FROM GIVEN TO CONSTRUCTED HUMAN NATURE

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Biljana Radovanović, Goran Ružić

University of Niš, Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Philosophy, Serbia

Abstract. *This paper starts from the thesis that dominant conceptions of human nature correspond to the basic frame of ideas that is characteristic for the period in which it appears. This work differentiates three teachings on human nature. The first viewpoint emphasizes the immutability and determination of human nature. This conception is supported by social inequalities within a society. It appears in societies with irreconcilable social differences. The conception of a teleologically directed human life emphasized a route through which humans accomplish their nature or gain salvation. This conception is widely accepted from the Christian perspective. The third conception describes the paths of free design, construction and change of human identity. This conception appears in the modern age, dominated by the idea of creating the new. The development of such ideas is the result of technological domination and the establishment of virtual reality spaces. We dealt with certain interpretations of human nature in order to show that our understanding of ourselves is always contextually determined.*

Key words: *determination, purpose, construction, human nature, Christianity, identity*

1. APROACHES

Theoretical discussions on human nature often begin with a principle question: Can we single out any general features at all, which are common for any human, without them being only physical and physiological? Certain theorists claim that there is no particular spiritual or mind structure that belongs to everyone, nor that our minds have been given complete ideas and concepts from birth. This is the attitude of the empiricists, who consider the human mind at the point of its inception a *tabula rasa*. In this sense, human nature is always the product of external circumstances and influences.

On the other hand, when talking about human nature, some theorists point out that there is indeed an innate structure that determines not only our physical growth and

development, but our basic intellectual and emotional constitution as well. Thinkers who consider that there is a shared innate essence among humans deal most frequently with such questions as: what is the very thing that distinguishes humans from all other life forms, what are their important features that do not belong to other species, etc.?

The discussion regarding the question of human nature presents a dilemma. Is there a single and unique basic human nature or can we only talk about the individual identity of each human? On the other hand, if human nature is defined as potential, which can be realized to a greater or lesser extent, this sets the stage for discussing the following: how can basic human potential develop differently in the conditions of varied surroundings and upbringing?[1]

The variety of potential approaches to studying human nature leads us to abandon this plane of thought and to switch from the principle level of analysis to viewing this topic on a historical and societal plane. Why? Principle discussions on this topic and various approaches thus formed in most cases reveal only our deeper assumptions, epochally and contextually determined, in direct connection with the understanding of concepts: experiences, history and cognition. What emerges from this is that the discussion on the essence of man is always a secondary product of deeper beliefs and learning that relate to: the problem of understanding the concept of time, defining the dominant conception of creation and the topic of the origin of knowledge. This is why this paper deals with our ways of understanding human nature, i.e. we answer the question of why human nature is defined in certain ways in given time periods and which important social, political, religious and philosophical attitudes these accepted concepts of human nature correspond to. Thus, the fundamental task of this paper is to point to the parallel between various conceptual assumptions, social circumstances and religious attitudes that allow or support these widely acknowledged and accepted determinations of man.

2. THREE CONCEPTIONS OF HUMAN NATURE

By considering various ideas in science, Christian religion, and philosophy, one can distinguish three important moments or degrees of conceptualization of the idea of human nature. The first conception understands human nature as given and unchangeable. The second conception, which represents a certain transition from the idea of human nature being fully determined to the study of the possibility of free identity construction, talks of assigned nature and with that in mind emphasizes the importance of a certain way of life. There are two subgroups within the second conception. The first one sees the path of life through the prism of realizing human essence or fulfilling their second nature (the teachings of Aristotle). In the other, in Christian conceptualization, a human being is assigned a life goal, the realization of which is in the Kingdom of God. Modern age,

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[1] The famous debate between Michel Foucault and Noam Chomsky from 1971, organized by Dutch TV, which was later also published, included a discussion on human nature. This question caused them to take different viewpoints. Chomsky claimed that mental structure is innate with humans, while Foucault advocated that human knowledge is always limited by the context in which the person lives and creates. Chomsky emphasized that human nature that contains freedom, dignity and creativity requires an adequate form of social organization for these traits to be realized. However, some societies do not provide an optimal environment for human nature to develop, nor for human life to be rethought. Foucault noticed a problem in this: "And if one admits that, doesn't one risk defining this human nature — which is at the same time ideal and real, and has been hidden and repressed until now — in terms borrowed from our society, from our civilization, from our culture?" (Chomsky Foucault 2006, 43)

through the third conceptualization, opens up the possibility of a free and creative relationship with your own identity.

