can nationalists such as Nkrumah. Appiah argues that these African nationalists never developed an acceptable definition of the notion of race. This, he claims, is because race is a pseudo-concept that is more hinderance than help in meeting the problems faced by the people of Africa.

The next three selections critique the critics of ethnophilosophy, thereby exemplifying the dialectical nature of the development of African philosophy. Albert G. Mosley subjects Kwame Anthony Appiah's arguments as presented in his recent book *In My Father's House—Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* (NY: Oxford University Press, 1992) to careful inspection. Appiah's classification of racism into extrinsic and intrinsic varieties, his claim that Blyden and Du Bois were intrinsic racists, and his claim that the concept of race has neither biological nor sociohistorical legitimacy are all examined and challenged in Mosley's response.

Oyekan Owomoyela of Nigeria provides a comprehensive summary of the ethnophilosophical position and its critique by Wiredu, Hountondji, Bodunrin, and others. He points out that the deference to the past so associated with traditional culture is true more in name than in fact, and he argues that ideas need not be written in order to be critically assailed and altered. The belief in a mystical world of spirits may be prescientific, but it may be a needed antidote to the scientific approach to nature. Africa's conquest by the West does not mean that African belief systems are inferior to modern European beliefs, and Owomoyela reaffirms that different civilizations may exemplify different virtues and different vices.

Abiola Irele, a Nigerian specializing in Francophone literature, provides a magisterial overview of philosophy in Francophone Africa. He presents the work of Senghor, Kagame, and Diop as examples of ethnophilosophy and reviews the arguments of their major critics, including Albert Franklin, Stanislas Adotevi, Franz Fanon, Marcien Towa, and Paulin Hountondji. In the final section of his paper, Irele examines V. Y. Mudimbe's *The Invention of Africa* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1988) and concludes with a warning that Mudimbe, Hountondji, and others should be wary of uncritically accepting the hegemony of Western models of science and philosophy.

How Not to Compare African Thought with Western Thought[1]

Kwasi Wiredu

Kwasi Wiredu is a Ghanaian philosopher, former chair of the Department of Philosophy of the University of Ghana, and currently teaches at the University of South Florida. He has published extensively in the area of African philosophy, and the selection provided here is one of the most cited and debated in the literature.

In this article, Wiredu argues that a failure to appreciate the nature of traditional Western thought has encouraged the tendency to identify Western thought with modern Western thought. Because African cultures in the modern world are the existing approximations to a prescientific stage of intellectual development, the contrast drawn by ethnophilosophers between African and Western modes of thought has really been between traditional and modern modes of thought.

He chides educated Africans for uncritically adhering to traditional African beliefs and practices, and warns that exhortations for Africans to uncritically preserve their traditional beliefs may be counterproductive to Africa's progress. If Africa is to develop its resources, then beliefs and practices that have no rationale, and practices that are economically and socially detrimental, must be critically assessed and replaced by more appropriate ones. In this regard, he stresses the need to cultivate written over oral modes of communicating, arguing that literacy is a necessary condition for the transition from a prescientific to a scientific phase of human development.

The modernization of Africa must involve not only Africa's physical resources but its modes of thought as well. The influence of the Western philosophical tradition on African traditional cultures is no less important than the impact of Greek and Roman thought on the barbaric tribes of Western Europe. This does not mean that traditional African cultures have nothing to contribute to the evolution of world civilization and, to illustrate, Wiredu suggests that Westerners could learn much from African systems of morality that are not based on appeal to the command of spiritual

entities and forces. This is a suggestion that Wiredu develops in a later essay in this volume.

Many western anthropologists and even non-anthropologists have often been puzzled by the virtual ubiquity of references to gods and all sorts of spirits in traditional African explanations of things. One western anthropologist, Robin Horton, has suggested that this failure of understanding is partly attributable to the fact that many western anthropologists "have been unfamiliar with the theoretical thinking of their own culture."[2] I suggest that a very much more crucial reason is that they have also apparently been unfamiliar with the folk thought of their own culture.

