



Martin Odei Ajei

The Paranormal

An inquiry into some features
of an African metaphysics and epistemology

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**By
Martin Odei Ajei**

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To Prof. Dr. Kwame Gyekye, supervisor of this work and tireless worker in the field, for his clairvoyance.

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NOTE ON THE PRONUNCIATION OF TWI WORDS

This book contains several words in Twi, the language of the Akans of Ghana¹. This language contains vowels which do not occur in the English alphabet, but which have been used in composing Twi words in this book. It is therefore important to provide this guide to the reader. The vowels under consideration are:

/ɛ / which should be pronounced as the vowel in the English word 'egg'.

/ɔ̃/ which should be pronounced as the vowel in the English word 'odd'.

¹ Akans live predominantly in Ghana and the Ivory Coast). In Ghana, the Akan is the largest communo-cultural group, and occupy five of the ten administrative Regions in the country. Therefore *Twi* is well spoken and understood by many people in the country, and can arguably be considered the unofficial *lingua franca* of Ghana

FOREWORD

This book contains the body of a thesis I presented in partial fulfillment of the degree of Master of Philosophy in philosophy to the Department of Philosophy, University of Ghana, in the year 2000. Besides correction of typographical errors and some linguistic inelegance, the work as it appears now is exactly as it was written originally. This is primarily due to the fact that not much new research has been undertaken on the subject in the intervening years that would significantly affect the arguments and conclusions reached in the work.

The set of phenomena described as paranormal has occasioned academic debate since the end of the nineteenth century. Physical scientists especially, and others who subscribe fully to the epistemological framework of mainstream Western philosophy and science, have denied the existence of these phenomena and the claims to knowledge made by their advocates.

This study attempts a close and critical study of the evidence for paranormal phenomena and defends the view that valid claims to knowledge can be made on the basis of these phenomena. Toward this, it expounds on some features of Akan metaphysics and epistemology, focusing on the concept of *sunsum* and interpreting it as a natural force as yet unaccounted for by Western orthodox science.

The book then proceeds to claim that the principles of a science, interpreted more broadly than that commonly understood in the West, are embedded in Akan thought, and *sunsum* becomes a viable scientific postulate for the explanation of the paranormal. Finally, the work claims that the procedures that Akan thinkers employ for the investigation of nature can make meaningful contributions to the search for human knowledge about nature and, as such, should be fully inquired into.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis will proceed with the definition of a paranormal event as an event whose explanation cannot be brought under the known laws of physics. Mosley defines these events as those which “seem to contradict...the fundamental ideas and principles upon which modern science has been based” (Mosley, 9). Because of their nature, paranormal events are usually denied reality by physical scientists and by all those who subscribe fully to the epistemological thesis that there are no other means by which reality can be experienced except through the senses or apprehended by the pure activity of the mind. The question at issue is: are there such paranormal phenomena? If there are, are the current laws of physics the only tenable means to explain their reality?

Following the definition of a paranormal event, ‘paranormal cognition’ would denote some form of apprehension brought about by means other than the senses or the pure activity of the mind. It has been argued by physical scientists and some epistemologists in the western philosophical tradition that the knowledge claims ascribed to the perceptions derived from events that are characterized as paranormal are invalid claims to knowledge, in as much as these perceptions cannot afford us a way of knowing in the real sense of the verb ‘to know’. There are only two legitimate sources of knowledge, they contend, and these are sense experience and the pure activity of mind. The next question then is: can paranormal cognition legitimately be considered a type of knowledge?

In Europe and America evidence for the occurrence of such phenomena has been accumulating over the centuries. It was the founding of the Society for Psychical Research (SPR) in London in 1882 that is often taken to mark the first effort in the West to address this question scientifically. Experimental study of the paranormal has since then been the approach of parapsychology or psychical research. The Society undertook to “investigate, among other things, the alleged acquisition of knowledge without the use of any known sense organ” (Mundle, 1967, 49-50). The commonest

term given to the kind of information identified for investigation on the agenda of the SPR is Extra-Sensory Perception (ESP) or Paranormal Cognition (PNC). Although no concerted effort at research has been undertaken in Africa, appeal to the paranormal is an integral part of the African cultural and epistemological experience. There is thus a need to inquire into the African beliefs in the reality of paranormal events.

