S. Fuller, 2002, *Social epistemology*, 2nd ed., x.

[69] S. Fuller, 2002, *Social epistemology*, 2nd Ed., xxviii.

[70] T. Nickles, 2002, Foreword, in S. Fuller, *Social Epistemology*, 2nd Ed., xxv.

[71] T. S. Kuhn, 1970, *The structure of scientific revolutions,* 2nd Ed., enlarged, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

[72] S. Fuller, 2002, *Social epistemology*, xii.

[73] R. DeWith, 2004, *Worldviews: an introduction to the history and philosophy of science,* Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 11.

[74] C. Smith, 2003, *Moral, believing animals: human personhood and culture,* New York: Oxford University Press, 50.

[75] C. Smith, 2003, *Moral, believing animals: human personhood and culture,* 50.

[76] R. Descartes, 1912, *A discourse on method, meditations on the first philosophy, principles of philosophy*, 3-4.

[77] J. Locke, 1999, *An essay concerning human understanding,* Bk IV, Ch. XVII, No. 1, 663.

[78] R. M. Martin, 2010, *Epistemology: a beginners guide,* Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 158.

[79] T. Honderich, 2005, *The oxford companion to philosophy,* 2nd ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 259.

[80] R. M. Martin, 2010, *Epistemology: a beginners guide,* 159.

[81] R. M. Martin, 2010, *Epistemology: a beginners guide,* 159.

[82] R. M. Martin, 2010, *Epistemology: a beginners guide,* 160-161.

[83] T. Honderich, 2005, *The oxford companion to philosophy,* 2nd ed., 259.

[84] A. Fairweather, 2001, Epistemic motivation, Eds. L. Zagzebski, & A. Fairweather, *Virtue epistemology: essays in epistemic virtues and responsibility,* New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 63.

[85] N. Lemos, 2007. *An introduction to the theory of knowledge,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 99.

[86] D. Pritchard, 2010, *What is this thing called knowledge?* 2nd ed., London & New York: Routledge, 59.

[87] L. Zagzebski, & A. Fairweather, Eds. 2001, *Virtue epistemology: essays in epistemic virtues and responsibility,* New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.

[88] N. Lemos, 2007, *An introduction to the theory of knowledge*, 99.

[89] N. Lemos, 2007, *An introduction to the theory of knowledge*, 100.

[90] D. Pritchard, 2010, *What is this thing called knowledge?* 2nd ed., 58.

[91] E. Sosa, 2007, *A virtue epistemology: apt belief and reflective knowledge,* Vol. 1. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 23.

[92] E. Sosa, 2007. *A virtue epistemology,* 26.

[93] A. Fairweather, 2001, Epistemic motivation, 68.

[94] A. Fairweather, 2001, Epistemic motivation, 69.

[95] A. Fairweather, 2001, Epistemic motivation, 69.

[96] A. Zimmerman, 2010, *Moral epistemology,* London & New York: Routledge, 2.

[97] B. Hallen, 2000, *The good, the bad and the beautiful*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 13.

[98] B. Hallen, 2000. *The good, the bad and the beautiful,* 32.

[99] B. Hallen, 2000. *The good, the bad and the beautiful,* 33.

[100] S. Fuller, 2002, *Social epistemology*, x.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0   HEGELIAN EPISTEMOLOGICAL INTERACTIVISM

2.1 Introduction

The idea of epistemic interactivism can be found in Plato, Hegel and in existentialism. As explained in the general introduction of this work in the section on clarification of terms, knowledge in Plato's world of Idea or Form is a kind of an epistemic interactivism. This thesis adopts that of Hegel as its theoretical framework because Hegel's epistemic interactivism is based on experience; the existential.

Merleau-Ponty's work, *The phenomenology of perception,* contains an idea of epistemic interactivism as well. He considers Hegel as the first existentialist philosopher because Hegel starts the exploration of "the non-rational, the non-cognitive, for example the emotional, the lived, the existential."[1]

In this chapter, we shall look at the existentialist framework of interactivism with emphasis on Merleau-Ponty's *The phenomenology of perception*. This will be followed by Hegel's epistemic interactivism which is the theoretical framework upon which this thesis is based.

2.2 Existentialist framework.

Priest defines existentialism as the attempt to solve the problems of human existence, and "a reaction against Hegel's dialectic of consciousness as found in his *Phenomenology of mind/spirit* (1807) and all forms of essentialism including that of Husserl."[2] In *The phenomenology of perception*, Merleau-Ponty synthesizes Husserlian phenomenology with existentialism. His phenomenology contains some element of Husserl's phenomenology which he meliorates with Heidegger's 'being-in-the-world'. But one of

Merleau-Ponty's major contribution to phenomenology is his consideration of the "subject-object dualism as phenomenologically primitive".[3]

Merleau-Ponty was impressed by Hegel's convinction that the human mind or reason is capable of transcending the limitation placed on it by Kant in his distinction of 'things-as-they-are' and 'things-as-they-appear-to-be'. He later equates Hegel's 'historical contingency' with Sartre's 'existential contingency', and he sees in Hegel's dialectics the reconciliation of divergent views in philosophical doctrines in general, and among existentialists in particular. Although he rejects Hegel's 'Absolute Knowledge' as being essentialist, he, however, interprets it as a way of life whereby consciousness possesses itself by passing through the ethical stage. This ethical stage of Hegel is likened to the state of authenticity of Nietzsche and Heidegger, and Sartre's 'bad faith' that is overcome by good faith.

For Merleau-Ponty, therefore, the subject-object dualism can be overcome by an existentialism that is constrained by Husserl's phenomenology or essentialist nature of Hegel's "Absolute Knowledge". With this in mind, this thesis now critically examines Hegel's epistemology beginning with his metaphysics.

2.3 Background to Hegel's philosophy.

Charles Taylor's work, *Hegel,* gives a lucid background to the philosophy of Hegel. He explains the philosophical trend of the seventeenth century that was dominated by the French culture. This was the age of Enlightenment.

The Enlightenment era was a shift from the Aristotelian conception of the self. Aristotle explains the self from the perspective of the cosmic order. The Enlightenment era explains the self from the background of the autonomous self-defining individual. This means that explanations of the self are no more made from the perspective of final causality, but from the perspective of efficient causality. Objectivity now becomes mechanical. And, since humans are both the subject of knowledge and object of nature,

they were conceived scientifically as contingent beings who could be studied behaviourally. So, the age of Enlightenment was evolving a notion of man consisting of "the notion of self-defining subjectivity correlative to the new objectivity; and the view of man as part of nature, hence fully under the jurisdiction of this objectivity."[4] These views were plagued with the problems of freedom and determinism, and the dualism of mind and body, reason and senses or feelings.

The above views of human objectification and dualisms that emanates from the influence of French culture in the age of Enlightenment was criticised by the post-Enlightenment German culture. The post-Enlightenment German culture presents the idea of human life as an expression, an idea or purpose emanating from the human will. Human life was now seen as "a single stream of life, or on the model of a work of art, in which no part could be defined in abstraction from the others."[5] Thus, the expressionist theory of the post-Enlightenment German culture has the following features: "it is strongly anti-dualist, it strives to overcome the body-soul dichotomy, or the spirit-nature dichotomy, which is the legacy of Descartes."[6] It is also "an aspiration to escape from a predicament in which the subject is over against an objectified world, to overcome the gap between subject and object, to see objectivity as an expression of subjectivity or in interchange with it."[7] It is against this background of the conflict of ideas between the Enlightenment era (influenced by French culture) and the post-Enlightenment era (influenced by German culture) that we can better understand Hegel's philosophy.

After reading the works of his contemporaries (Kant, Fichte, and Schelling), Hegel pushes the theory of idea "beyond the original meaning of 'idea' as a presentation of individual consciousness toward a doctrine in which all things and events occur in Mind objectified."[8] He was also conversant with the history of philosophy, as well as Christian theology. He was against orthodoxy (not theology) in Christianity and the church. But "he was inspired by the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. The spirit of man, his reason, is the cradle of the Lord, he held, and therefore cannot be subject to the limitations that Kant

had imposed upon it. This faith in reason, with its religious basis, henceforth animated the whole of Hegel's work."[9]

2.4 The metaphysics of Hegel.

There are many approaches to Hegel's metaphysics. One of such approaches is to contemplate it from the angle of the creation myth. The myth begins with spirit or mind existing alone in Eden and without self-knowledge since self-knowledge can only emerge from comparing itself with something else. This is followed by a second stage whereby spirit or mind is plunged into history and the "universal subject breaks up, sundering or particularising itself, most fundamentally into subject and object. The subject runs up against something that is it's other, and that is alien to it. This particularization is the unfolding of the natural, social and psychological worlds."[10] The third stage is the return of spirit or mind to Eden with the "recovery of unity, where subject and object are again one, but now blessed with a complex knowledge of that unity."[11]

Just as there is evolution in nature and humans are part of nature, though unique in having spirit or mind which is essentially reason, the human spirit or mind also undergoes evolution. Kenny explains this idea thus: "Spirit is not something given in advance in all its fullness: it proceeds from potentiality to actuality, and the motive force of history is spirit's drive to actualize its potential."[12] This evolution of the mind or spirit is a process of dialectic. And, as Frost explains it, dialectic is "The highest function of the mind … which enables one to see things whole, to see opposites unified. Here man rises to the true height of his nature. Thought moves from the simple ideas to more complex notions, from the individual to the rich and full."[13] Furthermore, for Hegel "The thinking being is a living logical process in which there is an unfolding and a progression." [14] This unfolding and a progression is also present in nature (evolution). So the whole universe becomes "a logical process of thought and not dead material upon which thought works."[15]

Absolute idealism is an attempt by Hegel "to achieve a complete and unified conception of all reality, a conception that gave meaning to each and every aspect in relationship to the sum total."[16] Idealism as a system of thought in philosophy is better understood when contrasted with materialism. Materialism speaks of matter as the only reality that exists independent of humans conceiving it. In fact, materialism insists that the human spirit, thought, or consciousness is an aspect of matter. On the contrary, idealism holds that matter has no existence of its own independent of the human mind. In order words, matter exists as a being dependent on ideas or the mind that comprehends it and thus transforms it into something mental. Reality ultimately becomes spirit or consciousness (which is a mental state); and in its fullness, reality becomes the 'Absolute Being or Spirit' reached through the process of dialectic. The relationship between Spirit as thought and matter is explained by Hegel thus:

> When I think of an object [*Gegenstand*], I make it into a thought and deprive it of its sensuous quality; I make it into something which is essentially and immediately mine. For it is only when I think that I am with myself [*bei mir*], and it is only by comprehending it that I can penetrate an object; it then no longer stands opposed to me, and I have deprived it of that quality of its own which it had for itself in opposition to me. Just as Adam says to Eve: "You are flesh of flesh and bone of my bone", so does spirit say: "This is spirit of my spirit, and its alien character has disappeared."[17]

Dialectic as a system of thought in philosophy is not peculiar to Hegel. It was used by Socrates as he dialogues with the Athenians in search for objective knowledge and truth. It was also used by Plato in his dialogues, and Aristotle used it in his syllogistic arguments. Medieval philosophers used it to deduce abstract propositions like that of God's existence. And Hegel also used it to develop his philosophical system known as 'Absolute Idealism'.

Hegel's 'Absolute Being or Spirit' that constitutes the whole process of reality manifests in different ways: subjectively and objectively in a logical manner. It has been interpreted by different scholars as God, Nature, Substance, and even Man. It is essentially experiential and thus manifests itself in different human endeavours in arts, philosophy,

religion, morality, etcetera. it is also the subject matter of all human endeavours beginning with the ancient Greeks understanding of being as being. In addition, it is essentially reason and can be conceived as reason in its fullness. Hence the development of human reason in history is seen as the manifestation and evolution of spirit in time. Fuller further explains experience as it relates to the Absolute thus:

> to explain experience the Absolute cannot be outside of, or above, or below experience. It cannot exist in any way *apart* from experience. It cannot be an Ego or a Mind whose thinking creates the world. An Ego or Mind apart from its thinking is nothing. An Absolute Ego or Absolute Intellect is simply the conscious *process* of experiencing and thinking, no less, no more. The Real, then, is a *Process*, not a substance. The sum of all that is experienced, then, tells all there is to know about the nature of the Real. The Absolute is the world-process, just as I *am* my career. The Absolute is a life and nothing more, just as I am my life and nothing more.[18]

Hegelian metaphysics is replete with a triad which is a process of dialectic between thesis, antithesis and synthesis. Hegelian dialectic can be understood as a process of negation or contradiction leading to a higher level of understanding where the negation or contradiction is resolved in a synthesis. Being as Being, for instance, is nothing fixed but evolving subject to the dialectical process. Its opposite is nothingness, such that one can say Being, as the 'Absolute', is 'Nought'. And if this 'Absolute' is taken to be God, one can as well say that God is 'Nought'. So we have Being and its opposition 'Nothing' ('Nought'), which is the same as 'Being and not-Being'. The oneness of Being (thesis) and not-Being (antithesis) is 'Becoming' (synthesis); and this becoming is found in the philosophy of Heraclitus when he declared that all things flow. Furthermore, becoming leads to determinate Being, and determinate Being leads to reality whereby our plans (thoughts) become manifest, that is, the "outward and immediate existence" of thought. "In the same sense the body may be called the reality of the soul, and the law the reality of the divine idea."[19] Thus, thought is aligned with the material visible world, and the ontological with logic.

And Hegel explains dialectic thus: "Wherever there is movement, wherever there is life, wherever anything is carried into effect in the actual world, there dialectic is at work. It is

also the soul of all knowledge which is truly scientific."[20] The purpose of dialectic is "to study things in their own being and movement and thus to demonstrate the finitude of the partial categories of understanding."[21] Hence it is at work in all natural things that are finite that turn naturally into their opposites. Plato was the first to use dialectic in his writings. This was revived by Kant through his antinomies of reason. Dialectics can also be found in the province of law and morality and individual ethics as shown by the following examples: "Pride goes before a fall: Too much wit outwits itself. Every feeling, bodily as well as mental, has its Dialectic. Every one knows how the extremes of pain and pleasure pass into each other: the heart overflowing with joy seeks relief in tears, and the deepest melancholy will at times betray its presence by a smile."[22]

Also, dialectic is a form of scepticism in that it contains negative results; but it differs from scepticism by transcending the negative result of scepticism to give birth to the positive speculative stage of positive reason – a stage which "apprehends the unity of terms (propositions) in their opposition, – the affirmative, which is involved in their disintegration and in their transition."[23] The apprehension of the unity of terms in their opposition can be noticed in the history of philosophy. Thought begins with this indeterminate Being, demonstrated by the abstract thought in the history of *Idea* or of the earliest philosophical systems. The most abstract of ideas are the poorest. Each older system logically preserves earlier systems in a subordinated and submerged way. Hence in a sense, since older philosophical systems are in later ones, "no philosophy has been refuted" because the Idea is present in all philosophies, and "every system represents one particular factor or particular stage in the evolution of the Idea."[24] Hegel explains further:

> Thus the history of philosophy, in its true meaning, deals not with a past, but with an eternal and veritable present: and, in its results, resembles not a museum of the aberrations of the human intellect, but a Pantheon of Godlike figures. These figures of Gods are the various stages of the Idea, as they come forward one after another in dialectical development.[25]

Hegel's 'Absolute Idealism' is the peak of dialectic where reality becomes a single holism or a unified whole. It is often contrasted with the subjective idealism of Berkeley

and the transcendental idealism of Kant and Fichte. While for Berkeley the material objective world exists in the minds of individuals, for Hegel the material objective world manifests infinite thoughts through the instrumentality of the minds of individuals.[26] Also, in reaction to Kant and Fichte, Hegel is of the view that the human mind or spirit is essentially reason and it is able to transcend things as they appear to us and arrive at things as they are through the process of dialectic. The material and finite world is a reflection of the mind or spirit. In fact, the material and finite world is dependent on the mind or spirit such that truth becomes coherence between thoughts developed via dialectic, and not a correspondence of thought with the material, finite world as is postulated by Descartes and Locke.

2.5 Hegel's epistemology.

Kant's reconciliation of the empiricist and rationalist extreme positions was impressive. But in the process, he denied man knowledge of the noumena because the human reason is plagued with challenging contradictions when it tries to do so. However, Hegel's epistemology was an attempt to transcend the limitations placed on the human spirit or mind by Kant's transcendental idealism into one that resolves the dichotomy between 'things as they appear to us' and 'things as they are' in absolute knowledge. Here reality becomes "the expression of *infinite* or *absolute* thought or consciousness. And when we think or philosophize about reality, this is consciousness becoming aware of itself, that is, becoming infinite."[27]

Hegel's epistemology does not favour immediate or intuitive knowledge unaided by experience. He rejects faith or knowledge of God based on divine revelation or common sense unmediated via experience. This self-evident, immediate or intuitive knowledge devoid of experience is the basis of Descartes *Cogito, ergo sum* upon which Descartes built his epistemology. Hegel explains that immediate knowledge, in its distinctive doctrine, is the view that "immediate knowledge alone, to the total exclusion of

mediation, can possess a content which is true."[28] Hegel is strongly of the view that experience is the starting point of knowledge, and this informs his rejection of intuitive or immediate knowledge devoid of experience. Absolute knowledge becomes attainable through a rational experiential process through dialectic. Though he recognises mathematics, technical expertness or arts as immediate, they are, nevertheless, tied to mediation because immediate knowledge is produced by mediated knowledge. Also, all immediate proofs of God's existence, ethical principles, instincts or innate ideas, common sense, and so on are all based on mediated knowledge. This is the essence of education, training or development. Hegel puts it thus:

> It is a matter of general experience that education or development is required to bring out into consciousness what is therein contained. It was so with the Platonic reminiscence; and the Christian rite of baptism, although a sacrament, involves the additional obligation of a Christian up-bringing. In short, religion and morals, however much they may be faith or immediate knowledge, are still on every side conditioned by the mediating process which is termed development, education, training.[29]

The error of believing that there is immediate knowledge devoid of experience, says Hegel, lies in equating idea with being, or equating a capacity (potentiality) in humans with actuality. He explains it this way:

> The reminiscence of ideas spoken of by Plato is equivalent to saying that ideas implicitly exist in man, instead of being, as the Sophists asserts, a foreign importation into his mind. But to conceive knowledge as reminiscence does not interfere with, or set aside as useless, the development of what is implicit in man:- which development is another word for mediation. The same holds good of the innate ideas that we find in Descartes and the Scotch philosophers. These ideas are only potential in the first instance, and should be looked at as being a sort of mere capacity in man.[30]

In addition, Westphal is of the view that Hegel was the first to attempt an epistemology that unites historical and social aspects of human life with realism.[31] Realism, as used by Hegel, has to do with objects with law-like characteristics that do not depend on us. Also, realism as used by Hegel makes no cognitive distinction between 'things-as-they-are' and 'things-as-they-appear to be', and it is accompanied by an ontological holism that is realist in nature.[32] Hegel explains this social aspect of knowledge in chapter four of the

Phenomenology of mind. Thus he grounds philosophy in the empirical sciences. Individual self-consciousness becomes realisable in conjunction with the self-consciousness of other persons. And, since as individuals we are imperfect, we need the cooperation of others, through education, in attaining complete self-knowledge. One implication of this view of Hegel is that the knowing spirit or mind is grounded on the human community. This comes out clearly in chapter six of the *Phenomenology of spirit*: 'human community'.

2.5.1 The limit of propositional knowledge.

In the first and second chapters of the *Phenomenology of the mind*, Hegel reflects on the knowledge of object that comes from sense perception. He rejects commonsense naïve realism and concludes that we can only say the object 'is': a statement that does not fully tell us what the object is. In other words, being is that which 'is', and passes into another in dialectic.[33] This does not mean that sense perception is useless to knowledge because, in his *Logic,* Hegel explicitly states that in theory "knowledge begins by apprehending existing objects in their specific differences."[34] We group them, following the analytic capacity of thought, into matter or forces, or other groupings in mathematics and other disciplines.

Furthermore, absolute truth for Hegel is not propositional but conceptual. A proposition is a statement asserting or declaring something about the world or states of affairs, and the declaration or assertion may be true or false.[35] But conceptual knowledge is arrived at through an evolutionary process of dialectic.

So, propositional statements say fragmentary things about the world or states of affairs. Though such fragmented statements about the world do not capture the full nature of reality, they nevertheless contain some partial truths about the world, truths that are still in the evolution of thought process leading to absolute knowledge.

2.5.2 The nature of 'Absolute Knowledge'.

For Hegel, propositional knowledge is fragmentary and a sign of a limitation in man. Absolute truth for Hegel, therefore, says Stokes, "is the attainment of completeness, or the transcendence of all limitations."[36] Knowledge becomes interactivist, engaging and rooted in experience. All experiences – perceptual, scientific, moral and religious – "are discovered and not produced or invented by the mind; they are 'given'" in an immediate way with an implicit unity.[37]

In acquiring knowledge, the perception of an object immediately presents the mind with its property "which is universal, thereby transcending the particularity of the object."[38] And on the account of the universality of the property, Hegel considers the initial perception of the object that isolates it as mistaken; and he consequently takes "the object entity as a community (*Gemeinschaft*) in general"[39] which transcends the object perceived.

On the dispute between the rationalists and the empiricists over immediate and mediated knowledge, Hegel is of the view that immediate knowledge is a fact, as in mathematics, technical expertness or the skills of arts immediate in our limbs. Other examples of immediate knowledge include original spontaneity in the knowledge of God or ethical principles, instinct, innate ideas, common sense, natural reason, and so on.[40] But it is tied to mediation because it is "actually the product and result of mediated knowledge."[41] Hence, the need for education or development which is a form of mediation. Also, Plato's reminiscence and Descartes innate ideas are forms of mediation because "These ideas are only potential in the first instance, and should be looked at as being a sort of mere capacity in man."[42]

As a thinking power, intelligence is universal and acts universally. It confers formal universality upon natural drives and purifies them. "This cultivation of the universality of thought is the absolute value of education",[43] and it is cultivated by the reflective will. Knowledge, science, talents, and so on are internal attributes of the spirit. The spirit has

the power to manifest them externally as things. "Thus they are not primarily immediate in character, but became so only through the mediation of the spirit, which reduces its inner attributes to immediacy and externality."[44]

So, absolute knowledge is a rational experiential process through dialectic, and not an immediate (intuitive) knowledge unaided by mediation (sense experience). Complete self-knowledge becomes an attainable ideal, says Fuller, "the moment we discard the antithesis between subject and object, mind and matter, thinking and being. *Thinking* and *being* are one and the same activity. I am what I *think* myself to be. Subject and object are identical."[45]

Furthermore, the human 'spirit' or 'mind' ('*Geist*') is essentially reason and is capable of closing "the gap between appearance and reality that Kant's 'transcendental idealism' seemed to have left open.[46] It can transcend opposites (thesis and antithesis) and arrive at a synthesis that resolves them with the goal of ultimately arriving at "Absolute Knowledge", a universal mind or spirit. When humans reason and reflect, "the Spirit rises above, negates, and transcends its individual enactments, although it still uses the individual as a base."[47] By so doing our thought rises above the particular and occupies itself with the universal with the ultimate aim of arriving at absolute knowledge and truth. Subject and object of knowledge remain distinguishable but they are inseparable and irreducible.[48] Reality ceases to be an isolation of things, or groups, or states of affairs (as in propositional knowledge), but a single unified whole with parts interacting with themselves; thus forming an integrated whole. In this totality or wholeness lies truth which is reached through the process of dialectic. The individual mind or spirit is, therefore, the means whereby the Absolute or Infinite thought reflects on itself.[49]

2.6 Meliorating Hegel's epistemology with personalism

2.6.1 The doctrine of personalism

According to Burrow, the term personalism was coined by Friedrich Schleiermacher in 1799. It was later used by Bowne and others. But they did not develop the term philosophically. [50] Personalism can be theistic (like that of Borden Parker Bowne), atheistic (like that of M. E. McTaggart), pantheistic (like that of William Stern), absolutist (like that of Mary Whiton Calkins), and so on.[51]

Personalism is an unpopular theory in the world today because "it fights against the dehumanization and depersonalization of all people."[52] It is essentially a metaphysics, a worldview. Its main focus is the person who is considered of worth and sacred in all fields or branches of philosophy. Reality is conceived as personal. It arose in part "as a reaction against absolute idealism, and argued against the idea that the person is a mere attribute of some absolute whole (whether God or some other entity). Instead, it asserts that the person is ultimately real and valuable."[53]

Also, personalism is an attitude regarding how one lives in the world. Personalism proponents are metaphysicians who do not live in an abstract realm of life. They "insist that metaphysics (the study of reality) begins and ends in experience – human experience – and that the work of the metaphysician is first and foremost for the uplifting and enhancement of persons."[54] The great aim of personalism is to be sensitive to and eradicate "all behaviour and practices that demean and crush the dignity of persons as if they were but things or objects to be manipulated and dehumanized."[55] Here personalism is interested in the total person, all aspects of a person's life and irrespective of the social class, culture, race or gender of the person, and so on. Hence it is both metaphysical and theistic.

