

# Introduction

*Bolekaja!*\*

This study of Europe is an intentionally aggressive polemic. It is an assault upon the European paradigm; a repudiation of its essence. It is initiated with the intention of contributing to the process of demystification necessary for those of us who would liberate ourselves from European intellectual imperialism. Europe's political domination of Africa and much of the "non-European" world has been accompanied by a relentless cultural and psychological rape and by devastating economic exploitation. But what has compelled me to write this book is the conviction that beneath this deadly onslaught lies a stultifying intellectual mystification that prevents Europe's political victims from thinking in a manner that would lead to authentic self-determination. Intellectual decolonization is a prerequisite for the creation of successful political decolonization and cultural reconstruction strategies. Europe's political imperialistic success can be accredited not so much to superior military might, as to the weapon of culture: The former ensures more immediate control but requires continual physical force for the maintenance of power, while the latter succeeds in long-lasting dominance that enlists the cooperation of its victims (i.e., pacification of the will). The secret Europeans discovered early in their history is that culture carries rules for thinking, and that if you could impose your culture on your victims you could limit the creativity of their vision, destroying their ability to act with will and intent and in their own interest. The truth is that we are all "intellectuals," all potential visionaries.

This book discusses the evolution of that process of imposition, as well as the characteristics of cultural beings who find it necessary to impose their will on others. It is not a simple process to explain, since the tools we need in order to dissect it have been taken from us through colonial miseducation.<sup>1</sup> It is necessary to begin, therefore, with a painful weaning from the very epistemological assump-

\**Bolekaja* is a Yoruba term meaning, "Come on down, let's fight!" See Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa Jemie and Ihechukwu Madubuike, *Toward the Decolonization of African Literature*, Vol. I, Howard University Press, Washington D.C., 1983, p. xii

tions that strangle us. The weaning takes patience and commitment, but the liberation of our minds is well worth the struggle.

My chosen field is African-centered cultural science — the reconstruction of a revolutionary African culture. I teach Pan-African studies. The experience convinces me more and more, however, that teaching Pan-African studies well means teaching European studies simultaneously. To be truly liberated, African people must come to know the nature of European thought and behavior in order to understand the effect that Europe has had on our ability to think victoriously. We must be able to separate our thought from European thought, so as to visualize a future that is not dominated by Europe. This is demanded by an African-centered view because we are Africans, and because the future towards which Europe leads us is genocidal.

Chinweizu describes himself as an “occidentalist”; Iva Carruthers calls for the study of “Aryanology.”<sup>2</sup> These African-centered scholars have made contributions to the demystification of European thought and behavior; the African liberation movement is indebted to them. And there are others (far too many to be mentioned here); *Ankobia\** who are paving the way for an African-centered social theory. In the spirit of Cheikh Anta Diop and Bobby Wright there comes Ayi Kwei Armah, Kwame Agyei Akoto, Kobi K. K. Kambon (Joseph Baldwin), Molefi Kete Asante, Ifi Amadiume, Frances Cress Welsing, Wade Nobles, Jacob Carruthers, Amos Wilson, Na’im Akbar, Kariamu Welsh-Asante, Maulana Karenga, Linda James Myers, Aziza Gibson-Hunter, Asa Hilliard, Ngugi Wa Thiong’o, K.C. Anyanwu, Cedric Robinson, C. Tsehloane Keto, Haki Madhubuti, Abena Walker, and others; a vanguard that is codifying the language of African-centered analysis. The standards for bold African affirmation had already been set by Harriet Tubman, Nat Turner, Ida B. Wells, Anna Julia Cooper, Edward Wilmot Blyden, Marcus Garvey, Carter G. Woodson, George James, John G. Jackson, Chancellor Williams, Yosef Ben Joachannan, John Henrik Clarke, Malcolm X, and the names we cannot mention, the names we do not know, the hundreds of political prisoners and prisoners of war, who have spent out their youth since the early 70’s in jail. Most of all, the intellectual tradition of African affirmation cannot be separated from the spiritual force which exists in every African person, as they sing and make music and protect their families and raise their children. Academia—a European misconception—has no place for us. African-centered

\* *Ankobia* is a Twi term that identifies those who lead in battle, setting the standard for courage and commitment.

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social theory is the collective creation of every aspect of our history of struggle and victory. It began when we began; challenged by the first invaders of the Motherland. It received new life from the Middle Passage. It was shaped during the crucible of the Maafa. And now encompasses the visions, thoughts, and creations of every African soul; every mother and father, every child. These are the names I would list.

I have attempted a comprehensive critique of the European tradition, but the degree to which the minds of people of African descent (especially our youth) are freed to envision a victorious African future will be the judgement of its success. The critique will be called “racist” by Eurocentrists, but it was not developed for them. And as Aziza Gibson-Hunter says, “racism” is the fire ignited by the Europeans; our response is only the smoke.” And though the “liberals” would have it otherwise, there is no way to extinguish a fire without experiencing the smoke. Europeans have made the fire; we will put it out.

## Thesis and Process

To be of African descent and to study anthropology is to be struck by the pervasive anti-Africanism of the discipline. And if one then approaches the discipline critically, it emerges as a tradition of Eurocentrism, functioning to satisfy the needs of the European ethos. The critique of anthropology led me right into the belly of the beast, as I discovered how deeply it was embedded in the bowels of the European cultural/historical matrix. I had no alternative then but to embark on a critical study of the totality that is European culture; to lay bare its ideological underpinnings, its inner workings, the mechanisms that facilitate its functioning.

Anthropologists, through their use and abuse of the culture concept have inhibited this necessarily critical process. They have generally ignored the political implications of culture by deemphasizing its ideological function. They have typically focused their attention on supposedly “simple” and “isolated” non-European societies. Through this conventional use of the culture concept these societies have been theoretically and superficially abstracted from the political contexts in which they exist. This use allows anthropologists to ignore the implications of European exploitation, while the conditions of colonialism and neo-colonialism provide them with their “objects” of study.