As we have previously emphasized, the assumption that creates the foundation of the paper is that there is a significant connection between the manner of understanding human nature that prevails in a certain time period and the important historical, social, religious, scientific and philosophical understanding of that time period.[2]

2.1. Teachings about the given, determined and complete human nature

In many mythological, religious, as well as philosophical conceptions human nature is determined as an unchangeable and determined structure. This viewpoint can be called metaphysical, since it is under the large influence of metaphysical teachings on the permanent nature of substance. Under such a paradigmatic horizon, human nature is determined as the one that has substantial, unchangeable essence. Human nature has been determined from the start, closed and completed.

Teachings about the immutability of human essence have been widely accepted and supported in social systems: those that are based on social inequality, those with a clear line between slaves and free people, where the position in society gained by birth cannot be changed. These teachings on the substantially immutable human nature support class inequality, a caste system within a country, the impossibility of changing the position of an individual in a radical and revolutionary way. When such theoretical viewpoints are held in a society where there are great social differences, then they support and uphold existing inequalities and advocate their preservation.

There is a noticeable similarity between the way that members of a culture determine human nature and the dominant conception of the time that they develop in their viewpoints. Ancient Greeks subscribe to the idea that the future brings nothing that has not already happened yet in some way. Describing the understanding of time in classical antiquity, Friedrich Nietzsche determines it succinctly as "eternal recurrence". The determination of phenomena and things in time, the lack of principles of creating the new and the innovative belongs to the viewpoint which claims that the position of a human gained by birth in society cannot be changed because it is based in differences that are natural and just. A conception of time without an open road into the new and uncertain future corresponds with the idea of birth-determined human nature, of predetermined destiny. Human activities and aspirations are concentrated in fulfilling the goals and tasks in this world and in the present time. The future is the repetition of what has already happened, while the past is just a model to look up to.

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[2] In the above-mentioned Chomsky-Foucault discussion, Foucault emphasizes that every determination of human nature is limited by our character and conditioned by the social and cultural conditions in which it came to be. (Chomsky Foucault 2006, 45) Without pretense that we can exhaust the list of all potential factors, influences and circumstances, this paper will mark some of the ideological currents that have instigated or limited the conception of the nature of man in some of the epochs. Opposing Foucault's viewpoint, we do not consider that every determination of human nature is limited by the prejudices of the time in which it appeared'; on the contrary, some of the conceptions, such as those of the Sophists, are in direct opposition to the prevailing teachings and official social relationships of their day. This means that some teachings can represent a possible answer and a reaction to the prejudices and limitations of a certain epoch.

2.1.1. Socrates and the Sophists

The decline of poleis and undermining of the basic postulates of Greek society match the appearance of the sophists and Socrates. The anthropological twist in philosophy that they bring sets the human being in the center of philosophical consideration, as well as the center of their world. The problem of human nature according to sophists deals with discussing a key question: are people by nature equal, or (translated to our dilemma) is there something such as unique human nature based on which all humans would be equalized? Comparing different laws in different countries and societies, the sophists notice and analyze the difference between *physis* and *nomos*, i.e. the difference between that which is *by nature* and that which is *by law*. They are the first to ask the following question in philosophy: what are human beings like by nature?

Some sophists choose as their starting point the assumption that there is one common essence shared by all humans. Starting from the structure that is common for everyone, they conclude that by nature all humans are equal, but the laws make them unequal.[3] Based on the teaching of the sophists on equality and common human nature, the basis for the idea of natural law was established in the foundation of any civic legal system.[4] On the other hand, by asking the question of what people are like by nature, some sophists would say that people are unequal by nature and that the laws should protect and support these natural inequalities.[5]

2.1.2. Plato

Discussing the problem of justice in his *Republic* dialogue, Plato touches on the questions of existing social inequalities. He finds support for unequal social statuses among people in the biological differences between them.[6] Although the basic structure is the same in all people, the differences arise from the differences in the dominant forces in them. Plato points out the three parts of the human soul: *logos*, *thymos* and *eros*, and different parts of the soul are stronger or weaker in individual people. Some are born to work the land and they are dominated by instinctive nature, others have the will and bravery that makes them born soldiers, while those whose mind is their greatest weapon should lead, make decisions and rule. Justice in a country comes from everyone doing the job they were born or predestined to do, i.e. what comes natural to them. In conceptions like these the community always comes before and above the individual who is not allowed to disturb the existing order of things. The essence of a human is achieved within

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[3] This teaching is advocated by Hippias (Plato Prt., 337c) and Antiphon (Diels 1983, 324-25, 87B44).

