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## COMMUNICATION AND REASON: THE CRISIS OF OUR CIVILIZATION

Chris OSEGENWUNE\*

### Abstract

The evolution of modern society has placed enormous responsibilities on the shoulders of managers of men and women requiring that, we transcend the modern and medieval challenges for effective communication to achieve unity in diversity. This condition is necessitated with the increase of multiplicity of human interests and aspirations. The collapse of ideological forces built on logocentric Greek metaphysics and epistemology glorified rationality and reason above any other transcendental structures of man. The inevitability of arrogance, imposition and supremacy appropriated to reason and rationality made man to become a slave to structures of bureaucratic red tapism that have affected our intellect. The mission of bureaucracy is to achieve efficiency but this goal has been frustrated by the application of reason as the ultimate legislator of results. To this end the communitarians have suggested rational consensus to achieve order and social stability in decision making. This paper therefore addresses the basic problems of rational consensus through communication.

**Keywords:** Communication, Reason, Crisis.

### The Emergence of Reason and Rationality

The history of philosophy has tremendously demonstrated presentation of various problems at each epoch of development. The foundations of these fundamental problems are traced to Greek metaphysics and epistemology. Plato who laid the foundation for most of the intellectual philosophical foundation of human knowledge in his academy exaggerated the role of reason in human affairs. The *Republic*, one of his greatest dialogues, a magisterial master piece, unarguably, demonstrated the inevitability of human reason as a precondition for the attainment of success in all human endeavors. In Plato's doctrine of the soul, three parts were identified namely; the appetitive the lowest part of the soul characterized by emotions and sensual pleasure, the spirited characterized by courage, fortitude and bravery while the third is rational part dominated by reason (Plato, *The Republic*, 1979:106-119). Plato's understanding of the role of reason is that of coordination because it is not only supreme to other parts of the soul, it is expected to regulate and bring other parts to subjection. Plato's division of the soul into three parts has practical implication to specialization of functions in human engagement through the division of labor. According to Plato, the appetitive element of the soul corresponds to the ordinary people or the artisans whose duty is to produce the economic and material needs of the society. The spirited element corresponds to the auxiliaries (soldiers) whose duty is to defend the territorial boundaries of the

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\* Ph.D, Department of Philosophy, University of Lagos.

society. The rational part of the soul is very crucial because it is the domain of reason culminating in the philosopher-king who is privileged to rule, and, a custodian of law and morality.

The strict division of the soul into parts and the subsequent classification of the society into three classes have implications for Plato's theory of justice. This theory stipulates that every man has a departmental excellence based on innate ability which can be tapped for effective utilization. For Plato, this means one man, one job, based on division of labor. It will amount to injustice then if one leaves his assigned duty to do something else (Ibid, pp.40-43). To bring this theory nearer home, what it means is, the artisans should concentrate on production of material goods, the soldiers should concentrate on defense and the philosopher-king on leadership. This will ensure harmony, equity and justice.

As noble as this theory sounds, the consequences are far reaching for the collective destiny of humanity. Rationality was elevated above any other human virtue. It became an instrument of evaluation of conduct, of right and wrong and right or wrong decision. Even in the medieval period when philosophy became the handmaid of theology, rationality became the instrument of giving credence to religious views. Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas Aquinas represent an articulated illustration of the eloquence of reason in arriving at valid conclusion of philosophical issues for the purpose of genuine knowledge of man and the world. Philosophers in this era viewed rationality as God-given gift, a peculiar, spectacular capacity that allowed human beings, alone among of all earth's creatures, to transcend their immediate experience and contemplate the distant feature, explore the distant past, and get a glimpse of heaven not to mention mathematics and the joys of philosophy (Solomon and Higgins,1996:257). There was even a long standing debate between reason and faith in approaching God. The consequence of this situation is that man was locked in rationality which constitutes the politics of assigning meaning to the world. The metaphysical, and the, epistemological foundations laid by this approach to reality affected virtually all the activities of man and his manipulation of nature with catastrophic consequences even in the modern and contemporary periods of philosophical development with intrusions in linguistic analysis, ethical realm, phenomenology, existential phenomenology, communication and postmodern discourse.

