

**Shifting Paradigms in the Study of Personality  
A Retrospective Survey of Western Ideas**

**Peralihan Paradigma dalam Kajian Personaliti  
Satu Tinjauan Retrospektif Idea Barat**

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**Abstract**

The birth of the Renaissance movement in the West ushered the scholars as well as the masses into a broader perspective of learning and knowledge seeking. The spirit of the Renaissance paved the way forward for scholars to gain freedom of speech and liberation from their old mindset. Europe that was bursting with new philosophical and scientific ideas also gave its people a wide range of perspectives in understanding man and personality. Secularism and modernism that came as a result of the Renaissance movement caused a shift in the understanding on man and his personality from a religious to a scientific one. In this study, the researchers would like to venture into the areas of man and personality from the Western perspective. Very precisely, the researchers would like to conduct a survey on the shifting paradigms in the field of Western psychology, pertaining to the study on man and personality. Upon performing the survey, the researchers would like to identify and analyze the underlying factors that caused the emergence of the different paradigms in Western psychology.

**Keywords:** Shifting, Paradigms, Study of Personality, Retrospective, Survey, Western Ideas.

**Abstrak**

Kewujudan gerakan Renaissance di Barat mengiringi para ulama dan juga rakyat jelata ke perspektif pengajian dan pencarian ilmu yang lebih luas. Semangat Renaissance telah membuka jalan bagi ulama untuk memperoleh kebebasan untuk

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bersuara dan kebebasan daripada cara pemikiran lama mereka. Eropah penuh dengan idea-idea falsafah dan saintifik yang baru dan juga memberi rakyatnya pelbagai perspektif dalam pemahaman manusia dan personaliti. Sekularisme dan modenisme yang diakibatkan daripada pergerakan Renaissance yang menyebabkan peralihan pemahaman manusia dan keperibadiannya dari segi agama kepada segi saintifik. Dalam kajian ini, penyelidik ingin menerokai bidang manusia dan personalitinya daripada perspektif Barat. Secara tepat, penyelidik ingin menjalankan survei mengenai peralihan paradigma dalam bidang psikologi Barat, yang berkaitan dengan kajian manusia dan personalitinya. Setelah melaksanakan survei itu, penyelidik ingin mengenal pasti dan menganalisis faktor-faktor asas yang menyebabkan kemunculan paradigma yang berbeza dalam psikologi Barat.

**Kata Kunci:** Iqbal, Falsafah Ego, Manusia, Kerohanian.

### **Introduction**

Study on personality is a quite wide area. Even from the Western perspective it is very vast and as there exists myriad of theories. This paper will only focus on some major views on human nature and personality put forward by Western mainstream psychology, making a survey in a retrospective manner, and highlighting the shifts and turns that have taken place in the understanding of the Western scholars in dealing with the topics on human nature and personality. The history on Western psychology reveals the fact that studies on personality development in the West have come a long way. Early studies on personality development were initiated by the Greek philosophers. Ever since then, personality studies have grown in numbers giving rise to a wide range of divergent theories. In the West, what seemed to have started as a philosophical approach to the study on personality changed later into an empirical and scientific one. This paradigm shift in the West should be rightly attributed to the advancement of knowledge and the scholars' obsession to scientific approach in finding answers to the problems faced by humanity. By going through the existing researches and their results achieved by Western psychologists, one will discover that many of the researches done by the Western scholars on personality reveal that personality development in an individual is evolutionary in nature that emerges as a result of one's learning experience, interaction with others and the environment, and also due to the intrinsic and extrinsic motivations.<sup>1</sup> The fol-

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<sup>1</sup> Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak, Iqbal's theory of personality: a contrastive analysis with Freud. ( Saarbrücken, Germany: Lap Lambert Academic Publishing, 2013), pp. 139-140.

lowing will be an exposition on the developments that have taken place in the study on personality in the West.

### **Personality Studies in the Ancient Times**

In the ancient past, the topic on human personality was subjected to interpretation albeit using mystical and superstitious beliefs. Notably in Greece and probably in other parts of the world too, such beliefs were prevalent. Hired astrologers predicted and interpreted the personality of the masses. According to such beliefs, one's personality in life can be predicted and determined by observing the position of the orbiting planets during the time when one is born. As such, during that time the astrologers occupied an esteemed position in the society for the expertise they possessed in prophesising the fate and personality of the masses. Although this might be seen as something irrational in the contacts of modern life, this tradition of reading other people's fate and personality is still very much alive in some communities of the world.<sup>2</sup>

A shift from the above notion on personality happened when Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 B.C) asserted, "The face is the image of the soul". This knowledge that was promulgated by some experts stated the idea, that it is possible to read the personality of an individual through intense observation of the face of an individual. This art of reading the face was known as physiognomy. It was believed that via physiognomy the experts would be able to read the hidden terrain of personality by observing the facial traits, the shape of the body and the way an individual walks. Julius Caesar (100-44 BC) also believed in this knowledge of the ancient past when he said: "I am not much in fear of these fat, sleek fellows, but rather of those pale, thin ones". This ancient art of predicting the personality of others lives on till today when people without realizing judge other people's character and behaviour by merely looking at their faces.<sup>3</sup>

The other development that followed in the study of personality was the emergence of pseudo-science known as phrenology. This ancient knowledge of skull reading of the Greek survived for many generations until it became a defunct field of study during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Before its demise, phrenology had a substantial influence on psychiatry and modern

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<sup>2</sup> See Robert S. Feldman & Joel A. Feinman, *Who you are: Personality and its Development*. (New York: Franklin Watts, 1992).