Western societies too have passed through a stage of addiction to spiritistic explanations of phenomena. What is more, significant residues of this tradition remain a basic part of the mental make-up of a large mass of the not so-sophisticated sections of Western populations. More importantly still, elements of the spiritistic outlook are, in fact, deeply embedded in the philosophical thought of many contemporary westerners—philosophers and even scientists.

Obviously it is a matter of first rate philosophical importance to distinguish between traditional, i.e., pre-scientific, spiritistic thought and modern scientific thought by means of a clearly articulated criterion (or set of criteria). Indeed, one of the most influential and fruitful movements in recent Western philosophy, namely the logical positivist movement, may be said to have been motivated by the quest for just such a criterion. Also anthropologically and psychologically it is of interest to try to understand how traditional modes of thought function in the total context of life in a traditional society. Since African societies are among the closest approximations in the modern world to societies in the pre-scientific stage of intellectual development, the interest which anthropologists have shown in African thought is largely understandable.

Unfortunately instead of seeing the basic non-scientific characteristics of African traditional thought as typifying traditional thought in general, Western anthropologists and others besides have tended to take them as defining a peculiarly African way of thinking. The ill-effects of this mistake have been not a few.

One such effect is that the really interesting cross-cultural comparisons of modes of thought have tended not to be made. If one starts with the recognition that all peoples have some background of traditional thought—and remember by *traditional* thought here I mean pre-scientific thought of the type that tends to construct explanations of natural phenomena in terms of the activities of gods and kindred spirits—then the interesting and anthropologically illuminating comparison will be to see in what different ways spiritistic categories are employed by various peoples in the attempt to achieve a coherent view of the world. In such specific differences will consist the real peculiarities of, say, African traditional thought in contradistinction from, say, Western traditional thought. Such comparisons may well turn out to hold less exotic excitement for the Western anthropologist than present practice would seem to suggest. In the absence of any such realization, what has generally happened is that not only the genuine distinguishing features of African traditional thought but also its basic non-scientific, spiritistic, tendencies have been taken as a basis for contrasting Africans from Western peoples. One consequence is that many Westerners have gone about with an exaggerated notion of the differences in nature between Africans and the peoples of the West. I do not imply that this has necessarily led to anti-African racism. Nevertheless, since in some obvious and important respects, traditional thought is inferior to modern, science-oriented thought, some Western liberals have apparently had to think hard in order to protect themselves against conceptions of the intellectual inferiority of Africans as a people.

Another ill-effect relates to the self-images of Africans themselves. Partly through the influence of Western anthropology and partly through insufficient critical reflection on the contemporary African situation, many very well placed Africans are apt to identify African thought with *traditional* African thought. The result has not been beneficial to the movement for modernization, usually championed by the very same class of Africans. The mechanics of this interplay of attitudes is somewhat subtle. To begin with, these Africans have been in the habit of calling loudly, even stridently, for the cultivation of an African authenticity or personality. True, when such a call is not merely a political slogan, it is motivated by a genuine desire to preserve the indigenous culture of peoples whose confidence in themselves has been undermined by colonialism. But it was a certain pervasive trait of this same culture that enabled sparse groups of Europeans to subjugate large masses of African populations and keep them in colonial subjection for many long years and which even now makes them a prey to neo-colonialism. I refer to the *traditional* and non-literate character of the culture, with its associated technological underdevelopment. Being traditional is, of course, not synonymous with being non-literate. A culture can be literate and yet remain traditional i.e., non-scientific, as the case of India, for example, proves. India has a long tradition of written literature, yet it was not until comparatively recent times that the scientific spirit made any appreciable inroads into the Indian way of life. But, of course, a culture cannot be both scientific and non-literate, for the scientific method can only

flourish where there can be recordings of precise measurements, calculations and, generally, of observational data. If a culture is both non-scientific and non-literate, then in some important respects it may be said to be backward in a rather deep sense. We shall in due course note the bearing of the non-literate nature of the traditional African culture on the question of just what African philosophy is.

