

The Akan Concept of a Person

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INTRODUCTION

A NUMBER of scholars, including philosophers, tend to squirm a little at the mention of "African philosophy," though they do not do so at the mention of African art, music, history, anthropology, religion, etc. While the latter cluster of disciplines is being cultivated or pursued in the various Centres or Institutes of African Studies in universities round the world, African philosophy as such is relegated to limbo because it is considered to be non-existent. Philosophy is thus assumed to be a special relish of the peoples of the West and the East. To a very great extent the lack of writing in Africa's historical past, leading in turn to the absence of a doxographic tradition, that is, a tradition of recorded opinions, has been responsible for the assumption that there is no such thing as African philosophy.

We do not ask the question whether there is European philosophy or Greek philosophy simply because there are the classic *Dialogues*, *Treatises*, *Essays*, *Philosophical Investigations*, which one can immediately delve into if he wants to study European or Greek philosophy. In Africa, traditionally, there has been a dearth of such philosophical classics. Yet this fact does not in any way argue the non-existence of African philosophy. For it is known that Socrates, the celebrated ancient Greek philosopher, did not write anything, although he inherited a written culture; but it is also known that he *philosophized*. In India "the Upanishads which are imbued with philosophy . . . were not written down for centuries. . . ." ¹ An eminent Indian philosopher wrote: "The Vedas were handed down from mouth to mouth from a period of unknown antiquity. . . . When the Vedas were composed, there was probably no system of writing prevalent in India." ² (The Vedas constitute the religious and philosophical classics of India. The Upanishads form the concluding portions of the Vedas.) And I learn that Buddha, the ancient Indian philosopher and religious thinker, "wrote no book, but taught orally." ³ Thus African philosophy is none the worse for the absence, traditionally, of written philosophical literature. To deny to African peoples philosophical thought is to imply that they are unable

¹ G. Parrinder, *Religion in Africa* (London, 1969), p. 25.

² S. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1963), I. 10.

³ P. T. Raju: *The Philosophical Traditions of India* (London, 1971), p. 114.

to make philosophical sense of, or to conceptualize, their experiences; it is in fact to deny them their humanity. For philosophy of some kind is behind the thought and action of every people. It constitutes the intellectual sheet-anchor of their life in its totality.

African philosophic thought not only forms part of the oral literature of the peoples; it is also expressed or reflected in real and vital attitudes. In Africa a great deal of philosophical material is embedded in the proverbs,⁴ myths and folk-tales, folk-songs, rituals, beliefs, customs and traditions of the peoples. The interested and careful philosopher can perceive the philosophical relevance of such material and may come across ideas or doctrines or problems that may have some affinity with those of the West or the East, but which originated from the peoples themselves.

After these dialectical preambles, I wish now to turn to a discussion of the Akan⁵ concept of a person, in which I shall attempt to interpret, reconstruct, and sort out in a more sophisticated way the elements of the Akan collective thought on the nature of a person, and provide the necessary conceptual or theoretical trimming such as is required by the anthropological and sociological accounts.

I. OKRA (SOUL)

We are given to understand from anthropological accounts that the Akans hold a tripartite conception of a person, considering a human being to be constituted by three elements: *okra*, *sunsum*, and *honam* (or *nipadua*: body).

The *okra* is considered to be that which constitutes the very inner self of the individual, the principle of life of that individual, and the embodiment and transmitter of his destiny (fate: *nkrabea*). It is thought to be a spark of God (*Onyame*) in man. It is thus divine and has an ante-mundane existence with God; it derives directly from God. The *okra*, therefore, might be considered as the equivalent of the concept of the soul in other metaphysical systems.

The presence of this divine principle in a human being may have been the basis of the Akan proverb *Nnipa nyinaa ye Onyame mma, obiara nye asase ba* ("All men are the children of God; no one is a child of the Earth").