In addition, personalism is against materialism. The activities of the mind and values are among the things one cannot picture. But we are conscious of them. It is also against absolute idealism because the person is not an attribute of the creator. In union with Berkeley, it stresses the immateriality of matter on the ground that material things are the activities of God's divine will and thought. On knowledge, personalism says:

> When I see the mountain in the distance, I do see the mountain. That is, the mountain does have phenomenal reality, and thus is not an illusion. … At any rate, the mountain as the activity of God is not the mountain as I perceive it. That is, I do not see the mountain in all its splendor and detail because of the distance and the limitations of my eyesight. But it also means that the mountain as phenomenal object is not all there is. …For example, I do not *see* what causes the mountain to be. …There is always a connection between what I perceive in mind and the object perceived. …The point to be made here is that the ontologically real is not something we can picture, while the phenomenal reality, for example, the mountain, is the revelation of the ontological reality.[56]

2.6.2 Borden Parker Bowne's personalism.

Borden Parker Bowne (1847 – 1910) of Boston University is the founder of American Personalism. Some basic tenets of Bowne's personalism include freedom, personal conscious experience, and interpreting experience in relation to reality. All those who are adherents of the tradition he set forth are scattered in their works, ideas and thought. But they all "maintain a positive view of religious values, were broadly committed to ecumenism, and were staunch advocates of civil liberties, civil rights, and academic freedom".[57] Bowne criticizes positivism, naturalism and absolute idealism on the grounds of impersonalism. He is greatly influenced by Berkeley and Kant whose works he, however, also criticises. His own brand of metaphysics is transcendental empiricism which he explains below:

> Intellect explains everything but itself. It exhibits other things as its own products and as exemplifying its own principles; but it never explains itself. It knows itself in living and only in living, but it is never to be explained by anything, being itself the only principle of explanation. When we attempt to explain it by anything else, or even by its own principles, we fall soon to the plane of mechanism again, and reason and explanation disappear together. But when we make active intelligence the basal fact, all other facts become luminous and comprehensible, at least in their possibility, and intelligence knows itself as their source and explanation.[58]

Bowne is of the opinion that knowledge can only be defined in terms of itself and not from that which is not knowledge. In knowing there is the distinction between the 'me'

and the 'not-me'. And, since the 'not-me' (object of knowledge) include other persons like me, the 'me' as subject of knowledge is enlarged by the addition of 'not-me' (person-object) to 'me' (subject of knowledge). Then, "the antithesis becomes the 'us,' and the 'not-us.' We human beings become the 'us,' the subjects, and the cosmic order with whatever else there may be becomes the 'not-us.' Then the 'not-us' breaks up again into the cosmic order, so far as it is an object of scientific study, and its cause."[59] The processes of knowledge that leads to knowledge having a universal content begins with the individual's (the 'me') gathering of the 'not-me'. The nature of both the subject and object of knowledge play significant role in the acquisition of knowledge. The subject should be active, while the object should be that which can be rationally attained; and there should be an interaction between the subject and the object. By object (the 'not-me') Bowne means "the world of things about us, or it might be an all-embracing impersonal energy, or it might be a supreme spirit upon whom we all depend."[60]

Knowing involves sensations (symbols of objects) from which thoughts are formed in the mind to produce meaning (interpretations). So, objects or the world (phenomena) is as I perceive and interpret them (logic). This perception and interpretation is my construction of objects or the world, and it is the closest I can get to about a reference to an existence (object) beyond consciousness; an objectivity that is a possible object of perception for others as well. Against this background, the doctrines of immediate knowledge devoid of sensation, idealism about the process of perception (Kant) rather than an analysis of the product of perception, and solipsism cannot be sustained. In idealistic impersonalism things as well as the human mind become ideas as perceived by the mind. The mind is also conceived as an object of knowledge, and in turn becomes 'only an idea or group of ideas.' This for Bowne is fiction because "All actual ideas are owned, or belong to some one, and mean nothing as floating free."[61]

One key point Bowne makes from common-sense is that "things are indeed independent of our thinking for their existence, but they are not independent from all thinking. They lie within the thought sphere".[62] And, apart from the finite spirit, there also exists an

infinite spirit, God "and his progressively unfolding plan and purpose and work."[63] Here we see the influence of Berkeley.

Personalism, therefore, becomes the only real philosophy. This Bowne explains succinctly below:

> We are not abstract intellects nor abstract wills, but we are living persons, knowing and feeling and having various interests, and in the light of knowledge and under the impulse of our interests trying to find our way, having an order of experience also and seeking to understand it and to guide ourselves so as to extend or enrich that experience, and thus to build ourselves into larger and fuller and more abundant personal life.[64]

2.7 Hegel's epistemology and Bowne's personalism.

Hegel's philosophy is comprehensive thus eliminating all forms of duality – mind and body, and object and subject dichotomies in the traditional theories of representation, and Kant's noumena (things-as-they-are) and phenomena (things-as-they-appear-to-us). In this all-inclusiveness, Hegel embraces all persons and objects (the whole of nature) in a single stream of life. Here the human spirit, which is essentially reason, undergoes evolution in union with the whole of nature. This evolution takes the form of dialectics that study the movement of things 'that turns naturally into their opposites' from where he derived the principle of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. The end point of dialectics is 'Absolute Spirit' ('Absolute Idealism'), and 'Absolute Knowledge'.

Also, Hegel's realism incorporates social and communal life. This is shown by the necessity of experience in knowledge acquisition that manifests itself also in education. This is traced to Plato's theory of knowledge as reminiscence, and Kant's antinomies of reason. Social and communal life help the human imperfect finite spirit to gradually evolve from propositional knowledge to attain total self-knowledge, and 'Spirit', through individual minds or spirit, arrives at 'Absolute Knowledge' and truth, which is essentially conceptual. At the level of 'Absolute Knowledge', subject and object of knowledge are

distinguishable, but they are, at the same time, inseparable and irreducible; reality becomes an integrated whole with interacting coherent parts.

Hegel's totalitarian philosophy and realism that incorporates social and communal life, seems to take care of the two-fold dichotomy created by the traditional theories of representation both at the level of the subject of knowledge (split between itself, as mind, soul, or thought, and the body with which it is conjoined) and at the level of the subject and object of knowledge (which include persons and nonpersons). However, a problem becomes imminent. It is the problem of freeing the person both from objects and from the 'Absolute Spirit' for whom the human spirit is an attribute.

Bowne's personalism comes in here to meliorate Hegel's absolute idealism, and thus helps free the person from both objects and the 'Absolute Spirit'.

Personalism is against all forms of dehumanisation and depersonalisation of all persons in any form. It considers the person as sacred, of worth and dignity, and ultimately real and valuable irrespective of race, colour, class, gender, and so on. The person is, therefore, not a thing or an object, or even an attribute of God, or the creator.

For Bowne, reality is personal, and knowledge is based on experience. He sees absolute idealism as impersonalism; hence dehumanises the person. In knowing, he distinguishes the 'me' (the subject of knowledge) from the 'not-me' (the object of knowledge) and enlarged the 'me' (the subject of knowledge) to include other subjects of knowledge ('not-me' as persons); thus creating the antithesis the 'us' (the subjects of knowledge) and the 'not-us' (the object of knowledge: objects and the cosmic order). He explains it this way:

> A fundamental distinction in knowing is that between the "me" and the "not-me." I place all other things or persons as my objects in changeless antithesis to myself as conscious subject. But inasmuch as this "not-me" includes my fellow men, the "me" is soon enlarged by their addition, and then the antithesis becomes the "us" and the "not-us." We human beings become the "us," the subjects, and the cosmic order with whatever else there may be becomes the "not-us." Then the "not-us" breaks up again into the cosmic order, so far as it is an object of

scientific study, and its cause. If we could attain to clear and definite knowledge on all of these points, we should have made great progress in philosophy.[65]

Also, since knowledge is based on experience, there should be an interaction between subject and object of knowledge such that the subject of knowledge is active and the object of knowledge has the quality of that which can be rationally attained. The person now becomes a knowing, feeling and living person and not an abstract intellect or will, or attribute of the creator.

2.8 Conclusion

Bowne's personalism can help meliorate the excesses in Hegel's 'Absolute Idealism'. It can help in freeing the person from being bond together with objects and things. It is also an attempt to enlarge the subject of knowledge from 'me' to 'us'.

However, Bowne's personalism did not exploit to the full what the enlargement of 'me' to 'us' entails. It is also not radical enough to inculcate the values in Hegel's interactivist epistemology with the values of personalism to create an epistemology of persons that can completely free the person-object of knowledge form all forms of dehumanisation.

An epistemology that radically liberates the person-object of knowledge from nonperson-objects of knowledge and creates an epistemic intercourse (relationship in knowledge) between the subject of knowledge and the person-object of knowledge can be found in Esan indigenous thought. This epistemic intercourse is captured by the Esan dictum: *ai yole abha len oria* (which literally translates as "we never say we do not know someone"). Since the crux of the matter is knowing the person-object of knowledge, it is expedient that we first of all critically look at the concept 'personhood'.

Endnotes

[1] S. Priest, 2003, *Merleau-Ponty*, London & New York: Routledge, 37.

[2] S. Priest, 2003, *Merleau-Ponty*, 4-5.

[3] S. Priest, 2003, *Merleau-Ponty*, 9.

[4] C. Taylor, 1975, *Hegel,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 10.

[5] C. Taylor, 1975, *Hegel,* 23.

[6] C. Taylor, 1975, *Hegel,* 24.

[7] C. Taylor, 1975, *Hegel,* 29.

[8] V. J. Bourke, 1968, *History of ethics,* Vol. II, Garden City, New York: Image Books & Doubleday & Company, Inc., 40.

[9] Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, 2010, *Encyclopaedia Britannica student and home edition*, Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica.

[10] A. Edgan, & P. Sedgwick, 2002, *Cultural theory: the key thinkers,* London: Routledge, 93.

[11] A. Edgan, & P. Sedgwick, 2002, *Cultural theory,* 94.

[12] A. Kenny, 2010, *A new history of Western philosophy in four parts,* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 585.

[13] S. E. Frost, 1962, *Basic teachings of the great philosophers,* New and enlarged edition, New York: Doubleday, 259.

[14] S. E. Frost, 1962, *Basic teachings of the great philosophers,* 259.

[15] S. E. Frost, 1962, *Basic teachings of the great philosophers,* 259.

[16] B. N. Moore, & K. Bruder, 2002, *Philosophy: the power of ideas,* 5th Ed, Boston: MaGraw-Hill Companies, Inc., 130.

[17] G. W. F. Hegel, 1991, *Elements of the philosophy of right,* Ed. A. W. Wood, Trans. H. B. Nisbet, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, § 4, 35.

[18] B. A. G. Fuller, 1945, *A history of philosophy,* Revised ed., New York: Henry Holt and Company. Contents II, 305.

[19] G. W. F. Hegel, 1892, *The logic of Hegel: translated from the encyclopaedia of the philosophical science,*. 2nd ed., revised & augmented, Trans. W. Wallace, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 172.

[20] G. W. F. Hegel, 1892, *The logic of Hegel,* 148.

[21] G. W. F. Hegel, 1892, *The logic of Hegel,* 149.

[22] G. W. F. Hegel, 1892, *The logic of Hegel,* 151.

[23] G. W. F. Hegel, 1892, *The logic of Hegel,*152.

[24] G. W. F. Hegel, 1892, 1892. *The logic of Hegel,* 160.

[25] G. W. F. Hegel, 1892, *The logic of Hegel,* 160.

[26] Moore, B. N. & Bruder, K. 2002. *Philosophy: the power of ideas*, 131.

[27] Moore, B. N. & Bruder, K. 2002. *Philosophy: the power of ideas*, 130.

[28] G. W. F. Hegel, 1892, *The logic of Hegel,* 128.

[29] G. W. F. Hegel, 1892, *The logic of Hegel,* 130.

[30] G. W. F. Hegel, 1892, *The logic of Hegel,* 131 – 132.

[31] K. R. Westphal, 2003, *Hegel's epistemology: a philosophical introduction to the phenomenology of spirir,* Indianapolis: Hackett, 51.

[32] K. R. Westphal, 2003, *Hegel's epistemology,* 53.

[33] G. W. F. Hegel, 1892, *The logic of Hegel,* 156.

[34] G. W. F. Hegel, 1892, *The logic of Hegel,* 144.

[35] For an analysis of what a proposition is, see R. M. Chisholm, 1977, *Theory of knowledge*, 2nd Ed., New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 6, 87 – 88; R. Audi, 2003, *Epistemology: a contemporary introduction,* 2nd Ed., New York & London: Routledge, 157; D. Pritchard, 2006, *What is this thing called knowledge?* London & New York: Routledge, 179; and R. M. Martin, 2010, *Epistemology: a beginner's guide,* Oxford: Oneworld Publication, 4 – 5.

[36] P. Stokes, 2002, *Philosophy: 100 essential thinkers,* London: Arcturus Publishing Ltd, 103.

[37] J. B. Baillie, 1967, Translators introduction, G. W. F. Hegel, *The phenomenology of mind*, Translated with an introduction and notes by J. B. Baillie, New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Incorporated, 54.

[38] G. W. F. Hegel, 1967, *The phenomenology of mind*, Translated with an introduction and notes by J. B. Baillie, New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Incorporated, 167.

[39] G. W. F. Hegel, 1967, *The phenomenology of mind,,* 167.

[40] G. W. F. Hegel, 1892, *The logic of Hegel,* 130.

[41] G. W. F. Hegel, 1892, *The logic of Hegel,* 130.

[42] G. W. F. Hegel, 1892, *The logic of Hegel,*131-132.

[43] G. W. F. Hegel, 1991, *Elements of the philosophy of right,* § 20, 52.

[44] G. W. F. Hegel, 1991, *Elements of the philosophy of right,* § 43, 75.

[45] B. A. G. Fuller, 1945, *A history of philosophy,* Contents II, 305.

[46] P. Stokes, 2002, *Philosophy: 100 essential thinkers*, 103.

[47] B. A. G. Fuller, 1945, *A history of philosophy,* Contents II, 306.

[48] J. B. Baillie, 1967, G. W. F. Hegel, *The phenomenology of mind*, 54.

[49] B. N. Moore, & K. Bruder, 2002, *Philosophy, the power of ideas,* 131.

[50] R. Burrow, Jr. 1999, *Personalism: a critical introduction,* Missouri, St. Louis: Chalice Press, 14.

[51] R. Burrow, Jr. 1999, *Personalism: a critical introduction,* 36-44.

[52] R. Burrow, Jr. 1999, *Personalism: a critical introduction*, 1.

[53] R. Burrow, Jr. 1999, *Personalism: a critical introduction,* 1.

[54] R. Burrow, Jr. 1999, *Personalism: a critical introduction,* 2.

[55] R. Burrow, Jr. 1999, *Personalism: a critical introduction,* 2.

[56] R. Burrow, Jr. 1999, *Personalism: a critical introduction,* 33.

[57] W. G. Muelder, 1999, Foreword, in R. Burrow, Jr. *Personalism: a critical introduction,* Missouri, St. Louis: Chalice Press, xiii.

[58] B. P. Bowne, 1908, *Personalism*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 67-68.

[59] B. P. Bowne, 1908, *Personalism*, 58.

[60] B. P. Bowne, 1908, *Personalism,* 62.

[61] B. P. Bowne, 1908, *Personalism,* 253.

[62] B. P. Bowne, 1908, *Personalism,* 93.

[63] B. P. Bowne, 1908, *Personalism,* 157.

[64] B. P. Bowne, 1908, *Personalism,* 263.

[65] B. P. Bowne, 1908, *Personalism*, 58 – 59.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0   PERSONHOOD IN INDIGENOUS ESAN THOUGHT

3.1 Introduction

Personhood in indigenous Esan thought has a strong foundation in Esan ontology. And, as Africans, the indigenous Esan people's ontology is rooted in African ontology. So, this chapter will critically look at personhood in indigenous Esan thought within the context of African ontology. It will proceed with the concept of personhood in African ontology in general. After this, it will look at the concept of personhood in indigenous Esan thought.

3.2   African ontology and the idea of personhood

The mindset of most scholars and researchers interested in African ontology and personhood are often clouded with Western ontology. This is partly due to the fact that most of these scholars and researchers are either Westerners who are not grounded in African culture and traditions, or Africans who are trained in Western culture and philosophy and who are still suffering from some of the epochal effects of colonialism.[1] Thiong'O is of the view that European writers' response to imperialism were from various ideological assumptions and attitudes, but "they could not free themselves from the Eurocentric basis of their vision"[2] due to their European upbringing and experience. Also, Romose observes that this mindset of scholars and researchers may explain why "what is presented as African philosophy is so familiar to Western thought that one still wonders what exactly is African after all."[3]

Be that as it may, some scholars and researchers have made some remarkable attempt in articulating African ontology. For instance, Anyanwu in "African world-view and theory of knowledge"[4] searches for that which has endured in African culture in spite of the changes in African culture since it came in contact with the West. He notes that, for the

African, humans and nature "are not two independent and opposing realities but the one inseparable continuum of a hierarchical order."[5] This hierarchical order is a unitary world where everything has life-force (spirit) that has existed since the origin of the world, and that actively permeates the whole universe. Humans, spirits, divinities, animals, and material objects possess and share in this life-force. Life-force or vital-force and the human soul co-exist in the same person who engages in a relationship with other persons, spirits, or things in a way that strengthens or weakens the vital-force in him or her, in other persons, spirits, or things in the universe. So persons, spirits, objects or things should be approached with care. Hamminga, also reflecting on African ontology, has this to say:

> As a classical African, your vital power is derived from all kinds of forces: your name (your changing godfather – ancestor), your parents, your wife, your children, your hunting equipment (bows and arrows, as well as other forces you are wearing, such as vitally strong parts of hunting animals and other non-living objects charged by, say, a diviner) and all other animal, vegetable and non-living supplies you procure for yourself. In the system of transmission of power, your own power increases and diminishes.[6]

Furthermore, for Anyanwu, there is flexibility of interpretation of the African worldview. And, although the African worldview is interpreted and institutionalized differently in African cultures, "all African communities believe in the existence of a Creator, in divinities and in ancestors".[7] In other words, belief in the Supreme Being as creator and sustainer of the universe, in divinities who collaborate with the Supreme Being in sustaining the universe, and in ancestors who are living-dead persons who sustain the moral life of the community and whose lives are to be emulated constitute the core of African ontology. Differences as to how many divinities there are, the processes of becoming an ancestor, and in the idea of reincarnation and so on are accidentals that do not undermine the fundamentals of African ontology.

In addition, Teffo and Roux also emphasize the holistic nature of African metaphysics. Reality for the African is perceived to be a closed system where vital forces are controlled by laws and principles. Everything is ordered hierarchically with God at the

87

zenith. After God comes ancestors, then humans, animals, plants and matter. This closed universe of forces is such that to gain an additional force is for something else to lose it, and *vice versa*. However, the living person is central in this closed system.[8] Thus there is the invisible world of God, spirits and ancestors, and the visible world of humans, animals, plants, and matter; and these interact and intercommunicate. Okolo puts it this way:

> In the invisible or immaterial universe, according to African ontology, dwell God, or the highest being; the ancestors, or souls of the heads of clans and of the departed relatives; and nature gods, or spirits. The material realm, on the other hand, contains human beings, animals, plants, and inanimate beings.[9]

And Hamminga also explains it this way:

> The universe is a chain of forces "empowering" and "depowering" each other. God is the universal superforce, charging everything. God has important business, so he does not deal with humans directly. He leaves this to others: the young to the elders, the elders to the ancestors, and to the diviner, who is in contact not only with ancestors, but also with powerful spirits, people who died and who we know only as a force.[10]

Also, apart from the human chain of forces, there are other chains of forces: "there is also an animal chain, a plant chain, and a non-living chain. Transfer of power from everything to everything is possible."[11]

It is pertinent to note that the moral life of the individual in indigenous African thought plays a significant role in the distribution of vital force. Good deeds will empower the individual and the community, while evil deeds will depower the individual and the community. So, evil deeds decrease power and call for one form of appeasement or the other. Evil deeds, such as insulting someone older than you, stealing, or transgressing the rules of the community, for instance, call for appeasement in various ways. Some of these appeasements may be an apology to the person offended or the community in general, an apology accompanied by a fine, or some special consultations with some elders or indigenous 'doctors' who have knowledge and experience to help appease the spirit world that may have also been offended.[12]

Now, the interactions and intercommunications that exist in this hierarchical order of vital force revolve round human beings who are believed to be at the centre of the hierarchy of vital force. This may not be surprising especially as the human person in this material visible world is believed to be the only rational being who can understand the interplay of the hierarchy of forces above and below him or her. Also, the human person is conscious of his or her spiritual self (the human soul or spirit) that can survive death and be united with the spirit world (by becoming an ancestor). This possibility of uniting with the spirit world (as an ancestor) is not extended to nonhuman persons in this material visible world. Although, human persons are conscious of the symbiotic role they play side by side with animals, plants, animate and inanimate objects in this unitary world, only humans vividly occupy the centre position in the hierarchy of vital force. Okolo puts it succinctly thus:

> The interactions and intercommunications between the visible created order and the invisible world of God, spirits, and ancestors are possible only through human beings, the ontological mean between beings acting above and below them. In this sense, the human being in the African world-view is the centre of creation with intimate and personal relationships above and below him/her. They are aware also that they are being influenced by these other beings in the universe and that they influence them as well.[13]

Furthermore, in African philosophy there is the affirmation of the concrete existence of man and nature. In fact, in this material visible world where human beings are situated, there is a bond between persons and nonpersons. According to Nassem, this concrete existence of man and nature is better conceived as "'two conceptual entities' rather [than] two separate ontological existences. They are incapable of bifurcation. Therefore neither man nor nature can be sacrificed. Moreover, in this sacred unity, man and nature participate in the same locus without being opposites."[14]

However, life in indigenous African society, say Teffo and Roux, is not explained wholly metaphysically devoid of empirical or experiential analysis. African metaphysics has an empirical dimension, although it is conscious of the fact that reality is too vast and deep

to be fully explained from an empirical perspective alone. And, in African metaphysics, an empirical explanation is based on a teleological account of causality devoid of chance.