What is immediately pertinent is to remark that unanalyzed exhortations to Africans to preserve their indigenous culture are not particularly useful—indeed, they can be counterproductive. There is an urgent need in Africa today for the kind of analysis that would identify and separate the backward aspects of our culture—I speak as an anxious African—from those aspects that are worth keeping. That such desirable aspects exist is beyond question, and undoubtedly many African political and intellectual leaders are deeply impregnated by this consideration. Yet the analytical dimension seems to be lacking in their enthusiasm. So we have, among other distressing things, the frequent spectacle of otherwise enlightened Africans assiduously participating in the pouring of libation to the spirits of our ancestors on ceremonial occasions, or frantically applauding imitation of the frenzied dancing of "possessed" fetish priests—all this under the impression that in so doing they are demonstrating their faith in African culture.

In fact, many traditional African institutions and cultural practices, such as the ones just mentioned, are based on superstition. By "superstition" I mean a rationally unsupported belief in entities of any sort. The attribute of being superstitious attaches not to the content of a belief but to its mode of entertainment. Purely in respect of content the belief, for example, in abstract entities in semantic analysis common among many logistic ontologists in the West is not any more brainy then the traditional African belief in ancestor spirits. But logisticians are given to arguing for their ontology. I happen to think their arguments for abstract entities wrong-headed;[3] but it is not open to me to accuse them of superstition. When, however, we come to the traditional African belief in ancestor spirits—and this, I would contend, applies to traditional spiritistic beliefs everywhere—the position is different. That our departed ancestors continue to hover around in some rarefied form ready now and then to take a sip of the ceremonial schnapps is a proposition that I have never known to be rationally defended. Indeed, if one were to ask a traditional elder, "unspoilt" by the scientific orientation, for the rational justification of such a belief, one's curiosity would be quickly put down to intellectual arrogance acquired through Western education.

Yet the principle that one is not entitled to accept a proposition as true in the absence of any evidential support is not Western in any but an episodic sense. The Western world happens to be the place where, as of now, this principle has received its most sustained and successful application in certain spheres of thought, notably in the natural and mathematical sciences. But even in the Western world there are some important areas of belief wherein the principle does not hold sway. In the West just as anywhere else the realms of religion, morals and politics remain strongholds of irrationality. It is not uncommon, for example, to see a Western scientist, fully apprised of the universal reign of law in natural phenomena, praying to God, a spirit, to grant rain and a good harvest and other things besides. Those who are tempted to see in such a thing as witchcraft the key to specifically *African* thought—there is no lack of such people among foreigners as well as Africans themselves—ought to be reminded that there are numbers of white men in today's London who proudly proclaim themselves to be witches. Moreover, if they would but read, for example, Treyor-Roper's historical essay on "Witches and Witchcraft,"[4] they might conceivably come to doubt whether witchcraft in Africa has ever attained the heights to which it reached in Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

It should be noted, conversely, that the principle of rational evidence is not entirely inoperative in the thinking of the traditional African. Indeed, no society could survive for any length of time without conducting a large part of their daily activities by the principle of belief according to the evidence. You cannot farm without some rationally based knowledge of soils and seeds and of meteorology; and no society can achieve any reasonable degree of harmony in human relations without a *basic* tendency to assess claims and allegations by the method of objective investigation. The truth, then, is that rational knowledge is not the preserve of the modern West[5] nor is superstition a peculiarity of the African peoples.

Nevertheless, it is a fact that Africa lags behind the West in the cultivation of rational inquiry. One illuminating (because fundamental) way of approaching the concept of "development" is to measure it by the degree to which rational methods have penetrated thought habits. In this sense, of course, one cannot compare the development of peoples in absolute terms. The Western world is "developed," but only relatively. Technological sophistication is only an aspect, and that not the core, of development. The conquest of the religious, moral and political spheres by the spirit of rational inquiry remains, as noted earlier, a thing of the future even in the West. From this point of view the West may be said to be still underdeveloped. The quest for development, then, should be viewed as a continuing world-historical process in which all peoples, Western and non-Western alike, are engaged.