[4] Although the idea of basic human rights was embedded in the foundations of European law quite late, it has its origins in the sophistic teaching of the natural equality of people. This teaching has established the distinction in legal science between natural and positive law. Namely, the norms of natural law derive their legal force from the idea that all people are equal. Basic human rights belong to all people because they have the same nature. If a person is denied these rights in their home country, they are guaranteed to possess them according to international law because they are entitled to them by birth. On the other hand, the norms of positive law base their legal force on the fact that the prescribed legal procedure was followed in their adoption. All the norms of positive law may at some point be suspended or renamed, but not the norms of natural law that apply always and everywhere. (see: Đurić 1959)

[5] This teaching is advocated by Callicles (Plato Grg., 483a–484c) and Thrasymachus (Plato *Rep.*, 338c–339a).

[6] Plato also figuratively illustrated that social differences in society are based on structural differences between people, stating that there are people made of gold, silver and iron (Plato Rep., 415 a-d).

the constraints of the class it belongs to. In such conditions even the worst order is considered better than no system at all.[7]

2.2. Shaping human nature as the goal of life

2.2.1. Assigned human nature

The second conception of human nature is in connection with the Greek term *paideia.* The appropriate translation of *paideia* is the shaping of a Greek person.[8] Becoming a person for Greeks had the meaning of manifesting and realizing your own innate essence and becoming an individual. Human essence has been determined by the idea of purpose, the ultimate goal that was established in advance as an ideal, a condition within which human nature is fully realized and accomplished.[9] However, a human being does not achieve their own purpose by realizing their basic nature, i.e. by reaching a certain degree of physical development, as is the case with other living creatures (animals and plants) where the purpose (τέλος) is imprinted in the physiological development of an individual and it is approached spontaneously and gradually. The fulfillment of human purpose, i.e. forming their second nature is a purposeful, conscious, long-term process and includes work on forming human habits and virtues.[10] By acting in a certain way, in accordance with virtue and reason, a human being acquires the habit and affinity to adequately form their ability to reach correct moral and political decisions. Placing the purpose at the end of the life is the essence of the second conceptualization of human nature.

Considering the problem of determining human essence in Aristotle, we can distinguish between the so-called first and second human nature. The first one includes development which man is bestowed upon by nature (by their nature). This nature includes the level of physiological development, the finished process of growing up and physical maturing. Human beings are assigned a form that is their essence. Aristotle will say: "man gives birth to man". However, the process of physically growing up does not imply achieving the complete essence of a human, the realization of second nature, as well as the action that makes humans human. In everyday life, individuals need to work on virtues, as well as participate in reaching a decision that concerns the common destiny of the citizens of a city-state. In this sense, life in the city-state is a life fit for humans. This is why Aristotle says that those who do not live in the city-state are either higher or lower than humans. A being that does not need a city-state to realize its essence is either a beast or a God (Aristotle Pol., 1253a 1-5; Pol., 1253a 27-30).

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[7] In the book of *Metaphysics and Politics*, Ritter states that Plato divided the human being into parts that he assigned to various classes. The embodiment of human nature are not individuals but classes, so individuals participate in human nature only to the extent that it belongs to them within the class of which they are a part. (Ritter 1987, 110-111)

[8] (see: Jeger 1991)

[9] Aristotle points out that the nature of a living being is what its purpose is. He says "For the city-state is their end, and nature is an end; for we say that each thing's nature-for example, that of a human being, a horse, or a household-is the character it has when its coming-into-being has been completed" (Aristotle Pol., 1252b 30-34). The concept of nature in Aristotle involves moving from possibility to realization, which is the ultimate purpose, or what is best.

[10] Man's practice is guided by his insight, desire, and commitment to achieve the ultimate good (Aristotle NE, I 1094a 1-5).

2.2.2. A life fit for humans

For our discussion it is necessary to emphasize the difference between what, on the one hand, would be the essence of human nature, and on the other, the processes and paths of its realization. This distinction is made because the condition of full realization of human nature is not automatic, it is a possibility that demands certain conditions to be met for adequate visibility and development. Thus, the conception of the way of life is closely connected to the notion of human nature. Aristotle differentiates three ways of life or life paths, according to different human natures: the theoretical, practical and poetic (βίος θεωρητικός, vita contemplativa; βίος πρακτικός, vita activa; βίος ἀπολαυστικός vita consumativa).[11] The most valuable is the theoretical, which aims to gain knowledge for knowledge's sake.

Life should be led in accordance to human nature and it needs to be worthy of a human, as considered by the Ancient Greeks. They point out that an individual achieves and realizes their purpose by acting within the human community. Therefore, *paideia* is not simply a human's upbringing, but it also represents the training of the individual for life in a political community. To act and to live in accordance with your nature can only be done in the city-state. The purpose of human life is achieved through a certain form of that person's practice.[12] With the help of reason and language, a human being can rationally communicate with members of the community it belongs to and together, through dialogue and discussion, exchange arguments regarding questions dealing with common good (see: Zunjic 1995).