Anthropology is not simply a “child of imperialism.”<sup>3</sup> It is a manifestation of the European ethos. This is why very few anthropologists study themselves, i.e., their own cultural backgrounds. Their politi-

cally superior position allows them to study others, but not to be studied. The few who do study Europe do so in isolated bits and pieces (Nordic myth, peasant society, folk culture). Even "urban anthropology" does not approach European culture as a totality. A Eurocentric social science cannot be used to critically examine the European cultural tradition. Yet there is no reason the concept of culture should not be used to study the extraordinary character of European imperialistic behavior. In fact, the African-centered perspective makes it compelling. Fortunately, this perspective has separated me from the tribe of European anthropologists.

Our present endeavor requires the "de-Europeanization" of the culture concept. It must be made relevant to the political needs of those who have been victimized by Europe,<sup>4</sup> and Europe must be brought into focus as a cultural entity. By emphasizing the ideological function of culture, it is possible to make sense of the intimidating confusion and superficial complexity of the European experience. Understanding culture as ideology allows us to approach European culture in such a way as to make it a visible, extremely cohesive and well-integrated phenomenon, in a sense more "simple" than we might suppose. Beneath its deceptive heterogeneity lies a monolithic essence; an essence that accounts for the success of European imperialism. This is not to say that this endeavor is an easy one. But that should not dissuade us. Its difficulty makes it all the more imperative, all the more urgent.

Wade Nobles defines culture as "a process which gives people a general design for living and patterns for interpreting their reality." Its "aspects," he says, are ideology, ethos, and world-view; its "factors" are ontology, cosmology, and axiology; and its "manifestations" consist of behavior, values, and attitudes.<sup>5</sup> These are the aspects of European culture that we will bring into focus in this study. Let us see how culture and ideology "fit" together; how an ideological emphasis in the interpretation of culture is more consistent with its meaning and significance. If we look at the phenomenon of culture, we are impressed by the following characteristics:

1. It acts to unify and to order experience, so that its members perceive organization, consistency, and system. In this respect it provides a "world-view" that offers up orienting conceptions of reality.
2. It gives people group identification, as it builds on shared historical experience, creating a sense of collective cultural identity.
3. It "tells" its members "what to do," thereby creating a "voice"

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of prescriptive authority.<sup>6</sup> To its members, culture *re-presents* values (which they themselves have created together out of shared experiences) as a systematic set of ideas and a single coherent statement.

4. It provides the basis for commitment, priority, and choice, thereby imparting direction to group development and behavior; indeed, it acts to limit the parameters of change and to pattern the behavior of its members. In this way culture helps to initiate and authorize its own creation.
5. It provides for the creation of shared symbols and meanings. It is, therefore, the primary creative force of collective consciousness, and it is that which makes it possible to construct a national consciousness.
6. For all the above reasons, it impacts on the definition of group interest and is potentially political.

Willie Abraham's understanding of the nature of culture is helpful in our study, and he perceptively acknowledges its applicability to the examination of European development:

Culture is an instrument for making . . . cooperation natural. Its success depends on the extent to which it is allowed to be self-authenticating. Though it allows for internal discussion . . . the principles of decision in such discussions are themselves provided by the culture. By uniting the people in common beliefs and attitudes . . . culture fills with order that portion of life which lies beyond the pale of state intervention . . . It fills it in such a way as at the same time to integrate its society, on the basis of common reactions, common actions, common interests, common attitudes, common values. It creates the basis of the formulation of a common destiny and cooperation in pursuing it. If one looks at the West one finds that this use of culture is well-developed. It is what is involved, when one hears it said that this or that belief will destroy a certain way of life, and that that way of life must be defended no matter what the cost.<sup>7</sup>

The ideological thrust of culture is inescapable. It boldly confronts us. Culture is ideological since it possesses the force and power to direct activity, to mold personalities, and to pattern behavior. This recognition implies a theory of culture. Raymond Betts puts it this way: "Ideology is here used in a cultural sense, to denote the verbal iconography by which a people represents itself in order to achieve communal purpose."<sup>8</sup> Leonard Barrett says that ideology is "the spiritual and intellectual foundation of group cohesion."<sup>9</sup> Both culture and ideology are extremely political in nature, since they are about

the definition of group interest, the determination of group destiny and common goals. Political behavior is simply behavior that issues from an awareness of group definition as distinct from other groups. We think politically when we assess our group interest in relation to the interests of other groups and determine whether those interests are compatible with or in opposition to ours. We act politically when our behavior and strategies reflect those assessments. Cultural identification and ideological commitment are bases for political consciousness. With this "repoliticized" understanding of culture we are prepared to begin our study of Europe.

The approach of the study must be, of necessity, holistic and synthetic. Exhaustive ethnographic description of European culture is of limited value even if it were feasible. The attempt to achieve detail would only serve to divert our attention from ascertaining the fundamental nature of the culture. The successful approach to the analysis and synthetic understanding of European culture demonstrates its organicity, discovers the relationships and interdependencies between its various aspects. As with any culture we look for consistency and pattern. Idiosyncrasy and anomaly are only useful in that, through contrast, they help us to recognize what is characteristic. This is revealed through an ideological focus and a methodology by which we search for the interrelationships between the dominant modalities through which the ideology of the culture expresses itself. European culture, like culture universally, is an ongoing process in which meaning is created and reaffirmed. The apprehension of meaning in the culture and the mechanisms through which it is reinforced are critical concerns of this study.

This endeavor is facilitated by the identification of "themes," which, as Morris Opler called them, are "dynamic affirmations" that act to determine behavior and to "stimulate activity." The translation of a theme into behavior or belief becomes its "expression."<sup>10</sup> Again there is an ideological focus. Suddenly the complexity (vastness) of European culture becomes approachable. We are in pursuit of the "explanatory principles" of the culture.<sup>11</sup> Through an axiological focus (values) the pivotal axes of the culture are clarified, and through an emphasis on synthetic functions we apprehend unity beneath the surface diversity (heterogeneity) of Europe. Looking beyond the superficial for that which has ideological significance, we have sought the modes of standardization and the mechanisms of legitimization. It is these aspects of European culture that give it order, and order is the most forceful attribute of culture. Indeed, the present study reveals that the impressive European order, its overwhelming con-

sistency, and the force of its ideology, give it an incomparable degree of power. The two-pronged question, "why" and "how," determines the method and approach of our inquiry. We have approached significant cultural creations and behaviors by asking: Why do they exist? How are they made forceful? These are the questions of ideology.