There are at least two important advantages in looking at development in this way. The first is that it becomes possible to see the movement towards modernization in Africa not as essentially a process in which Africans are unthinkingly jettisoning their own heritage of

thought in the pursuit of Western ways of life, but rather as one in which Africans in common with all other peoples seek to attain a specifically *human* destiny—a thought that should assuage the qualms of those among thoughtful Africans who are wont to see modernization as a foreign invasion. The relation between the concepts of development and modernization ought to be obvious. Modernization is the application of the results of modern science for the improvement of the conditions of human life. It is only the more visible side of development; it is the side that is more immediately associated with the use of advanced technology and novel techniques in various areas of life such as agriculture, health education and recreation. Because modernization is not the whole of development there is a need to view it always in a wider human perspective. Man should link the modernization of the conditions of his life with the modernization of all aspects of his thinking. It is just the failure to do this that is responsible for the more unlovable features of life in the West. Moreover, the same failure bedevils attempts at development in Africa. Rulers and leaders of opinion in Africa have tended to think of development in terms of the visible aspects of modernization—in terms of large buildings and complex machines, to the relative neglect of the more intellectual foundations of modernity. It is true that African nations spend every year huge sums of money on institutional education. But it has not been appreciated that education ought to lead to the cultivation of a rational[6] outlook on the world on the part of the educated and, through them, in the traditional folk at large. Thus it is that even while calling for modernization, influential Africans can still be seen to encourage superstitious practices such as the pouring of libation to spirits in the belief that in this kind of way they can achieve development without losing their Africanness. The second advantage of seeing development in the way suggested above is that the futility of any such approach becomes evident. To develop in any serious sense, we in Africa must break with our old uncritical habits of thought; that is we must advance past the stage of traditional thinking.

Lest these remarks appear rather abstract, let us consider a concrete situation. Take the institution of funerals in Ghana, for example. Owing to all sorts of superstitions about the supposed career of the spirits of departed relatives, the mourning of the dead takes the form of elaborate, and, consequently expensive and time consuming social ceremonies. When a person dies there has first to be a burial ceremony on the third day; then on the eighth day there is a funeral celebration at which customary rites are performed; then forty days afterwards there is a fortieth day celebration (*adaduanan*). Strictly, that is not the end. There are such occasions as the eightieth day and first anniversary celebrations. All these involve large alcohol-quaffing gatherings. Contrary to what one might be tempted to think, the embracing of Christianity by large sections of Ghanaian population has not simplified funeral celebrations; on the contrary, it has brought new complications. Christianity too teaches of a whole hierarchy of spirits, started from the Supreme Threefold Spirit down to the angels both good and refractory down further to the lesser spirits of deceased mortals. Besides, conversion to Christianity in our lands has generally not meant the exchange of the indigenous religion for the new one, but rather an amalgamation of both, which is made more possible by their common spiritistic orientation. Thus, in addition to all the traditional celebrations, there is nowadays the neo-Christian Memorial Service, replete with church services and extended refreshments, a particularly expensive phase of the funeral process. The upshot is that if a close relation of a man, say his father, died, then unless he happens to be rich, he is in for very hard financial times indeed. He has to take several days off work, and he has to borrow respectable sums of money to defray the inevitable expenses.

The extent of the havoc that these funeral habits have wrought on the national economy of Ghana has not been exactly calculated, but it has become obvious to public leaders that it is enormous and that something needs urgently to be done about it. However, the best that these leaders have seemed capable of doing so far has been to exhort the people to reform their traditional institutions in general and cut down on funeral expenses in particular. These appeals have gone unheeded; which is not surprising, if one recalls that these leaders themselves are often to be seen ostentatiously taking part in ceremonies, such as the pouring of libation, which are based on the same sort of beliefs as those which lie behind the funeral practices. It has so far apparently been lost upon our influential men that while the underlying beliefs retain their hold, any verbal appeals are wasted on the populace.

The ideal way to reform backward customs in Africa must, surely, be to undermine their superstitious belief-foundations by fostering in the people—at all events, in the new generation of educated Africans—the spirit of rational inquiry in all spheres of thought and belief. Even if the backward beliefs in question were *peculiarly* African, it would be necessary to work for their eradication. But my point is that they are not African in any intrinsic, inseparable sense; and the least that African philosophers and foreign well-wishers can do in this connection is to refrain, in this day and age, from serving up the usual congeries of unargued conception about gods, ghosts, and witches in the name of *African philosophy.* Such a description is highly unfortunate. If at all deserving of the name "philosophy," these ideas should be regarded not as a part of African philosophy simply, but rather as a part of *traditional* philosophy in Africa.