Aristotle also points out in *Politics* that animals also live in a community, but they form the community in order to survive, while humans needs societies in order to participate in moral and political activities (Aristotle *Pol.*, 1253 a 7-18; Aristotle NE., 1162 a 15-24). Biological differences in comparison to other living beings are not what makes humans special, but specific potentials (reason, language, speech), as well as certain types of activities that fulfill the goal and meaning of their lives.[13] Aristotle emphasizes that living in a city-state is not meant only for humans to survive biologically by joining others in a community, but its purpose is to allow for the possibility of a happy life.[14]

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[11] We can relate Aristotle's teaching of the three life paths to Pythagoras' earlier story of three kinds of people. Through the metaphor of who comes to the Olympics and why, Pythagoras talks about three kinds of people. Namely, every four years, Greeks come to Olympia from various cities-states and colonies. Some attend such festivities to earn something through trade, and so enjoyment and material gain are important to them. Another type of people comes to compete in certain sports disciplines and those in life, above all, strive for fame, success and public recognition. While a third group of people come to the Olympics to watch, and in that sense, learn something about people, the world, the nature of things... Knowledge and wisdom are important to this type of people (Ciceron 1974, V 9).

[12] Practice distinguishes humans from other living beings. It is an activity by which they manage to come to the fruition of their nature and their capabilities. The cause which guides the whole life of a human, which is the driver of their action, is the realization of their ultimate purpose and the meaning of their existence, which is the good in their life (Aristotle Metaph., V 1013b 33-35).

[13] Ritter will say that humans act on insight and expert scientific knowledge while animals work by nature without their own knowledge and clear awareness of it (Ritter 1987, 54).

[14] Aristotle believes that all people strive for happiness by nature. We want happiness for its own sake and not because it can serve some other needs. It is the goal, not the means (Aristotle NE, I 1097a 30-1097 b 6). The city-state is a community created for the sake of life, and exists for the sake of a happy and good life (Aristotle Pol., 1252 b 28-30).

In a later period of the development of human civilization, in an epochally-conceptional sense, the community is no longer considered an appropriate or even the most appropriate frame for the development of human nature, but as a determinant that assigns, conditions and changes human nature. With this direction in the development of ideas, extreme standpoints of the relationship between the individual and the community will appear, generally emphasizing that every community, to a greater or lesser extent, violates human nature by imposing different norms and punitive measures. Every society limits the rights, freedom or the nature of the individual in this way.

2.2.3. Accepting necessity

After the fall of the institution of the city-state, great countries of the world stepped on the scene. First it was the empire of Alexander the Great and later the Roman Empire. In these communities, the human position changed. Individuals were no longer important participants in political events because they were no longer deciding on important questions regarding the survival and future of their city. Schools of ethics, primarily the Stoics and Epicureans, that arise in the Hellenistic-Roman period, attempt to answer some of the burning questions of the day: how to design your life path in a situation where you decide on very little? How to find your happiness when you are left to your own devices? Heroism of suffering, worship of destiny, apathy, are just some of Stoic ideas. Individuals cannot change what does not depend on them or what happened in the past, but they can change their attitudes towards the inevitabilities of life and accept the position given to them by birth. Freedom is found in human spirit. Every person should come to terms with destiny and love necessity. Suffering stops when the determinism of the world is accepted.

The Epicurean teachings attempt to free humans from suffering. The ultimate goal of their teaching and the assignment one should strive for is to not suffer bodily and to not be disturbed in one's soul. The types of fear create unrest in humans, the fear of death and the fear of the Gods. *Ataraxia* – imperturbability of the soul – is achieved by accepting the rational explanations on the futility of such fears.[15]

Human nature can be fully realized and accomplished only through an adequate form of activity or way of life. This conception fits in well with the Christian ideas of the way of life and fulfilling goals.

2.2.4. Christianity and human nature

No religion of the world advocates a change in the position of humans in society or on this world. However, it is interesting that they do not share the prejudices of their time which justify the difficult position of the enslaved and the downtrodden, but they advocate salvation in the afterlife, equality before God's judgment, justice in the kingdom of heaven. From an eschatological perspective, all inequalities and injustice of this life will be made right in the afterlife. According to their merit, some will achieve salvation, and some will receive eternal suffering. Pointing out this purpose of religion, Karl Marx will dub it the "opium of the people" (Marx and Engels 1989, 91). It should justify all the social inequalities and provide comfort in this world by moving the goalpost for human life to the sphere of transcendence.

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[15] Epicurus says that death does not concern us at all, because while we are alive there is no death, and when death comes we are gone (Laertius 2018, 534). One should not fear the gods either. They created the world, but they do not interfere with its development (Laertius 2018, 533).