The divisions and subdivisions through which the study is presented are, to a great extent, superficial. They have been created for convenience and to aid us in the perception of a reality that we generally experience as one forceful totality, not in analyzable parts. The order of presentation is not meant to imply a lineal or hierarchical relationship between these "parts," for they overlap in a way that defies compartmentalization, and their relationship is circular and reticular.

In all cultures there is the taken-for-granted, assumed, and habitual aspect that though generally less visible than others, and rarely explicit — exerts the most profound influence on its members. This is precisely because it functions on such a deep level. According to Edward T. Hall these "hidden controls" become habitual responses that are experienced "as though they were innate."<sup>12</sup> Anthropologists talk about world-view as that aspect of culture that functions to replace presented chaos with perceived order by supplying the members of a culture with definitions of reality with which to make sense of their surroundings and experiences; it is the meaningful organization of experience, the "assumed structure of reality."<sup>13</sup> This "deep structure" of culture, as Wade Nobles has called it, has a most powerful influence on the shape of the culture and the thought-patterns of its members.<sup>14</sup>

This is only one of the reasons that this study begins with a discussion of European thought; there is another. European culture is unique in its use of cultural thought in the assertion of political interest. While the logic of any culture, in the sense of what its members are taught to accept as "making sense," may become for them part of an assumed reality, Europeans have used their "cultural logic" in an effectively aggressive manner: (1) The culture "teaches" its "logic" and world-view to the ordinary participants, who then assimilate it, assume it, and push it beneath the surface, from where it influences their collective behavior and responses. (2) Then "special" members of the culture — regarded as "intellectuals," "scholars," "theorists" — retrieve the assumptions of this world-view and represent them as the tenets of a universal system of thought, one that presents standards of logic, rationality, and truth to the world. These are considered the

seminal theorists of the culture, when actually their ideas simply reflect the assumed reality of the mainstream culture. The manner of their presentation is, however, authoritative. (3) In this way the European world-view takes on ideological force not only within, but *outside* the culture, since it can be imposed as universal, speculative, and self-conscious. (4) At the same time, its parochial and axiological character remains well-hidden and camouflaged beneath a pseudouniversalism.

This is the most difficult aspect of European culture. But once understood it is the key to the ideological thread that runs from one mode, one theme, one characteristic to another. The thought process is consistent, reflecting the consistency of the ideological thrust that must be laid bare. It is part of the nucleus of imperialism. Chapter 1, which begins Part I of this work, attempts to characterize the epistemological and ontological themes of European thought in order to establish a context in which to place the other dominant modes of European culture. To approach Europe critically, we must first understand that the language of European value is the language of an abstract scientism. Our task, in short, is to throw into question precisely what is assumed to be beyond question in European culture, namely, its scientific epistemology. By doing this we succeed in bringing European ideology into view so that it can be recognized in other patterns and creations of the culture. The ideological implications of the epistemology become a decoding tool for the critical interpretation of culture.

Chapter 2 reviews institutionalized religion as a system that sacralizes the ideology, achieves internal social and political order and imperial authority vis-à-vis other cultures. Chapter 3 discusses aesthetics as an expression of value. European conceptions of beauty and European principles of pleasure reveal a further statement of the ideology and the collective psyche. The theme of universalism rears its head, since the discussion of "art" is used by Europeans as a tool of imperialism. This concludes Part I, which leaves us with an understanding of the mental, philosophical, and aesthetic habits that act to support a particular style of behavior.

Part II, (Chaps. 4 & 5) examines the images and concepts of self and "other," which support the discussion in Part III: the patterns of behavior within European culture (Chap. 7) and towards others (Chap. 8). Chapter 6, which begins Part III, discusses the relationship between what Europeans want us to believe they are doing and what actually happens. It is very important to understand this breach between word and deed, as it were, since people from other cultures

often make costly political errors because of the lack of this rhetorical and hypocritical component in their own culture. They misinterpret European language and fail to predict European behavior. They are always therefore shocked by the intensity of the hostility and aggressive nature of that behavior.

Part IV closely examines the themes of "progress" (Chap. 9) and "universalism" (Chap. 10) in European ideology. Together they are the cutting edge that intellectually and culturally disarms the victims of European domination. The study concludes by offering an interpretation of European culture that relates its extreme rationalism to its intensely imperialistic behavior towards others. The various themes, modes, and patterns under discussion converge to form a single monolithic reality. Imperialism emerges as the overwhelming persistent theme of this critical statement, which demonstrates how epistemology, axiology, aesthetic, iconography, and behavior all link together in such a way as to form an impressively solid and supportive network, girding the quest for European power.

### Evidence

Once we have discerned the explanatory principles of European culture, we discover many varied sources of information. They include the historical record of European behavior, both from the viewpoint of those with whom Europeans have interacted and from the viewpoint of Europeans themselves. The emphasis, however, in terms of information-gathering, is on the various vehicles of European self-expression, in the belief that it is by looking at the statements, behavior, and modes of expression of those who have considered themselves European that we can begin to get at what "European" means. It emerges then as a desired "way of being" for a particular group of people. Our ethnographic sources are those vehicles of self-expression that reveal how Europeans see themselves and their culture; i.e., what they would like to be and how they wish to appear to others. We can then understand the logic of the behavior implied by these ideas, using the record of European behavior towards others.

Western European literature is also a very valuable source of information. I have used European social theory because there is so much axiology to be found hidden in its jargon and in the thought patterns that emerge from it, and I have occasionally used the literature of white nationalism, as it manifests crucial aspects of European ideology and the European self-image and image of others. Often I have used and referred to the words and ideas of those philosophers and theorists who are considered Europe's seminal thinkers. This dis-

cussion is in part a synthesis and affirmation of previous African-centered critiques of Europe as well as a recognition of those critical voices that have been largely ignored by the European tradition. These critiques also become a source of information.

However, the most important source is my own experience of the culture. Experiencing the intellectual core through its academies, feeling the weight of its oppression because of my Africanness, I have been both semiparticipant and "observer," amassing evidence of the nature of the European reality through direct confrontation. The advantage of being African is that it has allowed me to penetrate European culture from a "non-European" frame of reference.