### **Rationality in the Modern Period**

Solomon and Higgins (1996), suggest that the word "modern" has a long history and implies a beginning of a battle, a bit of arrogance, a cry of rebellion, a gesture of rejection, (even destruction) of what is past. They went down memory lane to indicate how the word modern has been abused by those who feel that they have done something new from the activities of their predecessors. For example, the Greeks of Alcibiades' generation referred to themselves as "modern" in opposition to the older (more democratic) politicians who stood their way. The Arabs of the middle ages regarded themselves "modern" in opposition to the ancients from whom they distinguished themselves. Towards the end of the Scholastic age, William of Ockham was called a "modern" because of his rejection of earlier scholastic doctrines, and in the eighteenth century, many nationalists called themselves "modern" because of their revolutionary activities. Also, this period witnessed the emergence and consolidation of a radically new world outlook which its advocates described as the "new philosophy" or "modern philosophy". One of the effects of this philosophy was a rejection of the medieval-scholastic reliance on qualitative descriptions and explanations, and an insistence that a proper understanding of the cosmos must be formulated in qualitative terms. My take in these examples listed is that every new fashion, ideas, method or invention is tagged modern an indication that there is something that is put in place. The point to drive home is that modern philosophy connotes revolution of a descriptive era. The title designates an attack and a rejection of the medieval period characterized by religious dogma, rigidity and orthodoxy. On the other hand, Modern philosophy is understood to mean the philosophy from the Renaissance period to the end of the nineteenth century. The Renaissance movement was a

landmark in European history as well as the history of Western philosophy (Omoregbe,2003:v). According to Omoregbe, it marked the end of medieval philosophy and the beginning of modern philosophy dominated by the activities of the continental rationalist namely; Rene Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz on one hand, and, the activities of the empiricists of Locke, Berkeley and Hume. In another development, Solomon and Higgins (1996) argue that for the sake of sheer simplicity and the convenience of historical records, the modern period starts from 1500 within limits of arbitrariness. According to them, less than a decade after that arbitrary date, Christopher Columbus discovered the "new world" altering not only the geography but the politics of the world forever. Only a decade after, Martin Luther would tack his ninety-five theses to the door of the church in Wittenberg and initiate the reformation, which would cause centuries of upheaval in Europe, change the nature of Christian religion, and, eventually change conception of human nature. With the reformation would come not only the rejection of medieval philosophy but the establishment of "protestant ethic" and the beginning of modern capitalism. One of the hallmarks of the modern period in philosophy is the emergence of humanism. The term humanism denotes the tendency to emphasize man and his status, importance, powers, achievements, interests or authority (Honderich 1995).According to Honderich, humanism has many connotations, which depend largely on what it is being contrasted with. Apart from making particular claims about man, it can also denote the tendency to study man in general. Early Greek thought began by studying the cosmos as a whole and particular phenomena in it, such as the weather, earthquakes, etc., and then turn to questions of logic and metaphysics but the so called humanist movement arose in the fifth century B.C when the sophists and Socrates called philosophy from heaven to the dwellings of men as Cicero put it later by posing fundamental questions on social, political and moral issues. Humanism is also associated with the Renaissance, when it denoted a move away from God to man as the center of the interest. Although God remained the creator and the supreme authority, the renaissance humanists did not depict atheistic disposition but being curious to control and dominate nature, a scientific outlook took pre-eminence which later led to the explanation of phenomena through general laws. This scientific outlook of humanism later became associated with rationalism not in its philosophical totality but in the appeal to reason in contrast to revelation or religious authority as a means of knowledge of the natural world and the nature and destiny of man, and, also giving a grounding for morality. The point to be made here is that reason dominated actions of man and by extension morality. The scope of reason was expanded later when a sharp conflict arose between science and religion arising from Darwinist inconsistency with the fundamentalist reading of the Bible, that humanism acquired its modern association with atheism or agnosticism (Ibidp.376). Some humanist quite frankly reject this tag of rationalist or scientific humanist because they do not subscribe to the view that reason alone can provide authentic justification for human knowledge as emotions also have roles to play in the attainment of human knowledge. This position of the humanist seems to emphasize the subject matter of modern philosophy.