The conception of the *okra* as the life principle in a person, his vital force, the source of his energy, is linked closely with another concept, namely *honhom*. *Honhom* means "breath"; it is the noun form of *home*, to breathe. When a man is dead it is said: *ne honhom ko* ("his breath is gone") or *ne 'kra afi ne ho* ("his soul has withdrawn from his body"). The two sentences, one with *honhom* as subject and the other with *okra* as the subject, do, in fact, say the same thing; they express the same thought, the death-of-the-person. The departure of the soul from the body means the death of a person, and so does ceasing to breathe. Yet this does not mean that the *honhom* (breath)

⁴ See my "The Philosophical Relevance of Akan Proverbs," *Second Order, An African Journal of Philosophy*, July 1975.

⁵ The Akans constitute about two-thirds of the peoples of Ghana.

is the *okra* (soul). The *okra* is that which "causes" the breathing. Thus, the *honhom* is the tangible manifestation or evidence of the *okra*. (I must say, however, that in some dialects of the Akan language *honhom* has come to be used interchangeably with *sunsum*, so that the phrase *honhom bone* has come to mean the same thing as *sunsum bone*, i.e. evil "spirit." The identification of the *honhom* with the *sunsum* seems to me to be a recent idea and may have resulted from the translation of the Bible into the various Akan dialects: *honhom* must have been used to translate the Greek *pneuma*, breath, spirit. The clarification of the concepts of *okra*, *honhom* and *sunsum* (spirit) is the burden of this paper.)

II. SUNSUM (SPIRIT)

Sunsum is another of the constituent elements of a person. It has usually been rendered in English as "spirit." In some of the literature on Western metaphysics 'spirit' appears to be a generic or comprehensive concept under which are subsumed specific concepts such as soul, mind, self, consciousness—all of which are, however, considered to be identical. But some Western philosophers distinguish the mind from the soul, for while they are prepared to admit that a human being has a mind (which they would identify with the brain or a brain state), they deny the existence of the soul mainly because of the immortality attribute that has traditionally been claimed for it.⁶ In the Akan metaphysics of the person, however, "spirit" is a specific concept. (I shall show in a later publication on Akan ontology that the concept is also used generically in other contexts.) It appears from the anthropological accounts that even when it is used as a specific concept "spirit" (*sunsum*) is not identical with the soul (*okra*) as they do not refer to the same thing. However, the anthropological accounts of the *sunsum* involve some conceptual blunders, as I hope to show presently. As for the mind (when it is not identified with the soul) it might be rendered also by *sunsum*, judging from the functions that are attributed by the Akans to the latter (*see below*).

On the surface it might appear that "spirit" is not an appropriate rendition for *sunsum*; but after clearing some misconceptions engendered by some anthropological writings, I shall show that it is an appropriate rendition but that its real nature requires some clarification. Anthropologists and sociologists have held, (i) that the *sunsum* derives from the father,⁷ (ii) that it is not divine,⁸ and (iii) that it perishes with the disintegration of the *honhom*,⁹ that

⁶ See, e.g. Jenny Teichman, *The Mind and the Soul* (London, 1974), p. 3f.

⁷ K. A. Busia, "The Ashanti of the Gold Coast," in D. Forde, *African Worlds* (Oxford, 1954), pp. 197 and 200; M. Fortes, *Kingship and the Social Order* (Chicago, 1969), pp. 199, note 14; R. A. Lystad, *The Ashanti: A Proud People* (New Brunswick, 1958), p. 155; Rev. Peter Kwasi Sarpong, *Ghana in Retrospect: Some Aspects of the Ghanaian Culture* (Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1974), p. 37.

⁸ Busia, *loc. cit.*; Lystad, *loc. cit.*; S. L. R. Meyerowitz: *The Sacred State of the Akan* (London, 1949), p. 86; "Concepts of the Soul in Akan," *Africa* (1951), p. 26.