This is not verbal cavilling. The habit of talking of African philosophy as if all African philosophy is *traditional* carries the implication,

probably not always intended, that modern Africans have not been trying, or worse still, ought not to try, to philosophize in a manner that takes account of present day development in human knowledge, logical, mathematical, scientific, literary, etc. Various causes have combined to motivate this attitude. African nationalists in search of an African identity, Afro-Americans in search of their African roots and Western foreigners in search of exotic diversion—all demand an African philosophy that shall be fundamentally different from Western philosophy, even if it means the familiar witches' brew. Obviously, the work of contemporary African philosophers trying to grapple with the modern philosophical situation cannot satisfy such a demand.

The African philosopher writing today has no tradition of written philosophy in his continent[7] to draw upon. In this respect, his plight is very much unlike that of say, the contemporary Indian philosopher. The latter can advert his mind to any insights that might be contained in a long-standing Indian heritage of written philosophical meditations; he has what he might legitimately call *classical* Indian philosophers to investigate and profit by. And if he is broad-minded, he will also study Western philosophy and try in his own philosophizing to take cognizance of the intellectual developments that have shaped the modern world. Besides all this, he has, as every people have, a background of unwritten folk philosophy which he might examine for whatever it may be worth. Notice that we have here three levels of philosophy: we have spoken of a folk philosophy, a written traditional[8] philosophy and a modern philosophy. Where long-standing written sources are available folk philosophy tends not to be made much of. It remains in the background as a sort of diffused, immanent, component of community thought habits whose effects on the thinking of the working philosopher is largely unconscious.[9] Such a fund of community thought is not the creation of any specifiable set of philosophers; it is the common property of all and sundry, thinker and non-thinker alike, and it is called a *philosophy* at all only by a quite liberal acceptation of the term. Folk thought, as a rule, consists of bald assertions without argumentative justification, but philosophy in the narrower sense must contain not just theses. Without argumentation and clarification, there is, strictly, no philosophy.

Of course, folk thought can be comprehensive and interesting on its own account. Still its non-discursiveness remains a drawback. For example, according to the conception of a person found among the Akans of Ghana, (the ethnic group to which the present writer belongs), a person is constituted by *nipakua* (a body) and a combination of the following entities conceived as spiritual substances:[10] (1) *okra* (soul, approximately), that whose departure from a man means death, (2) *Sunsum,* that which gives rise to a man's character, (3) *ntoro,* something passed on from the father which is the basis of inherited characteristics and, finally,

(4) *mogya,* something passed on from the mother which determines a man's clan identity and which at death becomes the *saman* (ghost). This last entity seems to be the one that is closest to the material aspect of a person; literally, *mogya* means blood. Now, in the abstract, all this sounds more interesting, certainly more imaginative, than the thesis of some Western philosophers that a person consists of a soul and body. The crucial difference, however, is that the Western philosopher tries to argue for his thesis, clarifying his meaning and answering objections, known or anticipated; whereas the transmitter of folk conceptions merely says: "This is what our ancestors said."[11] For this reason folk conceptions tend not to develop with time. Please note that this is as true in the West and elsewhere as it is in Africa.

But in Africa, where we do not have even a written traditional philosophy, anthropologists have fastened on our folk world-views and elevated them to the status of a continental philosophy. They have then compared this "philosophy" with Western (written) philosophy. In other, better placed, parts of the world, if you want to know the philosophy of the given people, you do not go to aged peasants or fetish priests or court personalities; you go to the individual thinkers, in flesh, if possible, and in print. And as any set of individuals trying to think for themselves are bound to differ among themselves, you would invariably find a variety of theories and doctrines, possibly but not necessarily, sharing substantial affinities. Since the reverse procedure has been the only one that has seemed possible to anthropologists, it is not surprising that misleading comparisons between African traditional thought and Western scientific thought have resulted. My contention, which I have earlier hinted at, is that African traditional thought should in the first place only be compared with Western folk thought. For this purpose, of course, Western anthropologists will first have to learn in detail about the folk thought of their own peoples. African folk thought may be compared with Western philosophy only in the same spirit in which Western folk thought may be compared also with Western philosophy, that is, only in order to find out the marks which distinguish folk thought in general from individualized philosophizing. Then, if there be any who are anxious to compare African philosophy with Western philosophy, they will have to look at the philosophy that Africans are producing today.