### **The Subject Matter of Modern Philosophy**

What constitutes the subject matter of modern philosophy appears not to be water-tight. For Zunjic (2011), its relentless search for solid foundations and its resolute turn towards subjectivity grounds the core area of concentration .Zunjic maintains that while the Renaissance, the Reformation, the discovery of the world, the rise of science and capitalism represent the external (socio-historical) determinants of modernity, its major internal driving forces have been undoubtedly the unleashed human subjectivity (freedom, creativity, innovation, autonomy, self-reflection) and the new spirit of foundationalism (laying down firm and stable grounds of all human knowledge and endeavor). The out come of these trends coalesce in the pivotal point of the knowing and acting subject. The " I" (The Ego), the most compressed formula for human subjectivity in general, becomes both the center and all pervasive philosophical theme of modern thought. The

modern thought therefore seems to be an integration of different contents as presented in ancient notion of the soul, the medieval system the Cartesian consciousness or the mind or the "transcendental apperception" of Kant (Ibid). The difference between Descartes and Kant here is that Descartes conceives the principle of subjectivity as an abstract thinking thing, while Kant sees it as a self-relating subject that attains absolute self consciousness. Kant's position is that the mind imposes itself on an object and makes a meaning of such object of knowledge. This means that the mind is not passive in the process of cognition. This is the crux of the gulf between rationalism and empiricism as rival as rival schools of thought in epistemology. Each of these schools contends for means of cognition and the viability of such process towards the attainment of human knowledge. We now turn to rationalism and empiricism contending schools in epistemological revolution in modern philosophy.

### **Rationalism and Empiricism**

Cottingham, (1988) observed that confronted with the bewildering complexity and variety of philosophical theories, the student turns with relief to labels and pigeonholes. By the classification of philosophers into movements and "schools of thought", we seem to have hope of discerning some pattern in the tumultuous flow of ideas. The point Cottingham seems to be making is that the classification of philosophers into schools of thought serves the purpose of giving students of philosophy and the general reader the convenience of thematic digestion of the contents. These classifications are made by the historians of philosophy and not the philosopher himself. The use of rationalist therefore presents some difficulties. For example, Cottingham says citing Bacon that rationalists are like spiders; they spin threads out of themselves while empiricists are like ants they collect and put to use. The implication of this position is that empiricism depends on experimenting on the information collected that of the rationalist is a priori given. In other words, the rationalist depends more on thinking. Rationalism therefore, is an epistemological school of thought which asserts that genuine knowledge comes from pure thinking. The term rationalist comes from the Latin 'ratio' which means reason. They share a common position that by use of reason, we can achieve a superior kind of knowledge than that derived from sensation. The major proponents of the rationalist tradition are Rene Descartes, Benedictus Spinoza and G.W. Leibniz. Descartes who appears to be the most controversial of the rationalist sees this method as one the first steps to lead the mind away from the senses. He is of the view that our inborn 'natural light' or 'light of reason' would enable us to penetrate the secrets of the most recondite sciences. Spinoza, on his own part conceives cognition based on 'random experience' as the lowest grade of cognition- a 'mutilated and confused' kind of awareness that cannot provide adequate representation of reality. Spinoza believes so much in the capacity of reason to perceive things truly as they are in themselves. Leibniz, too, embraces the notion of an innate 'natural light' of reason which, he argues, enables us to know necessary truths: 'the senses can help us after a fashion to know what is, but they cannot help us to know what must be or what cannot be otherwise'. We need to go beyond the senses to gain knowledge of 'the universal and necessary truth of the sciences' (Cottingham1988:5). The position of the continental rations namely; Descartes, Spinoza and Leibniz and the doctrine of rationalism is that reason dominates cognition, intelligibility and the politics of making meaning etc. On the hand, term 'empiricist' as represented by John Locke, George Berkeley and David Hume comes from the Greek word, empeiria which means experience. For the empiricist, Knowledge is derived only primarily from experience. A demarcation should be made between empiricism and historicism. Historicism is a social epistemology which acknowledges the role of experience but it differs from empiricism by assuming that that sensory data cannot be understood without considering the historical and cultural circumstances in which observations are made. Empiricism should not be confused with empirical research because different epistemologies should consider competing views on how best to embark on the journey of acquiring knowledge. Our understanding of empiricism should focus on one of the competing