⁹ Busia, *loc. cit.*; Lystad, *loc. cit.*; P. A. Twumasi, *Medical Systems in Ghana: A Study in*

is, the material component of a person. It seems to me, however, that all these three characterizations of the *sunsum* are incorrect.

Let us first take up the third characterization of the *sunsum*, namely, that it is something that perishes with the perishing of the body. Now, if a body, a physical object, perishes along with the *sunsum*, then it would follow that the *sunsum* also is something physical or material. As a matter of fact Danquah in his philosophical analysis concludes that "*sunsum* is, in fact, the matter or the physical basis of the ultimate ideal of which *okra* (soul) is the form and the spiritual or mental basis."¹⁰ Elsewhere he speaks of an "interaction of the material mechanism (*sunsum*) with the soul," and assimilates the *sunsum* to the "sensible form" of Aristotle's metaphysics of substance and the *okra* to the "intelligible form."¹¹ One would conclude from these statements that Danquah also conceived the *sunsum* as material (although some other statements of his would seem to contradict this). (See below.) The relationship between the *honam* (body) and the *sunsum* (supposedly bodily), however, is left unexplained. Thus philosophical, sociological, and anthropological accounts of the nature of a person have given us the impression that the Akans held a tripartite conception of a human being:

okra (soul) — immaterial
sunsum ("spirit") — material (?)
honam (body) — material

As we shall see presently, however, this account or analysis of a person, particularly the characterization of the *sunsum* ("spirit") as material, is not satisfactory. I must admit at this point that the real nature of the *sunsum* presents some difficulty for the Akan metaphysics of a person and has been a source of confusion for scholars. The difficulty is not insoluble, however.

There are many things said regarding the functions or activities of the *sunsum* which indicate that it surely is neither material (physical), nor mortal, nor derived from the father. Busia says that the *sunsum* "is what moulds the child's personality and disposition. It is that which determines his character and individuality."¹² Danquah says: "But we now know the notion which corresponds to the Akan 'sunsum', namely, not 'spirit' as such but 'personality' which covers the relation of the 'body' to the 'soul' (*Okra*)."¹³ That the *sunsum* constitutes the personality and character of a person is stated by Danquah in several pages of his book.¹⁴ Rattray also observed that the *sunsum* is the basis of character and personality.¹⁵ There are indeed some sentences in the Akan language in which the expression *sunsum* is used in obvious reference to personality (or qualities or traits in a person's character).

Medical Sociology, (Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1975), p. 22.

¹⁰ J. B. Danquah, *The Akan Doctrine of God* (London, 1944), p. 115.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

¹² Busia, *op cit.*, p. 197.

¹³ J.B. Danquah, *op cit.*, p. 66.

¹⁴ E.g., pp. 67, 75, 83, 205.

¹⁵ R. S. Rattray, *Ashanti* (Oxford, 1923), p. 46.

Thus, for "he has a strong personality" the Akans would say "*ne sunsum ye duru*" (i.e. his *sunsum* is "heavy" or "weighty"). When a man is generous they say that he has a good *sunsum* (*owo sunsum pa*). When a man has an impressive or imposing personality they say that he has an overshadowing *sunsum* (*ne sunsum hye me so*). In fact sometimes in describing a dignified person they would simply say, *owo sunsum*, that is, he has a commanding presence. And a man may be said to have a "gentle" *sunsum*, a "forceful" *sunsum*, a "submissive" or "weak" *sunsum*. Thus, the concept of the *sunsum* would correspond in some ways to what is meant by personality, as was observed by some earlier investigators.