Naturally Western anthropologists are not generally interested in contemporary African philosophy. Present day African philosophers have been trained in the Western tradition, in the continental or Anglo-American style, depending on their colonial history. Their thinking, therefore, is unlikely to hold many peculiarly African novelties for anyone knowledgeable in Western philosophy. For this very same reason, African militants and our Afro-American brothers are often disappointed with the sort of philosophy syllabus that is taught at a typical modern de-

partment of philosophy in Africa. They find such a department mainly immersed in the study of Logic, Epistemology, Metaphysics, Ethics, Political Philosophy, etc., as these have been developed in the West, and they question why Africans should be so engrossed in the philosophy of their erstwhile colonial oppressors.

The attentive reader of this discussion should know the answer by now: The African philosopher has no choice but to conduct his philosophical inquiries in relation to the philosophical writings of other peoples, for his own ancestors left him no heritage of philosophical writings. He need not—to be sure, he must not—restrict himself to the philosophical works of his particular former colonial oppressors, but he must of necessity study the written philosophies of other lands, because it would be extremely injudicious for him to try to philosophize in self-imposed isolation from all modern currents of thought, not to talk of longer-standing nourishment for the mind. In the ideal, he must acquaint himself with the philosophies of all the peoples of the world, compare, contrast, critically assess them and make use of whatever of value he may find in them. In this way it can be hoped that a tradition of philosophy as a discoursive discipline will eventually come to be established in Africa which future Africans and others too can utilize. In practice the contemporary African philosopher will find that it is the philosophies of the West that will occupy him the most, for it is in that part of the world that modern developments in human knowledge have gone farthest and where, consequently, philosophy is in closest touch with the conditions of the modernization which he urgently desires for his continent. In my opinion, the march of modernization is destined to lead to the universalization of philosophy everywhere in the world.

The African philosopher cannot, of course, take the sort of cultural pride in the philosophical achievements of Aristotle or Hume or Kant or Frege or Husserl of which the Western student of philosophy may permit himself. Indeed an African needs a certain level-headedness to touch some of these thinkers at all. Hume,[12] for example, had absolutely no respect for black men. Nor was Marx,[13] for another instance, particularly progressive in this respect. Thus any partiality the African philosopher may develop for these thinkers must rest mostly on considerations of truth-value.

As regards his own background of folk thought, there is a good reason why the African philosopher should pay more attention to it than would seem warranted in other places. Africans are a much oppressed and disparaged people. Some foreigners there have been who were not even willing to concede that Africans as a traditional people were capable of any sort of coherent[14] world-view. Those who had the good sense and the patience and industry to settle down and study traditional African thought were often, especially in the 19th and early 20th centuries,

colonial anthropologists who sought to render the actions and attitudes of our forefathers intelligible to the colonial rulers so as to facilitate their governance. Although some brilliant insights were obtained, there were also misinterpretations and straightforward errors. Africans cannot leave the task of correction to foreign researchers alone. Besides, particularly in the field of morality, there are non-superstition-based conceptions from which the modern Westerner may well have something to learn. The exposition of such aspects of African traditional thought specially befits the contemporary African philosopher.

Still, in treating of their traditional thought, African philosophers should be careful not to make hasty comparisons.[15] Also they should approach their material critically; this last suggestion is particularly important since all peoples who have made any breakthrough in the quest for modernization have done so by going beyond folk thinking. It is unlikely to be otherwise in Africa. I should like to repeat, however, that the process of sifting the elements of our traditional thought and culture calls for a good measure of analytical circumspection lest we exchange the good as well as the bad in our traditional ways of life for dubious cultural imports.

It should be clear from the foregoing discussion that the question of how African thought may appropriately be compared with Western thought is not just an important academic issue but also one of great existential urgency.