### Concepts and Terms

Ultimately the liberation of our thought from its colonized condition will require the creation of a new language.<sup>15</sup> Those involved in the development of African-centered theory are steadily moving towards that goal. At this stage we are prepared to create new concepts to facilitate our approach to the subject matter, which fit the methodology demanded by our critique. To understand and to explain the nature of European culture, we need a concept that is both analytical and synthetic. This concept must enable us to explain the European experience as a product of European culture and to explain the culture (thought, behavior, institutions) as a product of its ideological core. Indeed, any culture must be understood in these terms.

Robert Armstrong discusses the idea of a "primal consciousness" as "the code of awareness that instills each person, causing him to inherit and in turn to help constitute his culture, dictating the terms under which the world is to be perceived and experienced...."<sup>16</sup> This consciousness acts as a "generative germ"; it is thus "the causative factor of culture." This "preconceptual," "preaffective," "prespatial," and "pretemporal" factor functions to maintain the integrity and homogeneity of the culture. Armstrong calls it the "mythoform."<sup>17</sup> Armstrong's approach to what he calls "humanistic anthropology" is far in advance of Eurocentric social science, and "mythoform" opens up more liberating possibilities than the traditional European anthropological paradigm. As he presents it, mythoform links the unconscious and the conscious expressions of culture. In terms of consciousness, then, we could say that the cultural process is from mythoform to mythology to ideology. But we have to extend Armstrong's conception. Mythological systems present synthesizing symbols that help to collectivize the consciousness of persons within

the culture, at the same time stating preconscious, hidden experience in a more outward modality. Mythology creates ikons out of collective unconscious experience. Ideology is an intensely self-conscious extension of this process, which began with preconscious "mythoform" (if we are to accept Armstrong's term). Ideology involves the more intentional use of the sacred ikons of the culture for political purposes, that is, for the survival, defense, and projection of the culture. Ideology is mythology politically interpreted.

These facts of the presentation of culture can be understood as experiential actions (intellectual, emotional, spiritual) in a consistent process. Each cultural activity leads to or grows out of the other when all the causal circumstances are present. The process moves from the preconscious (mythoform) to the conscious (mythology) to the self-consciousness (ideology). But this is neither a hierarchical nor a strictly unidirectional process. Ideology is not necessarily the "highest" stage, except in a political context. (Unfortunately our reality has become dominated by political definition, and we have no choice but to give more attention to this facet of life.)

The ideological aspect of a culture can have two thrusts: (1) It is in every culture — giving direction to the lives of its members and to their group creations; (2) It gives the culture momentum. But in some cultures the ideology is also outward, seeking to project the culture, assuming a competitive and hostile posture towards other cultures. All cultures do not have an intensely developed ideological statement in this last sense. The lack of an aggressive ideology seems to be related to the lack of the perception of a threatening "outside" world, the inability to perceive other cultural groups as "the enemy." In European culture, the outward ideological thrust, the aggressive stance, is developed more intensely than in any other culture. As we examine the culture, we find that its dominant modes of expression reveal an almost fanatically political or confrontational consciousness in which all cultural phenomena that are "other" or different are considered hostile to the group interest. The heightened political awareness begins in the preconscious mythoform; the bio-cultural origins.

We need yet another concept, one that combines mythoform, mythology, and ideology in one causal atom, so to speak. In the present study I have introduced the concept of *asili*, a Kiswahili word that is used in several related ways to mean "beginning," "origin," "source," "nature" (in the sense of the "nature" of a person or thing), "essence," and "fundamental principle." It can also be taken to mean "seed" (i.e., origin) and "germ" (i.e., the source or initiating principle

of development). All of these meanings fit the idea I am attempting to convey, and I have taken the liberty of using *asili* as a term and fashioning it into a conceptual tool that the nature of this present study demands.

*Asili* as a conceptual tool for cultural analysis refers to the explanatory principle of a culture. It is the germinal principle of the being of a culture, its essence. The idea of a seed, the ubiquitous analogical symbol in African philosophical and cosmological explanations, is ideal for our purposes. The idea is that the *asili* is like a template that carries within it the pattern or archtypical model for cultural development; we might say that it is the DNA of culture. At the same time it embodies the "logic" of the culture. The logic is an explanation of how it works, as well as, the principle of its development. Our assumption then is that the *asili* generates systematic development; it is a statement of the logos. The *asili* of a culture is formulative, and it is ideological in that it gives direction to development. It accounts for consistency and pattern in culture, also its tenacity. The *asili* determines cultural development; then the form that the culture takes acts to maintain the integrity of the *asili*. It acts as a screen, incorporating or rejecting innovations, depending on their compatibility with its own essential nature. It is as though the *asili* were a principle of self-realization. It is a compelling force that will direct the culture as long as it remains intact: i.e., carried in the "cultural genes." In order for the culture to change (and this includes the collective thought and behavior of those within it), the *asili* itself would have to be altered. But this would involve a process of destruction and the birth of a new entity. Cultural *asili*(s) are not made to be changed.

Obviously the introduction of this concept implies a theory of culture. This theoretical framework has certain advantages. First, the assumption is that every culture has an *asili*, since it is the germinating seed of cultural formation, and that *asili* is determined by the collective, fundamental nature of its members. Second, the *asili* of a particular culture can be identified and consequently its inherent nature delineated. Third, this presents us with a powerful tool of explanation, since we have a concept that helps to explain the organicity, structure, and development of any culture: *Asili* accounts for its driving force, telling us "what makes it tick."

*Asili* is a synthesizing concept in that it allows us to explain and to see the way in which the various aspects of a culture relate and how they cohere. This critical relationship takes place within the ideological matrix of the culture, the *asili*. Rather than being limited by

a lineal process, we always come back to the center; the *asili* is our reference point; explaining cultural phenomenon within the context of a specific cultural tradition. *Asili* has an ideological focus, since it is concerned with that which compels and demands particular forms and content of expression. *Asili* allows us to recognize culture as a basic organizing mechanism that forges a group of people into an "interest group," an ideological unit. This is the case even when the descendants of an original culture and civilization have become dispersed in other areas of the world; as long as they are connected through a common *asili*, they constitute a diaspora, manifesting the continued life of the civilization. *Asili* allows us to distinguish the peripheral, the anomalous, and the idiosyncratic, and at the same time *asili* allows us to interpret patterns of collective thought and behavior (in terms, of the cultural *asili*). *Asili* is both a concept and a cultural reality. If we assume it (the concept), then it helps to explain a culture in terms of the dominant and fundamental principle of its development (its reality).

