

**HSL7520**

# **Human Nature**

## *...topics discussed*

Overview

Public  
perceptions

Competing  
views

Antique:  
Ancient  
Indian Tradn

5.  
Hebrew  
Tradition

Chinese  
Tradition

Early  
Philosophers:  
Plato

Aristotle

Buddha

Sankara

Modern  
Thinkers:  
Kant

Marx

Freud

Nietzsche

Sartre

Simone de  
Beauvoir

Gandhi

Scientific  
Theorizing:  
Rivalry

Physicalism

Non-  
physicalism

Evolutionism

Anthropocent  
rism

## Contents

*Ancient Views on Human Nature*: Indian Tradition; Hebrew Tradition; Chinese Tradition; Convergence and Divergence

*Early Philosophers on Human Nature*: Platonic Idealism, Aristotelian Thought; Buddhist Legacy; Advaita Vedanta of Sankara

*Dominant Modern Thinkers*: Immanuel Kant, Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, Friedrich Nietzsche, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Mahatma Gandhi

*Scientific Theorizing of Human Nature*: Physicalist and Non-physicalist Accounts; Evolutionist Explanation; Rival Theories; Critical Analysis

*Anthropocentrism*: Development of Anthropocentric View; Anthropocentrism in Diverse Movements, and Scientific and Technological Advancements; Follies of Anthropocentric Account of Progress

**Grading Scheme:**

3 Exams: 50%

Paper: 20%

Quiz: 20%

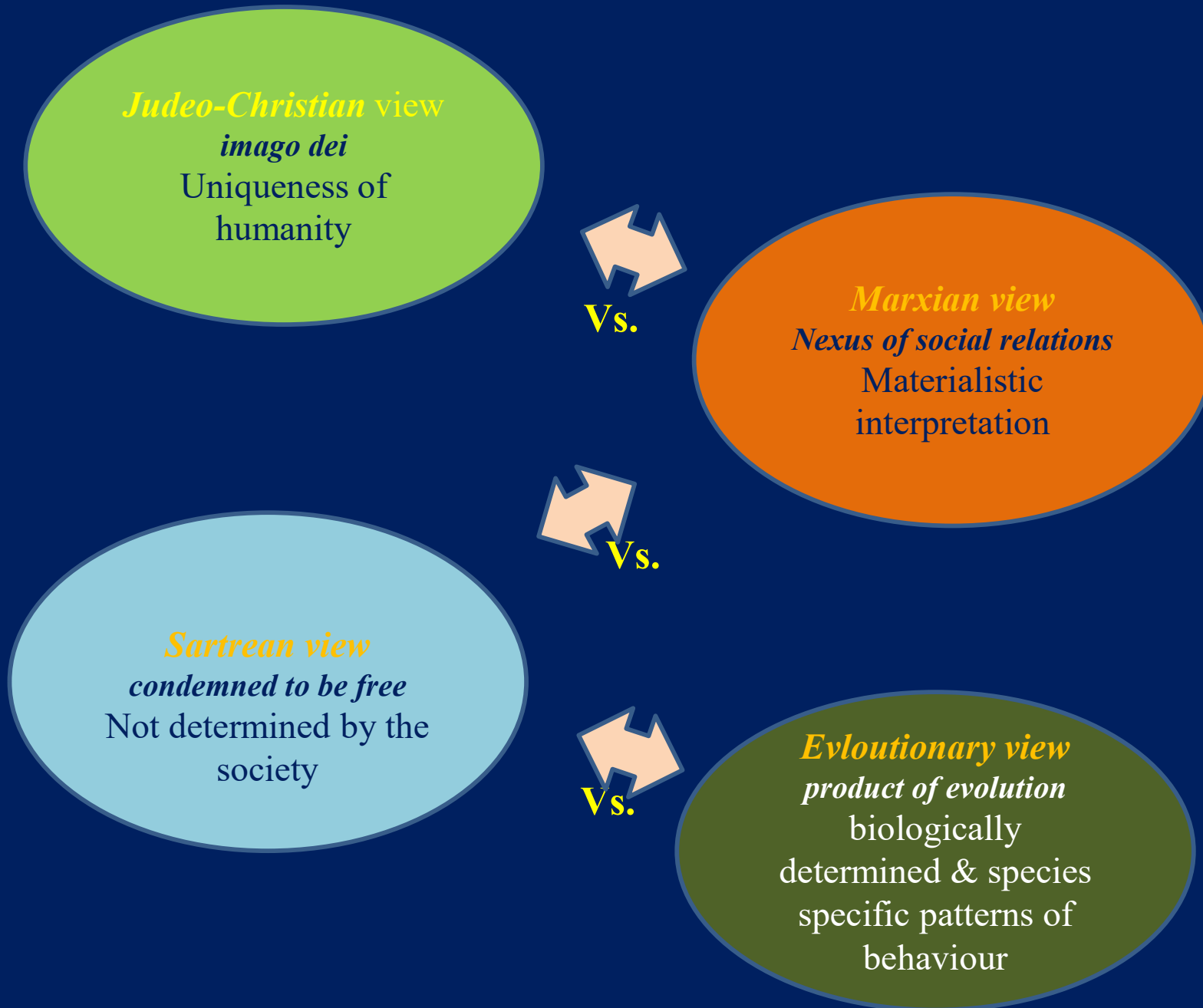
Presentation: 10%

*An overview of the course was discussed in the last class*

**What all hard questions pop up while thinking about human condition?**

So much depends on our conception of human nature: for individuals, the meaning and purpose of our lives, what we ought to do or strive for, what we may hope to achieve or to become; for human societies, what vision of human community we may hope to work toward and what sort of social changes we should make. Our answers to all these huge questions depend on whether we think there is some "true" or "innate" nature of human beings. If so, what is it? Is it different for men and women? Or is there no such "essential" human nature, only a capacity to be molded by the social environment—by economic, political, and cultural forces?

***Example of disagreement:***





*Different conceptions of human nature lead to different views about what we ought to do and how we can do it.*

*If an all-powerful and supremely good God made us, then it is His purpose that defines what we can be and what we ought to be, and we must look to Him for help.*

*If, on the other hand, we are products of society, and if we find that our lives are unsatisfactory, then there can be no real solution until human society is transformed.*

*If we are radically free and can never escape the necessity for individual choice, then we have to accept this and make our choices with full awareness of what we are doing.*

*If our biological nature predisposes or determines us to think, feel, and act in certain ways, then we must take realistic account of that.*

**Correlation between rival beliefs about human nature  
&  
Differences in scientific positions, individual ways of life, political  
structures, and economic systems**

**However, it is possible to find convergence amidst divergences**

## *Topics for the major exam:*

- Topics taken after the minor II (topics from Simone de Beauvoir)  
+ Kant & Freud

*Cfr the syllabus:*

*[Dominant Modern Thinkers:* Immanuel Kant, ~~Karl Marx~~, Sigmund Freud, ~~Friedrich Nietzsche~~, ~~Jean-Paul Sartre~~, Simone de Beauvoir, Mahatma Gandhi

*Scientific Theorizing of Human Nature:* Physicalist and Non-physicalist Accounts; Evolutionist Explanation; Rival Theories; Critical Analysis

*Anthropocentrism:* Development of Anthropocentric View; Anthropocentrism in Diverse Movements, and Scientific and Technological Advancements; Follies of Anthropocentric Account of Progress]

All the best!