Notes

1. This paper first appeared in *Ch'indaba* and is reprinted here by permission of the author.
2. Robin Horton, "African Traditional Thought and Western Science," in *Rationality* ed. Bryan Wilson (Oxford: Basil Blackwell). Originally published in *Africa* 37, nos. 1 & 2 (1967). Also appears on page 301 of this book.
3. My reasons for this remark will be found in my series of articles on "Logic and Ontology," *Second Order: an African Journal of Philosophy* 2, no. 1 (January 1973) and no. 2 (July 1973): 3, no. 2 (July 1974); 4, no. 1 (January 1975).
4. *Encounter* 28, no. 5 (May 1967) and no. 6 (June 1967).
5. Note that "the West" and "Western" are used in a cultural, rather than ideological sense in this discussion.
6. I am aware that my insistence in the overriding value of rationality will be found jarring by those Westerners who feel that the claims of rationality have been pushed too far in their countries and that the time is overdue for a return to "Nature" and the exultation in feeling, intuition and immediacy. No doubt the harsh individualism of Western living

might seem to lend support to this point of view. But in my opinion the trouble is due to too little rather than too much rationality in social organization. This, however, is too large a topic to enter into here.

7. The Arab portions of Africa are, of course, an exception, though even there what we have is the result of the interaction between indigenous thought and Greek influences.

8. "Traditional" here still has the pre-scientific connotation. Of course, if one should speak of *traditional* British empiricism, for example, that connotation would be absent.

9. Since such effect do, in fact, occur, this threefold stratification should not be taken as watertight.

10. See, for example, W. E. Abraham, *The Mind of Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967).

11. However, the circumstances that in Africa, for example, our traditional thought tends not to be elaborately argumentative should be attributed not to any intrinsic lack of the discoursive spirit in our ancestors but rather to the fact that their thoughts were not written down.

12. Hume was able to say in his *Essays* (London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd), footnote on pages 152 and 153 in the course of the essay on "National Characters:" "I am apt to suspect the Negroes to be naturally inferior to the Whites. There scarcely ever was a civilized nation of that complexion, nor any individual, eminent either in action or speculation. . . . In Jamaica, indeed they talk of one Negro as a man of parts and learning; but it is likely that he is admired for slender accomplishments, like a parrot who speaks a few words plainly." Obviously considerable maturity is required in the African to be able to contemplate impartially Hume's disrespect for Negroes and his philosophical insights, deploring the former and acknowledging and assimilating the latter. A British philosopher, Michael Dummett, was recently placed in a not altogether dissimilar situation when, himself a passionate opponent of racialism, he discovered in the course of writing a monumental work on Frege (*Frege: Philosophy of Language,* Duckworth, London, 1973),—a work which he had, indeed, suspended for quite some time in order to throw himself heart and soul into the fight against racial discrimination in his own country, Britain,—that his subject was a racialist of some sort. (See his own remarks in his preface to the above-mentioned book.) It would have argued a lack of balance in him if he had scrapped the project on the discovery. In any event he went ahead to complete the work and put all students of the philosophy of logic in his debt.

13. Marx is known once, in a burst of personal abuse of Lassalle, in a letter to Engels, to have animadverted: "This combination of Jewry and Germany with a fundamental Negro streak. . . . The fellow's self assertiveness is Negro too." Quoted in J. Hampden Jackson, *Marx, Proudhon and European Socialism* (London: English Universities Press, 1951), p. 144. It

is sometimes understandable for a man to chide his own origins, but to condemn a downtrodden people like this is more serious. Would that black men everywhere had more of the self assertiveness which Marx here deprecates. The Akans of Ghana have a proverb which says: "If the truth happens to lie in the most private part of your own mother's anatomy, it is no sin to extract it with your corresponding organ." African enthusiasts of Marx, (or of Hume, for that matter) may perhaps console themselves with the following less delicate adaptation of this proverb. "If the truth happens to lie in the mouth of your racial traducer it is no pulillanimity to take it from there."

14. Coherent thought is not necessarily scientific thought. Traditional thought can display a high degree of coherence; and certainly African traditional thought is not lacking in coherence.

15. I ought perhaps to point out that the kind of comparison between African thought and Western thought that has been criticized in this discussion is the sort which seeks to characterize the given varieties of thinking as wholes. My remarks do not necessarily affect the comparison of isolated propositions.