ideals of the attainment of human knowledge. Empiricism is first and foremost characterized by the ideal to let observational data 'speak for themselves'. Both rationalism and empiricism as contending epistemological schools have through their positions exaggerated the role of reason in the process of cognition. This orientation of the magnification of reason is responsible for imposition, rigidity, dominance, conflict, terrorism and war. It created a metaphysics of inelasticity, intolerance and an attitude of intolerance. Such ideological clashes of temperament created an atmosphere of the cold war which castrated human freedom. This seeming conflictual humanism resulted in an endless crisis and instability with paralyzing consequences. A metaphysical system built on the doctrine of Parmenides, "Being is, non-being is not". The thesis of Parmenides grounds reality on the 'One', the 'It is'. Being is familiar while non-being is the unfamiliar. With this human interest is grounded on what is with utter disregard to nothing. This is because, for Parmenides nothing can come out of nothing (Unah2010). This traditional metaphysical thinking made manifest by the philosophy of Parmenides led to the objectification of reality. The objectification of reality made it seeable to the extent that a contrary position is unacceptable even with superior logic. It further segmented objectivity and subjectivity. With the kind of metaphysics this kind of thinking has exposed humanity and to make man more human both in mind and spirit, a new philosophy came on board to address the problems of tolerance and accommodation among human community. The new philosophy we are talking about here is phenomenology to which we shall now turn.

### **Phenomenology and Communicative Rationality**

Phenomenology is a combination of two Greek words- phainomenon (phenomenon) which means appearance and logos- reason, word, theory. Etymologically, therefore, phenomenology is the theory or discourse on the phenomenon. The phenomenon is the appearance of things making phenomenology as the theory of what appears as distinct from the thing in itself. Phenomenology is a reasoned inquiry which discovers the inherent essences of appearances. Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) the founder of this movement in modern philosophy characterized it as the discourse of the essences of things or the theory of meaning. According to Husserl, anything that appears to consciousness is a legitimate area of philosophical investigation. For Husserl, one can characterize phenomenological philosophy as centering on the following basic themes: a return to the traditional task of philosophy, the search for philosophy without presuppositions, the intentionality of consciousness, and the refusal of subject-object dichotomy (Stewart and Mickunas, 1990:5). In *The Idea of Phenomenology* (1969) Husserl gave a clear and concise account of his phenomenology. This was followed in the *Ideas* (1913) where he defended phenomenology as a 'presuppositionless' and pure description of the content of consciousness. This intellectual excursion investigates what is before the mind when a thought occurs. On this position Husserl adopts the thesis of Brentano a descriptive psychologist that consciousness is intentional. The intentionality of consciousness maintains the position that consciousness is object driven. Husserl also saw in phenomenology a crucial task in traditional philosophy by returning to pre-reflective consciousness or the primordial level of philosophical inquiry. He embarked on the 'epoche' a Greek word for suspension of judgment. The "epoche" will encourage the observer to avoid prejudice, bias and assumption on his mission for thorough phenomenological investigation. This aspect of investigation is regarded as the descriptive stage of Husserl's phenomenology or what is regarded as phenomenological reduction. From here he moves to transcendental reduction that is, from a descriptive analysis of experience to transcendental idealism. At this stage, the phenomenological ego becomes a transcendental ego totally detached and far away removed from the empirical world. In the transcendental reduction according to Husserl, the phenomenologist must put the empirical world as well as his own natural self in bracket, in suspension or in parenthesis. When this condition is fulfilled, the transcendental ego will emerge (Husserl,1970:8). The emergence of the transcendental ego makes the observer neutral, impartial and a passive participant in the drama of existence. At