Thus, it is now clear that in Akan conceptions the *sunsum* ("spirit") is the basis of a man's personality, his distinctive character and, in the words of Busia, "his ego."¹⁶ Personality, of course, is a word that has been given various definitions by psychologists. But I believe that whatever else that concept may involve, it certainly involves the idea of a set of characteristics as shown in a person's behavior—his thoughts, feelings, actions, etc. (I do not think that it refers exclusively to a person's physical appearance.) Thus, if the *sunsum* is that which embodies a man's personality, it just cannot be a physical thing, for qualities of personality such as courage, generosity, jealousy, gentleness, forcefulness, meekness, dignity are not sensible or physical qualities; they are *psychical*. The jealous man *feels* ill or unhappy because of a possible or actual loss of position, status, expectations, or because of the better fortune of others; a courageous man is able to control *fear* in the face of danger, pain, misfortune, etc.; the ambitious man has strong *desire* to achieve something. The expressions *feel*, *fear*, and *desire* are of course psychical (psychological), not physicalistic, expressions. (In Akan metaphysics there is no room for materialism, the doctrine held by some philosophers in the West that a person is fundamentally a physical entity and that what is referred to as mind or soul is in fact identifiable with a person's brain, which is a physical organ.) Thus, if in fact personality is the function of the *sunsum*, then the latter cannot conceptually be held to be physical or material; it must surely be something (*ade*) immaterial, i.e. spiritual.

We have already noted certain statements of Danquah which suggest a physicalistic interpretation of the *sunsum*. On the other hand, he also maintains that "it is the *sunsum* that experiences,"¹⁷ and that it is through it that "the *okra* or soul manifests itself in the world of experience."¹⁸ Elsewhere he says of the *sunsum*: "It is the bearer of conscious experience, the unconscious or subliminal self remaining over as the *okra* or soul."¹⁹ It is not clear what Danquah means by the "bearer" of experience. Perhaps what he means is that the *sunsum* is the subject of experience; that which experiences.

¹⁶ Busia, *op cit.*, p. 197.

¹⁷ Danquah, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

¹⁸ *Loc. cit.*

¹⁹ Danquah, *op cit.*, p. 112.

This being so, I would think, at least provisionally, that the subject of experience cannot be physical. If, as he thought,²⁰ it is the *sunsum* which makes it possible for the destiny (*nkra*: fate) of the soul to be "realized" or "carried out" on earth, then, like the *okra* (soul), an aspect of whose function it was going to perform, the *sunsum* also must be considered as something spiritual, not physical. Danquah's position on the concept of the *sunsum* is ambivalent. And so is Busia's. Busia says that one part of a man is "the personality that comes indirectly from the supreme Being,"²¹ that is, God. By "personality" Busia must, on his own showing,²² be referring to the *sunsum* of a man, which must, according to my analysis of that concept, derive directly from God, and not from the father. It must, therefore, be divine and immortal, contrary to what he and others thought.

The explanation the Akans give of the phenomenon of dreaming also indicates that the *sunsum* is something spiritual. For the Akans, as for Sigmund Freud, dreams are not somatic but psychic phenomena. They believe that in a dream it is the person's *sunsum* that is the "actor." In sleep the *sunsum* is said to be released from the fetters of the body. It, as it were, fashions for itself a new world of forms with the materials of its waking experience. Thus, although the person is deeply asleep, his body (*honam*) lying in bed, yet he may "see" himself standing on the top of a mountain or driving a car or fighting with someone. The actor in any of these actions is thought to be the *sunsum*, which thus can leave the body and return to it.

As the basis or determinant of personality traits—which are non-sensible—as a co-performer of the activities or functions of the *okra* (soul), undoubtedly thought to be a spiritual entity, and as the *dramatis persona* of the spiritual or psychical phenomenon of dreaming, the *sunsum* must be something spiritual (immaterial). This is the reason for my earlier assertion that "spirit" might not be an inappropriate translation for *sunsum*, that is to say, the *sensum* is something spiritual.

On my analysis, then, we would have the following picture:

<i>Okra</i> (soul))	— immaterial (spiritual)
<i>Sunsum</i> (spirit))	
<i>Honam</i> (body)		— material (physical).

Thus, the Akans hold a dualistic conception of a person: a person is constituted by two principal substances, one spiritual (immaterial) and the other physical (material).