In the Middle Ages, influenced by Christianity, the focus of human desires shifted towards the future. The purpose of everything that is happening in life was determined from the anticipated perspective of what is upcoming (Жуњић 2009, 54-63). The idea of historical development and the linear concept of time takes center stage, moving towards the ultimate salvation which cancels the notion of time itself. When looking at life in this way, it asks of human beings to accept their position in society and develop those virtues that allow for redemption in the Kingdom of Heaven. For the duration of their lives on this Earth, they should do their best to gain the grace of God. God made man in his image and assigned him with the task of becoming more like God.

Religious teachings support both the first and the second conception images (which we propose in this paper) by advocating the following two ideas. The first one is that religion holds the viewpoint that the current state of the society should not be changed. This attitude supports the idea of a determined and immutable human nature. However, religion does not ask of people to passively (by accepting destiny) or actively (*amor fati* – love for destiny) accept the existing order and state of things, but demands of them to actively prepare for the afterlife and invest their spiritual and physical efforts into attaining higher goals, the realization of which is postponed until transcendence. Therefore, this is not acceptance of one's fate, but preparation for life eternal and the kingdom of heaven.[16]

There is a teaching in Christianity that says that all people are the same before God, equalized. This idea of equality before a higher instance and authority has, in the civic society, resulted in a fundamental principle that stands as the basis of the entire legal system – all people are equal before the law. Legal norms are the same for every person and the sanctions for breaking them are equal.

In Christian monotheism, God is the ultimate creator. Deistic conceptions throughout the 18th century open space for the role of the creator to transfer from God, who created the world, but still meddles in its goings-on, to humans, who become the main creators of the world, life and history.

2.2.5. Philosophical anthropology and human nature

In the latter half of the 19th century there were significant advancements in the empirical sciences, especially biology. Cultural anthropology and experimental psychology were created. In the 20th century there was a sudden and accelerated development of psychoanalysis, linguistics, cybernetics and computer science. Contributions from these fields have been reflected in the philosophical concepts of human nature. The mentioned influences have contributed to the creation of philosophical anthropology as a separate philosophical discipline in the 1920s.[17]

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[16] By analyzing the connection between the capitalist production and Protestantism, Max Webber explained in his study *The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism* how the religious ideas of Protestantism were stimulating for the development of capitalist production. We cannot know whether we have been chosen by God, whether we enjoy his mercy, but our social, material success is a sure indicator that such a privileged position has been made possible for us. This kind of explanation encouraged humans to try harder and achieve material riches in order to achieve and retain God's favor. In this sense, the religious ideas of the Protestants have been inspiring for the development of capitalist production (Weber 2005).

[17] This discipline reached maturity after the great losses in World War I. Political circumstances in Germany of the time started the discussion on whether we are aware what being human really is and what its fundamental definition is.

The founder of philosophical anthropology is the German philosopher Max Scheler.[18] He considered the basis of the social crisis in Europe to be an ontological crisis, the crisis of the human being (Scheler 1958).[19] In his essay, *The Idea of Man*, Scheler pointed out that humans are undefined and unfinished. (Scheler 1978) It can be said that he was building philosophical anthropology from "above", with a basis in metaphysical conception. As far as the essence of humans is concerned, in Scheler's latter works, it was the idea of the "all-man" (*Allmensch*) which includes the entire human being, not just some aspects of it. In this sense, the question of what a human being is, for him, goes beyond any anthropology (including the philosophical one) and belongs to metaphysics (Scheler 1987).

Helmuth Plessner was a biologist and a philosopher. Taking into consideration both disciplines he compares humans and animals in order to point out the specificities of humanity. He prefers to speak in a Kantian way of the conditions and abilities of the human (*conditio humana*) rather than human nature. In fact, he insists that humans are undefinable and talks about the hidden human (*homo absconditus)* (Plessner 1969). Plessner distinguishes between the biological level of human existence and its spiritual segment and talks of the deficient human nature, whose biological existence and instincts are not enough. Thus the spirit arises from the inadequacy of the body. Humans do not succumb to instinct like animals, but they have the ability to restrain themselves and correct their behavior (Plessner 2019). Therefore, the fall of humans can only be the consequence of nature (although nature by itself is not evil), and not culture (as the members of the Frankfurt School or, even earlier, Rousseau, would claim). It would appear that his attitudes on human nature are an attempt to explain a certain historical period in Germany where instead of a universal idea of humanity, the category of Nation was emphasized.

Arnold Gehlen advocates empirical philosophical anthropology starting from action, understood as a planned change of reality. He sees humans as beings of action, and thus beings of education. In this sense, humans are a goal and purpose unto themselves, they are unfinished (Gehlen 1986, 46). They are organically unspecialized, not adapted to only one special arrangement of natural conditions but can sustain themselves in any kind of circumstances. Compared to animals, humans are beings of deficiency (Gehlen 1988).