this stage one can begin to intuit the essences of things making the mind the alpha and omega of what reality is or should be. Husserl's phenomenology at this stage returns to full blast idealism a metaphysical position which grounds reality on the idea. If reality is grounded on the idea we seem to be presented with a monolithic perception of reality. Even in the presence of strong evidence, it is difficult for one to make adjustment. This is the main criticism against ancient, medieval and modern philosophy. Unfortunately, too, Husserl's phenomenology is a revision of Plato and Cartesian meditation. This position is premised on his notion of the transcendental reduction which elevates the ego above the empirical world where attainment of reality is based on intuition which is the tool of rationalism as a school of thought. This method of elevating reason above any other consideration is an objection against Husserl's phenomenology which needs a radical injection of irrationality in order to understand the real nature of man.

### **Phenomenology and Reason**

The etymological conception of phenomenology centers on the phenomenon and "logos" . The term "logos" denotes an immaterial substance (thought, reason or wisdom) which precedes all material substances (James, 1959: 139-140). This view point is given credence by Okoro (2006:331), that logos reminds us of the primevality and the primordality of thought, which as a foundation of existence amplifies the point that what really sustains existence as existence, is the human prowess of transcendence that rises from nothingness, projects into nothingness and returns into nothingness. What Okoro seems to be saying here is the transcendental powers of the mind which has the capacity and capability of reaching beyond in order to originate concepts to assign meaning to the chaotic cosmos. As beings of transcendence, we are also beings of logos. Logos, therefore, becomes the high way to being.

We have to be clear here about the "logos" that is being talked about. The logos here is different from the one Plato talked about. Plato uses logos to mean "eidos" and the transcendental process by which the "eidos" are apprehended he calls the dialectics of reason. Rene Descartes takes cogito to mean logos and cogito institutes transcendence by way of methodic meditation. For Immanuel Kant, the mention of logos brings up the discourse on *finite pure reason*, which by way of transcendental dialectics autonomously institutes transcendence and legislates spectacles for comprehending and ordering reality. For Husserl, logos would refer to transcendental ego or the ego of egos, which by process of inductive generalization and imaginative variation (the epoche) ascends the Olympian height of phenomenological standpoint where upon visioning becomes beatific (Ibid). From all the interpretations of logos, there seems to be a common denominator namely; "the majesty of thought", "the autocracy of reason" and the "might of wisdom", and are all incisive of the mind towards absolutism and impositionalism (Ibid). My take in this is that reason has become so powerful and has brought the world to a standstill. As rational as man claims by grounding decision on reason, we still encounter conflict, disagreement and, above all, we make mistakes showing the futility of reason. Reason has been challenged and therefore making it imperative to also, the notion of "rational consensus", that is, seeing all parties affected by crises as the only source of legitimacy of social norms and, more generally, of collective decisions. The outcome of this perspective is that every voice should be heard. If every voice should be heard it means that every rationally substantiated should be taken into consideration to pave way for understanding with a view to reducing tension and conflict not only in human society, but as a way of making man more human in mind and spirit. One of the ways to achieve order, stability and peace is through communicative rationality championed by Max Weber's philosophical discourse on rational consensus which we shall now turn.