<sup>3</sup> Morton Hunt, *The story of psychology* (New York: Anchor Books, 1994), pp.12-33.

neuroscience. Phrenologists like Johann Spurzheim (1776-1832), George Combe (1788-1858), Orson Squire Fowler (1809-1887) and Lorenzo Niles Fowler (1811-1896) made great names for themselves during the heydays of phrenology in America in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. According to phrenologists, the personality traits of a person can be determined through the careful observation of the bumps and fissures present in the skull. In the history of personality study, phrenology was considered to be more advanced than the medical theory of humours.<sup>4</sup>

One of the popular theories on personality prevalent during the Greek civilization was the humoral theory of Hippocrates (460-377 BC). According to this ‘Father of Medicine in the West’, the human body contains four different types of fluids, otherwise known as “humours” that correspond to the four elements of nature. Blood in the human body corresponds to fire, phlegm to water, black bile to earth, and yellow bile to air. In his view, a person enjoys good health when there is a proper balance of these bodily fluids. Hippocrates also prescribed the same in order for someone to have a good state of mental health. He wrote the following in one of his works on medicine:

Men ought to know that from the brain, and the brain only, arise our pleasure, joys, laughter, and jests, as well as our sorrows, pain, grief, and tears.... These things that we suffer all come from the brain when it is not healthy but becomes abnormally hot, cold, moist, or dry... Madness comes from its moistness. When the brain is abnormally moist, of necessity it moves, and when it moves, neither sight nor hearing is still, but we see or hear now one thing and now another, and the tongue speaks in accordance with the things seen and heard on any occasion. But when the brain is still, a man is intelligent. The corruption of the brain is caused not only by phlegm but by bile. You may distinguish them thus: those who are mad through phlegm are quiet, and neither shout nor make a disturbance; those maddened through his bile are noisy, evil-doing, and restless... The patient suffers from causeless distress and anguish when the brain is chilled and contracted contrary to custom; these effects are caused by phlegm, and it is these very effect that cause loss of memory.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas Hardy Leahey, *A history of Psychology*. (New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2004), pp. 312-313.

<sup>5</sup> Hippocrates in David Michael Lindsey. (2005). *The beast in sheep’s clothing: exposing the lies of godless human science*. (Louisiana: Pelican Publishing Company, Inc., 2005), pp. 217-218.

With regard to personality, the above ideas of Hippocrates have been adopted by one of his followers by the name Galen (131-201 CE). By incorporating ideas taken from his teacher, Galen conceptualized his own theory on personality referring to the four fluids present in the human body. According to him, human temperament can be subjected to the excessive presence of any one of the four humours. In his description he said, a phlegmatic person suffers from excess phlegm, a choleric one from an excess of yellow bile, a melancholic one from excess of black bile and sanguine one from an excess of blood.<sup>6</sup>

In this way the humoral theory relates personality and the well-being of a person to the proper balance of the bodily fluids. Though this is an outdated theory during this age of scientific revolution, there have been claims made by some from the scientific community that it has some truth in it. Latest findings by neurophysiologists and brain scientists have confirmed that substances produced by brain cells have effect over the human thought processes, and likewise induced drugs and other chemicals to the brain disrupt the thought processes. In relation to these latest ideas from the field of neurophysics, the knowledge passed on by Hippocrates, Galen and his followers on the human brain and the humours that influence the personality, were ideas spoken of without conducting prior research using any form of methodology and test conducted in the laboratories to validate their reliability.<sup>7</sup>

### **Defining Personality**

Personality, which forms a major part of psychology, discusses the nature of man and his characteristics. Human beings have characteristics, which are displayed in unique ways in most instances form as a reaction to the common situations in life. The typical manner, in which an individual reacts, distinctly depicts of his or her personality. Over the ages, different people had different meanings attached to the word personality. Going by the etymology of the word, personality goes back to the Latin word 'persona', which refers to the mask put on by an actor or actress on stage during the ancient Greek civilization. Thus, initially the word 'persona' carried the connotation of a false image or appearance. Similarly,

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<sup>6</sup> Ian Stuart-Hamilton, *Key ideas in psychology*. (London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kinley Publishers, 1999), pp. 54-55.

<sup>7</sup> Morton Hunt, *Op.Cit.*, pp. 17-19.

in modern day understanding, some thought that the word implies to an individual's superficial attractiveness that is seen by others. Therefore, there has been a false notion conceived by most laypersons looking at personality only as the outward behaviour of an individual. In contrast to this false notion, going by the definitions given by modern scholars, the meaning of personality, which just refers to behaviour, is an incomprehensive one, as it does not explain the more elaborate meaning that has been embedded to what is said to be personality.<sup>8</sup>

Apart from the above understanding of the word personality, most philosophers viewed personality as something that is real and something that emanates from within an individual. To put it differently, personality is none other than the inner essence of an individual that emerges and manifests itself in the observable behaviour of an individual. This inner core or otherwise known as the ultimate reality of an individual not only organises but also controls the behaviour of an individual. Modern psychologists on the other hand, take a neutral course in explaining what is meant by personality. According to them, behaviour alone is not considered to be personality as it only describes one part of a larger picture of what is meant by the word personality. In addition to that, they believe personality is neither the false image nor the ultimate cause of an individual. Most psychologists assert that personality emerges as the outcome of the interaction that happens between the individual's biological structures and the environment. As such, they describe personality as the individuality that is formed as a result of the interaction that takes place between the biological organism with that of the social and physical world.<sup>9</sup> A further elucidation on the word personality by the experts in psychology can clear the mist that surrounds this word. One of the comprehensive meanings given to the word personality is one that has been given by James Drever (1968) in his compilation of terms and terminologies used in psychology. In his book entitled 'A Dictionary of Psychology', Drever cogently explained the word personality as:

A term used in various senses, both popularly and psychologically, the most comprehensive and satisfactory being the integrated and dynamic organization of the physical, mental, moral, and social

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<sup>8</sup> Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak, *Contribution of Iqbal's Dynamic Personality Theory to Islamic Psychology: A Contrastive Analysis with Freud and Selected Mainstream Western Psychology* (Selangor: International Islamic University Malaysia, 2011), pp. 52-58.

<sup>9</sup> Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak, *op. cit.*, p. 128-131.