Reflecting on the above line of thought as it concerns the metaphysical and empirical aspects of African ontology, Keita in his article, "The African philosophical tradition", argues that Ancient Egyptian ontology (which is African) was both metaphysical and empirical. Unfortunately, ancient Greek philosophers who studied in ancient Egypt took the empirical aspect of Egyptian philosophy and developed Western science; and they ignored the metaphysical aspect of Egyptian philosophy. Hence Western science became grounded in materialism devoid of metaphysical elements, while African thought or science is both empirical and metaphysical. Keita enunciates it this way:

> African thought is essentially holistic in the sense that it accepts the
> material world, thus making possible empirical science, yet recognizing
> at the same time that metaphysical elements constitute the ontological
> support and motive force for movement and motion in the world.
> Paradoxically, it was this holistic ontology that permitted the most
> significant breakthroughs in empirical science in the modern era.[15]

At this juncture, this thesis now examines the various conceptions of personhood in African thought. The following, among others, have discussed the concept of personhood in Africa: Parrinder, Tempels, Abraham, Mbiti, Wiredu, Kagame, Oladipo, Gyekye, and Gbadegesin.

From Wiredu, Gyekye, Oladipo and Gbadegesin we can infer a West African conception of a person. Wiredu and Gyekye have both discussed the concept of a person in Akan. A person is said to possess three elements: *okra* – the life-giving force, the living soul; *nipadua* – body; and *sunsum* – that which gives the person his or her personality. While Gyekye equates *okra* with an immortal 'soul', Wiredu equates it with something that is quasi-physical with para-physical properties. So, Wiredu and Gyekye disagree, not on the existence of *okra* but on its nature.[16] Also, both Wiredu and Gyekye do not agree as to the immortality of *sunsum*. As for *nipadua*, the body, there is no controversy between

Wiredu and Gyekye, although there is controversy over how these three elements – *okra*, *nipadua*, and *sunsum* – interact in the person.[17]

The Yoruba conception of the person has been articulated by Oladipo and Gbadegesin. Oladipo presents to us the three elements or parts of the human person: *ara* – the visible tangible body; *emi* – the intangible life-giving element; and *ori* – the invisible personality element.[18] Gbadegesin, on his own part, divided the person (*eniyan*) into four parts or elements: *ara* – the physic-material part of the human being; *okan* – the organ responsible for circulation of the blood in the body, and the source of emotional and psychic reactions; *emi* – the active principle, the life-giving element, the divine breath; and *ori* – the physical head, and the bearer of destiny and the determinant of personality.[19]

Also, when compared to the Akan conception of the person, Gbadegesin's understanding of *okan* and *ori* are similar to Akan *sunsum*.[20]

Some conceptions of person in East and Southern African is based on the 'Force' thesis. For Tempels, the 'force' thesis distinguishes the African from the non-African. The African conception of being is a hierarchical dynamic vital force. Vital force is not static. Though it is not clear from Tempels' analysis what 'force' is in Bantu languages and thought, "this idea of force among the Luba seems to have similarities with that of *sunsum* and *okan* among the Akan and Yoruba respectively."[21]

Another thesis upon which conceptions of person is based in East and Southern Africa is the 'communalism' thesis. This thesis begins with Tempels. And in this thesis we also have *ubuntuism*. But Mbiti's propagation of a 'sociocentric' version of it on the basis that society makes or creates the person is remarkable. As can be deduced form his famous thesis, 'we are therefore I am', the communalism thesis has the advantage of bringing to bear the process of personhood; that is, "the constant and gradual remaking of persons through, inter alia, the acquisition and mastering of both cultural and esoteric knowledge. And to acquire such knowledge, 'the ontological priority of the collectivity' is indeed *presupposed*."[22]

In addition, Menkiti defines the human person in relation to the environing community. For him, the reality of the communal world comes before that of the individual, ontologically and epistemologically. The community defines a person which means that becoming a person involves a process of incorporation into a community. This implies that personhood is not acquired at birth, but it is something to be achieved with time in the community. That which is acquired with time in the community is a social self-hood which adds some essential qualities to the human person. So, the older one is in the community the more of a person he or she becomes. "What we have here then is both a claim that a qualitative difference exists between old and young, and a claim that some sort of ontological progression exists between infancy and ripening old age. One does not just take on additional features, one also undergoes fundamental changes at the very core of one's being."[23]

Community, for Menkiti, is best understood in the terms of Mbiti's 'I am because we are'. The 'we' is not additive "but a thoroughly fused collective 'we'."[24] Hence the African view of community is organic in essence such that priority is given to one's duties rather than one's rights in the society. Also, personhood is attained through participation in communal life and the discharge of one's duties. This points to the moral dimension of personhood.

Communalism is essentially social. And Okolo stresses the social aspect of the self in relation to others. The self or person is conceived to be an incarnate spirit, made up of body and soul or spirit. The self or person is a being-in-relation-to-others, as well as a unique being. This fact of being-in-relation-to-others and uniqueness is made vividly clear by personal names that reflect the circumstances and family background of the bearer. Thus an African personal name "points to the self as an individual, to a particular person, indeed to who the particular person is."[25]

Gyekye, however, criticizes Menkiti's idea that personhood is acquired in the community through time. According to Gyekye,

> Personhood may reach its full realization in community, but it is not acquired or yet to be achieved as one goes along in society. What a person acquires are status, habits, and personality or character traits: he, *qua* person, thus becomes the *subject* of the acquisition, and being thus prior to the acquisition process, he cannot be defined by what he acquires. One is a person because of what he is, not because of what he has acquired.[26]

So, it can be inferred from Gyekye's position that as a communal being a person is only partially defined by the community. This is moderate communalism, different from unrestricted and radical communalism of Menkiti.[27]

Furthermore, there are moral and epistemological dimensions to personhood. Gyekye in his reflection on some expressions in the Akan language notes that personhood may not be ascribed to a person due to some moral considerations. A person who has not displayed certain virtues expected of him or her as a person by the community, whose actions are thereby judged to be wicked, cruel and selfish, can be said not to be a person. Gyekye explains it thus:

> The pursuit or practice of moral virtue is held as intrinsic to the conception of a person. The position here may thus be the schematized as: for any p, if p is a person, then p ought to display in his conduct the norms and ideals of personhood. Thus when a person fails to exhibit the expected moral virtues in his conduct, he is said not to be a person (onnye 'nipa).[28]

From analyzing the Akan language it can be inferred that the idea of a person suggests moral personhood. Hence "a person is defined in terms of moral qualities or capacities: a human person is a being who has a moral sense and is capable of making moral judgments."[29] To this effect, though children are not yet capable of making moral judgments, "they are morally capable in potentiality."[30]

In addition, Kaphagawani argues that though elders have an epistemological monopoly over the young, it does not assert "an ontological distinction between the elders and the young: rather, it is merely to point out an epistemological difference; the young are not ontologically less human than the elders."[31]

So, arriving at a resume with Hamminga on African ontology, one can conclude that

> in the West anonymous, free moving atomic individuality (…) is the ideal self image, where the ideal self image of the classical African is holistic, community-dependent, power-connected personality ('every force is personal'). And… this characterizes the difference between western and African 'physic' (basic view on the working of the universe) as well![32]

3.3   Esan ontology.

The Esan worldview is made up of belief in the synergetic existence of the supernatural world of spirits and a physical world of material beings. The supernatural world of spirits are replete with males, as everything done in Africa, says Ukhun, "has always been from the male point of view."[33] The supernatural world of spirits is made up of "distinct categories of beings which are higher than the physical being here on earth."[34] The Esan belief in the spirits that inhabit the spirit world are listed by Ebhomienlen as follows:

> They believe in divinities, spririts of different nature and functions. These spirits include ancestors, Ogbanje or Egbakhuan, witches and wizards. They have strong belief in Ehi (guardian angel) or 'human double', that is a witness of a given individual's creation in the spirit world. He is also his spiritual counterpart.[35]

The physical world of material things is the abode of "humankind, all created beings and the things on earth, both animate and inanimate realities."[36] And human beings who are among the inhabitants of the physical world of material things need the assistance of the spirits, especially the ancestors, who live in the spirit world so as to be able to live good lives, die good death, and become ancestors.

This may explain why Ekoh asserts that "Esan people are communitarian in their worldview and this Esan communitarian life extends to the afterlife in the world of the living dead."[37] Also, concerning the social life of the Esan, Ukhun and Inegbedion are of the view that "The Esan people are communal in nature. This means that their hopes, aspirations, and relationships are perceived in communalistic terms."[38] The Esan saying, *elolo ivie ne ihue huean* (which can be translated as "a running nose follows crying") can be culturally interpreted to mean "What affects one of us affects all of us."[39]

In these two realms (the spiritual and the material), the human person is at the central stage. Okoh puts it this way: "The human person who lives on earth is the centre of the universe in Esan culture and tradition. The human person is like the priest of the universe, linking the universe to the creator."[40]

Reflections on the orderly, though mysterious, workings of nature may have led to the belief of the Esan people in the Supreme Being, God. This Supreme Being is believed to have created the world, and he is called *Osenobulua, or Osenobua.* Aluede describes *Osenobulua* with the following characteristics: "The supreme God, the intelligent creator, all seeing, all knowing and all hearing who was not created but single handedly created all that has been created".[41]

Next to *Osenobulua* in the hierarchy of beings are the divinities. The divinities are contingent beings (since only *Osenobulua* is a necessary Being) who play their special roles of sustaining creation (that was created by *Osenobulua* alone) and acting as intermediaries between *Osenobulua* and humans, or intercessors of humans to *Osenobulua*. Alli is of the view that divinities "act both as His [God's] ministers in the theocratic government of the world and as intermediaries between Him [God] and man."[42] Some of the names of these divinities, according to Aluede, are "*Amese*, *Imon*, *Agba*, *Ohie*, *Urabi*, *Obiavan*, *Erakpe,* etc."[43] And, some of these divinities are "gods of certain rivers, god of fire, god of iron, god of rocks, famous and influential individuals who by their feats are now deified."[44]

Also, Alli is of the view that in Esan, the divinities can be classified into two groups: the primordial and the deified divinities. He gives the following examples of deified divinities: "*Uda, Ohie, Edion, Agba,* etc"; and, for the primordial divinities, he gives the following examples: "*Idegun, Osun, Iyanto, Ojiuu,* etc."[45]

Following the divinities in the hierarchy of beings is *ehi*. These can be described as spiritual companions given by *Osenobulua* to each person right from each person's creation. They are to help each person achieve the destiny he or she has chosen. It should

95

be noted that each person's destiny is, from the very beginning, a positive one; that is, *Osenobulua*, in his goodness, does not make negative destinies for persons to choose from. It is also believed that *Osenobulua* gives each person the means to fulfill his or her destiny, including the giving of *ehi*. However, the ability to eventually fulfill one's destiny depends on the wisdom that comes from understanding the interplay of the hierarchy of forces. This explains why any person who fails to fulfill his or her destiny "is said to be cursed and he/she does not live a good life."[46]

Ancestors come after *ehi*. These are human beings who have died physically and now live spiritually. In this category of the spirits of human beings who have died physically, there are the ancestors – persons, who during their life time, lived a good life and who support in several ways the families they have left behind due to their physical death – and spirits of the dead (persons, who during their life time, lived in a way not worthy of being included in the class of ancestors). These spirits that are not admitted into the family of ancestors are believed to be ghosts, and they "are believed to be malevolent and benevolent in nature. Men could manipulate them to achieve their purposes."[47]

In addition, the ancestors are very much interested in the affairs of the families they have left behind and, indeed, the community they belonged to while on earth. Their presence is so felt that they are believed to avenge, on behalf of the community, all persons who do evil in the community. Ekoh holds that,

> The place and the role of the ancestors in Esan culture can never be over emphasize. The ancestors form the principal strand without which the fabric collapses. However, the ancestors, it seems are venerated because of the superhuman quality of their power, not its omnipotence, that make them so valuable, and sometimes, so dreadful, to their descendants in any extreme. More than any other forces, the ancestors are considered to be the protectors of the society as well as its most feared direct critic and source of punishment.[48]

After the ancestors we have human beings in the hierarchy of beings. And among human beings in Esan indigenous setting, the *onojie* (king) comes first, followed by village heads or clan heads with the council of chiefs or elders who help in decision making or

dispute resolution. "These elders perform a dual function, one, as physical persons who set examples of good behaviour for the young ones and two, as the representatives of the ancestors (the living dead) who are the guardians of public morality."[49] After the chiefs we have the heads of each family, then individual members of the community. In the category of the individual members of the community, the male folk is further divided into the *igenes* or the *igbamas*. After the *igbamas* then comes the *egbonughele* (the sweepers and foragers of the community). In Esan land, the collective functions of the *enijie* (kings), *edion* (elders), *obo* (priest), and professional craftsmen is summarized by Onobhayedo thus:

> They were the opinion leaders and custodian of the customs and values of the people. They ensured that the younger ones were groomed to be conformists within the traditional setting. They also provided leadership in politics, industry, religion as well as individual and community health management. The ordinary subjects generally obeyed or emulated these supposedly knowledgeable and well adjusted members of their community.[50]

3.4   Personhood in Esan culture

The Esan believes that *Osenobulua* (the Supreme Being) created him or her as well as the divinities, spirits and other animate and inanimate things in the world. The Esan word for a human being or a person is *oria. Oria* is unisex, that is, it stands for both *okpia* (male*)* and *okhuo* (female). *Oria* (person) in Esan "is a composite being, the spiritual and the physical. The physical is called '*Egbe*' while the spiritual is called '*orion'* (soul)."[51] There is no dichotomy between the *egbe* (body) and *orion* (soul); there is just one person, or human being with *egbe* and *orion*. Ekoh explains it this way: "According to the traditional Esan belief, a body without a soul is not a human being, but a corpse [;] and a soul without a body is not a human being either. It is at best a ghost. The human person is made up of body and soul."[52]

Just like the Yoruba, the Esan gives priority to *uhunmwon* (the 'head'). The *uhunmwon* for the Esan is a symbol of the personality of each person, and it contains the two vital

organs of the human person: *erhere* (brain) and *elolo* (eyes). The Esan believes that "without the brain and the eyes, one becomes a beast. … It is the brain that really makes man what he is."[53] This points to the recognition of the cognitive values of a person.

After *uhunmwon* comes *udu* (the *heart)* and *aralen* or *esagien* (the blood) that is pumped by the heart all through the body. *Aralen* (blood) is *able* to nourish *egbe* (the body) when the vital-force is still in the human body. The absence of the vital-force leads to lack of circulation of *aralen* (blood), and consequently death. It is the duty of each and every Esan to protect and preserve life as much as it is humanly possible with the able assistance of the spirits in the spirit world. "It is this close relationship between the part of God in man and blood, which has made Esan people believe that blood is life."[54] At death, the *orion* (soul) lives on; it does not die with physical death. *Orion* (soul) goes back to *Osenobulua* (Supreme Being) to give an account of how he or she has fulfilled his or her destiny.

Furthermore, in Esan culture, *oria* (human being, person) is the being around which all things in the universe revolve; that is, *oria* "is like a priest of the universe, linking the universe to the creator."[55] This idea has also been echoed by Mbiti.[56] Since each person has his or her destiny, and each person at physical death aims to eventually become an ancestor, there is need for a person at birth to be given a name. The significance of naming in Esan will now be discussed.

3.4.1 The significance of naming a child at birth.

Names are words (simple or compound), phrases, or compound sentences by which persons, places, objects or things are known. There is no language that does not have proper names with which it refers to objects and persons. In this sense, giving of names or the act of naming "is a universal human practice, apparently as old as language itself."[57]

According to Nuessel, apart from the fact that words connote and names denote, philosophers like John Stuart Mill and Bertrand Russell, and other linguists and scholars like Algeo, Gardiner, and Zabeeh, are of the view that "proper names (be they toponyms or personal names) have no meaning per se."[58] However, this is not the case with Esan proper names, especially Esan personal names. Esan names are very meaningful and tell the story of the person as well as the family of the person bearing the name. In other words, names reveal the family and circumstances of birth which play significant roles in the destiny of the person. So, your name gives an idea of your family, the circumstances of your birth, and the role your presence in the family ought to fulfill throughout your earthly existence.

In relation to Esan, Okojie notes that, "In Esan custom every child is given a name, and each name has a meaning, which may give a short insight into the father's, mother's or family history."[59] At birth, the child is already identified as a person, hence the child is given a proper name as befitting a human being.

Naming ceremonies can, therefore, be seen as processes of officially vesting an individual unique human being with human name(s), and, by so doing, making him or her an official member of the community of persons, and a sharer of the communal life of the society of persons. It is a movement from individuality (at birth) to communality as reflected in the name(s) given to the person that is/are enriched with the circumstances of birth, family history, hopes and aspirations, and an inference into the destiny of the bearer of the name in the community of persons into which the bearer has been born.

According to Kaphagawani, personal name is only culturally significant. It is not ontologically significant. So, it is not the case that a child becomes a person only after the child is named. He substantiates his point thus:

> For, before an individual is given a name he or she is an existent human being who happens to be nameless. The significant of the name is more to do with, inter alia, what the society expects or wishes him or her to be. Before the act of naming, he or she is not any the less human; he or

she is endowed with feelings and senses, and an intellect which is yet to
be put to some use.[60]

3.4.2 Acquiring of human values in the community through time.

Naming is followed by grooming by the whole community who sees the child as their own. The grooming continues into adulthood which can be said to be the fullness of personhood. This process of personhood involves partaking in initiation ceremonies, and the acquisition of moral values and wisdom through time.

The indigenous Esan people believe that the acquisition of values enrich or enhance personhood. Such values as morality, regard, respect, honour, responsibility, etcetera. are made possible through the acquisition, at birth, of cognitive values and senses.

Though the individual is a product of the community as he or she acquires values that enrich his or her personhood through time, the individual does not thereby lose his individuality and become fused into the community. This point can be explained using this Esan proverb: *Akha we na sikoko, a bha we na simanman*, which means "Come together does not mean fuse into one"[61] to the extent of losing one's unique individuality. Hence the Esan concept of a person can be said to be one of moderate communalism like that of the Akan, rather than the excessive communalism of Menkiti.

That Esan communalism is a form of moderate communalism and not excessive or thoroughgoing communalism can be demonstrated by the following: the practice of excommunication from the community of persons and that of the ancestors, the apportioning of praise and blame for actions carried out, and the denial of relationship in knowledge, that is, the denial of being known. This aspect of relationship in knowledge will be discussed in the next chapter.

Furthermore, Okolo spots some problems in the social production of the self as captured in some African notion of personhood. He is of the opinion that the communal or social

100

production of the self or person produces the problem of 'freedom' and 'autonomy'. The overwhelming nature of African communalism leaves little or no room for a meaningful individual freedom and autonomy: "Little or no room is left to the individual for initiative, spontaneity, responsibility, auto-decision, auto-determination, etc. which are the hallmarks of true liberty and autonomy."[62] But that is not the case in Esan indigenous thought. The problem derives from the idea of a thoroughgoing communalism as presented by Menkiti and some other African philosophers. Thoroughgoing communalism may be the case in some African conception of communalism, but not the case in the Esan idea of communalism.

To redress the problem posed by a thoroughgoing communalism, Okolo argues that a balanced African conception of the self should include the following ideas: "Man has an intrinsic dimension to his being. He cannot be reduced merely to a set of extrinsic relations. He is a subject, not simply an object; an end in himself, not merely a means; self-determined, not merely other-determined; and so on."[63]

3.5   Conclusion.

The Esan conception of the person is similar in many respects to those of other cultures in Africa. A person is made up of body and soul which function in a harmonious way that makes the mind-body problem of Western philosophy nonexistent. It is possible to talk of the body and its functions, as well as the soul and its functions. But to talk of the person, as a person, functioning completely as only a body or a soul in this material existence is not possible. The whole person acts when functioning materially or spiritually. Hence, the physical eating, drinking, sleeping or resting, bathing, etc. can affect positively or negatively the spiritual; that is, it can bring about increase or decrease in the vital force of the individual. Also, spiritual activities of the worship of *Osenobulua* through the deities or ancestors, seeking of the help of other spirits, and consulting the indigenous doctors or witch doctors can also affect the physical body and increase or decrease vital force as well.

101

Also, the human being or person is a moral being. Apart from rationality, morality is also considered an essential aspect of the person. This is such that the moral stance of the person from time to time either increases or decreases the vital force. Each person, in union with his or her *ehi* (guardian angel or spirit), is expected to work out the destiny he or she has chosen before *Osenobulua* (the Supreme Being) at creation. The whole process of fulfilling his or her destiny is played out over time through the development of the person (personhood) in the community.

However, though the human being or person is a communal being he or she is also unique to the extent that he or she is given a proper name befitting a human being. Personhood is better understood as a process of flowering, blooming to the full through the development of cognitive values (already inherent in the child) and acquisition of moral values, and other values like regard, respect, honour, wisdom, etcetera. as the child develops as a social and communal being in the community.

The consequences for epistemology of the unitary conception of the person, cognitive values acquired at birth, and moral values of the person that are developed through time in the community will be discussed in the next chapter.

Endnotes.

[1] P. P. Ekeh, 1983, *Colonialism and social structure,* An inaugural lecture delivered at the University of Ibadan on Thursday, 5 June, 1980, Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 5.

[2] N. W. Thiong'O, 2003, Moving the centre: towards a pluralism of culture, Eds. P. H. Coetzee, & A. P. J. Roux, *The African philosophy reader,* 2nd ed., London: Routledge, 53.

[3] M. B. Romose, 2003, The struggle for reasons in Africa, Eds. P. H. Coetzee, & A. P. J. Roux, *The African philosophy reader,* 2nd ed., London: Routledge, 7.

[4] K. C. Anyanwu, 1981, African world-view and theory of knowledge. Ed. R. E. A. Omi, & K. C. Anyanwu, *African philosophy: an introduction to the main philosophical trends in contemporary Africa,* Rome: Catholic Book Agency, 77 – 99.

[5] K. C. Anyanwu, 1981, African world-view and theory of knowledge, 87.

[6] B. Hamminga, 2005, Epistemology from the African point of view, Ed. B. Hamminga, *Knowledge cultures. Comparative Western and African epistemology*. Poznan studies in the philosophy of the sciences and humanities, Amsterdam-New York, NY: Rodopi, 65.

[7] K. C. Anyanwu, 1981, African world-view and theory of knowledge, 93.

[8] L. J. Teffo, & A. P. J. Roux, 2003, Themes in African metaphysics, Eds. P. H. Coetzee, & A. P. J. Roux, *The African philosophy reader,* 2nd ed., London: Routledge, 165.

[9] C. B. Okolo, 2003, Self as a problem in African philosophy, Eds. P. H. Coetzee, & A. P. J. Roux, *The African philosophy reader,* 2nd ed., London: Routledge

[10] B. Hamminga, 2005, Epistemology from the African point of view, 63.

[11] B. Hamminga, 2005, Epistemology from the African point of view, 63.

[12] B. Hamminga, 2005, Epistemology from the African point of view, 68.

[13] C. B. Okolo, 2003, Self as a problem in African philosophy, 211.

[14] Z. 'b, Nassem, 1996, African heritage and the contemporary life: an epistemological change, IMODOYE: A Journal of African Philosophy, Vol. 2, no. 2, 70 – 71.

[15] L. Keita, 2000, The African philosophical tradition, Eds D. Arjo, O. Conrad, L. Kirchner, and S. Yeargain, *From wonder to wisdom: an introduction to philosophy,* Boston, MA: Pearson Custom Publication, 340.

[16] D. N. Kaphagawani, 2004, African conceptions of a person: a critical survey, Ed. K. Wiredu, *A companion to African philosophy,* Malden, USA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 333.