### **Rational Consensus**

The question of what rational consensus is may constitute a philosophical problem because we need to understand what consensus is all about in decision theory before we begin to justify its rationality or otherwise. In philosophical discourse rationality is the exercise of reason. It is a way and means in which people derive conclusions when considering things deliberately. Rationality also refers to the conformity of one's beliefs with one's reasons for belief, or with one's actions with one's reasons for actions. However, the term "rationality" seems to be applicable to a wide variety of human knowledge especially when decision is involved. To this end, a rational decision is one that is not just reasoned, but is also optimal for achieving a goal or solving a given problem (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rationality>). Consensus on the other hand refers to concord in opinion expressed by parties. A consensus is arrived at when there is an agreement between parties. The problem now is when an agreement becomes rational. Is it when everybody accepts an opinion? What about if such an opinion is forced on people making no room for their input? These and other questions make it difficult to ascertain when a consensus becomes rational.

A critical German sociologist, Max Weber (1864-1920) is an exponent of rationality in the realm of social action. For Weber, there are different senses of reason and rationality and that what passed for rationality in human contemporary life was in fact a valueless, merely instrumental form of thinking, devoid of human and spiritual sentiment. In a word, what rationality has come to signify was bureaucracy (Solomon and Higgins, 1996). Bureaucracy for Weber originally meant a fair-minded governmental policy invented by the Romans and perfected by Napoleon had become a law unto itself with emphasis on efficiency. This emphasis on efficiency has thrown up some questions whether this goal has been achieved. Weber seems to be convinced that the goal of bureaucracy has been negated because of the enthronement of reason above all other consideration. Reason has become a tyrant which no longer recognized its limits as well as the value it is supposed to serve. This is evident in his work, *The Protestant Ethic and the spirit of capitalism*. In this work, it was Weber's view that capitalism was an accretion from the tyranny of reason and rationality. Weber identifies four types of rationality namely; practical, theoretical, substantive and formal. In practical rationality, Weber designates every way of life that views and judges worldly activity in relation to the individual's purely and pragmatic and egoistic interests as practical rational (Weber, 1930,1958). A practical rational way of life accepts given reality and calculates the most expedient means of dealing with the difficulties they present. For Weber, pragmatic action in terms of everyday interests is ascendant, and given practical ends are attained by careful weighing and increasingly precise calculation of the most adequate means (1946, 1958) Practical rationality seems to be focused on results and might not carefully way the consequences of the outcome of decisions. This is the major charge against pragmatism and other related movements that guide policies and social actions. Theoretical rationality involves a conscious mastery of reality through the construction of increasingly precise abstract concepts rather than through action. For Weber, since a cognitive confrontation with one's experience prevails here, such thought processes as logical deduction and induction, the attribution of causality, and the formation of symbolic "meanings" are typical. Generally, all abstract cognitive processes, in all their expansive active forms, denote theoretical rationality (1946). Theoretical rationality seems to have underpinnings of high intellectual abstraction with contending ideological forces. Interpretations of issues in theoretical rationality and their application to life situations may not be clear cut because of theoretical models. But beyond these apparent diversities, you will find the principles and foundation of apprehending reality. On the other hand, substantive rationality like practical rationality though unlike theoretical rationality, substantive rationality directly orders action into patterns. It does so, however, not on the basis of a purely means-end calculation of solutions to routine problems but in relations to past, present, or potential "value postulate"(Weber, 1968:85-86). In Weber's opinion, this is not simply a single value, such as positive evaluation of wealth or of the fulfillment of duty, a value postulate

implies entire clusters of values that vary in comprehensiveness, internal consistency, and content. To this end, this type of rationality exists as a manifestation of man's inherent capacity for value-rational action. The last of Weber's classification on rationality is formal rationality. This type of rationality according to Weber, generally relates to spheres of life and a structure of domination that acquires specific and delineated boundaries only with industrialization: most significantly, the economic, legal, scientific spheres and the bureaucratic form of domination. The core of formal rationality is that it legitimates a means end rational calculation by reference back to universally applied rules, laws, or regulations. In formal rationality emphasis is given to results without considering the impact of such results on regard to persons. The consequence of this is that strict legalism and mechanistic procedures dominate human affairs. For Weber, these types of rationality are regarded as "ideal types". The ideal represents a perfect model of reality, something that guides us to get things properly done. Incidentally, the ideal is a utopian especially when we are confronted with practical realities. All of these rationalities seem to be grounded on mental processes to achieve excellence and efficiency. The question now is whether these objectives have been attained. It is on this ground that many criticisms have trailed Weber's analysis of rationality to which we will now turn.