III. RELATION OF OKRA AND SUNSUM

Now having shown that the *sunsum* is in fact something spiritual (and for this reason I shall henceforth use the word "spirit" or "spiritual" in reference

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 66-67, 115.

²¹ Busia, *op cit.*, p. 200.

²² *Loc. cit.* in note 16.

to *sunsum* without quotes), we must go on to examine whether the expressions *sunsum* (spirit) and *okra* (soul) denote the same object in Akan metaphysics and philosophical psychology. In the course of my field research I was informed by a number of elderly people I interviewed that the *sunsum*, *okra*, and *honhom* ("breath") are identical; it is one entity that goes under three names. I have already shown that while there is a close link between the *okra* and the *honhom*, the two cannot, nevertheless, be identified.²³ What about the *sunsum* and the *okra*? Can they be identified?

To say that the two can be identified would logically mean that whatever can be asserted of one can or must be asserted of the other. Yet there are some things the Akans say about the *sunsum* which are not said of the *okra*; the predicates or attributes of the two are different. Thus, the need for a reconstruction of the relation between the *okra* and the *sunsum*. The Akans say:

- 1) *ne 'kra di awarehow* ("his *kra* is sad"; never, "his *sunsum* is sad").
- 2) *ne 'kra teetee* ("his *kra* is worried or disturbed").
- 3) *ne 'kra adwane* ("his *kra* has run away," an expression they use when someone is scared to death).
- 4) *ne kra ye* ("his *kra* is good"—a sentence they use when they want to say that a person is lucky or fortunate).
- 5) *ne kra aƒi ne ho* ("his *kra* has withdrawn from his body").
- 6) *ne kara dii n'akyi, anka owui* ("but for his *kra* that followed him, he would have died").
- 7) *ne kra aniagye* ("his *kra* is happy").

In all such statements, the attributions are made to the *okra* (*kra*; soul), never to the *sunsum*. On the other hand, the Akans say:

- 1) *owo sunsum* ("he has *sunsum*," an expression they use when they want to refer to someone as dignified and as having a commanding presence. Here they never say *owo (o) kra* ("he has *okra*," soul, for it is believed that every human being has a soul, the principle of life, but the nature of the *sunsum* differs from person to person; thus they speak of "gentle *sunsum*," "forceful *sunsum*," weak or strong *sunsum*," etc.).
- 2) *ne sunsum ye duru* ("his *sunsum* is heavy or weighty," i.e. he has a strong personality).
- 3) *ne sunsum hye* (or *to me so*) ("his *sunsum* overshadows mine").
- 4) *obi sunsum so kye obi dee* ("someone's *sunsum* is bigger or greater than another's").
- 5) *owo sunsum pa* ("he has a good spirit," i.e. he is a generous person).

In all such statements the attributions are made to the *sunsum*, never to the *okra*.

Now, given *x* and *y*, if whatever is asserted of *x* can be asserted of *y*, then *x*

²³ See p. 278 above.

can be said to be identical with *y*. If there is at least one predicate, which *x* has but *y* does not have, then *x* and *y* are not identical. On this showing, to the extent that things that are asserted or predicated of the *okra* do not apply to the *sunsum*, the two cannot logically be identified. But while they are logically and functionally distinct, they are not *ontologically* distinct. That is to say, they are not separate existences held together by an external bond. They are a unity in duality, a duality in unity. The distinction is not a relation between two independent entities. And the *sunsum* may, perhaps more accurately, be characterized as *a state* of the *okra* (soul). As mentioned earlier, the *okra* is the principle of life of a person and the embodiment and transmitter of his destiny (*nkrabea*). Personality and character traits of a person are the function of the *sunsum*. The *sunsum* appears to be the source of dynamism of a man, the really active part or force of the psychological system of man. It is said to have extra-sensory powers; it is that which thinks, desires, etc. It is not in any way identical with the brain. Rather it acts upon the brain (*adwen*); it is that which makes the *adwen* (brain) work. In short, it is upon the *sunsum* that man's health, worldly power, influence, position, success, etc. would depend.