By the 1940s, psychical researches had identified two broad categories of paranormal events. These are:

- a. Paranormal Cognition (PNC) or Extra-Sensory Perception (ESP).
- b. Psychokinesis

There are four main sub-species of PNC. These are:

- i. *Telepathy*: This term is used in PNC research to refer to the communication between one mind and another without the use of recognized channels of sense. Thus, it involves one mind acquiring information that originates from another mind extra-sensorially. In ordinary parlance, we identify telepathic ability as the ability to 'read someone's mind'.
- ii. *Clairvoyance*: refers to the mind's ability to acquire knowledge of physical objects or events, as distinct from mental ones, without the use of the senses. Thus, in clairvoyance, the extra-sensorial information originates from physical objects. An example of clairvoyant ability would be X's ability to state accurately the contents of a closed briefcase that he encounters for the first time.
- iii. *Precognition*: this refers to the acquisition of knowledge about future events. Thus, it involves one's mind having fore-knowledge of events without the use of recognized sensory channels.
- iv. *Retrocognition*: this species of PNC is a complementary phenomenon which we would be expected to accept if we accept precognitive experience. It is the non-inferential cognition of events in the past, verified later, which are outside the range of a person's memory. (Johnson, 1955, 9-57)

Psychokinesis, on the other hand, involves the direct influence of mental events on physical events external to the agent. Under this category come all the phenomena in which the mind is deemed to have extra-sensorial powers of action in the world. Some sub-species of Psychokinesis are levitations, poltergeist and witchcraft effects.

Witchcraft power, which constitutes a good portion of the evidence for paranormal events in Africa, can be defined as an innate and mystical power which can be used by its possessor to influence events in the world from any distance.

The aim of this study is to show the following:

- i. In the face of the gathered information about them, these phenomena cannot legitimately be denied reality.
- ii. In consequence to (i), it is more rational to broaden our ontology to make space for them, rather than denying them simply because they cannot be accommodated in the existing ontology as defined by Western scientific description of what exists.
- iii. There is good reason for the proposition that PNC is a legitimate form of knowledge.

It will also be argued that some African cosmologies are able to explain these events, and assert that these cosmologies, in a revised form, can acquire a status comparable to science.

Among the many arguments deployed against the skeptics of paranormal phenomena are those advanced by Albert Mosley and Sophie Oluwole. After pointing out that most of the skepticisms of the finding of psychical research derive from the fact that these findings contradict the laws of physics, Mosley writes:

“It is true that in accepting the existence of precognition, one is being asked to give up the irreversibility of time. But the assumption that time is reversible is the basis for Feynman’s thesis that positrons (anti-electrons) are in fact electrons traveling back in time. For this idea and its elaboration Feynman received the Albert Einstein Medal in 1953 and the Nobel Prize in 1965” (Mosley, 1978, 9).

Oluwole, on her part, argues that the denial by physical science of reality to the paranormal stems from mistaking epistemological conclusions for ontological ones. She writes:

“Until scientists accept that they have not discovered an indubitable method of knowing what is real; until they realize that science...is a direct consequence of our epistemological rather than an ontological argument, so long will they give room for being accused of “intellectual fraud”- “fraud” for substituting the epistemic for the ontic. As a matter of fact, this demand, this scientific hypothesis, transcends experience. Our consent to the occurrence of mysteries confirms that the mysterious is that which is not yet understood but not that which is unknowable” (Oluwole, 1995, 364).

According to this view, modern scientific activity has arrogated to itself the status of “the only true discoverer of order in nature”. But it is arrogant for science to claim that all of nature is describable by its laws because scientific activity is but one subject matter in the inquiry into nature. As such, scientific truths are, at best, only good working hypothesis for the present, not indefeasible truths about nature.

What we can gather from these perspectives are that:

- a. The foundations upon which the principles of modern science are based are no less immutable than the fundamental assumptions of other paradigms of knowledge and reality.
- b. The principles of modern physical science have been proven inadequate to explain recent advances in physics. As such, their validity, for some contemporary physicists, is in question.

I will consider these views as supporting my aim to show that the denial by the physicalists of reality to paranormal events is unjustified. Also, I will deploy several arguments to demonstrate that the belief in the reality of these phenomena is rational and justified, and that paranormal events afford us a legitimate route to knowledge.

In pursuit of these aims, my sources will be published material and interviews with traditional medicine men and others in our societies who claim to have knowledge of the paranormal. The work unfolds in the following chapters:

Chapter One: Here, I will present evidence - experimental and otherwise - for the occurrence of paranormal events and discuss the attempts at dismissing this evidence as implausible.