Günther Anders in his negative anthropology held the belief that humans are non-specific beings and considered that at the time of the third industrial revolution and technocracy – when technology, and not humans is the subject of history – humans are no longer the central point of the world. In this sense, he wrote in *The Obsolescence of Humankind* that even the (positive) philosophical anthropology is outdated (Anders 1985).

In earlier periods, philosophers attempted to define universal human nature. They saw humans as *sub specie aeternitatis*, while their thinking actually partook of the reality of their own times. With the appearance of historicism, Hegel's teaching on the spirit of time, Marx's teaching on socio-economic formations, philosophers spent less time talking from the position of absolute values and substantial immutability, but understood more and more

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[18] Philosophical anthropology was founded by German conservative intellectuals. Apart from Max Scheler, a significant contribution was made by Arnold Gehlen. Often, Helmut Plessner is included in this group as well; however, his political opinions were much more moderate and less radical. At the same time, within anti-conservative currents of thought, thinkers such as Theodor Adorno and Günther Anders developed the viewpoint of "negative anthropology". The basic intent of these authors was to thematize the problem of dehumanization in the world rather than discuss humans positively.

[19] Scheler writes, "In our ten-thousand year history, we are the first time period in which the human being has become fully and totally 'problematic'; the first time period in which the human being no longer knows who he or she is, but also does not *know that* he or she does not know" (Scheler 1958, 65-66).

that their ideas and convictions are historically conditioned. Depicting the condition of the human spirit from the start of the 20th century, the aforementioned anthropologists emphasize the undeterminedness and incompleteness of humans. This attitude opens space up a completely new dimension of individual creation of individual identities.

2.3. Human identity

In the period of Modernism, people focused on the present, which was seen as realized future.[20] The present is the carrier of ideas and a catalyst of future development in an attempt to surpass the contemporary state of things. Processes of the development of the world and individual lives become open, carrying with themselves not only freedom, but uncertainty as well. Humans take the role of the creator and attempt to create their own world based on principles of the mind. Novelty and innovation are aspired to. As working subjects, they can do whatever they want with their lives, as well as change and perfect their nature. Humans are not entirely defined in their essence, nor are they determined to begin with. They are not closed beings, but open, and they can change and correct their nature.

2.3.1. Technology of the digital age and anthropology

Under the influence of technological development, different understandings of human beings have arisen. The ever-increasing use of technology in the lives of individuals has caused the development of new topics, approaches and areas. Within modern anthropology, there are developments of techno-anthropology, cyber anthropology, virtual anthropology and cyborg anthropology. Digital anthropology studies the relationship between humans and internet technology. Cyberspace serves as the "field" for anthropologists, allowing observation (with or without interaction), interpretation of socio-cultural phenomena and analysis of the way social communities function in the virtual world.[21]

2. 3. 2. Construction of human identity

Third, the modern conception paradigm leans on the possibility of constructing or repeating the voluntary, controlled change of the given or the framed in primary human nature. The notion of construction deals with the exchange or coordination of the parts of the whole that have been in disagreement and the segments of which we desire to perfect or change. Human nature, as its own identity, is understood as a personal project, i.e. the construction that an individual shapes, creates and determines. In this sense, what is negated is the existence of a firm, immutable structure that makes up the human essence. What we call human nature is a culturally conditioned and constructed identity.

Human essence is not something given (as is the case with animal and plant life), nor assigned (human nature which, in order to be realized, must be shaped), but human nature can change in the sense of changing individual identity according to the direction of our intentions, desires and ideas. Humans can build and change themselves: physically, sexually, nationally, racially and in any other sense. A person is acknowledged, by societal institutions,

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[20] Alexandre Koyré points out that the most significant idea for the creation of the modern world was the idea of an infinite universe (Koyré 1957).

[21] As far as the method is concerned, there is disagreement on whether it is possible to conduct research exclusively via the Internet or if research can be complete only when it is done holistically, both online and offline.

the right to personal convictions and feelings concerning the concrete forms of their identity, i.e. they are allowed to be what they are convinced they actually are or should be.

With existentialists, the central questions become the problem of individual existences, personal identities, individual needs. I am not, as a human being, interested as much in who we are as humankind as much as I am interested in who I am as an individual. In this sense, Sartre will say that man is his own project, choosing and designing what he will become. "Existence precedes essence" (Sartre 2007, 20). This means that nature in the sense of human essence is non-existent. Existentialism as a philosophical school of thought has fit in well with the tendencies and possibilities in the technical and technological era in which science and technology help humans upgrade, change and transform themselves.