[17] D. N. Kaphagawani, 2004, African conceptions of a person, 333.

[18] O. Oladipo, 1992, The Yoruba conception of a person: an analytico-philosophical study. *International Studies in Philosophy,* XXIV/3, 15.

[19] S. Gbadegesin, 1998, 'Eniyon': the Yoruba conception of a person, Eds. P. H. Coetzee, & A. P. J. Roux, *Philosophy from Africa: a text with readings*, Johannesburg: Thomson Publishing, 175 – 180.

[20] D. N. Kaphagawani, 2004, African conceptions of a person, 334.

[21] D. N. Kaphagawani, 2004, African conceptions of a person, 335.

[22] D. N. Kaphagawani, 2004, African conceptions of a person, 338.

[23] I. A. Menkiti, 1984, Person and community in African traditional thought. *From wonder to wisdom: an introduction to philosophy.* Eds D. Arjo, O. Conrad, L. Kirchner, and S. Yeargain, *From wonder to wisdom: an introduction to philosophy,* Boston, MA: Pearson Custom Publication,167.

[24] I. A. Menkiti, 1984, Person and community in African traditional thought, 171.

[25] C. B. Okolo, 2003, Self as a problem in African philosophy, 214.

[26] K. Gyekye, 1992, Person and community in African thought. Ed. K. Wiredu, & K. Gyekye, *Person and community. Ghanaian philosophical studies, I.* Washington, D. C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 108.

[27] K. Gyekye, 1992, Person and community in African thought, 113.

[28] K. Gyekye, 1992, Person and community in African thought, 109.

[29] K. Gyekye, 1992, Person and community in African thought, 110,

[30] K. Gyekye, 1992, Person and community in African thought, 110.

[31] D. N. Kaphagawani, 2004, African conceptions of a person, 338.

[32] B. Hamminga, 2005, Epistemology from the African point of view, 79.

[33] C. E. Ukhun, 1998, Women: the missing variable in Africa's salvation, *EPHA: Ekpoma Journal of Religious Studies,* vol. 2, no. 1, June, 133.

[34] T. O. Ebhomienlen, 2006, The concept of oro among the Esan people: a medium of social cohesion, *IRORO: Journal of Arts,* vol. 11, no. 1 & 2, June, 182.

[35] T. O. Ebhomienlen, 2006, The concept of oro among the Esan people, 182.

[36] J. E. Ekoh, 2014, *Life, death and life after death: an Esan-Christian response,* Benin City: Floreat Systems Publications, 74.

[37] J. E. Ekoh, 2014, *Life, death and life after death: an Esan-Christian response,* 67.

[38] C. E. Ukhun, & N. A. Inegbedion, 2005, Ontological validation of land tenureship in Esan tradition, *IRORO: Journal of Arts,* vol. 10, no. 1 & 2, June, 252.

[39] C. G. Okojie, 1992, *Words of wisdom from Ishan elders*, prov. 500, 77.

[40] J. E. Ekoh, 2014, *Life, death and life after death: an Esan-Christian response,* 75.

[41] C. O. Aluede, 2006, Esan native doctors' musical instruments as spirits: basis and relevance in contemporary Nigeria, *IRORO: Journal of Arts,* vol. 11, no. 1 & 2, June, 339,

[42] P. O. Alli, 2011, *Esan cosmology and its effects on the social behaviour of the people,* Lagos: Deocraft Communications.

[43] C. O. Aluede, 2006, Esan native doctors' musical instruments as spirits, 339.

[44] C. O. Aluede, 2006, Esan native doctors' musical instruments as spirits, 339.

[45] P. O. Alli, 2011, *Esan cosmology,* 48.

[46] P. O. Alli, 2011, *Esan cosmology,* 24.

[47] T. O. Ebhomienlen, 2006, The concept of oro among the Esan people, 183.

[48] J. E. Ekoh, 2014, *Life, death and life after death: an Esan-Christian response,* 68 – 69.

[49] M. A. Izibili, 2006, Cultism in Nigerian universities: reflection on African and cult practice, *IRORO: Journal of Arts,* vol. 11, no. 1 & 2, June, 228.

[50] A. Onobhayedo, 1999, Western education and social change in Esan land, *IRORO: Journal of Arts,* vol. 7, nos. 1 & 2, Aug, 270 – 271.

[51] P. O. Alli, 2011, *Esan cosmology,* 19.

[52] J. E. Ekoh, 2014, *Life, death and life after death: an Esan-Christian response,* 77.

[53] P. O. Alli, 2011, *Esan cosmology,* 19.

[54] P. O. Alli, 2011, *Esan cosmology,* 21.

[55] J. E. Ekoh, 2014. *Life, death and life after death: an Esan-Christian response,* 75.

[56] J. Mbiti, 1991, *Introduction to African Religion,* Oxford: Heinemann.

[57] B. A. Okolo, & P. A. Ezikeojiaku, 1999, *Introduction to language and linguistics,* Benin City: Mindex Publishing Company Limited, 144.

[58] F. Nuessel, 1992, *The study of names: a guide to the principles and topics,* Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 5.

[59] C. G. Okojie, 1994, *Esan native laws and customs*, 31.

[60] D. N. Kaphagawani, 2004, African conceptions of a person, 340.

[61] C. G. Okojie, 1992, *Words of wisdom from Ishan elders*, prov. 304, 51.

[62] C. B. Okolo, 2003, Self as a problem in African philosophy, 215.

[63] C. B. Okolo, 2003, Self as a problem in African philosophy, 215.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 AI YOLE ABHA LEN ORIA: EPISTEMIC INTERACTIVISM IN INDIGENOUS ESAN THOUGHT

4.1 Introduction

The Esan dictum, *Ai yole abha len oria* (which literally translates as "We never say we do not know someone"), captures the essence of the epistemology of indigenous Esan thought as it relates to knowing person-objects. This dictum is a popular proverb in Esan culture, and understanding it requires an appreciation of the role proverbs, as an aspect of language, play in expressing the rich cultural heritage, wisdom and philosophy of the Esan people.

In this chapter, the epistemology of the Esan people will be discussed. It will begin with an exposition of epistemology from some African cultural perspectives. This will be followed by proverbs in Esan, since Esan proverbs contain the rich culture and wisdom of the Esan people. Finally, this chapter will discuss knowing the person-object in indigenous Esan thought.

4.2 African epistemology.

Hallen in "What's it mean?: 'analytic' African philosophy" highlights the need for an African epistemology to serve as an alternative cognitive system valid in its own right. It can be inferred from the idea he proposes that worldviews influence epistemological understanding of reality. The Western worldview has influence Western epistemology. The African worldview should also form the basis for an African epistemology. Much has been said concerning the African worldview or ontology and how it is essentially different from the Western worldview or ontology. But the equivalent African epistemology that should blossom from the African worldview or ontology has not been

adequately articulated. Emphatically, Hallen opines that "it will be at the battlefield of epistemology that the legitimacy of African philosophy must most importantly be established."[1]

Many scholars and researchers have articulated in different ways epistemological ideas in African cultures. Hamminga, for instance, using the analogy of a tree, has this to say about African epistemology: "Our community is a tree (…) (Dead) ancestors are roots giving energy to the adults. Adults form the trunk. They in turn supply the branches, leaves and flowers, our children. The tree knows. 'We' know. The tree is the knowing subject."[2] When 'we' know, the community knows; and when the community knows, 'we' know. So, we, in union (not in isolation) with the community, know. Knowledge is not an individual isolated property; it is essentially social and communal.

Furthermore, as noted by Hamminga, togetherness is highly valued by the African; and knowledge is an expression of this togetherness. 'We' want to always share our views and resolve our different opinions because "Togetherness is our ultimate criterion of any action, the pursuit of knowledge being just one of them."[3] In other words, there is the consciousness that knowledge is collectively owned even though the individual may initiate it via his or her experiences. The basis for interpreting individual experiences lies in communal share beliefs and practices. And the basis for accepting any individual's experience as knowledge also lies in communal shared beliefs and practices. Hence, the individual actively participates in the communal knowledge of his or her people by partaking in the communal knowledge of his or her people, and at the same time contributing to it through his or her experiences.

Therefore, individualism, in the sense of isolation from the community of persons, is alien to the African. In fact, no one can have knowledge or participate in knowledge if cut off from the community. Hamminga summarises what an African scholar or philosopher who is conversant with Western philosophy and science will likely explain about Western

philosophy and science to another African who is not familiar with Western philosophy and science thus:

> First, consider yourself as an "independent", "isolated" individual. Second, build up your own *private* set of "reasons to believe". Third, on every occasion [that] you have to decide whether to believe something or not, you should come – individually, on your own – to your own conclusions, using you own set of reasons to believe, if necessary expanding them for the purpose.[4]

The above explanation articulates the mindset of the Westerner. This lonely independent mind of modern Western thought has grown in number. But for the African, loneliness and independence are dangerous. Using the analogy of a tree, once more, Hamminga explains the danger that the lonely independent mind of the modern Westerner poses to the African thus:

> A part of a tree does not choose an individual existence. No part of a body – and that is all you are – can meaningfully survive cut off from the rest. And everything you do, including acquisition of knowledge and coming to beliefs, serves the purpose of enhancing the vital energy, the procreation of the tribe. Together. What you do if you isolate, individualize yourself is worse than dying: you will never be a root [an ancestor].[5]

The African culture, while resolving the conflict between the self and the world, "makes the self the centre of the world."[6] The self now gives life, meaning, order and unity to the world such that what happens to the self happens to the world, and *vice versa.* In other words, "The African culture assumes that a life-force permeates the universe, that the world is centered on the self, that reality cannot be separated from personal experience and that all life forces are in constant interaction in a hierarchical order."[7]

As a life-force, the African is an active participator and not a spectator of life. So, knowledge involves all human faculties and experiences: "He sees, feels, imagines, reasons or thinks and intuits all at the same time. Only through this method does he claim to have the knowledge of the other."[8] And the method employed in all these is intuition (best understood as a kind of synthesis of all human faculties) and personal experience built upon the collective and shared experience of the community of persons. This

107

method is not individualistic, but culture-bound. The cultural world encloses us; we cannot transcend it although our human experiences can enlarge it.[9]

Hamminga explains the ontological principle that forms the basis of African epistemology thus:

> First, the universe consists of *forces*. They exert *power* over each other. You have: non-living forces, living forces, formerly living forces (dematerialized forces, forces nevertheless!). Licking some kind of stone can stop you feeling sick when you are pregnant. A plant can cure your skin. Your dead father can give you power and advice. A bow can help you to hunt successfully. Everything has power, is active. More or less active. The African question to any unknown object is not "What is it?" but "What does it do?"[10]

The question "What is it?" from a Western perspective is more of analysis – to break apart so as to understand the inner workings or logic of what the thing or object is – followed by a synthesis of the understanding of the inner workings or logic of the thing or object. This method is believed to help yield objectivity of the object or thing bracketed away from other objects or things. In other words, to objectively understand an object or a thing, Western science primarily studies the object or thing in itself, without reference to what it influences or what influences it. It is at the secondary level that it considers what the object or thing does.

For the African, based on the unity of forces and beings in African ontology, the primary concern in knowledge of an unknown object is "What does it do?" "What does the vital force contained in it do?", not onto itself (for a vital force is for something: to enrich or impoverish something), but for persons and the community at large. In other words, "*All knowledge acquisition is the discovery of the power of forces*. To discover what a thing 'does'. What the force is for."[11]

Now, in African thought, the ultimate goal of knowledge is wisdom. And wisdom is all-encompassing. Without the right knowledge there cannot be wisdom; and without wisdom, the knowledge one has is incomplete and dangerous to the individual and the community. Complete knowledge which manifests in wisdom is ongoing. It is not static

108

or something one attains at once and no more. It is a continuous openness to the whole of reality, which is experience. Hence elders and diviners are entrusted with the serious business of growing in the knowledge of the interplay of forces. "Such knowledge is not 'produced' (…), but given. … Just having respect, an open mind and readiness to receive is what counts."[12] In other words, "knowledge is not produced, but it comes, is given to you by tradition, the ancestors, as a heritage. So knowledge acquisition is a *purely social* matter, a matter of teaching, of being told, 'uploaded' (by living, dead or spiritual powers) only."[13]

In addition, the knowledge whose goal is wisdom further aims at attaining stability in the vital-force through the instrumentality of morality. Hallen rightly notes the foundational role played by epistemology both to morality and other disciplines thus: "Considerations of how and what people claim to believe and to know are always fundamental. They underlie every aspect of human endeavour: aesthetic, common-sensical, moral, social, political, technical, etc."[14] While moral actions continue to sustain the stability of the vital-force, immoral actions create instability in the vital-force. Here we have the strong relationship between knowledge and morality such that an immoral act is considered a display of lack of knowledge concerning the consequences of the immoral act or a clear sign of wickedness on the part of the person who commits immoral acts in the community. And, as Ojoajogwu enunciates it,

> an action performed by man, that is capable of bringing disrepute and shame to him and the community or the society, is a violation of the principles of knowledge. Knowledge should otherwise be able to create growth and development of society. For that, any violation of the essence of knowledge in this way calls for the attention of the respective community. … In other words, the community plays a watch-dog role in the protection of ethical principles while at the same time recognizing the individual as its essential part in the scheme of things[15]

In other words, knowledge is for human growth and socio-cultural and communal development. In this sense it is intrinsically tied to morality because moral acts alone can promote human growth and communal development. Immoral acts, on the other hand will

destroy the person and the community on the long run. To act as a rational person, therefore, is to act out of knowledge grounded on morality. To fail to act out of knowledge built on morality is to be a threat, first to yourself, and second, to the community. To preserve itself, the community protects both knowledge and morality from persons whose actions may threaten the life of the community through appropriate sanctions.

Also, Onyewuenyi elucidates the relationship between knowledge and morality in the African context. He said that the African is conscious of the effect of his moral life on the hierarchy of forces. His life is God's own; however,

> The strengthening of his life and its preservation are in the hands of his ancestors and elders. In the life of the community each person has his place and each has his right to well-being and happiness. Therefore, what to do and what to avoid in order to preserve, increase, and strengthen vital forces in himself and others of his clan constitute morality.[16]

Gyekye also notes that, in Akan culture, human nature is considered to be intrinsically good and the human person is essentially good. Also, the human person can carry out good actions and should be treated in a good way. In other words, "the human person is considered to possess an innate capacity for virtue, for performing morally right actions and therefore should be treated as a morally responsible agent."[17]

Though knowledge has physical and spiritual dimensions in African epistemology, it also has cognitive and normative or moral dimensions. Ozumba and Chimakonam put it like this:

> Nothing is known in Africa epistemic enterprise that is not known to be good or bad or both otherwise there in no knowledge. Every variable necessarily undergoes evaluation simultaneously with its assessment. Hence the process of knowledge acquisition in Africa is intertwined with a normative evaluation.[18]

Also, Ozumba and Chimakonam note that the African worldview is such that epistemology is linked with ethics. To be known is to be known to be either good or bad/evil.

4.3   Esan epistemology.

Esan epistemology is essentially built on morality. In this sense it is overtly moral. And since Esan wisdom and philosophy is engraved in proverbs of the Esan people, an understanding of Esan proverbs will help us to understand Esan epistemology. So this section will begin with an exposition of the nature of Esan proverbs.

4.3.1 Esan proverbs as reservoirs of knowledge.

Most of the written works on indigenous African thought were the inventions of European scholars, writers, and clerics who did not take the pain to study and be grounded in the culture and traditions of the African people. Mudimbe in his work: *The invention of Africa*[19] articulates this point very well. According to Brown the translations of African idioms by European scholars, writers, and clerics were from the perspective of Western conceptual idioms so much so that "Eurocentric languages were superimposed upon African cultures without an informed or dedicated commitment to preserving the integrity of African conception idioms, and without clear and accurate understanding of the underlying ontological commitments that grounded those idioms."[20]

In addition, Brown is of the view that "our ability to appreciate or otherwise understand the content of the conceptual languages of others turns on the extent to which we are able to view the content from the perspectives of the native users of the language."[21]

Now, the Esan People, as well as peoples of diverse cultures and traditions, express themselves through language. Language contains proverbs, idioms, riddles, songs, poems, etcetera. Okojie is of the view that proverb occupies a significant position in African languages because it "epitomizes a people's language showing not just wit, humour, wisdom but life's experience and hence it is the major medium of expression of the aged and the wise. Our fathers invested them as cardinals of reason providing salvation to an irrational public."[22]

111

Esan proverbs, therefore, contain a "lot of wisdom, knowledge, and native intelligence"[23] of Esan fathers (ancestors) and elders. The greatest asset of Esan fathers and elders as it relates to proverbs "was brevity or economy of words … meant to hit the hearer who on reflection gets the message almost immediately."[24]

4.3.2 The relationship between epistemology and morality in Esan thought

The unity of the person or the human being in Esan indigenous thought, as it is also present in most, if not all, African cultures, was well captured by Ekoh when he said that a body without a soul is a corpse, and a soul without a body is a ghost.[25] *Oria* (a human being or a person) is neither a corpse nor a ghost. So, the dichotomy between mind/soul and body in Western philosophy, especially in Descartes and Locke which informed their epistemology, does not hold in Esan indigenous thought. So knowledge, as it is the case in most African cultures, involves the whole person – rational processes of the mind, the senses, intuition, imagination, feelings, etc. – acting in unison.

Knowledge which involves the whole person is also intrinsically moral since one of the characteristics of the human person is that he or she is a moral being. The significance of this idea of the moral nature of the human being or person comes out in the functions of persons in the community. The *onojie* (king), for instance, is believed to have been chosen by *Osenobulua* (the Supreme Being) to rule the community. To fulfill his divine mandate, he has to serve the people and not himself, his family, or friends alone. He should not live in a way that negates the customs or traditions of the people. His private life is not an exception to this rule. As Alli puts it, "His private life may affect his public act, and his public act is not merely his, but that of the community since he represents the community in the presence of the divine."[26] The same goes for the chiefs or elders and other persons in the community who carryout one form of social responsibility or the other. By extension, both the public and private morality of the Esan people are governed

by rules and regulations. For instance, as private as sexual intercourse is between husband and wife, the only form of sex approved for married people is indigenous Esan thought is that which goes with the contact of the genital organs. Oral sex is forbidden.

Social interactions necessitate rules and regulations. Even private morality necessitates rules and regulations as well since the vital force of the community is affected both by the social and private life of the individual. Onimhawo has this to say about morality and social interactions among the Esan people:

> Morality is a cherished value among the Esan people, which is enforced in their traditional code of behaviour. It originates among them through the process of social interactions in the community. This explains the behavioural pattern of the Esan people as a culture which is traditionally organized. Organization comes to play because some basic rules are set down to govern them through which they are able to distinguish between good and evil in their community. Moreover, they are able to maintain this through social sanctions in which good deeds are praised while evil deeds are frowned at.[27]

One way through which good is praised and evil is frowned at is through social sanctions. These social sanctions are based on cultural morality grounded in the strong belief in what the spirits, especially the ancestors, will do to those who violate moral rules and conducts. Some examples of evil to be avoided in indigenous Esan are suicide, murder, incest, adultery, homosexuality, bestiality, witchcraft, stealing, lying, etcetera. Examples of virtuous acts or good to be done in Indigenous Esan are hospitality and generosity to members and non-members of the community; protection of the poor, widows and orphans; respect for elders and constituted authority; the discharge of one's responsibility according to one's grade or position in the society, etcetera.

Hence excommunication, ostracizing, and excluding one from the bond of knowledge is to be cut off from the community of persons and be deflated of vital force. Such a person, in the words of Hamminga, can never become an ancestor.

At this juncture, this work now examines the nature of knowing of the 'other' – person-object – in indigenous Esan thought, and the role morality plays in this process.

113

4.3.3 *Ai yole abha len oria*.

One form of social affirmation or denial of the person can be found in the epistemology of the Esan people as it relates to knowing the 'other', person-object. A combination of the social affirmation or denial of the person based on morality, coupled with the epistemic understanding of the person based on the ontology of the person, gives an insight into the Esan dictum: *ai yole abha len oria* (which literally translates as "we never say we do not know someone"). This dictum that captures the essence of knowledge as it relates to the 'other' – *the person-object of knowledge* – can be described as *relationship in knowledge*. It is also a *knowledge intercourse* underpinned by the ontological unity between the subject of knowledge and the person-object of knowledge.

In indigenous Esan thought, to the question: *Uwe len imen?* (which literally translates as 'do you know me?') coming from an adult person one is not acquainted with, one does not say outright: *I bha len uwe* (which literally translates as: 'I do not know you'). Also, when someone you are not acquainted with or you have never met before now is being introduced to you by another person with the question: *Uwe be len oni oria na?* (which literally translates as: 'Do you know this person?') you do not also say outright: *I bha len olen* (which literally translates as: 'I do not know him or her'). The conventional reply is a*i yole abha len oria* (which literally translates as "we never say we do not know someone").

The conventional reply: *ai yole abha len oria*, made by the Esan man or woman (as subject of knowledge) is not to be taken as a metaphorical or a polite way of him or her saying "I do not know you" to the person-object of knowledge he or she is meeting for the first time. In other words, when the Esan says: *ai yole abha len oria*, he or she is not saying "I really do not know you, but I am saying it in a polite and respectful way so that you do not get offended by me." The dictum: *ai yole abha len oria* is a statement that ascribes cognitive and moral values, as well as recognition, regard, honour, respect, etc.

114

to the person-object of knowledge. It is, therefore, not a metaphorical statement. The explanations below further explicate this point.

To the question: *Uwe be len oni eran ni?* (which literally translates as: 'Do you know that tree?'), one can answer *Ee or en* (meaning 'Yes!') or E*eye* or *eo* (meaning 'No!') depending on whether or not one is conversant with what the tree 'does' for persons or the community at large. The same goes for other objects and things – nonperson-objects – in the visible material world. Also, to the question: *Uwe len imen?* (which literally translates as: "Do you know me?") said by a person one does not want to associate with, one can say categorically, *I bha len uwe* (meaning: "I don't know you"). The same negative answer can be given when one is been introduced to a person one does not want to associate with. This negative answer severs the relationship in knowledge, the epistemic intercourse between the parties involved. It also provokes the person-object to demand for an explanation from the subject of knowledge that warrants his or her being severed, not only from the relationship in knowledge, but also from the community at large. If there is a grave moral reason for saying: *I bha len uwe* (meaning: "I don't know you"), the subject of knowledge is justified for severing the epistemic intercourse that naturally exists among persons. But if there are no grave moral reasons for denying epistemic intercourse with the person-object of knowledge, the person-object can rightly take offence, summon the community and demand an apology form the subject of knowledge. This issue will be further deliberated on in the section below dealing with morality.

From the foregoing, it should be noted that in Esan epistemology, distinctions are made between the subject of knowledge, the person-object of knowledge, and the nonperson-object of knowledge in a way that does not disengage the subject of knowledge either from himself or herself, or from the person-object or the nonperson-object of knowledge. In other words, there is a fundamental unity between persons, spirits in the invisible-spirit world, and nonpersons (objects, things, animate and inanimate beings) in the visible-material world. Within this fundamental unity a distinction is further made between

persons (as subjects and person-objects of knowledge) and nonperson-objects of knowledge.