### **Rational Consensus and Communication**

Decisions of conflicting interests in human society follow Weber's typology of the ideal. Meszaros (1986) examined Weber's treatment of bureaucracy in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* and quoted his views as follows:

*The ruled for their part, cannot dispense with or replace the bureaucratic apparatus of authority once it exists. For this bureaucracy rests on expert training, a functional specialization of work, and an attitude set for habitual and virtuoso-like mastery of single yet methodically integrated functions. If the official stops working, or if his work is forcefully interrupted, chaos results, and it is difficult to improvise replacements from among the governed who are fit to master such chaos. This holds for public administration as well as for private economic management. More and more material fate of the masses depends upon the steady and correct functioning of the increasingly bureaucratic organizations of private capitalism. The idea of eliminating these organizations becomes more and more utopian.*

Meszaros pointed out from this quotation of Weber, that the ruled cannot dispense with or replace the bureaucratic apparatus once it exists; and that the idea of eliminating these organizations becomes more and more utopian. This categorical assertion by Weber is called to question because the masses through revolt can create more chaos to the system that has become oppressive as history of revolutions has shown. If this position is taken to a logical conclusion it means that a single approach to a problem may not solve such a problem as there are multiplicities of approaches to resolve problems. It is because of this reason that Gadamer, (1989:270) argues that human prejudice is the basis of understanding. Prejudice for him means prejudgment; prejudice can either be positive or negative, and to assume that all prejudices are illegitimate and misleading represents simply a prejudice against prejudice. In order to gain understanding, every individual is expected to undergo a process of projecting his or her prejudices. Communicative understanding requires the suspension of prejudices and assumption to enable us make a valid judgment. In order to understand according to Gadamer, one opens up ones self to other possibilities (or prejudices). Understanding is predicated on language because of its crucial to communication. For this reason Gadamer posits that language is the ontological ground of human beings. The outcome of Gadamer's analysis on language and by extension communication is the need for a dialogical relationship as truth emerges through a genuine dialogue by constant questioning and answering.



This line of thinking is closely related to the view of Martin Buber's "I-Thou" and "I-It". For Buber, the "I-Thou" relationship is between two human beings which is characterized by qualities such as mutuality, openheartedness, directness, honesty, spontaneity, frankness, lack of pretense, non-manipulative intent, communion, intensity, and love in the sense of responsibility of one human to another (Buber,1970). Furthermore, in an "I-It" relation, a person uses and experiences the other person as an object for his or her profit. Buber's "I-Thou" relationship is significant because an individual is appreciated in all his or her uniqueness and is not objectified. As individual and civilizations vary, there is an urgent need to appreciate cultural diversities existing among groups in the human community in order to promote rational consensus and legitimacy which is the last segment of our discourse.