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qualities of the individual, as that manifests itself to other people, in the give and take of social life; on further analysis it would appear in the main to comprise the natural and acquired impulses, habits, interests, and complexes, the sentiments and ideals, the opinions and beliefs as manifested in his relations with his social milieu.<sup>10</sup>

In modern times, psychologists in the West have come up with a more simplified explanation on what personality is all about. Richard M. Ryckman (2003) defined the word personality as: “A dynamic and organized set of characteristics possessed by a person that uniquely influences his or her cognitions, motivations, and behaviours in various situations”.<sup>11</sup> In another definition given by Schultz & Schultz (1994) we read “Personality is the sum total of a person’s conceptions, beliefs, emotional (reactions), thoughts, actions, appearance, which interacts with the environment to distinguish the individual from other people”.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, Kendra Van Wagner (2008) in her ‘Psychology Guide’ webpage gives the following definition to what she perceives as personality: “Personality is made up of the characteristic patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviour that make a person unique. In addition to this, personality arises from within the individual and remains fairly consistent throughout life”.<sup>13</sup> After providing some definitions on what has been described as personality from the modern Western contexts, this survey will venture to explore some of the Western theories and the developments that have taken place in the area of personality development.

### Freud’s View on Personality

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) who initially started as a medical doctor later became interested in neurology and eventually turned into a clinical psychologist. Through the trainings acquired during his travel to France and other parts of Europe, he learned to be a psychotherapist.

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<sup>10</sup> James Drever. A dictionary of psychology. (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1968), p. 208.

<sup>11</sup> Richard M. Ryckman. Theories of personality. (8<sup>th</sup> edn.) (Belmont, CA: Thomson/Wadsworth, 2003), p. 4.

<sup>12</sup> Duane P. Schultz & Sydney Ellen Schultz. Theories of personality. (5<sup>th</sup> edn.). (Pacific Grove, California Brooks/Cole Pub. Co., 1994), p. 10.

<sup>13</sup> Kendra Van Wagner. What is personality, Retrieved: 1<sup>st</sup> Dec 2008.

<http://psychology.about.com/odoverviewofpersonality/a/personodef.htm?rd=1>

Very particularly, through his acquaintance with Jean-Martin Charcot (1825-1893), a neurologist, Freud learned the knowledge and skill of how to prod and search into the unconscious of his clients by using hypnotism and talking therapy. By using information collected from his clients, he conceptualized a theory on how human personality develops. His theory is very much different from all other pre and post-Freudian theories. Though different in its nature, his theory of personality later had a profound influence on the masses, mainly the media, novelists, movie-makers and other professionals who more often used the key concepts used by Freud in describing the image of man and his behaviour.<sup>14</sup>

Freud's ideas on man and personality contradict with the description given to the concept of man as explained in the Old and New Testaments. He gave one of the pessimistic views on the human species based on his assumption that man is evil and selfish at the same time.<sup>15</sup> As a psychologist, he analyzed the human psyche and arrived at a conclusion that man is not very different from the rest of the animal kingdom. As an admirer of Darwin(1809-1882), Freud's ideas seems to be in line with what had been illustrated by Darwin in his 'On the Origin of Species' first published in 1859.<sup>16</sup> In his theory of personality, Freud is of the opinion that the human personality is empowered by the psychic energy of an individual. Besides that, he also believed that personality of an individual emanates as a result of the interplay of the three psychological forces that are engaged in mutual rivalry to be the dominant force in the human psyche. Through his theory on personality Freud explained the three forces of the human psyche are the id, ego and superego.<sup>17</sup>

Freud's concept on human personality is a deterministic concept as it explains that every individual person is being subjected to his or her psychosexual developments in life. He is of the contention that man is no different than an animal enslaved to his sexual impulses. He further thought that man is controlled by his libidinal impulses and therefore should be un-socialized and irrational in his behaviour. As such, Freud

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<sup>14</sup> Richard Webster. Freud. (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003), pp. 6-18.

<sup>15</sup> Gerald Corey. Theory and practice of counseling and psychotherapy (3<sup>rd</sup>. ed.). (California: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1986), pp.11-13.

<sup>16</sup> See Charles Darwin (2008) On the Origin of Species. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>17</sup> Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak. Human nature: A comparative study between Western and Islamic Psychology (Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia, 1997), pp. 47-50.



believed that man has no freedom to cut loose from the shackles of his psychosexual developments. As a result of not having the freedom of choice, man's behaviour is determined by the warring parties of his psyche; namely the id, ego and superego. An exploration into Freud's ideas on the human psyche and personality reveals the fact that he believed man undergoes endless tension, stress, conflict, dilemma, chaos, and other psychopathological problems due to the imbalance created by the psychic forces. Freud's theory on personality explains that the formation of a strong personality is only possible when the ego is strong. On the contrary, he also stressed on the point that a weak ego produces an individual who is weak in his personality. To Freud, the ego is one of the psychic components of man. It acts as the mediator and peacemaker between the id, and superego on one side and the external world on the other side. In Freud's understanding, the ego's inability to handle the chaos that goes on within the human psyche which is caused by the irrational demands of the id and the unrealistic moral standard imposed by the superego, and the true reality that exists in the external world, can lead an individual to a state of neurosis.<sup>18</sup>

### **Freud's Theory**

Freud presented a controversial theory on how the human personality development takes place. Through his theory, he explained that human beings go through five stages during which personality develops. The five stages which he called as the psychosexual development, is centred on his theory on 'libido'. His concept on personality became highly controversial due to the elements of vulgarity and profanity found in it. In developing his theory, Freud admitted that he had used ideas spoken of by early philosophers and psychologists. In studying his theory, one would discover that it was the genius of Freud to erect a theory out of the bits and pieces of information which he has gathered from others, going back as early as Plato's views on man. In addition to the information gathered from his predecessors and friends, Freud also used data collected from his clients during the many sessions of psychotherapy which he had with them.

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<sup>18</sup> R. L. George & T. S. Cristiani. *Counseling: Theory and practice* (3<sup>rd</sup> edn.). (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1990), pp. 40-41.