Taking into consideration the positive meanings of construction[22] as a term, it can be defined in the following manner: a construction is a designed, artificially created frame, with its own structure. On the other hand, the word construction has a negative connotation as well, signifying something imaginary, created on one's own, willfully and arbitrarily. When we use this word in the area of the human world or when we concretely use it for explaining identities, then construction is not creation but renaming, the change of meaning. If we change the purpose, we construct the object or phenomenon in some way, although we do not change it in a structural or material sense. Also, one of the meanings of the word *construction* is to raise and set up something new on existing foundations. With the help of modern technology, we can upgrade, i.e. reconstruct our body. Implants bypass deficiencies in weakened parts of the organism that are no longer capable of optimal function.[23]

We are in the age of robotization and cyber-bodies (improved performance by adding artificial parts to an organism). Natural processes have been exchanged for artificial ones, just like living body parts.[24] Also, genetic design moves the limits in terms of the moment from which human nature can be changed, chosen, created or constructed. Humans have an open possibility to intervene where they could not do so before, and to design the organs and predispositions of their descendants. The position from which these questions can be discussed and decided on has been moved from an individual to the parents.

In the contemporary technological and computerized world, the individual is no longer offered a life fit for humans, but an existence in the manner of machines. Everything we demand today from machines, we demand from humans as well. The machine is perfected by changing parts. Devices become better models by increasing and improving functions. By imitating the way machines function, human work becomes mass production of the same items. It stops being a personal and creative act. The machine is the one that is: networked, always at one's disposal, available, it has to be efficient and fast, its functions are programmed and loaded, its effects quantified. This technical manner of functioning

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[22] The word construction originates from Latin *construtio*. It has several meanings. Primarily, it signifies: 1a. the projection of a frame, establishing the composition of some device, make up of an object etc., 1b. a unit purposefully built out of parts, a technical construction, a building, 2. The organization of structures, composition, 3. (linguistic meaning) a collection of words connected in accordance with grammatical rules that is smaller than a sentence, 4. (geometrical meaning) presentation, i.e. drawing of geometrical figures in a plane based on the given elements, 5. arbitrary interpretation, concoction (Klajn i Šipka 2008, 655).

[23] Implants include: artificial teeth, hips, heart valves, in order to change impaired parts of the body. Electro stimulators that help the heart, stents that stop blood vessels from become too narrow, metal parts that help broken bone parts grow back together, etc

[24] The example of the scientist Stephen Hawking shows us that he became less and less a body as his disease continued to advance. In the end, the only thing that was left of him was the brain. The computer took care of all the necessary functions of his body.

becomes a way of life for contemporary individuals. This makes human nature increasingly less natural and more technical and artificial.

We want to point out the key change that came to be after the accent was moved from the notion of purpose to the notion of *function*. The idea of *telos* or purpose is key to determining essence. Ancient Greeks emphasized that purpose is the good behind the created or made; however, this notion becomes out of place when we talk about the project of constant change, upgrading and constructing one's own identity. *In the modern age notions of form and purpose have been exempt from the definition of human nature and instead of them, the notions of constructed functions and accepted roles have been emphasized.*[25]

Humans should be able to shape their nature according to the ideal, to values, to the best of the best. However, if there is no prime role-model, if a person is not aiming to be the best possible version of oneself, and generally aiming to become a better person, then this idea of creating and producing oneself turns into a free act of playing with one's own identity in accordance with haphazard ideas.

The development of science, technology and the means of communication created the possibility of forming a virtual identity as well. Double or split identity used to be seen as symptomatic of the dissociative identity disorder. Today it is not only approved of, but encouraged to create imaginary virtual identities in the artificially created spaces of social communication networks. In cyber-reality, man is given the right to be a completely different being, one's own creation, an imaginary character, an *avatar*, a construed identity.

3. THE NOTION OF CREATION

Important differences between the three mentioned conceptions can be noticed by analyzing the key notion – that of creation. There is no *ex nihilo* creation in the Ancient World, because the world of possible phenomena and things is finite. It is impossible for something to appear which had not existed before.[26] In this sense, human nature was given and created in advance. Its essence (*eidos*, form, idea, substance) is eternal. Its creation through birth[27] is always followed by the continuation of the given species (Plato *Sym.*, 207d).

It is only with the Christian conception of God, who creates the world from nothing, that there appeared the notion of being able to produce something that had never in any way existed. The idea of *novum* is born, of that which is created without anything before it having existed. The Christian conceptual frame, with the emphasized notion of creation, provides the possibility for the areas of production, invention, technology to form new instruments, devices, things, materials, machines, worlds.