Furthermore, the epistemic relationship between the subject of knowledge and the person-object of knowledge is deeper than that between the subject of knowledge and the nonperson-object of knowledge. The epistemic relationship of the subject of knowledge and the person-object of knowledge is an *interactivism* which takes the form of an epistemic intercourse underpinned by a bond or unity that makes the subject – object dichotomy of the subject and person-object of knowledge of the traditional theories of representation in Western epistemology non-existent. This kind of bond exists between persons and persons only, and does not exist between persons and nonpersons in the visible material world, even though there is a permeating unity between all beings in Esan ontology. So, while there is a distinction between the subject of knowledge and the person-object of knowledge in indigenous Esan thought, the subject of knowledge and the person-object of knowledge remain inseparable and irreducible in a Hegelian sense. Hence the Esan dictum: *ai yole abha len oria.* This idea is linked to the cognitive and moral values of the human person as it affects epistemology.

4.3.3.1 *Ai yole abha len oria* and acquisition of values.

The dictum, *ai yole abha len oria,* encompasses the values in human personality. Some of these values in human personality are acquired at birth, while some others are developed or acquired over time in the community as one matures in personhood. This is a form of communalism that explains how one either acquires or develops personhood in the community. Mbiti and Menkiti suggest a rigid communalism that talks of the acquisition of personhood over time in the community. This means that at birth one is not yet a person; one gradually acquires personhood in the community as one matures. Gyekye has criticised Menkiti's rigid communalism (and by extension all forms of rigid communalism) on the basis that, at birth, one is ontologically a person. Community development may help enhance personhood acquired at birth, but it is not the community

116

that makes the child at birth a person. At best, community development helps the child acquire status, habits, personality and character traits which enhance the child's personhood. This view of Gyekye is moderate communalism and is similar to that of indigenous Esan thought as will be explained from the analysis of the concept *oria* ('human being', 'person').

In indigenous Esan thought, the word *oria* stands for 'human being' or 'person'. There is no linguistic distinction between 'human being' and 'person'. It is not the case that the Esan lack enough terms to explain or make a distinction between 'human being' and 'person'. It is an indication that the human being at birth is also a person who, however, acquires some values over time in the community that enhances or enriches his or her personhood. It is possible that the distinction between 'human being' and 'person' is one of the concepts borrowed from Western philosophy that African intellectuals and scholars are still domesticating in African thought.

However, it is significant to note that the dictum, *ai yole abha len oria,* is often used for adults. This is because it brings into human personality the ideas of regard, honour, respect and recognition, modesty, rationality, morality and virtue, communion, freedom, community-dependent, and power (force)–connected. Some of these values are inherent in the human being or person, while some of them are acquired in the community through time as one progresses or matures into adulthood. Hence the dictum, *ai yole abha len oria,* is often used in relation to adults believed to have acquired these values. Some of these qualities of human personality that indigenous Esan ascribe to the adult person have been highlighted: Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Descartes and the rationalists, Locke and the empiricists define the human person in terms of rationality and perception. Smith defines human persons as "fundamentally moral, believing animals"[28], and Hamminga has also presented the ideal self-image of the classical African as "holistic, community-dependent, power-connected personality"[29]. These qualities of human personality are ascribed by the Esan people to all adult human persons irrespective of gender, class, race, colour, religious affiliation, and socio-cultural and historical contexts. This further

buttresses the views of Okojie that traditional Esan people have "preferential treatment for strangers"[30] ; in other words, persons from other communities are regarded with respect and dignity just as an Esan person will be regarded and respected.

Furthermore, the dictum: *ai yole abha len oria* further attests to the dignity of the human person that warrants the epistemic separation of the human person from the nonhuman person in the visible material world. The human person, for the Esan people, is not classified as a thing and he or she is the knowing subject who, in union with other person-objects (who are also knowing subjects in their own rights in the community that preserves and imparts knowledge to all) wants to discover what a thing 'does'. The individual cannot know things alone. He or she needs the cooperation and assistance of other knowing subjects in the community both as individuals and, more so, as a community. The 'other' – person- object – is not classified along with things or objects in the visible-material world.

In addition, the dictum, *ai yole abha len oria,* also emphasises the fact that the human person is the pivot around which all things revolve in the hierarchy of being and vital force. This idea of being a pivot around which all things revolve has also been noted by Anyanwu, Okolo, and Teffo & Roux as discussed in the previous chapter. This idea demonstrates that the human person is valuable unto himself or herself and not in relation to other things or objects in this visible material world. Things or objects are valuable, not unto themselves, but in relation to what they 'do' for human persons and the community at large. Hence to know person-object in relation to his or her value from the standpoint of the status or office of other person-objects or nonperson-objects or things is dehumanising. To also group the human person alongside nonperson-objects or things as object of knowledge is also dehumanising; a display of lack of the knowledge of the inherent dignity of the person, and the pivotal role played by the person in the vital force. It is also a relegation of the person to the level of an object or thing.

At this juncture, it is necessary that we explain the Esan dictum: *ai yole abha len oria* in relation to some aspects of Hegel's epistemology. This will help prove that the ideas inherent in the Esan dictum: *ai yole abha len oria* are not completely alien to Western epistemology, and can, consequently, be universalised as an epistemological alternative to knowing the person-object of knowledge.

Knowledge in a Hegelian sense has been explained in the second chapter of this work. However, a recap of some of the similar ideas is not out of place here. For Hegel, knowledge, prior to being 'Absolute' is propositional in the sense that it is fragmentary and incomplete. Knowledge in the right sense of the word is 'Absolute' and 'Absolute Knowledge' is complete, nonfragmentary, and nonpropositional. It is essentially interactivist, engaging and rooted in experience, and reached through the process of dialectic. At the stage of 'Absolute Knowledge', though a distinction can be made between the subject and object of knowledge, they are, however, irreducible and inseparable. Hence at the level of 'Absolute Knowledge', the subject of knowledge is united with the object of knowledge with no distinction made by Hegel between the person-object and the nonperson object of knowledge. This grouping together of the person-object and the nonperson object of knowledge dehumanises the person; hence in chapter two, this work meliorated Hegel's epistemology with Bowne's Personalism. Bowne's Personalism rescued the person from being the attribute of the 'Absolute Spirit', but having his or her own inherent dignity.

Similarly, in indigenous Esan thought knowledge of the person-object involves a bond between the subject of knowledge and the person-object of knowledge such that though they can be distinguished, they are ultimately inseparable and irreducible. In this Hegelian sense, knowledge of the person-object also becomes nonpropositional. However, these qualities of irreducibility and inseparability applies only to persons and not to nonpersons as the Esan dictum, *ai yole abha len oria,* attests to. Also, Bowne's Personalism attests to this dignity of the human person and also enlarges the subject of knowledge from 'me' to 'us'. This points to the social and communal nature of

knowledge. But to fully capture the Esan dictum, *ai yole abha len oria,* it requires Hegel's epistemological interactivism restricted to the person-object of knowledge alone.

In other words, the concept of knowledge of the person-object in indigenous Esan thought is built on personhood. From here proceed other forms of knowledge (particular accidental characteristics of the person-object like age, gender, social and economic status, race, nationality, marital status, etcetera). Hegel's "Absolute Spirit" which encompasses both the human person and objects in general, and reflects on itself through individual minds or spirits, is dehumanising. It bonds humans and nonhumans together. But the Esan concept of knowing the person-object is built on the totality of personhood, and distinct from the knowledge of the nonperson-object. Here the indigenous Esan view of the person has some affinity with Bowne's Personalism which reacted against absolute idealism and the subjection of the human person to being an attribute of the "Absolute". Personalism emphasizes human experiences – physical, moral, spiritual and substantial – regardless of sex, race or class, and treats persons different from objects or things just as indigenous Esan does as shown in the knowledge of person-object.

The nonpropositional nature of the Esan dictum, *ai yole abha len oria,* can be made clearer when explained side by side with the propositional knowledge of the nonperson-object in indigenous Esan thought.

4.3.3.2 *Ai yole abha len oria* and propositional knowledge

Propositional knowledge has been the main preoccupation of epistemology until recent times when the attempt to ground knowledge on things other than experience has failed. Emphasis is now being laid on experience which is nonpropositional. However, propositions can be said to be conclusions reached or arrived at from experiences believed to be real. Such conclusions can be true or false.[31] In other words, a proposition asserts that something is the case, as is common with most declarative statements.[32] And

it can be seen as a 'knowing – that' kind of knowledge distinct from the 'knowing – how' kind of knowledge. However, what is essential to a proposition is that "the object, the thing known, is something that's either true or false."[33] And since the knowledge of what is known can be true or false, Chisholm has this to say of a proposition: "A proposition, we may now say, is true if and only if it obtains. And it is false if and only if it does not obtain. Hence, every proposition is such that it is either true or it is false, and no proposition is such that it is both true and false."[34]

Furthermore, Bewaji in the second chapter of *An introduction to the theory of knowledge,* stresses the need not to limit knowledge to propositional knowledge alone, and the importance of the socio-cultural construction of the self, prior to the self who in turn now produces knowledge: "knowledge is a social construction whose utility exist within the social context. In fact we must recognise the intrinsic inadequacy of a personal reality unreinforced by social, cultural and community realities."[35] As for the poverty of limiting epistemology to propositional knowledge, he has this to say:

> What we need to determine is not just the case of knowing that relates to propositions … but knowing generally. … In fact, to claim that epistemology should mainly be concerned with propositional knowledge is to abdicate the philosophical responsibility of illuminating concepts, ideas, issues and problems in a way that will facilitate human understanding and existence.[36]

In indigenous Esan thought, there is a distinction between knowing a person-object and knowing a nonperson-object. This distinction is captured by the Esan proverb: *Ai sun egbe ihien* (which means "We do not pry into each other's skin"). To understand this proverb fully, Okojie gives the analogy of prying into a corn cob: "You pry a corn cob open to see if it is strong or ready. You do not do the same to your fellow man before you know he too has blood under his skin."[37] This explicitly points to the nonempirical foundation of knowledge of the person object, and distinct from the empirical foundation of the nonperson-object. The senses play a large role in knowledge of objects, things, inanimate and animate objects in the visible-material world. Hence one may not know what one has not experienced concerning the nonperson object. But this is not the case

with knowledge of the person-object of knowledge which is interactivist in nature. This interactivist knowledge does not exist between the subject of knowledge and nonperson-object of knowledge. Since Personhood is acquired at birth, but developed or blossoms over time in the community, the Esan dictum: *ai yole abha len oria* suggests on the part of the subject of knowledge an ontological acceptance of the person-object accorded with regard, honour, cognitive and moral values (among other values), and an openness to continue to know the contingent aspects of the person-object.

4.3.3.3 *Ai yole abha len oria* and morality.

In chapter three of this work, Ozumba and Chimakonam's view that to know something is to know it to be good or bad or both, not in itself, but in relation to what it does, was noted. And Gyekye's explanation of how the concept of the human person in Akan is essentially good and the human person has innate capacity for virtuous and morally good acts, were also noted. He also spoke of certain situations in Akan where a person is denied personhood on moral grounds; that is, someone can be denied personhood for lacking some virtues, and if his or her actions are judged wicked, cruel, selfish, etc. by the community. So, for Akan, the pursuit and practice of moral values is intrinsic to human personhood.

Similarly, in indigenous Esan thought one can be denied personhood on moral grounds. But a further step is taken towards severing relationship in knowledge. In other words, the epistemic intercourse between the subject and the person-object of knowledge can be severed if the actions of the person-object are judged (from the standpoint of the communal values) to be morally wrong or bad. To act as a rational, sensual, and moral being (among other values) is to act in knowledge, and not to act outside of knowledge. And, since the goal of knowledge is wisdom, and wisdom is of the ancestors and elders as preserved by the community, it is expected that the adult person will acquire communal knowledge through time as he or she enhances his or her personhood. Failure to acquire communal knowledge and values warrants the preservation of the community from such

122

a person through excommunication, etcetera; and in Esan this excommunication is not only ontological, it is also epistemological. For morally wrong actions, therefore, one is believed to have been depleted of vital force at the ontological level and consequently becomes a threat to the community. One can then be exiled from the community or ostracized (that is, no paying of visits to the person, and no buying from or selling to the person) by the community. Also, for morally wrong actions one can be cut off from the communal epistemology or relationship in knowledge. What this means, therefore, is that certain morally wrong actions take away the respect, regard and dignity accorded a person such that the relationship in knowledge between the subject and the person-object of knowledge is severed.

To exile someone from the community on moral grounds and thereby cut off the person from communal knowledge can be likened to imprisonment in modern times. An adult (one above eighteen years) can be imprisoned if he or she performs moral actions considered a threat to the communal existence of persons in the society. The person can be sentenced to death, imprisoned for life, or sentenced for a period of time before being released from prison to join other persons in the society. Also in indigenous Esan thought, one can be exiled, made to serve some punishment, or made to make some sacrifices to appease the gods or ancestors if he or she commits moral acts considered a separation from the communal life in the whole hierarchy of being and vital force.

In addition, the relationship between knowledge of the person-object and morality can also be explained from the perspective of equating a false proposition with a lie. In indigenous Esan thought, to make a false proposition (intentionally or unintentionally) is synonymous to haven lied. Hence one needs to have an *elo men se bho* (which can be translated as "my eyes witnessed it" or "I personally experienced it") experience before making a categorical proposition or statement about concrete reality. If one does not have an *elo men se bho* experience, one should simply quote one's informant or state one's source of the proposition; and this makes one's proposition a secondhand knowledge that consequently weakens the strength of one's statement. And, if the reality in question

involves communal wisdom, one needs to make an *Aba mhan we* (which can be translated as "Our Fathers say") or an *arole kpa itan bhe Esan we* (which can be translated as "there is a parable in Esan which states that") reference to the communal knowledge of the ancestors or elders in proverbs to justify what one wants to say. If one does not have a direct experience of what one wants to say, or cannot make a reference to the communal knowledge of the elders in proverbs in what one wants to say, one will usually humbly say at the begin of what one wants to say, or at the end of what one has said thus: *elo mhen bha sebho,* (which can be translated as "my eyes did not witness it" or "I did not personally experience it"). This further explains why, in Esan culture, one is slow to negate the proposition of an elder directly. To negate the proposition of an elder is culturally understood to mean that one is saying explicitly that the elder is lying. And to negate the proposition or statement of an elder, or to say explicitly that an elder is lying, one should be sure one knows and can substantiate clearly one's position that the elder is lying. If not, one runs, not only the risk of being asked to pay *oko* ("a fine"), but also the risk of some spiritual consequences. So, in Esan culture, before any adult male or female, especially an elder, makes a categorical statement or a proposition the adult male and female or elder must be sure he or she knows what he or she is saying. This is also because if the elder or an adult male and female is found to have lied, he or she runs the risk of being asked to pay *oko* ("a fine") or of being punished by the spirits, especially the ancestors; and in the case of elders, the punishment is often untimely or sudden death. But this idea in not well captured in the English definition or understanding of a lie. In English, to lie is to have deliberately or intentionally made a false statement or proposition with the intention to deceive others. Also, this idea of judging the truthfulness or falsity of a proposition based on the moral rating of the person making the proposition in Yoruba has been articulated by Hallen.

From the foregoing, to say *I bha len uwe* (which literally translates as "I do not know you") to a human adult person amounts to disregard and slight to the inherent dignity of the person, strips the person of 'humanness', cuts off the person from the community of

124

persons, and relegates the person to the level of a nonentity (that is, insignificant and non-existent) disconnected from reality. It is to make a negative moral judgment of the person and foreclose any further unveiling or revealing of the person.

So, to say *I bha len uwe* (which literally translates as "I do not know you") to an adult person implies having a good moral reason or reasons for rejecting the adult person. It implies that the person has committed some moral crimes against the community that have severed the relationship between the person and the community, and consequent also severed the relationship in knowledge between the person and other persons.

4.3.3.4 *Ai yole abha len oria* and the communal justification of knowledge

In a general sense, the human person possesses personhood, 'humanness', at birth that does not depend on what he or she does or the sex or social class into which he or she is born. As the human person matures into adulthood, he or she attains personhood in full and becomes a communal reality that interacts or engages with other human persons within a community of human persons so as to realise himself or herself. Knowledge of the 'other' (person-object) becomes an epistemic intercourse with the person of the 'other' that is encapsulated in the communal or collective knowledge of the human person. Knowledge and truth become the property of the community of human persons which each adult person participates in and contributes to. Another Esan saying: *Agha we na sikoko, abha we na sumanman* (which literally translates as "If we are asked to come together, we are not asked to be mashed together and lose our personality") further explains how the individual person participates in communal knowledge and contributes to it through his or her everyday experiences.

Also, the individual, as a member of the community, is the point of departure of any idea that may eventually become a part of the knowledge of the community. The final destination of any idea that may eventually become a part of the knowledge of the

community is the community itself. The community is made up of persons who are co-subjects of knowledge production. A collective acceptance of the idea based on the worldview, beliefs and practices of the community ultimately makes the idea in question knowledge. At that point, the knowledge becomes collectively owned by the community of persons. Some epistemological implications of this view are that "truth, justice, certainty, etc., may be relative but not extremely relative to be reduced to the individual; they may be general but not without limit; …, they cannot be absolute."[38] So, the force of justification of all knowledge of individuals of a community lies in the community.

4.4   Conclusion

In indigenous Esan thought, one can deduce the necessity of each person (who is also a person-object to every other person) to possess and sustain cognitive and moral values (among other values) so as to sustain relationship in knowledge. Also, one needs to be conscious all the time of the bond between knowledge and morality such that to make a false proposition is to have lied. So, when the subject of knowledge says, *ai yole abha len oria,* to a person-object of knowledge, the subject of knowledge is attesting personhood to the person-object and consequently ascribing cognitive and moral values, senses, regard, honour, etc. to the person-object. It is also an invitation to the person-object of the willingness of the subject of knowledge to accept the accidental qualities of name, age, occupation, social status, etcetera. of the person-object. This dignity, honour and regard for the person is not based on any empirical fact about the person-object, but on ontological and communal understanding of personhood in indigenous Esan thought.

Endnotes.

[1] B. Hallen, 1996, What's it mean?: 'Analytic' African philosophy, *Quest Philosophical Discussions: an International Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. x, No. 2, Dec.,70.

[2] B. Hamminga, 2005, Epistemology from the African point of view, Ed. B. Hamminga, *Knowledge cultures. Comparative Western and African epistemology*. Poznan studies in the philosophy of the sciences and humanities, Amsterdam-New York, NY: Rodopi, 57 -58.

[3] B. Hamminga, 2005, Epistemology from the African point of view, 58.

[4] B. Hamminga, 2005, Epistemology from the African point of view, 58.

[5] B. Hamminga, 2005, Epistemology from the African point of view, 59.

[6] K. C. Anyanwu, 1981, African world-view and theory of knowledge, Ed. R. E. A. Omi, & K. C. Anyanwu, *African philosophy: an introduction to the main philosophical trends in contemporary Africa,* Rome: Catholic Book Agency, 86 – 87.

[7] K. C. Anyanwu, 1981, African world-view and theory of knowledge, 93.

[8] K. C. Anyanwu, 1981, African world-view and theory of knowledge, 94.

[9] K. C. Anyanwu, 1981, African world-view and theory of knowledge, 97.

[10] B. Hamminga, 2005, Epistemology from the African point of view, 62.

[11] B. Hamminga, 2005, Epistemology from the African point of view, 63.

[12] B. Hamminga, 2005, Epistemology from the African point of view, 66 – 67.

[13] B. Hamminga, 2005, Epistemology from the African point of view, 76.

[14] B. Hallen, 1996, What's it mean?: 'Analytic' African philosophy, 70.

[15] O. N. Ojoajogwu, 2012, Fundamentals of social values and morality in an African setting –Igala people of Nigeria, EPHA: Ekpoma Journal of Religious Studies, vol. 9, no. 1 & 2, 240 – 241.

[16] I. Onyewuenyi, 2000, Is there an African philosophy? Eds D. Arjo, O. Conrad, L. Kirchner, and S. Yeargain, *From wonder to wisdom: an introduction to philosophy,* Boston, MA: Pearson Custom Publication, 52.

[17] K. Gyekye, 1992, Person and community in African thought, Ed. K. Wiredu, & K. Gyekye, *Person and community. Ghanaian philosophical studies, I.* Washington, D. C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 109.

[18] G. O. Ozumba, & J. O. Chimakonam, 2014, *Njikokaamaka: further discussions on the philosophy of integrative humanism,* Calabar: 3rd Logic Option Publishing, 35.

[19] V. Y. Mudimbe, 1988, *The invention of Africa: gnosis, philosophy, and the order of knowledge,* Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

[20] L. M. Brown, 2004, *African philosophy: new and traditional perspectives,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 4.

[21] L. M. Brown, 2004, *African philosophy: new and traditional perspectives*, 8.

[22] C. G. Okojie, 1992, *Words of wisdom from Ishan elders,* Benin City: Ilupeju Press, 2.

[23] C. G. Okojie, 1992, *Words of wisdom from Ishan elders*, 2.

[24] C. G. Okojie, 1992, *Words of wisdom from Ishan elders*, 2.

[25] J. E. Ekoh, 2014, *Life, death and life after death: an Esan-Christian response,* 77.

[26] P. O. Alli, 2011, *Esan cosmology and its effects on the social behaviour of the people,* Lagos: Deocraft Communications, 32 – 33.

[27] J. A. Onimhawo, 2011, Foreword, in P. O. Alli, *Esan cosmology and its effects on the social behaviour of the people,* Lagos: Deocraft Communications, ix – x.

[28] C. Smith, 2003, *Moral, believing animals: human personhood and culture*, New York: Oxford University Press, 4.

[29] B. Hamminga, 2005, Epistemology from the African point of view, 79.

[30] C. G. Okojie, 1994, *Esan native laws and customs*, 31.

[31] R. Audi, 2003, *Epistemology: a contemporary introduction to the theory of knowledge,* 2nd ed. New York & London: Routledge, 157.

[32] D. Pritchard, 2006, *What is this thing called knowledge?* London & New York: Routledge, 179.

[33] R. M. Martin, 2010, *Epistemology: a beginner's guide,* Oxford: Oneworld Publication, 5.

[34] R. M. Chisholm, 1977, *Theory of knowledge,* 2nd ed., New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 88.

[35] J. A. Bewaji, 2007, *An introduction to the theory of knowledge: a pluricultural approach,* Ibadan: Hope Publication, 13.

[36] J. A. Bewaji, 2007, *An introduction to the theory of knowledge,* 33.

[37] C. G. Okojie, 1992, *Words of wisdom from Ishan elders*, prov. 76, 18.

[38] G. O. Ozumba, & J. O. Chimakonam, 2014, *Njikokaamaka: further discussions on the philosophy of integrative humanism*, 35.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0   ESAN EPISTEMIC INTERACTIVISM AND CONTEMPORARY EPISTEMOLOGY

5.1   Introduction

Concerns have been raised over some approaches to philosophy which, in an attempt to propose alternative philosophies or epistemologies from different cultural perspectives, have brought about parochialism and cultural relativism. These concerns have been raised by Udefi and Ekanola among others.

This last chapter of this work will critically examine the interactivist approach to epistemology of the indigenous Esan people in the light of epistemology in general with the view of noting its central features and the possibility of its being an alternative epistemology that is not parochial, but rather universal.

To this end, this chapter will proceed with reasons given by scholars as to the need to avoid parochialism and cultural relativism in the search for new approaches to solving philosophical problems. This will be followed by a recap of the epistemic interactivism of indigenous Esan thought. After this the work will examine the contributions of other approaches to epistemology that attempted a solution to the problems and challenges of the traditional theories of representation. Finally, this chapter will examine the epistemic interactivism of the indigenous Esan people in relation to other epistemological theories from the African point of view, and then conclude with a critique of the epistemic interactivism of the indigenous Esan people towards making it universal.