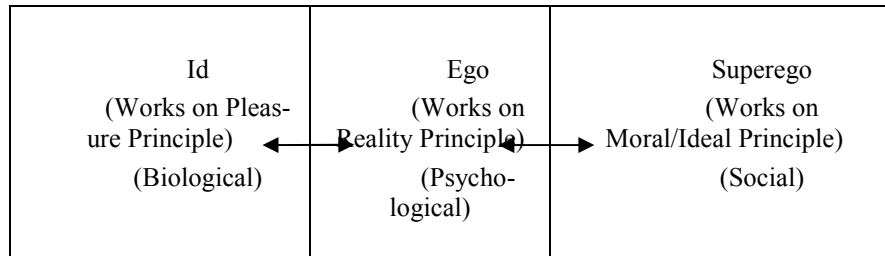
By equating man to an animal, Freud in his theory only highlighted the negative aspects of man and left out the element of goodness found in man. This better part of the human being was only highlighted later by the other schools of Western psychology, mainly the humanistic psychology. Much of the negative aspects on man spoken of by his predecessors like Darwin (1809-1882), Schopenhauer (1788-1860) and Nietzsche (1844-1900) found centre-stage in the drama he enacted on man, and how the human personality emanates. From Darwin he assimilated the idea that man is an animal like the rest of the ape family, sex is the most powerful instinct in man as stated by Schopenhauer, and man is mainly controlled by the forces of his unconscious, an idea stated by Nietzsche.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak. Contribution of Iqbal's dynamic personality theory to Islamic psychology: A contrastive analysis with Freud and selected mainstream western psychology. (Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia, 2011), p. 296.

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### Freud's Structural Model on Personality



Notes:

- The id, ego and superego fight for dominance in the human psyche
- The human personality, mental health, creativity, motivation, psychotherapy, etc. are all related to the interplay of the id, ego and superego.
- A stable condition in the human psyche is sustained when the ego is able to balance the moderate demands of the id and superego.
- An individual develops a strong personality when the ego is strong and dominant compared to the id and the superego.<sup>20</sup>

In presenting his theory on personality, Freud divided the human psyche into three contending elements; id, ego, superego, which perpetually fight one another for the dominance of the human psyche. In reading Freud's theory, one would discover that the id which forms the biological component of the psyche resembles what one finds in the principle of hedonism. As such, the id is propelled by the pleasure principle. Freud further explained that the id driven by this principle is reckless, adamant and selfish in getting its needs fulfilled. On the other hand, the ego which forms the psychological component of the psyche is propelled by rationality. Due to this nature of the ego, it works on the reality principle. But the superego which forms the social component of the psyche is propelled by morality. For this reason the superego works on the ideal principle. Freud's theory on personality is a concept that he kept on constantly changing and revising over a period of half a century. Being an authoritative person in his field, Freud had been toying around with many of the concepts in psychoanalysis. In answering what is personality, he started with the topographical model using terms like; unconscious, preconscious and conscious. Later presented it in a more academic manner using terms like; id, ego and superego. As a researcher, at

<sup>20</sup> Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak, Ibid. 2011, p. 321.

certain stage of his investigation into the nature of the human psyche and personality, Freud frankly admitted his mistakes in conceptualizing some aspects of his theory. In realizing it, he would immediately present the same old data with a slightly modified version.<sup>21</sup>

### **Personality According to Behaviourism**

The behaviourist school of psychology came to exist in the West at the same time with the emergence of psychoanalysis. Among the great figures in this school of psychology were Ivan Pavlov (1849-1936), J.B. Watson (1878-1958) and B.F. Skinner (1904-1990). To the behaviourists, psychology is a science that focuses on the observable behaviour of man. As such, psychology is an objective science that depends on data collected through experimentation. With regards to the human behaviour, all actions are the outcome of the physiochemical process that happens in the human body. They also believe that every human behaviour can be predicted as a result of the type of stimulus received by man. In the behaviourist school of psychology, environmental factors are assumed as the dominant factors in producing the different types of personality. Being inclined in introducing and applying scientific approach in psychology, the behaviourists came to the assumption that any human behaviour can be studied by taking man to the laboratory for observation and experimentation. Furthermore, they also generalized results obtained from experiments and studies conducted on animals on human beings. The reason for this is because, like Freud, Watson too believed that man is similar to the animals.<sup>22</sup>

Behaviourism as a school of thought in psychology has its roots in John Locke's (1632-1704) theory of associationism. J.B. Watson the founding father of Behaviourism shared the same idea with Locke, which says that the child's mind is a 'tabula rasa' at birth- so pure and clean like the tablecloth, waiting to be written on by its experiences.<sup>23</sup> With the assumption that a child is a 'tabula rasa' at birth, this school of psychology

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<sup>21</sup> R. L. George & T. S. Cristiani, *Op.Cit.*, 1990, pp.40-41, Gerald Corey, *Op.Cit.*, 1986, pp.12-13.

<sup>22</sup> John Broadus Watson. *Behaviorism*.(New York: W.W. Norton, 1970), pp.1-19. See Broadus Watson. *The ways of behaviourism* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1928). See Hasan Langgulung. *Beberapa tinjauan dalam pendidikan Islam* (Kuala Lumpur: Penerbitan Pustaka Antara, 1981), p.127.

<sup>23</sup> N. Hayes. *Foundations of psychology* (New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 249-250.

does not entertain the notion that a child is born with some form of innate knowledge. According to them, man is nothing more than a mechanical object that can be conditioned and programmed to do any task. J.B. Watson strongly believes that a child comes to this world in a state of neutrality without any inborn potentials. He further believes that under the most conducive environment the child can be moulded into any desired type of personality, either good or bad, through the system of education and by the nurturing of the parents and teachers.

Unlike the psychoanalysts, the behaviourists have a different concept on human nature and personality. In their concept of human nature, much emphasis has been laid to explain that man is nothing more than an outcome of his own environment. In the behaviourist concept, the environment refers to the physical as well as the social condition of family, society and the country at large. According to the behaviorists, the human personality is nothing more than the sum of learned behaviors. People are different from one another because they experience different reinforcement in their lives. Both Watson and Skinner disregarded the existence of the mind, or any kind of internal self in man. In explaining man's behaviour they are of the opinion and emphasized that man's behaviour is a result of how he responds to the stimuli that come from the environment.<sup>24</sup> Since behaviorists believe that human behaviour and personality are something learned and they involve a process of learning, they are against the Freudian concept of personality that explains that the human personality is something that emerges out of the ongoing battle among the id, ego and superego in the human psyche in relation to the external world of reality.