When Nietzsche said *God is dead* (Nietzsche 1974, 167, 181-182; Nietzsche 2006, 69) this did not mean only that the ultimate absolute principle and authority was removed from the world stage, but also that God is no longer the maker, the one who creates. Humans stepped into the world scene as the supreme demiurge. Scientists create: artificial viruses,

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[25] The importance of the notion of function can be seen in the example of modern art. If a simple object from a household is brought to a gallery, does it become something else? How is it possible that an object which has not changed in a physical and structural sense becomes a work of art and an exhibit in a gallery? Namely, the function of the object in the sense of use, utilization, was changed, which changes its meaning.

[26] In Greek mythology, the world is created from chaos by bringing order into an undistinguished unity. The material is already there. It is impossible to create something that was not present in any way prior to that (Pavlović 1978, 7-12).

[27] Plato distinguishes between birth in body and birth in spirit (Plato *Sym.*, 206b7-208b5).

new diseases, different species by combining existing ones. Noticing certain processes in nature they cause them, repeat them and vary them in their experimental interventions (e.g. make existing molecular structures unstable by creating new connections, bombarding the nucleus of the atom, etc.). Humans have uplifted themselves to the position of a powerful creator of modern reality. They revise the conception of birth with the idea of cloning. They design the world in material, conceptual and virtual areas. They re-create, build and destroy and become the masters of the processes of appearance and disappearance.

The human need to produce is enormous. Scientists have come up with new worlds, inhabited by newly created personal profiles, new identities, accounts… Cyberspace has been created and you can build in it in a new way, while varying all possible factors of the creation process. This is how humans can simulate and create today. They create the simulation of creation, which is in itself a creative act.[28]

4. CONCLUSION

Discussing the problem in this way clearly shows that it is impossible to ascertain a strong causal connection, but only favorable circumstances, similarities and stimuli for an unhindered development of certain perceptions. Different conceptions that we have pointed out regarding the formation and change of human nature led us to distinguish between: 1. human nature, 2. human purpose, and 3. human identity.

We have emphasized within the first conception that human nature has been defined as given and unchangeable. It determines the individual through all the capacities at his disposal. These possibilities represent both the human limits and powers. In this paper we have attempted to point out that important class differences in society have strongly determined and supported this manner of defining human nature.

The second conception points out the importance of a certain form of human practice for the realization of the purpose of human life. The goal is to live in a way that is fit for humankind in order to realize and draw out human essence. This conception worked well for the Christian notion that certain forms of human activities lead to the right goal – human salvation, reward, the kingdom of heaven, etc.

The third conception points out the openness of a human being to the utmost variety of changes and transformations. Human identity is created and constructed. This image in Modernism is a product of the domination of technology over nature and the consequence of increased speed of technological development that offers new forms of design and development of human looks and identity.

This paper distances itself from a potential discussion on the question of whether human nature exists or not, or if it does what it is like. Attention was directed at the demonstration of representative teachings on this question that we have ascertained corresponded to the general characteristics of certain historical epochs. The intellectual horizon within which we determine our essence always includes some of the fundamental assumptions of the epoch in which determinations of nature, goals and human identity arise. Having this in mind, the future development of society and science will significantly determine some new future understanding of human nature and its essence.

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[28] Humans create in artificial reality, using real time. The next revolution comes when humans are allowed to create new worlds in an artificially created time. By creating artificial time, humans will increase the opportunity to satisfy their need to produce and create.

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OD DATE DO KONSTRUISANE LJUDSKE PRIRODE

U ovom radu polazimo od teze da dominantne koncepcije čovekove prirode korespondiraju osnovnim idejnim okvirom koji je karakterističan za epohu u kojoj se one javljaju. U radu razlikujemo tri učenja o ljudskoj prirodi. Prvo stanovište ističe nepromenjivost i određenost ljudske prirode. Ova koncepcija jeste podržana društvenim nejednakostima u državi. Javlja se u društvima gde vladaju nepomirljive socijalne razlike. Koncepcija o teleološki usmerenom čovekovom životu ističe put kojim čovek ostvaruje svoju prirodu ili zadobija spasenje. Ova koncepcija je široko prihvaćena u hrišćanskoj perspektivi. Treća koncepcija opisuje puteve slobodnog osmišljavanja, konstrukcije i menjanja čovekovog identiteta. Ova koncepcija se pojavljuje u modernom dobu u kojem dominira ideja stvaranja novog. Razvoj ovakvih ideja rezultat je dominacije tehnike i otvaranja prostora virtuelne realnosti. Bavili smo se različitim interpretacijama ljudske prirode u nastojanju da pokažemo da je naše razumevanje nas samih uvek kontekstualno određeno.

Ključne reči: *determinacija, svrha, konstrukcija, ljudska priroda, hrišćanstvo, identitet*