### **Rational Consensus and Legitimacy**

Communicative rationality is the outcome of postmodern discourse on how to achieve unity in diversity, harmony, peace and social cohesion. In spite of the seeming collapse of contending ideological positions of capitalism and socialism, society looks forward to a point where all races, languages and opinions will be respected to forge a common front and reduce not only tension but also clash of civilizations. A philosophical window has been opened known as 'communicative rationality' contends for the need for "the rational consensus of all parties affected" in a dispute to dialogue as the only source of legitimacy of social norms and, by extension a resolution of such dispute. Dialogue which is a missing link in most crises in human society is needed now more than ever before to reduce tension and manage conflict. The position of communicative rationality is that every rationally substantiated claim should be taken into consideration and this in turn offers a more plausible alternative to our current humanism. Granted that this alternative sounds credible, it raises questions as to the true nature of rational consensus bearing in mind the multidimensional approach to language. Is there something like rational consensus? Is it possible, given human interests and desires to achieve a consensus, what about dissensus? These and other questions will be examined through postmodern discourse, the philosophy of our current century. The question of consensus appears a difficult task among human beings. One of the reasons for this difficulty is that of crisis in human interests and values. Jean-Francois Lyotard speaks of "justice of multiplicities", and a liberal pluralism of "political subjects with multiple interests and organizations" which valorizes diverse modes of multiplicity, refusing to privilege any subject or positions, or to offer a standpoint from which one can choose between opposing political positions(Cf. Best and Keller, 1991: 174-175). Lyotard seems to have contextualized postmodern discourse on global political economy with Marxist orientation of Jurgen Harbermas which offered a profound analysis and criticism of "the regime of capitalist modernization", the empirical theoretical, or cognitive-instrumental, rationally complex" "which" has so clearly come to dominate and marginalize other modes of knowing"( Ibid). Harbermas' postmodern discourse manifests more clearly in his lamentation of the "split between social modernization and modernist culture as a reactive defense against the increased penetration of the life- world by economic and administrative rationality (Harbermas 1984). For Harbermas, both economic and administrative rationality are part of instrumental rationality complex which has come to relegate other forms of reason and from which man requires emancipation. In his view the way to go about this emancipation is through consensus by which he means an agreement between men, defined as knowing intellects and free wills... obtained through dialogue. Jean-Francois Lyotard who took over the instrumental rationality problem of modernism from Harbermas has a contrary view on the road map to emancipation from a scientific culture that has become an instrument for manipulation and control in the hands of power would come through consensus. This is because consensus for Lyotard is the end of freedom and of thought. What allows human beings to experience freedom, think and to extend the frontiers of possibilities is dissensus or rather, the perpetuation of dissensus which represents a permanent crisis in representation, an ever

greater awareness of the contingent and localized- unstable- nature of all forms of representing the world (Herman1993:163).Harbermas and Lyotard seem to argue and at the same time make a strong case for humanity that our postmodern world should give an unfettered access to all people, groups, sexes, all ages to discourse and that such unfettered access of all and to discourse should constitute the hallmark of social, scientific and political legitimations.

One of the greatest challenges of our civilization is the tyranny of the majority which Mills has challenged. In as much as we want majority opinion to prevail, we should not lose sight of the minority interests. Any society where everybody agrees to a point of view without clash of interest raises critical questions on the ontological nature of man. My take in all these is that dissension otherwise called dissensus is a democratic approach to decisions that border on man, politics and society. A democratization of viewpoints does not mean that a matter is settled once and for all as any major decision in a dispute is subject to revision, amendment and rethinking. What this tells us therefore is that there is no settled question on anything once reality is involved.

### Conclusion

Society is riddled with conflict and instability as a result of adopting a point of view thinking that it is the way to resolve tension and crisis. This approach has been used at one time or the other in the evolution of society. Many branches of human knowledge had participated in this regard of solving problems. This methodology of doing things got to its zenith in modern philosophy with the emergence of rationalism and empiricism rival epistemological schools who became poles apart on ways of acquiring human knowledge. The struggle displayed by these schools demonstrated dominance and superiority to the extent that reason became majestic, tyrannical and autocratic. As a result of this imposition of rationality on all spheres of human endeavor communication a veritable tool of conflict resolution through dialogue became impaired. This development attracted the attention of the communitarians who feel that a rational consensus should be attained in crucial decision. As noble as this view sounds it created its own problems because questions as to how consensus will be achieved not to talk of rational consensus became a big task. Weber's identification of ideal types of rationality though laudable was wide of the mark. To this end consensus and dissensus became the paradigm to resolve conflicting social and political impasse. This is because consensus is the end of freedom as individuals and groups will not have a say when consensus is reached. The idea of rational consensus is a negation of the ontological structure of man.

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