Moreover, moral predicates are generally ascribed to the *sunsum*. Lystad is, thus, wrong when he says: "In many respects the *sunsum* or spirit is so identical with the *okra* or soul in its functions that it is difficult to distinguish between them."²⁴

In the Akan conception of a person, the soul (*okra*) is held to be a mental or spiritual entity (substance). It is not a bundle of qualities or perceptions, as is held in some western philosophies. The basis for this assertion is the Akan belief in disembodied survival. A bundle theory of substance implies the elimination of the notion of substance, for if a substance is held to be a bundle or collection of qualities or perceptions it would mean that when the qualities or perceptions are removed nothing would be left; there would then be no substance, i.e. no substratum or "owner" of those qualities. Thus, if the soul or mind is held to be a bundle of perceptions, as in Hume, it would be impossible to talk of disembodied survival in the form of a soul or self since the bundle itself is an abstraction. One Akan maxim, expressed epigrammatically, is that "when a man dies he is not (really) dead" (*onipa wu a na onwui*). What they imply by this is that there is something in a human being which is eternal and indestructible, and which continues to exist in the world of spirits (*asamandow*). An Akan motif expresses the following thought: "Could God die, I will die" (*Onyame bewu na m'awu*). In Akan metaphysics God is held to be eternal, immortal (*Odomankoma*), and what is being asserted in the above thought is that since God will not die, a person, that is, his *okra* (soul), conceived as a spark of God in a person, will not die either. That is to say, the soul of man is immortal. But—and this is the point I want to make—the attributes of immortality and eternity make sense if, and only if, the soul is held to be a substance, and not a bundle of qualities or perceptions.

²⁴ Lystad, *op cit.*, p. 158.

But where in a human being is this mental or spiritual substance located? Descartes thought that the soul is in the pineal gland. The Akans also seem to hold that the soul (*okra*) is lodged in the head of a person, although they do not mention any specific part of the head where it is. But although it is in the head "you can not see it with your natural eyes," as they would put it, since it is an immaterial substance.

That the soul is in the head (*eti, ti*), may be inferred from the following expressions of the Akans: When they want to say that a person is lucky or fortunate they would say *ne ti ye* ("his *head* is well") or *ne 'kra ye* ("his soul is well"). Both sentences express the same thought. And when a person is constantly afflicted with misfortunes he would say "*me ti nnye*" ("my *head* is not well") or "*me 'kra nnye*" ("my *soul* is not well"). It may be inferred from such expressions that there is some kind of connection between the head and the soul. And although they cannot point to a specific part of the head as the "residence" of the soul, it may be conjectured that it is in the region of the brain (*adwen*), which, as stated earlier, receives its activism from the *sunsum* (spirit), a state of the soul (*okra*). That is, the mind (or, soul) acts on the brain in a specific locality, not that it is itself actually localized.

The Akan conception of a person, as it appears in my analysis, is thoroughly dualistic, not tripartite. A dualistic conception of a person does not necessarily carry with it a belief in a causal relation or interaction between the two parts of the person, soul and body. For instance, some dualistic philosophers in the West maintain a doctrine of psycho-physical parallelism, which completely denies causal interaction between body and soul. Others, also dualists, maintain a doctrine of epiphenomenalism which, while not completely rejecting causal interaction, holds that the causal direction goes in one way only, namely, from body to mind; such a doctrine is thus not an interactionist doctrine. The Akans, however, maintain a thorough interactionist position on the relation between soul and body. They believe that not only does the body have a causal influence on the soul but also the soul has a causal influence on the body (*honam*). What happens to the soul (*okra*) takes effect or reflects on the condition of the body. Similarly, what happens to the body reflects on the condition of the soul.