In stating that learning is the key to behaviour formation, Watson stated the following: "It is what happens to individuals after birth that makes one a hewer of wood and a drawer of water, another a diplomat, a thief, a successful business man or a far-famed scientist".<sup>25</sup> By emphasising the act of learning that leads to character and behaviour formation, the behaviourists use scientific approach in understanding personality of others. Watson among others suggested the following should be given due consideration in the study of personality by a researcher:

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<sup>24</sup> N. Hayes, *Ibid.*, 1995, pp. 249-250.

<sup>25</sup> J.B. Watson, *Op.Cit.*, 1970, p. 270.

(1) By studying the educational chart of the individual; (2) by studying the individual's achievement chart; (3) by using psychological tests; (4) by studying the spare time and recreation record of the individual record of the individual; (5) by studying the emotional make-up of the individual under the practical situations of daily living.<sup>26</sup>

### **Personality According to Humanistic Psychology**

Humanistic psychology, which appeared as an alternative force to the previous schools of psychology in the West, started in the 1950's and has gained much influence through its concept of human nature. As the 'Third Force' in Western psychology, much of its existence and establishment has been inspired by the principles found in the existential and phenomenology philosophies that emphasized much on the 'here and now' in the human life. It got its name from the basic belief that every individual has basic goodness, and his or her needs have to be respected. By this outlook on man, it came with a kinder or compassionate concept of human nature compared to psychoanalysis and behaviourism. The main icons of humanistic psychology were Abraham Maslow (1908-1970) and Carl Rogers (1902-1987).<sup>27</sup> This school of psychology has propelled much with the ideas of these two personalities. In tracing the reason for its establishment, one would discover that the main underlying factor was no more than a reaction to the unsatisfactory concepts of human nature given by the earlier schools of psychology in the West, namely psychoanalysis and behaviourism. Very particularly, humanistic psychology was not happy with Freud's concept of human nature that depicted man as an animal full of sexual and aggressive energy that drives him wild and reckless in the pursuit of his selfish motives.<sup>28</sup> One among the many concerns of humanistic psychology is to highlight the many positive parts of human nature that have been overlooked by earlier schools of psychology. They paid much attention and emphasized strongly on the parts of human nature that are uniquely of human potentials such as reflection, reasoning, judgment, self-awareness, rationality and creative imaginations. Moreover, humanistic psychologists, believe that every individual has a freedom of choice, a tendency to enjoy inter-

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<sup>26</sup> J.B. Watson, *Ibid.*, 1970, p. 279.

<sup>27</sup> Mohd Abbas, *Op.Cit.*, 1997, p. 59-60.

<sup>28</sup> Abraham Maslow. *Toward a psychology of being* (2<sup>nd</sup> edn), (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1968), p. 5

personal relationship, can have his or her own intention and purpose in life and also able to undergo spiritual experience otherwise called as 'peak experience' in one's life.

Even though humanistic psychologists emphasized a great deal on the above unique potentials of man, they did not fail to acknowledge the existence of the unconscious and irrational motives as part of human nature. To them what was more important than the unconscious and irrational motives are the conscious planning and rational choice in human behaviour. Furthermore humanistic psychologists believed and emphasized that each person is unique due to his or her learning and personal experience. According to them, the uniqueness of an individual should draw the attention of that person to discover who he or she is, and to find out what sort of a person he or she wants to be. Only through such an effort one can fully develop his or her potential as a self-directing human being.<sup>29</sup>

The humanistic concept of human nature is very different from the psychoanalysis and behaviourist schools of psychology. Humanistic psychologists are against the ideas previously conceptualized by the earlier schools of psychology. With psychoanalysis, they disagreed with its concepts that state that man is irrational, un-socialized and self-destructive. While with behaviourism they disagreed when it conceptualized the idea stating that man is merely a mechanical being that reacts to the stimulus that comes from the environment. On the contrary, humanistic psychologists present a very optimistic and positive concept of human nature. Besides that, they also believe man is very much different from animals as he can plan and carryout things according to his plan, capable of creating, developing and transmitting cultural values and passing them to the next generation. Their overall perception of man is that man is good intrinsically and can guide, regulate and control himself towards a 'fully-functioning person' and towards 'self-actualization'.<sup>30</sup>

Personality in the humanistic concept is very much different from the psychoanalysis and behaviourist schools of psychology. The humanistic approach is more philosophical than empirical. Humanistic psy-

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<sup>29</sup> C.G. Morris. Contemporary psychology and effective behavior (7<sup>th</sup> edn.), (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1990), p. 40.

<sup>30</sup> Bem P. Allen. Personality theories: development, growth and diversity. (Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 2000), pp. 219-241.

chologists do not view the structure of personality as the way viewed by Freud, which is made-up of three competing psychological forces, namely the id, ego and superego. Besides that, they also disagree with Watson, Skinner, and others from behaviourism, who viewed personality as nothing more than the outcome of one's responses towards the stimuli that come from the environment. In the contexts of the humanistic psychology, the human self or psyche is regarded as one indivisible construct with the absence of any conflicting element in it. Humanistic psychologists also believe that the self comes to exist when a child is born into this world. Contrary to the 'tabula rasa' theory present in the behaviourist psychology, the humanists believe that the child is not a blank slate at birth but born with the innate knowledge or latent tendencies embedded on the self. As such, the human self, right from birth has the capacity for growth. Since the concept of the self is very important in humanistic psychology, the self takes a pivotal role in their theory of personality. Carl Rogers developed his theory of personality based on the notion that the human self has the potentiality for growth and called his theory as 'the self theory of personality'.<sup>31</sup>

According to Rogers, personality is the unique, subjective experience of every individual personality. Human behaviour and actions are the outcome of the way an individual perceives, interprets and responds to the events that are happening in his or her life. He further believed that each person knows better of his or her true nature (self) better than anyone else. Moreover, an individual has the freedom of choice either to respond or not to respond in all situations of life. This view on the freedom of choice directly contradicts the deterministic views on human nature put forward by the psychoanalysts and behaviourists.<sup>32</sup>

Rogers agreed with much of what Maslow explained in his hierarchy of needs and the characteristics of people who experience self-actualisation. In addition to the ideas on self-actualisation, Rogers also believed that in order to develop a healthy personality an individual needs an environment that provides him or her with, i) congruence (genuineness, or realness), ii) unconditional positive regard (acceptance and caring), and iii) accurate emphatic understanding ( an ability to deeply grasp the subjective world of another person). As a strong believer on

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<sup>31</sup> Bem P. Allen. *Op. Cit.*, 2000, pp. 219-241.