5.2   Towards a common co-ordinating system in philosophy

Reasons have been given for the need to find a common ground for doing philosophy that will accommodate cultural differences and, at the same time, be universal. Although all

philosophies are culture bound since there is no view from nowhere, most culture-bound philosophies are universalisable when cogent efforts are made to transcend cultural specifics and search for cultural universals that can be found within each culture. For instance, Udefi rejects the idea of a unique African mode of knowing because it separates Africans conceptually and intellectually from other persons and races in the world, and because it is not supported empirically.[1] He, therefore, recommends that, in so far as there is no view that is not from a given perspective, African epistemologists should work within "a common co-ordinate system on which all human beings accept"[2] so as not to produce an epistemology that suggests that Africans are radically different from other persons and races in the world. Also, Ekanola notes the unfortunate incidence of African philosophers who, in their attempt to defend African personality, have contributed to its denigration.[3] He then recommends a comparative approach between African culture and Western culture so as to reveal things peculiar to each culture and things that overlap.[4]

A perspective to the above views may help shed some light on the issue of a uniquely African mode of knowing. Any Westerner born in Africa and who lived his or her whole life in Africa will most likely develop an African mind-set built on African belief systems or ontology. The same can be said of any African who is born in the West and who lived his or her whole life in the West. Such a person will most likely have a Western mind-set built on Western belief systems or ontology. Therefore, all humans, irrespective of race, colour, nationality, religious affiliation, and socio-cultural and environmental contingencies are fundamentally the same with the qualities of rationality, sense perception, intuitive perception, imagination, feelings, morality, power-connectedness in the vital force, etcetera. The difference in conceptions or perceptions lies in the pervading worldview or belief systems of each individual. In this sense, there are no unique modes of acquiring knowledge. There is but one mode of acquiring knowledge: the human mode. But there are different ways of conceptualising, interpreting, or understanding reality from this one human mode of knowing or experiencing reality.

The consciousness of the fact of one human mode of knowing coupled with different ways of conceptualising, interpreting, or understanding reality may be the basis for the argument in some quarters that there is need to compare one's epistemic or philosophical ideas with those of other cultures towards a better understanding of one's own cultural believes, practices and philosophy. To adequately understand, comprehend and appreciate one's culture, one needs to understand another culture with which to critically make a comparison. Post-colonial Africans seem to have the advantage (over Westerners) of being able to compare their indigenous cultural beliefs and practices with those of Western cultural beliefs and practices because they (post-colonial Africans) live in a pluricultural world. This advantage further makes it easier for them to appreciate their own indigenous cultures and those of the colonizers. So, one can reasonably conclude that to rationally appreciate the mixture of cultures is not possible, in most cases, for persons who live only within their mono-cultural boundaries. In other words, as Khaphagawani & Malherbe articulate it,

> People who have never experienced a culture other than their own, have no wider standard or more general background against which to think about and appreciate their own traditions. ('Appreciate', please note, does not mean only to think uncritically that something is wonderful. It means to have a fair, full, and conscious knowledge of both the good and bad points of a thing.) Appreciation of the thought systems of a culture is the first condition for cognitive revision and renewal.[5]

Hamminga, while characterising the Western conception of knowledge that emerged from late Mediaeval and early Renaissance thought, opines that it is as difficult as "making the fish understand its water".[6] In other words, "one needs other environments to explain the specifics of one's own in which one grew up, taking it for granted. One needs alternative concepts of knowledge for comparison. These are not readily at hand in western society."[7]

As Brown rightly notes, contemporary philosophers should be concerned about how "to bring Western philosophy into contact with traditional African folk philosophy in a fruitful way – a way that will encourage and enable those from each tradition to learn

from the other and by so doing, foster a more humane understanding of how to see ourselves, each other, and the world at large."[8] In other words, "seeing ourselves through the conceptual lenses of others enables us to have a more informed view of ourselves, and the derived knowledge empowers us to enable others more appropriately."[9] Furthermore, Brown opines that "Not taking seriously the philosophical concerns within other cultures can severely limit the ability of Western philosophy to evolve or otherwise grow. … Significant growth often occurs when we look at ourselves through the lenses of others."[10] So, the post-colonial African is challenged to use the advantage of being conversant with his or her indigenous cultural philosophy as well as those of the colonizers to develop alternative perspectives in philosophy. By so doing they will be advancing philosophy beyond the limit set on it by Western philosophical traditions.

To map out a programme within African epistemology that will adequately take care of all the concerns raised above calls for a critical review of relativism and pluralism in philosophy especially as cultures and peoples are becoming more conscious of their differences by the day. Even the individual person is getting fixated to seeing differences. To stress these differences some have agitated for cultural relativism, while others who oppose cultural relativism have argued for some sort of objectivity as a method of maintaining standards even though there is no consensus as to which culture should be used as a paradigm to assess all other cultures. The search for an appropriate theoretical position has itself encouraged the current agitation for pluralism.

Cultural relativism is an offshoot of epistemic relativism, which arguably has been championed by W. V. O. Quine. According to Quine, "the physical objects and the gods differ only in degree and not in kind. Both sorts of entities enter our conceptions only as cultural posits."[11] By arguing this way Quine intends to say that the distinctions traditionally made by the traditional theories of representation and the response made by Kant between the synthetic and the analytic and between the mythical and the empirical are misleading and unnecessary because they are all products of various experiences. Although it is difficult to give a final interpretation of Quine because, even though he

tends to refer to experience as diverse phenomena, it is also obvious that the diversity presupposes some general agreement or even universality on what is meant by experience in the first place. Hence, Quine further argues that the implied diversity does not in any way hinder intercultural communication. This difficulty in reference to understanding Quine notwithstanding, he lays the foundation for a lively debate on relativism. This relativist trend has also been advocated by Thomas Kuhn who contends that change takes place in a revolutionary way when mutually exclusive paradigms compete to substitute or displace one another in a somewhat political manner. By implication, there is no one ideal or best paradigm. Rather, there are numerous competing paradigms in a competition in which the emergence or ascendance of one among the competing paradigms do not in any way indicate that the emergent one is better than those defeated. Each of the paradigms is as good or bad as the other; only that one is luckier or more politically fierce than other relegated ones. Wittgenstein also argues that ideas cannot be understood apart from the contexts that produces them. In Wittgenstein's opinion, philosophical problems are complications resulting from philosophers' attempts to interpret words independent of the context, usage, and grammar that produce them. This problem he described in the *Philosophical investigation* as 'language gone on holiday.'[12]

Relativism is the view that our knowledge, ethical and aesthetic views and values "are dependent on the social or conceptual systems that underpin them." [13] Put differently, relativism is the position that knowledge or standards are functions of the evaluating standard. It argues that all evaluations are value-laden. Relativists reject absolutes[14] in favour of "relational facts about what is allowed or forbidden by particular epistemic system."[15] They also reject universalism, objectivism, monism, and the use of any given culture as a paradigm to judge any other culture. However Puthenpurackal articulates the ideals of cultural relativism uniquely thus: "According to relativism the idea of absolute or universal truth is a myth. The customs of different societies are all that exist. These customs cannot be said to be right or wrong because there is no independent standard to judge them. Every standard is culture-bound."[16]

Furthermore, Baghramian sees cultural relativism as an aspect of social relativism that argues that "there can be no such thing as a culturally neutral criterion for adjudicating between conflicting claims arising from different cultural contexts."[17] Recently too, Boghossian, applying Rorty's arguments adapted from *Philosophy and the mirror of nature*,[18] defends epistemic relativism. Using Wittgenstein's comparison (in *On certainty)* of those who believe in physics with those who believe in oracles, and Evans-Pritchard's studies of the Azande people who explain reality by consulting oracles, Boghossian argues thus:

> The most that any epistemic practice will be able to say, when confronted by a fundamentally different, genuine alternative, self-supporting epistemic practice, is that it is correct by its own lights, whereas the alternative isn't. But that cannot yield a *justification* of the one practice over the other, without begging the question.[19]

However, relativism fails, says Baghramian, in its response to "irreconcilable diversity and contingency" and its "inability to compare and evaluate what lies outside our immediate cultural and conceptual surroundings" thus leading to parochialism and ethnocentrism.[20] In spite of the arguments against relativism in general, it speaks in favour of tolerance, open-mindedness, and liberation "from the shackles of the dominant paradigm."[21] This value of relativism, amongst others, is captured by pluralism.

We currently live in the postmodern world where 'uniformity' has become a myth.[22] Relativists, in the postmodern spirit, consider absolute or universal truth as a myth.[23] Pluralism agrees with relativism in rejecting monistic versions of reality. But it disagrees with relativism in allowing limits to the scope of diversity, and distinguishes "between better and worse, or more and less fruitful or productive, conceptual systems."[24] Pluralism also believes that "there are culture-transcendent constraints on what is an acceptable belief -or value- system"[25] which allows for "comparisons between different conceptual frameworks and perspectives"[26], and "acknowledge the possibility of giving preference to one framework over others, without embracing ethnocentrism or parochialism."[27]

Cultural differences are felt more today than ever before. The mass media has made it possible for peoples of different cultures to know that "there are people who 'think' and 'act' differently."[28] Nevertheless, pluralism provides context-independent ground for resolving conflicts between incommensurable and incompatible values. This context-independent ground is essentially a respect for human life found in all cultures and among all societies. Coupled with the respect for human life (which includes promoting life as much as possible) is the prohibition of murder and lying. Though exceptions and disagreement to these values exist in some cultures and societies; "this disagreement exists against a background of agreement on the larger issues."[29]

While admitting varieties and incompatible paradigms, pluralism aims at an existential dialogue among them.[30] The existential dialogue is built on the principle that no single culture or people totally embody the whole of human experiences. We have equal approaches and different perspectives on reality with none superior or prior to the other.[31] Equal approaches and different perspectives imply that each human person, as a cultural person, comes into the world of pluralities rooted in his or her own cultural identity, especially the post-colonial African who is caught up in the dilemma of his indigenous epistemology and those of his or her colonial masters. As pure as one's own cultural identity may be, there is need for integration and enrichment through complementing one's own culture with other cultures for no culture is self-sufficient or complete in itself.[32] Integration does not mean interpreting one's own culture with the paradigm of another culture or to copy the values of another culture and paste it in one's own. It also does not mean proliferating foreign cultural practices in one's own culture. "It means rather to be touched, to be coloured, to be influenced, to be inspired by the other without losing one's identity." [33] To achieve this goal there is need to understand the metaphysics behind the epistemologies of other cultures, especially those of the West as well as to be thoroughly grounded in African ontology and communalism.

In other words, to integrate demands that one reads from within one's own rootedness in one's culture another culture that one wants to be complemented with following

Derrida's philosophy of deconstruction. Here there is no monopoly of meaning and no center, for, in union with Ngugi Wa Thiong'O, the center is moved to plurality of centres.[34] Having read from one's own cultural centre, one now implements in one's own culture what has been read. By so doing one achieves a form of unity with the human race that expresses itself in diversity. [35]

Another principle of pluralism is that all thoughts and cultural patterns belong to humanity as a whole. So, no group of persons or cultures can lay claim in a monopolistic way to them.[36] And as Arifalo futher explains it, "All cultural or philosophical units have a universal character insofar as they belong to the *being* of humanity, although they are born and rooted in a specific somewhere. This gives an added reason for each unit to be integrated with every other – the *identity* with the *alterity*."[37]

At this juncture, this thesis now examines the epistemic interactivism of indigenous Esan thought to see the extent it has accommodated the concerns raised above.

5.3 A recap of epistemic interactivism in indigenous Esan thought.

The Esan dictum, *ai yole abha len oria,* (which literally translates as "we never say we do not know someone") captures the essence of epistemology in indigenous Esan thought, especially as it concerns knowing the 'other', the person-object of knowledge. At birth the child is given a personal name that speaks volumes about his or her family history and possible destiny because he or she is believed to be a human being or person who will develop his or her personhood through active social participation in the life of the community through time. During this process to adulthood, the child develops his or her inherent values and acquires some other values as well. These values include rationality, morality, sensuality, regard and honour, community-dependent and power-connectedness in the vital force. Such values, coupled with the ontological value of the person who is at the centre of the hierarchy of beings in the vital force, are accorded all persons irrespective of nationality, race, colour, religious affiliations, or socio-cultural and

environmental contingencies. These are the essential qualities of the person handed down by the ancestors and preserved by the elders of the community in perpetuity. Hence, the subject of knowledge and the person-object of knowledge are distinguishable (since persons are not lumped together to the extent that they lose their individuality) but they are ontologically and epistemologically inseparable. This epistemic bond is an epistemic intercourse, an interactivism between the subject and the person-object of knowledge which makes the subject and the person-object dichotomy of traditional theories of representation non-existent in indigenous Esan thought. But this bond exists for persons alone; it does not exist for nonperson-object in the visible-material world. This explains why the Esan dictum, *ai wole abha len oria,* is couched in a nonpropositional form because it captures the essence of the person; and this essence of the person is believed to be eternally true. From this dictum, propositional statements about the person-object like the name, occupation, social status, marital status, etc. proceed.

Some of the ideas contained in the epistemic interactivism of indigenous Esan thought are present in the thoughts of Hegel and Bowne. It shares some affinity with Hegel's epistemic interactivism on the one hand, and Bowne's personalism on the other hand. However, the significance of knowing the person-object in indigenous Esan thought lies in its nondifferentiation of the subject of knowledge and person-object.

5.4   A review of the responses to the deficiencies of the traditional theories of representation

The traditional theories of representation, especially as captured by Descartes and Locke, have the following two-fold deficiency: (1) the theories make a strict dichotomy between the subject of knowledge and the object of knowledge to the extent that the subject of knowledge (the self) is disengaged from the world, becomes burdened with isolation and solitude, and the 'other' becomes alien and foreign; (2) the theories group together under the category of object of knowledge both human persons (that possess cognitive and

moral values) and nonhuman persons (objects, things, animate and inanimate beings in the world). This dehumanizes the relationship between the subject of knowledge and the person-object of knowledge.

The following persons and schools of thought have responded to the deficiencies of the traditional theories of representation with the view of resolving them. Kant attempts a harmonisation of the extreme positions of the rationalist tradition (represented by Descartes) and the empiricist tradition (represented by Locke). For him, knowledge begins with the chaotic sense experience and ends with the ordering of sense experience by the categories of reason. So, both the senses and the categories of reason are essential to knowledge. Knowledge cannot be successfully pursued or attained with either the senses or reason alone.

Equipped with the reconciliation reached by Kant, other philosophers, using both the senses and reason, provided some solutions to the deficiencies of the traditional theories of representation. Social epistemology robes the isolated self that produces knowledge from a vacuum with social and historical conditions of the self. The social and historical processes influence the subject of knowledge in the production of knowledge. Thus social epistemology can help in resolving the problem of the disengagement of the self from the world, and consequently help resolve the problem of isolation and solitude. Also, social epistemology can help in solving the problem of the 'other' becoming alien and foreign since the social and historical processes necessitate the recognition and cooperation of the 'other' as a co-producer of knowledge. However, social epistemology has not been able to resolve the second problem of grouping person-objects with nonperson-objects as object of knowledge.

In addition, feminist epistemology modifies the lonely and isolated self of the theories of representation with the addition of feminine qualities and attributes like women's intuition, common-sense, personal knowledge of others, know-how, cognitive styles, world-views, etc., as well as social classification and economic power. Hence, it further

138

helps in resolving the deficiency of the first problem in the theories of representation. But, it has not addressed the second problem of dehumanising relational problem that arises from grouping person-objects alongside nonperson-objects as object of knowledge.

Also, virtue epistemology, on its own part, focuses on the properties of persons as agents of justification. These properties – conscientiousness, accuracy, adroitness, aptness, endurance in finding truth, reliability, motivation, open-mindedness, wisdom and understanding – are epistemic or intellectual virtues that make it easier for the epistemic agent to arrive at true propositional beliefs and avoid falsehood given certain conditions. This shift from representations to epistemic values of the subject of knowledge that is perfect through time is the major contribution of virtue epistemology to amend the sole production of knowledge by the self of the theories of representation. However, just as is the case with social epistemology, virtue epistemology is yet to address the second problem of grouping person-objects and nonperson-objects of knowledge together as object of knowledge.

Furthermore, moral epistemology focuses on the moral stance of the knowledge producer. A person with a good moral rating will have his or her propositions relied on as true compared to a person whose moral rating is questionable. Here there is a subtle shift from justifying propositions on the strength of representation to that of the moral standing of the subject of knowledge. Thus moral epistemology clothes the lonely and isolated self of the theories of representation with morality which is acquired socially. But the second aspect of the problem, which is the grouping together of the person-object and nonperson-object of knowledge has not been addressed.

One possible reason why the above responses to the traditional theories of representation have not attempted to proffer solution to the problem of the dehumanised relationship between the subject and the person-object of knowledge of the traditional theories of representation is that they have either not noticed it due to the Western worldview that is not inclined towards a unitary ontology, or they are not able to think beyond the

limitations of the Western worldview to notice the deficiency. Western science may not be able to help here even though it is believed to be the most objective form of knowledge. This is because it is based on the assumptions of Western metaphysics. For instance, as already explained in this work, the Aristotelian worldview contains facts that make it true, and the Newtonian worldview also contains facts that make it true. But the Newtonian worldview is preferred to the Aristotelian worldview because it seems for now to solve more life puzzles compared to that of Aristotle. But is the Newtonian worldview the best and only accurate fact producing view of reality as Western science tend to purport?

To answer the above question, DeWith presents us with this practical example. Let us assume there are two pencils on the desk in front of you because you put them there and you have direct observational evidence, known as empirical fact, about them. Now take one of the pencils and put it in a drawer of the table. You no more perceive the pencil in the drawer but you believe it is in the drawer – a belief based on the further belief that "the world consists largely of stable objects that remain in existence even when not being observed."[38] So the belief in the pencil on the table is based on direct observable evidence, while that of the pencil in the drawer is based on our belief about the world.

From the above experiment, DeWith concludes that theories in science are expected to represent facts about the world. But, historically, theories "were actually based more on philosophical/conceptual convictions about the sort of world people involved inhabited."[39] Most beliefs, therefore, are a mixture of empirical facts and philosophical/conceptual facts. That there is a pencil on my table based on direct evidence is an empirical fact; but beliefs on the 'perfectly circular and uniform motion' and that 'the world consists largely of stable objects' are philosophical/conceptual facts not based on straightforward empirical evidence. Hence, "the reasons we have for most beliefs are tied partly to the way those beliefs fit in with our overall jigsaw puzzle of beliefs."[40] Western science, therefore, is built on Western metaphysics that lacks a unitary view of the world.

Anyanwu has spotted the deficiency of the lack of a unitary view in Western philosophy: "The West separates man from nature and again subordinates him to nature processes. … In fact, the history of Western Philosophy has been the substitution of one pole of conflict for another. Thus, the Western culture operates with fragmented or dissociated views of reality because it lacks a unitary view."[41] So, one can begin to appreciate the value of reflecting on one's worldview through the lens of another worldview to spot some differences, and be able to criticise and understand it better.

Also, these theories that have responded to the traditional theories of representation believe that knowledge is personal (in the sense that it includes the values of the person as the subject of knowledge) but they have not considered the possibility of ascribing the social values, epistemic values, moral values, and feminine qualities to the person-object of knowledge. Surely, these values are believed to be present in the person-object of knowledge as some of them are the defining qualities of a person that distinguish persons from nonpersons. But the possible epistemological consequences such qualities provoke in the person-object have not been adequately articulated by these theories. So, it is not enough to say that knowledge should be personal and continue to employ the Western scientific method that is essentially impersonal in analysing and knowing the person-object of knowledge. Knowledge, to be fully personal, must proceed from the essential characteristics of the person irrespective of whether or not the person is the subject or the person-object of knowledge. These essential characteristics of the person are what indigenous Esan thought draws our attention to concerning knowing the person-object of knowledge.

5.5   African epistemological options.

Attempts have been made by some African scholars and researchers to excavate epistemological thought out of indigenous African thought. In *In my father's house*[42], Appiah explains his views on the problems of epistemology in Africa. In "African studies and the concept of knowledge"[43], he further summarises his views on the problems of

141

epistemology in Africa. While summarising his views, he argues that Horton's view that traditional society is closed has rightly been challenged and negated by the complexities of war and trade in pre-colonial Africa, Ogotemmeli's (a Dogon elder) cosmology captured in Griaule, and the evidence of Hallen's Yoruba sages like *babalawo* (diviner or healer). These, says Appiah, show evidence of "the existence, within African traditional modes of thought, of styles of reasoning that are open neither to Wiredu's (…) stern structures nor to Horton's milder ones."[44]

African traditional modes of thought can be inferred from some works on Africa like those of Tempels' *Bantu philosophy*, Mbiti's *African religions and philosophy*, and Senghor's *On African socialism*. One common idea that permeates these works is the idea of African communalism. This we shall now discourse and later concentrate on Senghor's *Negritude*.

5.5.1 African communalism.

Oguejiofor defines communalism as "the primacy of the community over the individual."[45] This primacy is such that most times "the individual, however, is completely subsumed within communality such that he becomes no more than a mere appendage to the group, with over-burdened duties and without corresponding rights."[46] The idea that African communalism is thoroughgoing, unrestricted or radical can be found in Tempels, Kagame, Mbiti, Anyanwu, Menkiti, and Okolo. In *Bantu philosophy*, Tempels states that, in African ontology, there is hierarchy of being beginning with God down to inanimate things. In this hierarchy all beings and things are linked together by vital force. Vital force is in each being in degrees and is increased or decreased in beings as they interact. The individual, as a force, exists by himself or herself in relation to the community and ontological relationship with other beings. Cut off from this ontological relationship, the individual has no existence. .

According to Mbiti, knowledge for the African can be captured thus: "I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am".[47] This view of Mbiti reiterates Tempels' views on African communalism. For him, the life and identity of the individual is completely swallowed up by the community. Here the individual is defined and shaped by the community. Personhood becomes acquired by the individual through the community. This view of Mbiti is an example of a thoroughgoing communalism that does not fully explain the possibility of individual autonomy, freedom, responsibility and destiny. It also does not fully explain the role of the individual who, through his or her experiences, also partakes in and contributes to the knowledge of the community. This radical view of African communalism greatly influenced Senghor's view on the African mode of knowing.

5.5.2 Senghor's Negritude

The view that African communalism is unrestricted or radical greatly influenced Senghor's *negritude*. According to Senghor, negritude is an attitude towards one's culture or race (specifically the African culture or race) based on the awareness of essential cultural values which one defends and develops for the betterment of Africa.[48] Senghor's negritude is a reaction to Western colonialism, superiority mindset, and rationalistic approach to reality. He distinguishes the African way of knowing reality from that of the West. While the West distances the subject of knowledge from the object of knowledge and analysis and dissects it, the African subject of knowledge, says Senghor, embraces the object of knowledge emotionally and intuitively. Hence, while the West relies more on reason to acquire knowledge, the African relies more on emotion to acquire knowledge. He articulates his thought thus:

> In contrast to the classic European, the Negro-African does not draw a
> line between himself and the object, … He touches it, feels it, smells it
> … sympathises, abandons his personality to become identified with the
> Other, [and] dies to be reburn in the Other. He does not assimilate; he is
> assimilated. He lives a common life with the Other; he lives in a

143

symbiosis. … 'I think therefore I am' Descartes writes … the Negro-African could say 'I feel, I dance the other, I am'.[49]

From the above, it can be inferred that Senghor negates the Western approach to reality that dichotomises between the subject of knowledge and the object of knowledge, and proposes an African option "which affords the black person an unmediated mystical contact with reality."[50] Thus, the subject and object of knowledge becomes bonded and mystically inseparable. Knowledge becomes essentially one of emotion and common participation.