*Asili*, then, will enable us to understand and explain the behavior, thought, and creations of a people in terms of the origin and logic of their culture. In this case, it enables us to understand European thought and behavior as being part of an ideological whole. European religious philosophy and aesthetics become particularized in the context of the European *asili*. It remains now for us to determine the content and nature of this particular *asili*. Once we have done that, European culture becomes explicable as an ideological totality. This does not mean, however, that a definitive *asili* is conveniently visible for us initially; rather its nature emerges from the most forceful characteristics of the culture as they are "felt" through confrontation and observation. It is a question of the perception of emphasis, focus, and priority. These gel into our conception of *asili* as the seed, which is then understood as being the formulative germ. But *asili* is not an idea, like Armstrong's mythoform. It is a force, an energy that asserts itself by giving direction to and placing limits on cultural creativity. *Asili* is the primary determinative factor of cultural development and an essential explanatory principle of cultural theory.

In the present study, I have used two other concepts to complement the *asili* concept. I have borrowed other Kiswahili terms to connote the ideas in question. *Utamaduni* means "civilization" or "culture"; *wazo* means "thought"; and *roho* is "spirit-life." I have created the concept *utamawazo* to convey the idea of "thought as determined by culture." And I have introduced *utamaroho*,<sup>18</sup> slightly more difficult to explain, as the "spirit-life of a culture," also the "collective per-

sonality" of its members.

*Utamawazo* is very close to what is meant by "world-view," but it has more of an ideological emphasis than the way we usually use that term. Gregory Bateson's "eidos" is similar, but again, there are differences. In his book *Naven*, Bateson introduces the concepts "eidos" and "ethos" as tools for investigating what he calls "cultural structures," a collective term for the coherent logical scheme of the culture. This is somewhat like our *asili*. The investigator can determine the "scheme," he says, by "fitting together the various premises of the culture."<sup>19</sup> Eidos is "a standardization of the cognitive aspects of the personality of individuals," and, again, the "cultural expression of cognitive and intellectual aspects of personality." Ethos refers to the emotional aspects of cultural behavior; "the system of emotional attitudes which governs what value a community shall set upon the various satisfactions or dissatisfactions which the contents of life may offer."<sup>20</sup> Bateson offers an explanation of how this process works:

The culture into which an individual is born stresses certain of his potentialities and suppresses others, and it acts selectively, favoring the individuals who are best endowed with the potentialities preferred in the culture and discriminating against those with alien tendencies. In this way the culture standardizes the organization of the emotions of individuals.<sup>21</sup>

A really valuable aspect of Bateson's approach is the concept of "standardization" as "the process by which the individuals in a community are molded to resemble each other in their behavior."<sup>22</sup> Interestingly enough, he says that the concept of ethos can be "valuably" applied "even to such enormous and confused cultures as those of Western Europe."<sup>23</sup> If we look at the way in which Bateson explains the process through which the ethos is standardized from an African-centered perspective, we can understand that the "discrimination" against those of us with African "tendencies" is, in a sense, a natural result of the standardization process that functions in European culture. The culture "chooses" the personality-styles that "suit" it, just as our personalities have been influenced by the African *asili*.

*Utamawazo*, thought as determined by culture, is Bateson's eidos in that it focuses on the way in which culture acts to determine collective cognitive style. It refers to the thought patterns of a group of people who are culturally related, in so far as these thought patterns have been determined by the culture. *Utamawazo* is like "world-view" in that it stresses the significance of metaphysical assumptions

and presuppositions about the nature of reality, and the way in which the culture presents its members with definitions and conceptions with which to order experience. *Utamawazo*, however, places more emphasis on conscious mental operations and refers to the way in which both speculative and nonspeculative thought is structured by ideology and bio-cultural experience. *Utamawazo* allows us to demonstrate the ideological consistency of the premises of the culture and to identify those premises as they tend to be standardized expressions of a single cultural entity. Julian Jayne uses the expression "collective cognitive imperatives,"<sup>24</sup> and this is very much what we mean by *utamawazo*. It focuses on epistemological definitions in the belief that as culture acts to fix definitions of truth and truth-process, the culture constructs a universe of authorization that rejects and incorporates ideas with reference to a cultural predisposition in intent and style. And, what is more, the *asili* adds dimensions of purpose and direction, that are forceful. *Utamawazo*, then, cannot be understood unless it is placed in the context of *asili*. *Utamawazo* accounts for perspective.

Wade Nobles defines the ethos of a people as "the tone, character, and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mode. It emerges as a set of guiding principles that define the underlying attitude they have toward themselves and their world."<sup>25</sup> Karenga defines ethos as "the sum of characteristics and achievements of a people which define and distinguish it from others and gives it its collective self-consciousness and collective personality."<sup>26</sup>

*Utamaho*, like ethos for Nobles, accounts for "attitude," "character," and "aesthetic" in a collective sense, but it does not include the "guiding principles" that have a determinative function; that would be closer to our *asili*. In terms of Karenga's use of "ethos," *utamaho* does include the idea of "collective personality," but it is not in any way self-conscious. *Utamawazo* has a self-conscious expression, even though it originates in the meta-conscious *asili*, but *utamaho* remains on an unconscious level of feeling. *Utamawazo* is cognitive in expression, while *utamaho* is affective. *Utamaho* is many things at once. It is a concept that denotes the way in which the *asili* acts to forge a collective response among the members of a culture to life and to the world as they confront it. But this response, in the sense of *utamaho*, is not thought out or planned. It is more of an instinctive reaction caused by their "spirit." Used this way "spirit" refers to the essential nature of a being. It is the idea that a person, (or as it is in this case), a culture, or group of people possess an immaterial (nonphysical) substance that determines their unique

character or "nature." But the physical and nonphysical essence is here linked as it is in the concept of a "gene" which carries "memory."