<sup>32</sup> W. Mischel. *Introduction to personality*. (5<sup>th</sup> edn.), (Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1993), p. 237.



these ideas, Rogers was against the assumption put forward by others outside of humanistic psychology that states people cannot be trusted and as such need to be directed, motivated, instructed, punished, rewarded, controlled, and managed by others who act as superior and expert.<sup>33</sup>

### **Other Western Views on Personality**

The foregoing discussion was mainly focused on the ideas on personality put forward by the main icons of psychoanalysis, behaviourism and humanistic psychology. However, in this segment of the study, the researchers would like to state briefly some of the ideas on personality put forward by other psychologists in the West. These ideas that came later than the ones stated earlier on are actually modified versions of what had been stated by the founding fathers of the Western mainstream psychology. Psychologists like Carl Jung (1875-1961), Alfred Adler (1870-1937), Karen Horney (1885-1952), Erich Fromm (1900-1980) and Harry Stack Sullivan (1892-1949), who disagreed with some of Freud's basic contentions with regard to the topics on human nature and personality, later went on to form splinter groups of their own.<sup>34</sup>

Carl Jung as one of the neo-Freudians believed that human personality develops mainly due to the activity of the ego. For him, the ego refers to the conscious mind or that segment of human personality that deals with feelings and thinking. Furthermore, he is of the opinion that the way people behave or react to the environment is related to the type of personality they belong to, either extroversion or introversion. People who are extroverts have a positive attitude that reflects their eagerness to explore and get acquainted with the environment and other people. The personality of the extroverts is described to be more expressive in their words and actions. Introverts on the other hand, are more close to their own feelings and are also seen as those who are withdrawn from others. With regard to personality development, Jung believes that it is a conscious act of an individual of what he or she hopes to be and of what one has been doing in life. This idea is contrary to Freud's idea which states that personality is mainly a product of one's past experiences that have

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<sup>33</sup> Gerald Corey, *Op. Cit.*, 1986, pp. 99-117.

<sup>34</sup> Ian Stuart-Hamilton, *Op. Cit.*, 1999, pp. 56-62.

been repressed into the unconscious during early childhood.<sup>35</sup> In giving a detailed classification of the two types of personality: extroversion and introversion, Jung gave the following:

1. The extroverted thinking people
2. The extroverted feeling type
3. The extroverted sensing type
4. The extroverted intuiting type
5. The introverted thinking type
6. The introverted feeling type
7. The introverted sensing type
8. The introverted intuiting type<sup>36</sup>

However, for Adler, the ego is the conscious mind. As such, consciousness is the centre of personality. The goals in life provide the motivation for growth, and in bringing security, and in overcoming human inferiority complex. Human creativity is the outcome when one is able to overcome one's feelings of inferiority. Moreover, the state of one being inferior propels an individual to mastery, superiority and perfection. Adler strongly believed that human beings are not merely a product of heredity and environmental factors but they have the propensity to influence and create events in their lives. Adler's model of personality development is grounded in the philosophy that states individuals can be re-educated and the society can be reshaped. In addition to that, he also made 'striving for superiority' as the cornerstone to his ideas on personality. Adler was one of the early psychologists who believed in the internal determinants of man that have considerable influence on his or her behaviour such as values, individual perception towards life, goals, beliefs, interest and attitude.<sup>37</sup>

Gordon Willard Allport (1897-1967) who thought that Freud had gone too deep and the behaviourists too flimsy on their explanation on how human personality develops emphasised that the study on personality should focus on the uniqueness of an individual. Supplementary to

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<sup>35</sup> Ahmed M. Raba. Major personalities in the Qur'an. (1<sup>st</sup> edn.). (Kuala Lumpur: A. S. Noordeen, 2001), pp. 10-12.

<sup>36</sup> Duane P. Schultz & Sydney Ellen Schultz, Op.Cit., 1994, p. 83.

<sup>37</sup> See G. M. Karim (1984). The Islamisation of psychology, paper presented at the Third International

Seminar on Islamic Thought, International Institute of Islamic Thought, Kuala Lumpur, 26-31 July, 1984, pp. 2-6.

that, he also called that the 'here and now' should be given preference over the probing of the past history in answering what gives rise to the personality of an individual. Allport, who was one of the pioneers in the study of personality in America, introduced the trait approach in studying personality. He initiated his approach by listing down words found in the dictionary that describe personality traits. Out of the eighteen thousand words found in the dictionary and after identifying similar meanings described by the words, Allport brought down the number close to five thousand. In identifying the human personality traits, he categorised them into individual traits and common traits. The former explains the uniqueness of an individual, while the latter can be found common among the member of a culture or society that can change over time. Later, Allport developed and divided his ideas on traits into three categories: cardinal, central and secondary.<sup>38</sup>

Other researchers in the area of personality had a different approach than Allport. In their effort to find out which personality trait played a dominant role in deciding the individual's type, they used factor analysis which involves the use of questionnaire, computer and mathematical techniques. Raymond Bernard Cattell (1905-1998) who has been ranked the 16<sup>th</sup> most influential and eminent psychologist of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was one of those who used factor analytical method in understanding the basic dimensions of personality. By employing the scientific method in the study of personality he conducted tests to measure personality traits. Overwhelmed with the scientific approach in the study of human nature and personality, and much to the polemics on the topics of human nature and personality development prevalent earlier on, he said the following comment in favour of a scientific understanding of man:

Psychology appeared to be a jungle of confusing, conflicting, and arbitrary concepts. These pre-scientific theories doubtlessly contained insights which still surpass in refinement those depended upon by psychiatrists or psychologists today. But who knows, among the many brilliant ideas offered, which are the true ones? Some will claim that the statements of one theorist are correct, but others will favour the views of another. Then there is no objective way of sorting out the truth except through scientific research.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Robert S. Feldman & Joel A. Feinman, *Op.Cit.*, 1992, pp. 42-51.