Furthermore, while modern epistemology in the Western tradition began with Descartes' *cogito ergo sum* which other rationalists agree with and empiricists disagree with, Senghor coins his 'I feel, therefore I am' as the starting point of Negro-African epistemology. This view of Senghor, says Nassem, reflects an overwhelming influence of European philosophy and culture on colonised African intellectuals:

> Regrettably, Senghor's views are really a reflection of this European scholarship. His philosophy of the emotive self is typical of French art, literature and philosophy but it also captured the heart of colonised African intellectuals. Otherwise the starting point of African epistemology, traditionally speaking should be the premise 'We are, therefore I am'.[51]

5.5.3 Epistemic interactivism of indigenous Esan thought and Senghor's Negritude

The epistemic interactivism of indigenous Esan thought separates the person-object from the nonperson-object of knowledge. It also differentiates between knowing the person-object and knowing the nonperson-object of knowledge. While to know a person-object is based on the ontological and communal idea of personhood that recognises the cognitive and moral values of a person, to know a nonperson-object is based on what the nonperson-object 'does' for persons and the community at large. This knowing of the nonperson-object that is based on what it 'does' for the person or the community is highly empirical and recognises the role played by reason, the senses and other human

faculties. However, Senghor's epistemology as captured in his negritude does not distinguish between knowing the 'other' – person-object and knowing nonperson-objects of knowledge. The mode of knowing (emotion) is the same for both the person-object and the nonperson-object; and this gives the impression that reason, the senses and other human faculties do not play any role in the knowing process.

Also, while the epistemic interactivism of indigenous Esan thought recognises the bond between all beings in its ontology, it is still able to distinguish the subject of knowledge from the object of knowledge, and further separate the person-object of knowledge from the nonperson-object of knowledge on cognitive and moral grounds. But Senghor in his negritude explained the African mode of knowing in terms of an emotive self that embraces the object of knowledge such that there is an inseparable bond between the subject of knowledge and the object of knowledge (persons and nonpersons alike). This idea of Senghor is a kind of epistemic monism whereby the subject of knowledge cannot separate himself or herself in a cognitive and moral sense from the object known.

Also, it can be inferred from the epistemic interactivism of indigenous Esan thought that all human faculties come to play in knowing. While some faculties are emphasised over others depending on what one is trying to know, the overriding role of reason is always present even though the logic may be different. The unique African mode of knowing found in the thoughts of Tempels, Mbiti and Senghor's negritude based solely on emotion is misleading for they create the impression that reason is of the West and emotion (in the case of Senghor) is African. They also have not taken into cognisance that all persons, irrespective of race, colour, gender or nationality are biologically the same with complete modes of accessing reality: reason, senses, intuition, emotions, imagination, etcetera. The difference between one continent and the other in terms of modes of knowing depends, most times, on what mode a continent may emphasise over and above other continents. The West emphasises reason and the senses. Some African scholars like Senghor emphasise emotion and intuition. But the fact remains that knowing encompasses all modes or ways of knowing. So, there is a human mode or way of knowing that

encompasses all ways humans experience reality with different interpretations of these experiences based on the prevailing worldview of the person knowing. To reduce knowledge to only a given mode or way of knowing within experience is myopic.

5.6   A critique of epistemic interactivism in indigenous Esan thought

The cognitive and moral values (among other values) ascribed to the person by the Esan is remarkable and it forms the basis of epistemic interactivism in indigenous Esan thought. These values are ontological and communal and make up personhood. The ontological values are attained at birth, and enhanced by the community as one matures into adulthood. Some of these values are the capacity to reason and use the senses, the capacity to be moral or normative, the power-connectedness of the person as the pivot around which things revolve in the hierarchy of beings and vital force. Other values acquired in the community that enhance one's personhood as one attains adulthood include respect, regard, honour, communal spirit, etcetera.

These cognitive and moral values are ascribed by the Esan not only to a fellow Esan, but to all persons irrespective of race, tribe, nationality, colour, culture, gender, and religion. Hence the Esan dictum, *ai yole abha len oria,* is applicable to all persons, Esan and non-Esan alike. But not all persons share the Esan idea of knowing a person-object; and not all persons can, therefore, appreciate the value and dignity it gives to the person. So, to be fully appreciated, there is need for the Esan to constantly educate the non-Esan on what it means to know a person-object in Esan culture. And if the non-Esan is conversant with Platonic, Hegelian, and existentialist philosophies, these philosophies can help in elucidating the epistemic interactivism of indigenous Esan thought. Unless properly understood, the non-Esan may not be able to live up with the moral demands of knowing a person in Esan culture.

Also, the overtly moral nature of epistemic interactivism such that one can be cut off from the communal knowledge of one's community poses the challenge of universal moral standards. In other words, the Esan can severe relationship in knowledge between

himself or herself in relation to a person-object of knowledge on moral grounds based on taboos or other grave moral deficiencies. This moral decision is as dictated by the customs and traditions of the Esan people; and customs and traditions vary so much so that what is considered good or bad in the Esan cultural beliefs and practices may be bad or good in other cultural beliefs and practices. While there does not seem to be a problem with ascribing ontological and moral values to the adult person such that the adult person is respectfully known and honoured, the moral conditions under which an adult person may be cut off from the communal epistemology is relative to Esan cultural practices and beliefs. There is therefore the need to search for universal moral values that can be applied to all persons irrespective of race, colour, religion, status, gender, and cultural differences, and at all times.

For instance, in indigenous Esan thought, and in most parts of Africa, homosexuality and bestiality are condemned because they do not fit into the African worldview. This is because procreation is essential to the living community and the community of the living-dead (ancestors); and homosexuality and bestiality do not support, encourage, or promote procreation and enriching communal life. Also, no distinction is made in indigenous Esan thought between private and public morality because of the nature of the bond that exists among persons. For instance, in indigenous Esan thought, oral sex is forbidden as well as sexual intercourse between married couples in public places. But in some parts of the West, homosexuality is becoming an acceptable moral practice, and bestiality, oral sex and sex in public places between consenting adults are currently given the quiet treatment on the basis of private morality. So, while in indigenous Esan thought anyone guilty of homosexuality, bestiality, oral sex or sex in public places will be expelled or ostracised from the community, cut off from ontologically becoming an ancestor, and consequently severed from the bond or epistemic intercourse that exist among persons, this moral yardstick will not hold for Westerners who see nothing wrong with these practices. Developing a universal morality to determine when an adult person can be cut off from epistemic intercourse among persons becomes problematic.

The search for universal moral values upon which to base moral judgments of persons to determine the inclusion or exclusion of persons in communal knowledge, therefore, becomes another challenge before the epistemic interactivism of indigenous Esan thought. Wiredu has suggested some values that can be universalised like those of truthfulness and respect for life. However, this search should begin from what is common to African cultural beliefs and practices before extending it to other cultural beliefs and practices of the world.

5.7 Conclusion

The Esan dictum, *ai yole abha len oria* (which literally translates as "we never say we do not know someone"), adequately captures the epistemic interactivism of indigenous Esan thought. It ascribes cognitive and moral values to both the subject of knowledge and the person-object of knowledge. These cognitive and moral values have social dimensions and implications such that the subject of knowledge ceases to be an asocial being, and the person-object of knowledge becomes vividly distinguishable from the nonperson-object of knowledge.

The cognitive and moral values that distinguishe persons from nonpersons creates a bond, an epistemic intercourse, between the subject of knowledge and the person-object of knowledge. This bond, an epistemic intercourse, further creates a relationship in knowledge between the subject of knowledge and the person-object of knowledge that sufficiently takes care of the two-fold dehumanising deficiency of the traditional theories of representation.

Also, the epistemic interactivism of indigenous Esan thought is different in some significant ways from other African epistemological programmes especially Senghor's negritude that is a kind of epistemic monism that equally dehumanises the person.

In addition, when the epistemic interactivism of indigenous Esan thought is adequately explained to the non-Esan using similar epistemic interactivism of other cultures like that

of the West, and its moral challenges are constantly evaluated as it interacts with other cultures of the world towards attaining a morality that can be universalised, then it can be an alternative epistemology for knowing and understanding the person-object of knowledge; an alternative epistemology that enhances the dignity of the human person, and that dehumanises neither the subject nor the person-object of knowledge.

General conclusion

The strong relationship between epistemology and metaphysics can be vividly explained with the role they both play in generating worldviews. Prior to the advent of philosophy in the Western philosophical tradition, there were mythologies with which reality was explained. According to Bulfinch, "The Greeks believed the earth to be flat and circular, their own country occupying the middle of it, the central point being either Mount Olympus, the abode of the gods, or Delphi, so famous for its oracle."[52] In Greek mythology, the gods were at the centre of reality and the custodians of knowledge. Humans were objects at the disposal of the gods. Arbitrarily, the gods favour whoever they wish with prosperity, health, wisdom, luck, etcetera. or they may make life miserable for any one they choose. The advent of philosophy brought about a shift away from the gods as the pivot around which all things revolve to humans who were principally believed to be rational, and thus distinct from all other beings or objects in the world. Aristotle later developed a worldview around man that lasted up to the 1600 when the telescope was invented.

With the invention of the telescope, there was a shift from the earth as the centre of the universe in Aristotelian physics, to the sun as the centre of the universe in Newtonian physics. The human being lost his centrality in the scheme of explaining reality. Matter with its characteristics of force and motion took the central stage, and consequently gave birth to materialism. Though there are other worldviews in the Western philosophical tradition, like that of Plato that influenced the Judeo-Christian worldview which places God at the centre around which all things revolved and all things are meaningful, that of

149

Newton was the dominant worldview. In this dominant worldview of Newton, the laws and forces (motions) of nature are some of its essential principles upon which the methods of science (those of natural sciences) are grounded. The influence of this method of science on knowledge cannot be overemphasised.

The dichotomy between the ancient Greek gods as the custodians of knowledge, on the one hand, and humans and objects as the beneficiaries of this knowledge, on the other hand, was unconsciously imbibed by ancient Greek philosophers in their search for the basic substance of the universe. The subject of knowledge (the human person) now replaces the Greek gods as the custodian of knowledge. Hence the ancient Greek philosophers, as natural philosophers who searched for the basic stuff of which the universe was made, made a strict division between the individual as the subject of knowledge and every other being (persons and nonpersons) as the objects of knowledge to be investigated with senses and reason; thus they paved the way for Western science that still bases investigation of all things and beings on the senses and reason of the subject of knowledge aided by scientific instruments. Knowledge, to be objective, gradually became impersonal and devoid of morality. This assumption has remained with Western epistemology till date and forms the bases for the strict divide between the subject of knowledge and the object of knowledge in the traditional theories of representation. Later formulations of the traditional theories of representation in modern times by Descartes and Locke further led to the creation of a solitary asocial self that is estranged from himself or herself (and thereby dehumanised), and who further dehumanises the person-object of knowledge who is known (just like other beings and objects) impersonally.

From Africa we can deduce another worldview that is distinct and separate from that of the West. This worldview, though conceptualised differently by different cultures in Africa, essentially contains belief in the Supreme Being as one who created and sustains the universe, belief in divinities, belief in ancestors, and belief in humans as the centre around which the whole of reality (the immaterial and invisible world of spirits, and the

material and visible world of humans, animals, plants and objects) revolves in the hierarchy of forces.

As the pivot around which all things revolve in the African worldview, the person is valuable unto himself or herself unlike nonpersons in the material visible world that are valuable in relation to what they 'do' for persons or the community at large. And since the person is conceived as a rational, moral and sensual being among other values, knowledge becomes overtly moral in some African cultures like the Esan. So, while traditional theories of representation in Western or European philosophy produced an epistemology that is impersonal and devoid of ethos and pathos, that of the indigenous Esan thought in Africa produces an epistemology of the person-object that is grounded on the cognitive and moral values of the person.

In indigenous Esan thought, knowledge between the subject of knowledge and the person-object of knowledge is a relationship, an epistemic intercourse that is interactivist in nature such that the subject – object dichotomy in traditional theories of representation does not hold. The Esan concept of personhood encapsulates both ontological and communal values that bond persons together irrespective of race, colour, gender, nationality, religion, social and economic status, and their roles as subject or person-object of knowledge. Thus, in this relationship in knowledge of indigenous Esan thought, the dignity, respect, value, and regard for the human person is maintained. The human being, either as subject of knowledge or person-object of knowledge is not dehumanised. However, since the epistemology of indigenous Esan thought is overtly moral, the relationship in knowledge (the epistemic intercourse that exists between the subject of knowledge and the person-object of knowledge) can be severed through immoral actions capable of separating a person ontologically and from the community. When such happens, the epistemic intercourse between the subject and person-object of knowledge is severed. In other words, the relationship in knowledge, the epistemic intercourse between the subject and person-object of knowledge, is built on Esan ontology and communalism to the extent that to be severed ontologically or from the community through immoral

acts amounts to having severed the relationship in knowledge. At that point, the bond or epistemic intercourse between the subject and person-object of knowledge no longer exists.

As rightly noted by Hamminga and other scholars mentioned in this work, one needs the knowledge and experience of another culture to be able to meaningfully evaluate his or her worldview. The epistemology of indigenous Esan thought is at home with African epistemology. When it interrogated Western epistemology, certain similarities and differences were discovered. For instance, it conforms to the unitary worldview of most African cultures and adopts a moderate communalism similar to that of the Akan of Ghana as articulated by Gyekye. It also shares some affinity with Hegel's epistemic interactivism that bonded the subject and object of knowledge without discriminating between the person-object and the nonperson-object of knowledge, whereas the epistemic interactivism of indigenous Esan thought only bonded the subject and person-object of knowledge. These go to show that the Esan people are not a peculiar or unique breed of human beings whose epistemology has no relationship with any other epistemology in the world.

Furthermore, the Esan dictum, *ai yole abha len oria*, captures the essence of Esan epistemology as it relates to knowing the person-object of knowledge. As already noted in this work, this saying is not peculiar to the Esan people. The Edo-speaking people of Edo State and the Mbayion people of Gboko Local Government Area of Benue State (who speak Tiv language) have similar views. Also, the idea of a bond, an epistemic intercourse built on relationship in knowledge, is best explained by the term 'interactivism'. The ideas represented by the term 'interactivism' are also not peculiar to the Esan people. They are present in Plato's world of Idea or Form, in an aspect of Hegel's epistemology, and in Bowne's personalism in the Western philosophical tradition.

However, the epistemic interactivism of indigenous Esan thought differs from other forms of epistemic interactivism, especially those of Plato and Hegel. Plato's epistemic interactivism bonds the subject of knowledge (the human rational soul before it is imprisoned in the body) with the object of knowledge (universals like humanity, personhood, beauty, justice, and those of animate and inanimate objects). Hegel's epistemic interactivism bonds the subject of knowledge and the object of knowledge (persons and nonpersons) together at the peak of 'Absolute Knowledge'. But the epistemic interactivism of indigenous Esan thought separates the person-object of knowledge from the nonperson-object of knowledge, and bonds only the subject of knowledge with the person-object of knowledge on the basis of cognitive and moral values that distinguishes persons from nonpersons.

On the basis, of the arguments stated above, the epistemic interactivism of indigenous Esan thought can be said not to be parochial. It is, therefore, valid in its own right, and should be considered as an alternative epistemology to other epistemologies in philosophy.

Endnotes.

[1] C. A. Udefi, 1999, *A critique of the idea of African epistemology,* Thesis, Philosophy, Arts, University of Ibadan, ii, 16.

[2] A. Udefi, 2005, Theoretical foundations for an African epistemology, *Footprints in philosophy,* Ed., R. A. Akanmidu, Ibadan: Hope Publications, 81.

[3] A. B. Ekanola, 2005, Task of the philosopher in contemporary Africa, *Footprints in philosophy,* Ed., R. A. Akanmidu, Ibadan: Hope Publications, 86.

[4] Ekanola, A. B. 2005, Task of the philosopher in contemporary Africa, 89.

[5] D. N. Kaphagawani, & J. G. Malherbe, 2003, African epistemology, Eds. P. H. Coetzee, & A. P. J. Roux, *The African philosophy reader,* 2nd ed., London: Routledge, 227.

[6] B. Hamminga, 2005, Introduction, Ed. B. Hamminga, *Knowledge cultures. Comparative Western and African epistemology*. Poznan studies in the philosophy of the sciences and humanities, Amsterdam-New York, NY: Rodopi, 7.

[7] B. Hamminga, 2005, Introduction. Ed. Hamminga, B. *Knowledge cultures*, 7.

[8] L. M. Brown, 2004, *African philosophy: new and traditional perspectives,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, vii.

[9] L. M. Brown, 2004, *African philosophy: new and traditional perspectives*, 3.

[10] L. M. Brown, 2004,. *African philosophy: new and traditional perspectives*, 4.

[11] W. V. O. Quine, 1951, Two dogmas of empiricism, *The Philosophical Review,* 60, 20–43.

[12] L. Wittgenstein, 1958, *Philosophical investigations,* Trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, Oxford: Blackwell.

[13] M. Baghramian, 2004, *Relativism,* London & New York: Routledge, 1.

[14] B. Rosen, 1993, *Ethical theory: strategies and concepts,* California: Mayfield Publishing Company, 159.

[15] P. Boghossian, 2011, Epistemic relativism defended, Ed. A. I. Goldman, & D. Whitcomb, *Social epistemology: essential readings,* New York: Oxford University Press, 44.

[16] J. J. Puthenpurackal, 2006, Introduction, Ed. J. J. Puthenpurackal, *Pluralism of pluralism: a pluralistic probe into philosophizing,* ACPI Philosophy Series, 7. Bangalore, India: Asian Trading Corporation, 5.

[17] M. Baghramian, 2004, *Relativism*, 6.

[18] R. Rorty, 1979, *Philosophy and the mirror of nature,* New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 328-331.

[19] P. Boghossian, 2011, Epistemic relativism defended, 51.

[20] M. Baghramian, 2004, *Relativism*, 232

[21] M. Baghramian, 2004, *Relativism*,10.

[22] J. J. Puthenpurackal, 2006, Introduction, *Pluralism of pluralism,* 7.

[23] J. Venattumattam, 2006, Pluralism and relativism, Ed. J. J. Puthenpurackal, *Pluralism of pluralism: a pluralistic probe into philosophizing,* ACPI Philosophy Series, 7. Bangalore, India: Asian Trading Corporation, 105.

[24] M. Baghramian, 2004, *Relativism*, 233.

[25] M. Baghramian, 2004, *Relativism*, 233.

[26] M. Baghramian, 2004, *Relativism*, 244.

[27] M. Baghramian, 2004, *Relativism*, 244.

[28] J. J. Puthenpurackal, 2006, Introduction, *Pluralism of pluralism,* 7.

[29] J. Venattumattam, 2006, Pluralism and relativism, 118.

[30] J. J. Puthenpurackal, 2006, Introduction, *Pluralism of pluralism,* 20.

[31] J. J. Puthenpurackal, 2006, Introduction. *Pluralism of pluralism,* 24-25.

[32] J. J. Puthenpurackal, 2006, Introduction. *Pluralism of pluralism,* 27.

[33] J. J. Puthenpurackal, 2006, Introduction. *Pluralism of pluralism,* 28.

[34] N. W. Thiong'O, 2003, Moving the centre: towards a pluralism of culture, Eds. P. H. Coetzee, & A. P. J. Roux, *The African Philosophy Reader,* 2nd ed., London: Routledge.

[35] J. Venattumattam, 2006, Pluralism and relativism, 119.

[36] J. J. Puthenpurackal, 2006, Pluralism: a philosophical clarification of the notion, Ed. J. J. Puthenpurackal, *Pluralism of pluralism: a pluralistic probe into philosophizing,* ACPI Philosophy Series, 7. Bangalore, India: Asian Trading Corporation, 32.

[37] S. O. Arifalo, 2001, *The egbe omo Oduduwa: A study in ethnic and cultural nationalism,* Akure: Stebak Books and Publishers, 5.

[38] R. DeWith, 2004, *Worldviews: an introduction to the history and philosophy of science,* Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 31.

[39] R. DeWith, 2004, *Worldviews*, 32.

[40] R. DeWith, 2004, *Worldviews*, 33.

[41] K. C. Anyanwu, 1981, African world-view and theory of knowledge, Ed. R. E. A. Omi, & K. C. Anyanwu, *African philosophy: an introduction to the main philosophical trends in contemporary Africa,* Rome: Catholic Book Agency,, 86.

[42] K. A. Appiah, 1992, *In my father's house,* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

[43] K. A. Appiah, 2005, African studies and the concept of knowledge, Ed. B. Hamminga, *Knowledge cultures. Comparative Western and African epistemology.* Poznan studies in the philosophy of the sciences and humanities, Amsterdam-New York, NY: Rodopi.

[44] K. A. Appiah, 2005, African studies and the concept of knowledge, 46.

[45] J. O. Oguejiofor, 2007, How African is communalism? Ed. I. Odimegwu, *Perspectives on African communalism*, Canada: Trafford Publishing, 6.

[46] C. Ogbujah, 2007, The individual in African communalism, Ed. I. Odimegwu, *Perspectives on African communalism*, Canada: Trafford Publishing, 137.

[47] J. S. Mbiti, 1970, *African religions and philosophy*, New York: Doubleday & Company, 141.

[48] L. S. Senghor, 1965, *Prose and poetry,* trans. J. Reed & C. Wale, London: O. U. P., 22.

[49] L. S. Senghor, 1964, *On African socialism*, New York: Praeger, 72 – 73.

[50] M. M. Makumba, 2007, *Introduction to African* philosophy, Nairobi: Paulines Publication Africa, 119.

[51] Z. 'b. Nassem, 1996, African heritage and the contemporary life: an epistemological change, IMODOYE: A Journal of African Philosophy, Vol. 2, no. 2, 66.

[52] T. Bulfinch, 1979, *Myths of Greece and Rome*, introd. J. Campbell, comp. B. Holme, New York: Penguin Books, 13.

REFERENCES

Aigbodioh, J. A. 1997. *Philosophy of science: issues and problems.* Ibadan: Hope publications.

Alli, P. O. 2011. *Esan cosmology and its effects on the social behaviour of the people.* Lagos: Deocraft Communications.

Aluede, C. O. 2006. Esan native doctors' musical instruments as spirits: basis and relevance in contemporary Nigeria. *IRORO: Journal of Arts,* vol. 11, no. 1 & 2, June. 338 – 344.

Anyanwu, K. C. 1981. African world-view and theory of knowledge. *African philosophy: an introduction to the main philosophical trends in contemporary Africa.* Ed. Omi, R. E. A. & Anyanwu, K. C. Rome: Catholic Book Agency, 77 – 99.

Appiah, K. A. 1992. *In my father's house*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

---------- 2005. African studies and the concept of knowledge. *Knowledge cultures. Comparative Western and African epistemology*. Poznan studies in the philosophy of the sciences and humanities. Ed. Hamminga, B. Amsterdam-New York, NY: Rodopi. 23 – 56.

Arifalo, S. O. 2001. *The egbe omo Oduduwa: A study in ethnic and cultural nationalism*. Akure: Stebak Books and Publishers

Audi, R. 2003. *Epistemology: a contemporary introduction.* 2nd Ed. New York & London: Routledge.

Ayer, A. J. 1959. *Logical positivism.* New York: The Free Press.

Baghramian, M. 2004. *Relativism.* London & New York: Routledge.

Bennett, J. 1964. *Rationality.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Bewaji, J. A. 2007. *An introduction to the theory of knowledge: a pluricultural approach.* Ibadan: Hope Publication.

---------- 2012. *Narratives of struggle: the philosophy and politics of development.* Durham, North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press.

Bodunrin, P. O. Ed. 1985. *Philosophy in Africa: trends and perspective.* Ile-Ife: University of Ife Press.