We speak of *utamaroho* as we might speak of "temperament" and "character" and emotional response. These may sound like the terms of psychology, but *utamaroho* is not "individual"; it is collective. The question of relationship between culture and personality is not a new one. The fairly recent "psycho-historical" studies assume a Freudian posture for the most part, using psychoanalytical theory to analyze cultural developments in the context of historical circumstance.<sup>27</sup> The "culture and personality" school of anthropology is much older, its theorists attempting to discover the ways in which culture influences the personality of its members. They have usually emphasized alternatively world-views or "patterns" (Benedict) and/or "configurations," "themes" (Opler), and language (Mead) as these phenomena act to determine the style of the culture in question. Spengler (1926) talks rather obscurely about the "soul-image" of the Western European as being "Faustian."

*Utamaroho* does not categorize the ethos(es) of cultures into types, as previous ethnological theories may, but, as inseparable from *asili*; it focuses on the uniqueness of a particular culture with respect to its emotional rather than cognitive patterns. While the character of a culture's *utamawazo* is expressed most obviously in literature, philosophy, academic discourse, and pedagogy, *utamaroho* becomes more visible in behavior and aesthetic expression whether visual, aural, or kinesthetic. At the same time *utamaroho* is the inspirational source from which the *utamawazo* derives its form, for *utamawazo* is not simply "thought," but "forms of thought." The *asili* defines the *utamaroho* (spirit) and gives form to the *utamawazo*. The *asili* is in turn energized by the *utamaroho* (life-force). *Utamawazo* (thought), *utamaroho* (spirit-life), and *asili* (seed), influence, reinforce, and build on each other in a circular process and in a reality that precludes their rigid distinction as "cause" or "effect." This circular process and synthesis is culture itself. It would not be possible for one of these cultural phenomena to contradict another within the same cultural experience. By their very definition they are supportive, compatible, reaffirming, and mutually generative. They are the interlocking pieces of one ideological system.

*Utamaroho* is a special part of this process, since it is the energy source for all of the culture's collective forms. The *asili* is the seed, the origin, but once in existence, the *utamaroho* is the vitality of the culture. It guarantees its continued life. The *asili* compels the culture to fulfill itself, but it does so through the form of its *utamawazo* and

the life of its *utamaroho*. The *utamaroho* of a people is a force made powerful through its collectiveness. The unique character of the culture — its accomplishments, limitations, brilliance, institutions, and posture vis-à-vis other cultures — are spirited by its *utamaroho*. But the *utamaroho* must be continually regenerated by the institutions, creations, and patterns of thought and behavior in which it is reflected. The *utamaroho* (collective personality) of the people will be warlike, if the *asili* demands war for its fulfillment, its self-realization. The *utamaroho* will be spiritualistic or materialistic, creative or controlled, depending on the nature of the *asili* of the culture. The *utamaroho* will be an indication of the kinds of activities that are pleasurable and desirable for the members of the culture. It will determine what they consider to be beautiful and, to some extent, how they move and speak. The axiological aspects of culture will be related to its *utamaroho*, which significantly accounts for motivation in a collective sense. The *asili* is the seed that produces a force. The force is the *utamaroho* of a people. It is the collective personalization of the *asili* and represents the possibility of its continued existence. The *utamawazo* is the thought modality in which the people's mental life must function in order for them to create and to accept a culture that is consistent with the originating *asili*.

*Utamaroho* and *utamawazo* are extremely forceful phenomena in the European experience. They are brought together in the *asili*, the root principle of the culture. Neither the character of the European *utamaroho* nor the nature of its *utamawazo* are alterable unless the *asili* itself changes. Understood this way, the culture is the unfolding of principles already implied in its originating process. But the *asili* concept does not imply its own cause. Chapter 8 reviews other theories of the origin of European behavior. My theoretical discussion, however, is limited to a delineation of how the culture works, not what caused the *asili* to come into being. These three concepts allow us to approach and understand European culture as a unique product of its fundamental aspects. They become intensely political concepts as European culture is intensely political, and they cohere in the ideological thrust of the culture. Thus, with their introduction, we have properly politicized the idea of culture by giving it an ideological focus.

There are a few more terms, although they do not represent new concepts, that should be discussed for the sake of clarity, so that my use of them will be understood from the onset. It would seem absurdly academic to ask the question, What is "European?" Much of what passes for information in the academies is simply one long pan-

egyric of the European experience. In these instances, there never seems to be a problem identifying what is meant by "European" or "Western." Norman Cantor reveals his Eurocentric perspective as he introduces his three-volume work *Western Civilization: Its Genesis and Destiny*, while using the rhetoric of academic "objectivity":

Most of us are products of the Western heritage, and our traditional ways of thinking about historical events have been shaped by the forces that molded much of Western culture. In all our modes of thought, we inevitably show the impress of the Western heritage. We imbibe our ethics, religions, philosophy, science, art, and literature from families, schools and a social and intellectual environment which in turn have been formed by centuries of growth and development.<sup>28</sup>

He feels comfortable talking about "the basic foundations of our civilization," and goes on to ask the following question:

How and why did the West attain intellectual, economic, and military preeminence in the world by 1900? Why does the history of the West, in spite of many retrogressions and failures, appear to be a story of progress toward new forms of thought and art toward the achievement of greater and greater wealth and power?<sup>29</sup>

He continues:

Some qualities of European thought and social life are unique. Other civilizations have merits that the West lacks, but certain ideas occurred only to Europeans, and certain techniques were discovered and applied only by them.

For Cantor the fundamental problem to be addressed by students and teachers of Western civilization is, "Why and how did the distinctive ideas and institutions of the West develop?"<sup>30</sup> Toynbee answered that only the West responded to challenges, and that the West was marked by its creative vitality. According to Cantor, "Thus far no scholar has offered a full and thoroughly satisfactory explanation of the development of the unique qualities of Western civilization." That is precisely the objective of the present study, though not from the same perspective as Cantor's. As to what he means by the "West," Cantor says specifically, "the countries of Western Europe and the branches of Western civilization found in North and Latin America."<sup>31</sup> And he has made it clear that in his view Europeans are the people responsible for "Western civilization."