<sup>39</sup> Raymond Bernard Cattell. *The Scientific Analysis of Personality*. (Harmondsworth (England): Penguin Books, 1965), p. 14.

As his contribution towards the study on personality, Cattell invented an instrument, which has been used by many in their study on personality, famously known as the “Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire” or the “16 PF”. Cattell believed that these sixteen factors are present in individuals universally. Through empirical test results, he was convinced that personality and behaviour of an individual could be measured and predicted. Cattell also asserted that traits are relatively permanent reaction tendencies that form the basic structural units of personality.

It seems that Cattell’s concept on the sixteen personality traits was not a final thing that was agreed upon by other researchers in the study of personality traits. Hans Eysenck (1916-1997) who disagreed with Cattell came up with his own research and concluded that personality can be answered by using two dimensions or traits. Eysenck postulated that individuals could be either introvert or extrovert. Though the idea that personality of an individual can be classified into two categories; introversion or extroversion, is a thing already stated by Carl Jung earlier on, but what makes Eysenck’s theory different is that he used factorial analysis which made it of a scientific nature compared to Jung’s which is of a philosophical nature. Eysenck introduced two sets of questionnaire that can be instrumental in analysing personality are: ‘Maudsley Personality Inventory’ and the ‘Eysenck Personality Inventory’. Besides Eysenck, others too did their factorial analysis and found different number of basic traits with regard to the study of personality. The Five-Factors Model or the ‘Big Five’ developed by Robert R. McCrae and Paul T. Costa, Jr. became quite popular among researchers on personality traits.<sup>40</sup> The factors normally measured by using the ‘Big Five’ are:

- a) Neuroticism: worried, insecure, nervous, highly strong.
- b) Extroversion: sociable, talkative, fun-loving, affectionate.
- c) Openness: original, independent, creative, daring.
- d) Agreeableness: good-natured, soft-hearted, trusting, courteous.
- e) Conscientiousness: careful, reliable, hard-working, organize.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Robert S. Feldman & Joel A. Feinman, *Op. Cit.*, 1992, pp. 42-51. Also see Ahmed M. Raba, *Op. Cit.* 2001, pp. 15-18.

<sup>41</sup> Duane P. Schultz & Sydney Ellen Schultz, *Theories of personality*. (8<sup>th</sup>. edn.), (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing, 2008), p. 283.

In spite of being scientific and sophisticated, personality studies using factorial analysis still have their drawbacks. Some researchers believe that explanation on human personality traits do not provide sufficient information as to why people develop a particular trait. Moreover, traits too do not tell us of how people change, as they get older. Due to these reasons, and the fact that not even one school out of the myriad of Western psychology, was able to provide a comprehensive explanation on the topics on human nature and personality development, at the moment and perhaps in the future, psychologists and counsellors view man and human nature from an eclectic perspective rather than just confined to one school of thought.

#### **Analysis of the Western Views on Personality**

This study has indicated that research on human nature and personality development in the West go back as early as the Greek philosophers. Researchers use the word 'personality' synonymously to describe 'human nature'. By interchangeably using the two words they describe the psychological make-up of man who responds to his physical, mental and emotional needs. The history of personality study in the West started with the most superstitious belief of gazing at the stars and planets in the night sky corresponding to the day one is born. According to these experts, by observing the position of the planets, the type of personality one is bound to cherish can be predicted.

From the art of reading the planets the study on personality further advanced on a new direction. The new approach which is known as 'physiognomy' makes prediction of an individual's personality by reading the facial traits and body language of the individual. This development was followed with yet another new pseudo-science known as 'phrenology'. Experts in this area would be able to state the personality of an individual by carefully studying the structure of the skull for its bumps and fissures. After phrenology, Western ideas on personality moved on to the 'humoural theory' which is also known as the type theory. According to this theory, human personality is determined by the excessive presence of any one of the four humours present in the human body; blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile.

Modern day theories on personality in the West start with Freud when he tried to explain personality in relation to what goes on in the human psyche. In the beginning, Freud showcased his research on the

human psyche to the world by using the 'topographical model' which is made up of three levels; the unconscious, preconscious and conscious. Later he employed the 'structural model' to explain how personality develops in an individual. Through his structural model he explained that there exist three components in the human psyche which perform different functions. The three components of the psyche are id, ego and super-ego. Freud also explained that the three components of the psyche are not regions of the human mind but they are mere mental constructs used by him to describe the hidden forces that reside within the human psyche which are responsible in producing the human behaviour and personality. Through the structural model Freud propounded that the unconscious forms the important part of the human psyche as it gives the impetus and driving force for all of man's activities. Moreover his theory also states that the development of personality in an individual, his state of mental health, creativity, motivation in life, psychotherapy are all related to the interplay of the id, ego and superego which form the hidden forces of his psyche. Freud's theory on personality states that an individual develops a strong personality when the ego is strong and dominant when compared to the other two components of the psyche; the id and the superego. On the contrary, the development of a weak personality is attributed to the ego's weak position in the human psyche. In Freud's opinion, a weak ego gives in to the demands of the id and superego. A stable condition in the human psyche is sustained when the ego is able to balance between the moderate demands of the id and the superego. With regard to how personality develops in an individual, Freud divided the development into five phases or stages, namely the oral, anal, phallic, latency and genital stages. Freud's theory on personality gives much importance to the role of the psychic forces than to the social environment that surrounds an individual's life. As such, man's personality development is very closely linked to his childhood experiences of his psychosexual development. By placing too much importance to the roles of the id, ego and superego of the human psyche Freud overlooked the significant roles played by the environment, peer groups and the society during an individual's process of growing up with regards to personality development.