Boghossian, P. 2011. Epistemic relativism defended. *Social epistemology: essential readings.* Eds. Goldman, A. I. & Whitcomb, D. New York: Oxford University Press. 38 – 53.

Bourke, V. J. 1968. *History of ethics.* Vol. II. Garden City, New York: Image Books & Doubleday & Company, Inc.

Bowne, B. P. 1908. *Personalism.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Boyne, R. & Rattansi, A. 1990. *Postmodernism and Society.* Hampshire & London: The Macmillan Press Ltd.

Brown, L. M. 2004. *African philosophy: new and traditional perspectives.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Buchanan, D. R.1998. Beyond positivism: humanistic perspectives on theory and research in health education. *Health Education Research: Theory and Practice.* Vol. 13. No. 3: 439 – 450.

Bulfinch, T. 1979. *Myths of Greece and Rome*. With an introduction by Campbell, J., and compiled by Holme, B. New York: Penguin Books.

Bunnin, N. & Yu, J. 2004. Person. *The Blackwell dictionary of Western philosophy*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Burrow, R. Jr. 1999. *Personalism: a critical introduction.* Missouri, St. Louis: Chalice Press.

Campbell, J. 2010. *Nigeria: dancing on the brink.* Ibadan: Bookcraft.

Capra, F. 1982. *The tao of physics: an exploration to the parallels between modern physics an Eastern mysticism.* London: Flamingo.

Chisholm, R. M. 1977. *Theory of Knowledge.* 2nd ed. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Christian, J. L. 1973. *Philosophy: an introduction to the art of wondering.* San Francisco: Rineheart Press.

Chukwudi, E. Ed. 1998. *African philosophy: an anthology.* Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Cocodia, J. 2008. Exhuming trends in ethnic conflict and cooperation in Africa: some selected states. *African Journal on Conflict Resolution*, vol. 8, no. 3, 9-26.

Coetzee, P. H. & Roux, A. P. J. Eds.1998. *Philosophy from Africa: a text with readings.* Joannesburg: International Thomson Publishers.

Descartes, R. 1912. *A discourse on method, meditations on the first philosophy, principles of philosophy,* Trans. Veitch, J. Introd. Lindsay, A. D. London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd.

DeWith, R. 2004. *Worldviews: an introduction to the history and philosophy of science.* Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

157

Diop, C. A. 1987. *Precolonial black Africa.* Translated from the French by Harold J. Salemson. New York, Brooklyn: Lawrence Hill Books.

Dougherty, T. and Rysiew, P. 2014. Experience first. *Contemporary debates in epistemology.* Ed. Steup, M., Turri, J., and Sosa, E. 2nd ed. West Sussex: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 17 – 22.

Ebhomienlen, T. O. 2006. The concept of oro among the Esan people: a medium of social cohesion. *IRORO: Journal of Arts,* vol. 11, no. 1 & 2, June. 182 – 188.

Edeh, J. I. 2010. African concept of life, person and community: contribution to global bio-ethical discourse. *Personhood and personal identity: a philosophical study.* Eds. Asiegbu, M. F. & Chukwuokolo, J. C. Nigeria: Nigerian Philosophical Association (NPA).

Edgan, A. & Sedgwick, P. 2002. *Cultural theory: the key thinkers.* London: Routledge.

Ekanola, A. B. 2005. Task of the philosopher in contemporary Africa. *Footprints in philosophy.* Ed. Akanmidu, R. A. Ibadan: Hope Publications. 84 - 95.

Ekeh, P. P. 1983. *Colonialism and social structure.* An inaugural lecture delivered at the University of Ibadan on Thursday, 5 June, 1980. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press.

Ekoh, J. E. 2014. *Life, death and life after death: an Esan-Christian response.* Benin City: Floreat Systems Publications.

Etim, F. 2008. An examination of Ibibio epistemology. *Four decades of African philosophy: issues and perspectives.* Eds. Asiegbu, M. F. & Agbakoba, J. C. Ibadan: Hope Publications. 91 - 100.

Fadahunsi, A. Ed. 1997. *Philosophy: an anthology.* Lagos: Ark Publishers.

Fasiku, G. 2008. African philosophy and the method of ordinary language. *The Journal of Pan African Studies.* Vol. 2. No. 3. March. 100-116.

Feyerabend, P. 1975. *Against Method.* London: New Left Books.

Frost, S. E. 1962. *Basic teachings of the great philosophers.* New and enlarged edition. New York: Doubleday.

Fuller, B. A. G. 1945. *A history of philosophy.* Revised ed. New York: Henry Holt and Company.

Fuller, S. 2002. *Social Epistemology.* 2nd ed. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Gbadegesin, S. 1998. 'Eniyon': the Yoruba conception of a person. *Philosophy from Africa: a text with readings.* Eds. Coetzee, P. H. & Roux, A. P. J. Johannesburg: Thomson Publishing. 175 – 191.

Gettier, E. L. 1963. Is justifies true belief knowledge? *Analysis*. 23. June. 121 – 123.

Goldman, A. I. & Whitcomb, D. Eds. 2011. *Social epistemology: essential readings.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Goldman, A. I. 2011. A Guide to Social Epistemology. *Social epistemology: essential readings.* Eds. Goldman, A. I. & Whitcomb, D. New York: Oxford University Press. 11 – 37.

Goodman, M. F. 2005. Persons. Ed. Borchert, D. M. 2006. *Encyclopedia of philosophy*. 2nd ed. Vol. 7. Detroit: Thomas Gate.

Gyekye, K. 1992. Person and community in African thought. *Person and community. Ghanaian philosophical studies, I*. Ed. Wiredu, K. & Gyekye, K. Washington, D. C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy. 101 – 122.

Hallen, B. 1996. What's it mean? 'Analytic' African philosophy. *Quest Philosophical Discussions*: *An International Journal of Philosophy*. Vol. x. No. 2. Dec. 67-77.

---------- 2000. *The good, the bad and the beautiful*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

---------- 2002. *A short history of African philosophy.* U. S. A.: Indiana University Press.

Hamminga, B. 2005. Epistemology from the African point of view. *Knowledge cultures. Comparative Western and African epistemology*. Poznan studies in the philosophy of the sciences and humanities. Ed. Hamminga, B. Amsterdam-New York, NY: Rodopi. 57 – 84.

Hegel, G. W. F. 1967. *The phenomenology of mind*. Translated with an introduction and notes by Baillie, J. B. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Incorporated.

---------- 1892. *The logic of Hegel: translated from the encyclopaedia of the philosophical sciences.* 2nd ed., revised & augmented. Trans. Wallace, W. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

----------1991. *Elements of the philosophy of right.* Ed. Wood, A. W. Trans. Nisbet, H. B. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Honderich, T. 2005. *The oxford companion to philosophy.* 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hopkin, R. H. & Stroll, A. 1993. *Philosophy made simple*. 2nd edition, revised. New York: Doubleday.

Horgan, J. 1998. *The end of science: facing the limits of knowledge in the twilight of the scientific age.* London: Abacus.

Hospers, J. 1997. *An introduction to philosophical analysis.* 4th ed. London: Routledge.

Hountondji, P. J. 1983. *African philosophy: myth or reality.* London: Hutchinson and Co.

Ibhie Esan Association South Africa. *Brief History of Esan Culture and People*. From http://www.ishan.org.za/ (accessed 17/09/2014).

Isiramen, C. O. 2006. Witchcraft confessions in Ekpoma, Edo State, Nigeria: a critical assessment. *IRORO: Journal of Arts,* vol. 11, no. 1 & 2, June. 285 – 298.

Iyere, J. I. 2006. The traditional rites of pregnancy, birth and naming ceremony among the Weppa-Wanno of Edo State. *UMA: Journal of Philosophy and Religious Studies.* Kogi State University. Vol. 1. No. 1. March.

Izibili, M. A. 2006. Cultism in Nigerian universities: reflection on African and cult practice. *IRORO: Journal of Arts,* vol. 11, no. 1 & 2, June. 225 – 231.

John, E. O. 2009. African Epistemology. *From footmarks to landmarks on African philosophy.* Ed. Uduigwomen, A. F. 2nd ed. Lagos: Obaroh & Ogbinaka Publishers Ltd. 160 – 168.

Jovchelovitch, S. 2007. *Knowledge in context: representations, community and culture.* London & New York: Routledge.

Kaphagawani, D. N. 2004. African conceptions of a person: a critical survey. *A companion to African philosophy.* Ed. Wiredu, K. Malden, USA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd. 332 - 342.

Kaphagawani, D. N. & Malherbe, J. G. 2003. African epistemology. *The African philosophy reader.* Eds. Coetzee, P. H. & Roux, A. P. J. 2nd ed. London: Routledge. 219 – 229.

Kapoor, D. & Shizha, E. 2010. *Indigenous knowledge and learning in Asia/Pacific and Africa.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Keita, L. 2000. The African philosophical tradition. *From wonder to wisdom: an introduction to philosophy.* Eds. Arjo, D., Conrad, O., Kirchner, L., and Yeargain, S. Boston, MA: Pearson Custom Publication. 337 – 340.

Kenny, A. 2010. *A new history of Western philosophy in four parts.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Kim, J. 2000. What is 'naturalized epistemology'? *Epistemology: an anthology.* Eds. Sosa, E. and Kim, J. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, Ltd. 301 – 313.

Koch, A. 2000. Interpreting God's truth: a postmodern interpretation of medieval epistemology. *International Social Science Review,*

Koestenbaum, P. 1968. *Philosophy: a general introduction.* New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Company.

Kuhn, T. S. 1970. *The structure of scientific revolutions.* 2nd ed. Enlarged. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lawhead, W. F. 2002. *The voyage of discovery: a historical introduction to philosophy.* 2nd ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.

Lemos, N. 2007. *An introduction to the theory of knowledge.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lindberg, D. C. 2007. *The beginnings of Western science: the European scientific tradition in philosophical, religious, and institutional context. Prehistory to A. D. 1450.* 2nd ed. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Locke, J. 1999. *An essay concerning human understanding.* Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University.

Loux, M. J. 2006. *Metaphysics: a contemporary introduction.* New York & London: Routledge.

Madu, R. O. 1996. *African symbols, proverbs and myths: the hermeneutics of destiny.* Owerri: Assumpta Press.

Makinde, M. A. 2007. *African philosophy: the demise of a controversy.* Ile-Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University Press.

Makumba, M. M. 2007. *Introduction to African* philosophy. Nairobi: Paulines Publication Africa.

Mannheim, K. 1960. *Ideology and utopia: an introduction to the sociology of knowledge.* Translated from the German by Wirth, L & Skils, E. London & Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Maritain, J. 2005. *An introduction to philosophy.* London: Continuum.

Martin, R. M. 2010. *Epistemology: a beginners guide.* Oxford: Oneworld Publications.

Masolo, D. A. 1995. *African philosophy in search of identity.* Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers Ltd.

Mbiti, J. S. 1970. *African religions and philosophy.* New York: Doubleday & Company.

---------- 1991. *Introduction to African Religion.* Oxford: Heinemann.

Menkiti, I. A. 1984. Person and community in African traditional thought. *From wonder to wisdom: an introduction to philosophy.* Eds. Arjo, D., Conrad, O.,

Kirchner, L., & Yeargain, S. Boston, MA: Pearson Custom Publishing. 166 −
172.

Mercier, J. L. 2000. *Epistemology and the problem of truth.* Indian: Asian Trading
Corporation.

Moore, B. N. & Bruder, K. 2002. *Philosophy: the power of ideas.* 5th Ed. Boston:
MaGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.

Mudimbe, V. Y. 1988. *The invention of Africa: gnosis, philosophy, and the order of
knowledge.* Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

Munoz, L. J. 1996. *Virtues: an inquiry into moral values for our times.* Ibadan &
Lagos: Sefer Books Ltd.

Nassahi, A. 2004. What do we know about knowledge? An essay on the knowledge
society. *Canadian Journal of Sociology.* Vol. 29. No. 3. Summer, 439 − 449.

Nassem, Z. 'b. 1996. African heritage and the contemporary life: an epistemological
change. IMODOYE: A Journal of African Philosophy. Vol. 2, no. 2, 63 − 85.

Norris, C. 2005. *Epistemology: key concepts in philosophy.* London: Continuum.

Nuessel, F. 1992. *The study of names: a guide to the principles and topics.* Westport,
CT: Greenwood Press.

O'Brien, D. 2006. *An introduction to the theory of knowledge.* Cambridge: Polity
Press.

Oduwale, E. O. 2010. Personhood and abortion: an African perspective. *Personhood
and personal identity: a philosophical study.* Eds. Asiegbu, M. F. &
Chukwuokolo, J. C. Nigeria: Nigerian Philosophical Association (NPA). 97 −
103.

O'Farrell, C. 2006. Foucault and post modernism. *The Sydney papers.* 18. 3 − 4: 182 −
194. Retrieved Oct 2, 2013, from http://eprints.qut.edu.au

Ogbujah, C. 2007. The individual in African communalism. *Perspectives on African
communalism.* Ed. I. Odimegwu. Canada: Trafford Publishing. 127 − 141.

Oguejiofor, J. O. 2007. How African is communalism? *Perspectives on African
communalism.* Ed. I. Odimegwu. Canada: Trafford Publishing. 5 − 23.

---------- 2010. In praise of African philosophy. *Inaugural Lecture Series*, No. 14.
Awka: Nnamdi Azikiwe University.

Ogunmodede, F. 2001 *Of history and historiography in African philosophy.* Ibadan:
Hope Publications.

Ojoajogwu, O. N. 2012. Fundamentals of social values and morality in an African setting – Igala people of Nigeria. EPHA: Ekpoma Journal of Religious Studies, vol. 9, no. 1 & 2, 238 – 254.

Oke, Moses. "From African Ontology to an African Epistemology: A Critique of J. S. Mbiti on the Time Conception of Africans." *QUEST: An African Journal of Philosophy. Vol. XVIII. 25-36.*

Okoduwa, A. I. 2001. In search of Esan Origin. *Irolo: Journal of Arts.* Vol. 8, no. 1 & 2, Sept, 219 – 224.

Okojie, C. G. 1992. *Words of wisdom from Ishan elders.* Benin City: Ilupeju Press.

---------- 1994. *Esan native laws and customs with ethnographic studies of the Esan people.* New edition. Benin City: Ilupeju Press.

Okolo, C. B. 1987. *What is African philosophy: a short introduction.* Enugu: Freemans Press.

---------- 2003. Self as a problem in African philosophy. *The African philosophy reader.* Eds. Coetzee, P. H. & Roux, A. P. J. 2nd ed. London: Routledge. 209 – 215.

Okolo, B. A. & Ezikeojiaku, P. A. 1999. *Introduction to language and linguistics.* Benin City: Mindex Publishing Company Limited.

Okon, J. A. 2010. Rethinking the idea of human personhood. *Personhood and personal identity: a philosophical study.* Eds. Asiegbu, M. F. & Chukwuokolo, J. C. Nigeria: Nigerian Philosophical Association (NPA).15 – 19.

Oladipo, O. 1992. The Yoruba conception of a person: an analytico-philosophical study. *International Studies in Philosophy,* XXIV/3, 15 – 24.

---------- Ed. 1998. *Remaking Africa: challenges of the twenty-first century.* Ibadan: Hope Publications.

---------- 2000. *The idea of African philosophy.* 3rd ed. Ibadan: Hope Publications.

---------- 2002. *The third way in African philosophy: essays in honour of Kwasi Wiredu.* Ibadan: Hope Publications.

Olu-Owolabi, K. A. 2011. My people perish for lack of philosophy. Inaugural Lecture. University of Ibadan. 11 Aug.

Omi, R. E. A. & Anyanwu, K. C. 1981. *African philosophy: an introduction to the main philosophical trends in contemporary Africa.* Rome: Catholic Book Agency.

Omo-Ojugo, M. O. 2004. *Esan language endangered? Implication for the teaching and learning of indigenous languages in Nigeria.* 21st Inaugural Lecture, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma, Nigeria. 25th November.

Onigbinde, A. 2000. *Philosophy and the social sciences: discourse in conceptual relations.* Ibadan: Frontline Resources Ltd.

Onimhawo, J. A. 2011. Foreword. Alli, P. O. *Esan cosmology and its effects on the social behaviour of the people.* Lagos: Deocraft Communications.

Onobhayedo, A. 1999. Western education and social change in Esan land. *IRORO: Journal of Arts,* vol. 7, nos. 1 & 2, Aug.

Onwuegbusi, M. O. 1997. The origin and nature of epistemology: an introduction. *Philosophy: an anthology.* Ed. Fadahunsi, A. Lagos: Ark Publishers, 15 – 30.

Onyewuenyi, I. C. 1993. *The African origin of Greek philosophy: an exercise in Afrocentricism.* Nsukka: University of Nigeria Press.

---------- 2000. Is there an African philosophy? *From wonder to wisdom: an introduction to philosophy.* Eds Arjo, D., Conrad, O., Kirchner, L., and Yeargain, S. Boston, MA: Pearson Custom Publication. 44 – 53.

Ozumba, G. O. 2004. *Introduction to philosophy of language.* Ibadan: Hope Publications Ltd.

Ozumba, G. O. & Chimakonam, J. O. 2014. *Njikoka amaka: further discussions on the philosophy of integrative humanism.* Calabar: 3rd Logic Option Publishing.

Prah, K. K. 1993. African languages, the key to African development: a critique of ideas in development thinking. *Changing paradigms in development – South, East and West: a meeting of minds in Africa.* Ed. Troil, M. V. Uppsala: Mordiska Afrikainstitutet. 69 – 76.

Priest, S. 2003. *Merleau-Ponty*. London & New York: Routledge.

Pritchard, D. 2006. *What is this thing called knowledge?* London & New York: Routledge.

---------- 2010. *What is this thing called knowledge?* 2nd ed. London & New York: Routledge.

Puthenpurackal, J. J. *Pluralism of pluralism: a pluralistic probe into philosophizing.* ACPI Philosophy Series, 7. Bangalore, India: Asian Trading Corporation.

Quine, W. V. O. 1951. Two dogmas of empiricism. *The Philosophical Review,* 60, 20–43.

---------- [1969] 2000. Epistemology naturalized. *Epistemology: an anthology.* Ed. Sosa, E. and Kim, J. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, Ltd. 292 – 300.

Romose, M. B. 2003. The struggle for reasons in Africa. *The African philosophy reader.* Eds. Coetzee, P. H. & Roux, A. P. J. 2nd ed. London: Routledge. 1 – 9.

Rorty, R. 1979. *Philosophy and the mirror of nature.* New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

---------- 1991. *Objectivity, relativism and truth: philosophical papers.* Vol. 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rosen, B.1993. *Ethical theory: strategies and concepts*. California: Mayfield Publishing Company.

Rota, G. & Crants, J. T. 2000. Ten philosophical (and contradictory) predictions. *The philosopher's handbook: essential readings from Plato to Kant.* Ed. Rosen, S. New York: Randam House Reference.

Senghor, L. S. 1964. *On African socialism*. New York: Praeger.

---------- 1965. *Prose and poetry*. Trans. Reed J. & Wale, C. London: O. U. P.

Serequeberhan, T. Ed.1991. *African philosophy: the essential readings.* New York: Paragon House.

Shand, J. Ed. 2003. *Fundamentals of philosophy.* London: Routledge.

Sia, S. 2006. *Philosophy in context.* Faculty of Philosophy, DVK. Dharma endowment lectures. No. 9. Bangalore, India: Dharmaran Publications.

Smith, C. 2003. *Moral, believing animals: human personhood and culture.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Sosa, E. 1980. The raft and the pyramid: coherence versus foundations in the theory of knowledge. *Studies in epistemology: Midwest studies in philosophy.* Vol. 5. Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press.

---------- 2007. *A virtue epistemology: apt belief and reflective knowledge.* Vol. 1. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Sosa, E. & Kim, J. 2000. *Epistemology: an anthology.* Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Steup, M. & Sosa, E. Eds. 2005. *Contemporary debates in epistemology.* Malden: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Stokes, P. 2002. *Philosophy: 100 essential thinkers.* London: Arcturus Publishing Ltd.

Taylor, C. 1975. *Hegel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Teffo, L. J. & Roux, A. P. J. 2003. Themes in African metaphysics. *The African philosophy reader.* Eds. Coetzee, P. H. & Roux, A. P. J. 2nd ed. London: Routledge. 161 – 174.

Tempels, P. 1959. *Bantu philosophy.* Paris: Presence Africaine.

Thiong'O, N. W. 2003. Moving the centre: towards a pluralism of culture. *The African philosophy reader.* Eds. Coetzee, P. H. & Roux, A. P. J. 2nd ed. London: Routledge. 52 – 57.

Thomas, H. 1962. *Understanding the great philosophers.* New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc.

Udefi, C. A. 1999. *A critique of the idea of African epistemology.* Thesis. Philosophy, Arts. University of Ibadan.

---------- 2005. Theoretical foundations for an African epistemology. *Footprints in philosophy.* Ed. Akanmidu, R. A. Ibadan: Hope Publications. 74 - 83.

Udoidem, S. I. 2009. Greek indebtedness to the African philosophical heritage revisited. *Bodija Journal. N*o. 2. June. 29 – 43.

Uduigwomen, A. F. Ed. 2009. *From footmarks to landmarks on African philosophy.* 2nd ed. Lagos: Obaroh & Ogbinaka Publishers Ltd.

Ukhun, C. E. 1998. Women: the missing variable in Africa's salvation. *EPHA: Ekpoma Journal of Religious Studies,* vol. 2, no. 1, June.

Ukhun, C. E. & Inegbedion, N. A. 2005. Ontological validation of land tenureship in Esan tradition. *IRORO: Journal of Arts,* vol. 10, no. 1 & 2, June. 251 – 257.

Ukpokolo, I. E. 2004. P*hilosophy interrogates culture: a discourse in philosophical anthropology.* Ibadan: Hope Publications.

Venattumattam, J. 2006, Pluralism and relativism. *Pluralism of pluralism: a pluralistic probe into philosophizing.* Ed. Puthenpurackal, J. J. ACPI Philosophy Series, 7. Bangalore, India: Asian Trading Corporation.

Wescott, R. W. 1974. Benin names in Nigeria and Georgia. *Linguistics, no. 124,* 21 – 32.

Westphal, K. R. 2003. *Hegel's epistemology: a philosophical introduction to the phenomenology of spirit.* Indianapolis: Hackett.

Williamson, T. 2000. *Knowledge and its limits.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

---------- 2014. Knowledge first. *Contemporary debates in epistemology.* Eds. Steup, M., Turri, J., and Sosa, E. 2nd ed. West Sussex: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1 – 9.

Winch, P. 1980. *The idea of a social science.* London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Wiredu, K. 1980. *Philosophy and an African culture.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

166

---------- 1980. A philosophical perspective on the concept of human communication. *International Social Science Journal.* Vol. xxvii, no. 2, 199 – 206.

---------- 1995. *Conceptual decolonization in African philosophy: four essays.* Selected and introduced by Oladipo, O. Ibadan: Hope Publication.

Wittgenstein, L. 1958. *Philosophical Investigations*. Trans. Anscombe, G. E. M. Oxford: Blackwell.

Woodhouse, M. B. 2003. *A preface to philosophy.* 7th ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.

Wright, R. A. Ed. 1977. *African philosophy: an introduction.* Washington D. C.: University Press of America, Inc.

Zagzebski, L. & Fairweather, A. Eds. 2001. *Virtue epistemology: essays in epistemic virtues and responsibility.* New York: Oxford University Press, Inc.

Zimmerman, A. 2010. *Moral epistemology.* London & New York: Routledge.

Zukav, G. 1979. *The dancing Wuli masters.* New York: Bantan Books.