This is the kind of definition that is assumed as we make our way through the plethora of undergraduate required courses, texts, television, and even movie spectaculars that deal with "Western civilization" Eurocentrally. But when an African-centered critique of Europe is attempted, suddenly it becomes, if not invisible, an evasive entity of uncertain definition and demarcation. Once when I made a comment about the "European world-view" a colleague asked me to which of the "many" world-views represented in the European tradition, I was referring. Though he had praised the tradition consistently, now he argued that it was not uniform, nor did it represent a single reality. But European nationalism, so strong and so pervasive, is created not by diversity, but by the perception of unity. This is R.H. Tawny's perception:

The societies composing Europe are in varying degrees the heirs of the first great age of Western civilization; nor was the partnership dissolved when that age was wound up. Greek philosophy and literature, Roman law; the long adventure of Christian missionaries; the medieval church; feudalism; the Renaissance, the Reformation and Counter Reformation; the Revolution — all these and much else have reacted to them. Their religion, their literature and art, their science, their economic systems are a cosmopolitan creation, to which all have contributed and all are in debt. Such things, it is true, do not in themselves create unity, but create the conditions of it. They cause Europe, amid all its feverish jealousies and terrors, to be a single civilization, as a contentious family is still a family, and a bad state remains a state. They make its culture one, its crimes domestic tragedies, its wars civil wars.<sup>32</sup>

This is the cultural entity under examination in the present study.

I have used the term "European" most consistently in this study, but I consider it to be interchangeable with "Western," "Western European," and "European American." Oswald Spengler talks about "Western-European-American," which he considers to be the only culture in the phase of "fulfillment."<sup>33</sup> What is "European," like other cultural phenomena, is in part an intuited whole and therefore does not lend itself to simplistic "scientifically" rigorous definition. Yet the term is understood and used by academicians, theorists, and lay people alike. The definition of any particular culture is not a lineal process, but a necessarily circular one. We begin with the assumption of the cultural phenomenon of "Europeanness" that lends itself to description and explanation, because we have already perceived and experienced (felt) it to be such. In the process of describing what we perceive, we hope to give it the definition it already inherently pos-

sesses. But this does not lead to any kind of lineal or temporal priority, nor is it "seen" in the same way that a material object is "seen." What is European will forever be, in part, a product of how it is experienced. To abstract these reactions from its definition would not only be impossible, but would leave very little of value or relevance.

What is European is not simply a group of characteristics, and to attempt to enumerate such characteristics would not only misrepresent my intention, but would leave this study open to obvious criticism. Any one or a number of the generalized characteristics that will be discussed as European can be found to some extent in other cultures. And a discussion of the etiology of "Europeanness" using such an approach would be further complicated by the fact that it has been one of the more significant manifestations of European chauvinism to claim cultural creations that can be shown to be of non-European origin. The contradiction in this attempt is obvious, since the self-conscious identification of the cultural entity that would be referred to as "Western" occurred chronologically much later than many of the institutional developments with which Europeans choose to identify. As cultural traditions go, the "West" is, after all, quite young and biologically or racially Europeans are, of course, the "new boys on the block." Individual characteristics do not identify them as being "European": rather it is the way in which they are combined, and the fact that they are reinforced throughout culture, that fuses them into an ideological force. It is only in the context of European culture that the identified themes take on ideological significance. It was this realization that led me to the concept of *asili*, as the organizing and meaningful center of culture.

With this understanding and objective in mind, we need not become involved in the argument as to what cultural institutions are "European inventions," and "how much" or "how little" a particular culture has "contributed to the progress of civilization." These are merely the polemics of European chauvinism, and they become significant only as ethnographic data in this study. For part of the definition of what is European is to be found in those things with which those who call themselves Western or European have traditionally chosen to identify, and, similarly, the way in which they view themselves in relation to other peoples. What is presented herein is a unique configuration of characteristics that are combined in such a way that the emphasis, priorities, and manifested behavioral tendencies form an experienced cultural/historical reality that has traditionally been referred to as "Western European," "Western," or, as we shall refer to it, "European."

A product of modern Europe civilization, studying any problem of Universal History, is bound to ask himself to what combination of circumstances the fact should be attributed that in Western Civilization, and in Western Civilization only, cultural phenomena have appeared which (as we like to think) lie in a line of development having *Universal* significance and value.<sup>34</sup> [his italics]

Max Weber has asked the "right" question for Eurocentric reasons and therefore cannot offer an answer that is useful to us. The key to the African-centered answer lies in his parenthetical statement — "as we like to think." That is the only element that is universal about "Western civilization." Its *utamaroho* ("we like") and its *utamawazo* ("to think") combine in a manner dictated by an *asili* that causes the culture to consistently project itself in universalistic terms. This tendency is specifically discussed in Chap. 10, but it is a recurring theme throughout the book.

Is European synonymous with "modern?" Is it, after all, a stage in universal cultural development? The answer depends on one's perspective. The question is, therefore, moot. Part of the difficulty is with the definition of terms. The significant point from an African-centered perspective concerns what happens if we say that European culture merely represents what will be the eventual form of all cultures. The answer is that there is no possibility for a viable critique of what Europeans have created, because there is no other ("non-European") perspective. Other ideologies become impotent, because to identify "Europeanness" as an inevitable stage in "non-European" development is to say that they ("non-Europeans") do not exist — certainly not as directives, as influences, or as agents of change.

Most of the potentially valuable critiques of European culture — of which there are a precious few — have suffered from a common malady. Since they syntactically make European culture into a representation of a universal stage in human development, they are left with no place to look for solutions or creative alternatives. "Western" problems become the problems of "modern man" in these critiques. Thereby they are superficially universalized, and Africans must become "modern" before they can even deal with them. Europeans are, in this view, the only ones with the authority to criticize their culture, and the criticisms they make and the solutions they find are said to have universal significance. European imperialism, in this way, is not seen as the product of the behavioral patterns of a particular cultural group nor of certain kinds of people, but rather of the "natural" tendencies of all people at a particular period of cultural development. The argument continues: "Every culture becomes European

as it becomes more modern," so there is really only one valid culture, and the only ideological alternative is the "more-than-modern" one.