It is the actual bodily or physical behaviour of a person that gives some idea of the condition of the soul. Thus, if the physical behaviour of a person suggests that he is happy they would say *ne 'kra ani agye* ("his soul is happy"); if unhappy or morose they would say, *ne 'kra di awerzhow* ("his soul is sorrowful"). When the *okra* (soul) is enfeebled or injured by evil spirits ill health results; and the poor conditions of the body also affect the condition of the soul. That is, the condition of the soul depends on the condition of the body. As a matter of fact the belief in psycho-physical causal interaction is the whole basis of spiritual or psychical healing. There are certain diseases which are believed to be "spiritual diseases" (*sunsum yare*) and cannot be healed by the application of physical therapy. In such diseases attention is paid to both physiological and spiritual aspects of the person.

Unless the soul is healed the body will not respond to any physical treatment. The removal of a disease of the soul is the activity of the diviners or the "medicine men" (*adunsifo*).

Some similarities have been discovered between the functions and activities of the *sunsum* of the Akan psychology and the ego of Freud. An essential task of the ego is to engage in intercourse with the external world. Like the *sunsum*, it directs the business of everyday living; it is the executive of the personality, that is, the psychological system. It is the representative of the Id in the external world. An aspect of the nature of the *sunsum* is or may be similar to the ego. The *sunsum* of the Akan psyche is not always conscious, and a man does not always know what his *sunsum* wants. It is believed that it is the *sunsum* that the Akan diviner (*okomfo*), believed to possess extra-sensory abilities, communicates with. It tells the diviner what it really wants without the person knowing or being aware of what he wants; thus, the *sunsum* may be unconscious. Freud said: "And it is indeed the case that large portions of the ego and super-ego can remain unconscious and are normally unconscious. That is to say, the individual knows nothing of their contents and it requires an expenditure of effort to make them conscious."²⁵ It is, I suppose, for these reasons that some scholars²⁶ have not hesitated to identify the *sunsum* with the ego of Freud, and having done so go on to identify the *okra* with the Id.

But there are dissimilarities which must be stated. Firstly, in Freud the Id is the original system of the psyche, the matrix within which the ego and the super-ego become differentiated. But in the Akan conception both the *okra* and the *sunsum* at once constitute the original system of the psyche. Unlike the Id, the *okra* is not the only component that is present at birth. Secondly, in Freud the ego and the super-ego are formed or developed later. In Akan the *sunsum* is not formed later; it was part and parcel of the original psychical structure, the *okra*, soul. At birth the child possesses a *sunsum*, just as it at that time possesses an *okra*. Freud thought in fact that the mental structure of a man was pretty well formed by the end of the fifth year. Thirdly, the super-ego is the moral dimension of personality; it represents the claims of morality.²⁷ In the Akan system, as stated earlier, moral attributes are generally attributed to the *sunsum*. Thus the *sunsum* of the Akan seems to perform aspects of the functions of both the ego and the super-ego of Freud.

It seems to me that an interactionist psycho-physical dualism is more realistic than materialism, epiphenomenalism, parallelism, etc. Even apart from the prospects for disembodied survival which this theory of a person holds out, it has had significant pragmatic consequences in Akan communities as evidenced in the applications of actual psycho-physical therapies. There are

²⁵ Sigmund Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis* (Penguin, 1973), pp. 101-102.

²⁶ See for instance, E. L. R. Meyerowitz, *The Sacred State of the Akan*, p. 84; "Concepts of the Soul in Akan," *Africa*, (1951), p. 26; Rev. H. Debrunner, *Witchcraft in Ghana* (Kumasi, 1959), p. 15.

²⁷ Freud, *op cit.*, p. 92.

countless testimonies of people who have been subjected to physical treatment for months or years in modern hospitals without being cured, but who have actually been healed by traditional "medicine men" applying both physical and psychical (spiritual) methods.

All this seems to underline the facts that a human being is not just a bag of flesh and bones, that he is a complex being who cannot completely be explained by the same laws of physics used to explain inanimate things, and that our world with all its complex and strange phenomena cannot simply be reduced to physics.