The behaviourists who came as an alternative to psychoanalysts presented a theory on man based on the principle laid by John Locke (1632-1704) in his 'tabula rasa' theory. As a continuity of this theory, behaviourists emphasized much on the environment and kept themselves far from acknowledging aspects like innate or inborn potentials of man. On the issue of how personality develops in human beings, they are of

the contention that it develops out of man's learning experience. Very precisely, they believed that personality of an individual is nothing more than how he responds to the stimuli that come from the environment. Besides that they also believe that the way an individual behaves is based on his previous learning experience. As such, the way a person would behave in a particular situation with regards to his personality can be predicted. On the overall, reading their theory on how personality develops gives one the understanding that the behaviourists presented an oversimplified view on man and personality development. In the behaviourists' concept, man's position is no more than a mechanical object. Being too inclined towards the scientific approach in understanding man they generalized many of the research done on animals to the human condition without considering the fact that man is different from animals in many ways.

In contrast with what has been said by the behaviourist school of thought on how personality develops, humanistic psychologists gave a different view. Based on their positive views on man they believe that man has many latent potential within his Self. Supplementary to that they believe that the manner in which man reacts to the many demands that come from the environment cannot be predicted as what has been suggested by the behaviourists, as the choice to respond is left to the individual himself. To the humanists, personality is the unique and subjective experience of an individual. With such a contention, the humanistic psychologists believe that personality is the reflection of the inner state of the Self of an individual. In other words, the human behaviour and actions are the outcome of the way an individual perceives, interprets and responds to the unfolding events that happen in one's life. Moreover, they also believe that through self-actualization an individual is able to manifest many of the positive aspects of him. By stating this, they tied up the topic on personality development of an individual to the self-actualization process.

In the West, the theories that came after the humanistic theory on personality became more scientific than philosophical. Their appearance in the West marked the introduction of laboratory, questionnaire, computers and even statistical analysis in assessing the personality of an individual. The 'trait theory' on personality identified in people that there exists what is termed as individual traits and common traits. The trait

theory classified traits found in human beings into three categories; cardinal, central and secondary.

In assessing the history of the Western theories on personality, one would discover that modern theorists have built their conceptual framework on the philosophical explanation provided by earlier theories on human nature and personality development. Despite the many approaches employed by Western psychologists to explain the concept on human nature and personality, one thing that has come clear through this survey on the historical and philosophical developments in the area of personality study, is that, there is no consensus among the Western scholars on describing what is the true nature of man and what is meant as personality. Besides that, Western psychology with the utilization of modern and sophisticated methods is still far from finding a successful and comprehensive answer to the many enigmatic problems that surround the study on man and personality. Nevertheless, all the different paradigms in Western psychology have contributed in their own way in explaining what seems to be a complex notion in the understanding on what is the true nature of man. This study has also made it clear that in the Western theories of psychology there is an absence of a good role model in explaining what constitutes to be a good personality. This situation has left the Western schools of thought in psychology unable to draw out a distinction between what subscribes to a good and bad personality in constructing a theory on personality development.

It should be indicated here that many of the theories on man and personality that came during the modern era of Western civilization have been greatly influenced by the Darwinian theory of evolution. This theory by Darwin on the human evolution states that man's existence in this planet is the continuity of his ancestors who belonged to the ape family. Influenced by the Darwinian Theory on man, Western scholars paid much attention to the few characteristics that are commonly shared by man with the animals and neglected the uniqueness and honoured position occupied by man in the hierarchy of God's creations. As a result of the Darwinian factor, personality psychology in the West which by right should be more interested in the study on man in relation to his soul became more diligently occupied in studying man's physical appearance and behaviour. In their defence they claimed that the study on the entity of the human soul is no not possible as it is not a visible and tangible thing that can be measured. They further claimed, anything that cannot be measured, that thing does not exist. In the Western mainstream psychology, the idea equating man to animals is a thing clearly seen in the



concepts on human nature and personality given by the Freudian and Behaviourist schools of thought. The researchers of the present study believe that any study on personality will be incomprehensive until and unless some consideration is given to the study on the human soul. Since the word psychology refers to the study on the human soul, Western theories should entertain some discussion on human nature and personality in relation to the human soul. It is the conviction of the researchers that Islamic psychology which pays a great deal of emphasis on the existent of the human soul can come to the rescue in filling the lacuna found in the study of man and personality in most Western theories. Man's spiritual dimension explained by medieval Muslim scholars and philosophers through Islamic psychology that describes the role of the *Nafs*, *Qalb*, *Rūh* and *'Aql* in the bringing upon his moral, ethical, emotional, psychological and personality developments can be of great help to modern Western theories. Like in the Golden Age of the Muslims (750-1258), Western scholars should once more again be prepared to borrow ideas from the Muslim scholars pertaining to man and personality. Ideas of Al-Ghazālī (1058-1111), Ibn Sīnā (980-1037), Al-Fārābī (872-950), Ibn Rush (1126-1198), Ibn Khaldūn (1332-1406) and others can be of great value to provide a comprehensive understanding on human nature and personality. Simply put, the researchers believe that in many ways man's external behaviour and personality are the reflection of the condition of the soul entity that lives within his physical body.

### **Conclusion**

This study on man and his personality has indicated that the research on man in the West which started during the ancient Greek civilization has not ended. The European Renaissance that came as a revolt against religion somehow undermined the validity of the religious ideas on man and personality. Despite giving preference to science and scientific study on man, Western scholars with their arduous effort and a constant shift in their paradigms are unable to solve all issues pertaining to the understanding of man and his personality. As such, they are not able to provide a comprehensive theory on man and personality. As a result of purely applying the empirical approach and the inability in answering many of the perplexing issues pertaining to human nature and personality has made some scholars in the West to call for an eclectic approach; a combination of religious, philosophical and scientific approach in the study of man. Since man is a unique and complex creation of God when

compared to other life forms in this planet, any latest findings on man pertaining to human nature and personality will be added information to the existing knowledge and science on man. This nature of the study on man makes the research on human nature and personality a perennial one.