To be useful, "modernity" has to be redefined, so that, for instance, we can speak of modern African dress or modern African art using an African-centered frame of reference. Presently, the concept of modernity is much too Eurocentric to be either practical or of theoretical value in a critique of European culture. We must begin with the assumption that Europeanness is not inevitable. And since we wish to describe "a certain mode of cultural being as opposed to "a certain level of history,"<sup>35</sup> European development is a product of European ideology. Consequently, it represents a particular view and approach to the world — as partial as any other. And, as any other ideological construct, it can theoretically, therefore, be rejected, critiqued, or replaced. This is not to say that the rejection of Europeanness is an easy task, or that Europe does not give the illusion of being ubiquitous. But the question of the universal validity of European forms must not be confused with the successful expansionism of European culture. And the resistance to Europe, as it is now defined, can only be achieved through a commitment to that resistance. Those who begin with the assumption that they are simply dealing with the character of "modernity" are doomed from the start, for they have already accepted the terms of European ideology.

Some problems in terminology arise in referring to other cultures. The term "non-European" is used reluctantly because of its usual negative connotations, and because it implies a Eurocentric frame of reference. But in this case it is appropriate since the focus of the study is Europe exclusively: So that what is "other" is indeed a negation of what is "European" (i.e., "non-European"). This fact notwithstanding, I have felt more comfortable using other terms, and they require some explanation. The term "First World" is used to refer to the descendants of the oldest civilizations known to us: Africa and its Diaspora. "Primary cultures" is also used in this way. Europeans in this sense represent a secondary, derived, and younger people. I have sometimes borrowed Chinweizu's term from the title of his book, *The West and the Rest of Us* (1978) and refer to those of us who are not European as "the rest of us." And I have referred to these "other" peoples and cultures as "majority," since Europeans and the culture they have created represent a small "minority" when viewed in the world context.

"Nationalism" as a cultural phenomenon is a very significant aspect of European culture and therefore of this study. Nationalism in this sense is not limited by the concept of "nation-state," rather it

refers to the commitment on the part of the members of a culture to its political defense, its survival, and its perpetuation. In the case of Europe it also involves a commitment to its supremacy, to its expansion, and to the destruction of other cultures. European nationalism is therefore dangerous to the rest of the world. But it is very important to understand that this does not mean that nationalism is a negative phenomenon universally. It is indeed "natural" to be centered in one's culture and to seek to preserve it. That is part of the essence of culture. But the content of European nationalism becomes problematical: (1) because it implies imperialistic aggression; and (2) because it is usually not recognized as the expression of group interest, thereby making it difficult for other groups to defend themselves against its effects. An important objective of this work, therefore, is to make European nationalism recognizable as such.

### Perspectives and Objectives

This study was not approached objectively. It is not possible to be objective towards Europe: Certainly the victims of its cultural, political, and economic imperialism are not objective, if they are sane. And Europeans cannot be "objective" about their own cultural history. The question, then, becomes: What could objectivity possibly mean in terms of human mental attitudes? The implications of the concept of objectivity are discussed critically in this study and elsewhere.<sup>36</sup> It is a concept that acts to mystify Europe's victims: one of the most effective tools of European ideology.

The claim to an absolute ultimate truth is a psychological necessity for the European mentality. And since we have accepted it, it is an edict that has constrained most of us who have been trained in European academies. But African-centeredness breaks that hold by recognizing the truth as a process in which we immerse ourselves because of a commitment, not to some universal abstraction, but to a certain quality of life. From an African-centered perspective, we understand truth to be inseparable from the search for meaning and purpose — the unique concern of human consciousness. As African scholars, it is our responsibility to create systematic theoretical formulations which will reveal the truths that enable us to liberate and utilize the energies of our people. In this view, the self-determinist, the revolutionary, and the scholar are one, having the same objective, involved in the same truth-process. The claim that we make is not to a spurious "objectivity," but to honesty. I, therefore, have made no attempt to camouflage either my relationship to Europe or my goal in undertaking this study.

As Wade Nobles says, the types of questions we ask are influenced by the culture to which we belong.<sup>37</sup> Theory is born out of commitment and intention. Every theorist puts part of herself (or himself) into the theoretical formulations and conclusions that she (or he) produces. But that does not make them any less valid. When dealing with the social sciences, theories gain validity when viewed in relationship to one's frame of reference, one's center. That center is culturally meaningful only when it issues from a collective consciousness. The view of Europe presented herein will be convincing only to the extent that one is freed of European assumptions and Eurocentric ideological commitments. But that is not because of any weakness in the arguments or evidence presented. The record speaks for itself. Ultimately validity is judged in terms of interest. This theory of European culture is valid to the extent that it helps to liberate us from the stranglehold of European control.

This study represents a view of European thought and behavior that grows out of protracted personal confrontation with European culture, out of an awareness politicized by means of African consciousness, and made intellectually positive through a grounding in African-centeredness. "Afrocentricity" is a way of viewing reality that analyzes phenomena using the interest of African people as a reference point, as stated by Asante<sup>38</sup>. African-centeredness provides the theoretical framework within which the dominant modes of European expression have been set for analysis here-in. This process establishes a system for critical evaluation. Its standards are severe. Its questions uncompromising.

The most insidious expression of European nationalism is manifested in the process of codification through which behavior and thought patterns have been standardized by validating theoretical formulations provided by European academia. We need only to decode its workings in order to understand the mechanisms of supremacy and break its power. The objective of this study is to place the European experience under scrutiny in order to reveal its nature. We turn the tables by transforming "subject" into "object," and in the process we are ourselves transformed into victors rather than victims. We emerge from the yoke of European conceptual modalities that have prevented us from the realization of the "collective conscious will" of our people.<sup>39</sup> Our objectives are, specifically:

1. to demonstrate the relationship between European thought, the nature of European institutions, European anti-Africanism, and European imperialism;
2. to remove the cloak of universalism from European choice,

value, particularism, European interest and Eurocentrism; 3. to examine and expose expressions of European nationalism; 4. to understand the *asili*, or fundamental germinating principle of European cultural development; and thus 5. to provide a tool for the explanation of European thought and behavior as part of a consistently patterned ideological construct.

This is achieved through an ideological focus that recognizes Europe as the powerful monolith that it is. The compelling question this study asks and answers is: What accounts for European power and Europe's successful domination of the world? The objective of this book is our liberation from that control, so that we can indeed reclaim ourselves and what belongs to us, and in the process, transform the universe, thereby reestablishing primary equilibrium. The intent is to speak with the voice of African nationhood and to be inspired by the collective vision of our people and our ancestors.