Chapter Two: Premised on the assumption that culture-specific conceptualizations are important in our experience and understanding of what is real, I will in this chapter, look at the philosophical foundations of the belief in the paranormal in an African culture: the Akan. I will interweave Gyekye's elaboration of Akan cosmology and ontology with information from my research work, and explore the possibility of a holistic metaphysic which is more capable of explaining the paranormal than either Gyekye's dualism or Wiredu's materialist claims. I will consider the possibility of this holistic approach defining the foundations of a science (conceived more widely than modern science) and claim that by explaining more successfully a fact of nature - the paranormal - this holistic science embedded in Akan traditional thought can make important contributions to human knowledge.

Chapter Three: The traditional western philosophical view of knowledge is that knowledge of external events can be acquired only through the senses of a subject undergoing a conscious process. Paranormal cognition (PNC) on the other hand suggests that we can have knowledge of the external world without recourse to sensory cues or through a conscious process. In this chapter, I will argue that there is good reason for upholding PNC as another valid category of knowledge. But if PNC is a legitimate form of acquiring knowledge, what is its genesis? How do we analyze it?

I will claim here that there are two possible ways open to us:

- a. to assert that it is mystical knowledge and accept or reject it, depending on individual perspectives
- b. to validate PNC on account of its rationality, i.e., that it can be validated through the mainstream analysis of knowledge. I will argue the validity of PNC on the basis of (b).

I will argue that the problems with this view is no worse than those encountered by traditional Western analysis of knowledge, because the conditions of knowledge to be met in this framework contain assumptions which, when critically examined, expose the uncertain basis of knowledge. And, if this route to knowledge is fraught with problems then, surely, I will suggest, we need not deny cognitive value to paranormal forms of knowledge simply because of the problems we may encounter on the route to their validation.

Chapter Four: This chapter will look at some epistemological systems and theories of contemporary science that are compatible with, or supportive of, the Akan system. I

will then look at the discourse on the relationship between science and metaphysics and contend that since the gap between them is ever closing, and since a systematic activity of thought and practice can be found embedded in traditional African epistemologies, this permits us to draw strong analogies between science and the metaphysics of traditional Africa.

Chapter Five: In this concluding chapter, I will try to throw some light on the unifying ideas that pervade the preceding chapters of the thesis. I will claim that the African view, as expounded, explains more successfully a natural phenomenon - the paranormal - whose explanation still presses difficulties for Western philosophies and science. Therefore, African traditional thought, properly elaborated, may make important contributions to human knowledge.

I will assert that African philosophers have an important role in this respect. My view amounts to this: if the African cultural experience is to have a universal impact on human knowledge, then African philosophers have an important task to perform. This task consists neither in unveiling the intellectual levels of the African past nor in dethroning the theories of Western science from their metaphysical and epistemological pedestal in order to place African traditional thought, in its present form, on it. For African traditional thought to make genuine and meaningful contribution to human knowledge, it must also seek to abandon unproductive approximations and acquire some of the exactitude demanded by science. The effort towards this exactitude must form the proper task of African philosophers if they are to succeed in rehabilitating traditional African thought.

CHAPTER ONE

1. Paranormal Phenomena: Evidence and Philosophical Implications

1.1. The Paranormal

My aim with this chapter is twofold: first, to answer the question: are there any genuine paranormal phenomena whose existence and explanation cannot be brought under the known laws of physics? And, second, to explore some philosophical problems engendered by these events, should we find convincing evidence of their reality.

Herodotus provides one of the early interesting records of a paranormal event in the history of the Western world. According to him, Croesus, King of Lydia (from 560-546BC), alarmed at the growing power of the Persians, decided to consult an oracle as to what he should do. Accordingly, he sent messengers to seven oracles (six Greek and one Egyptian), all starting on the same day, with instructions that on the hundredth day after their departure, each should ask his oracle, "What is King Croesus the son of Alyattes doing now?" The answers were to be written down and brought back. None of the replies remain on record except that of the oracle at Delphi. There, at the moment the messengers entered the sanctuary and before they put their questions, the Pythoness (i.e. the priestess) answered them thus:

I can count the sands, and I can measure the ocean;

I have ears for the silent and know when the dumb man meaneth;

Lo! On my sense there striketh the smell of a shell-covered tortoise
Boiling now on a fire, with the flesh of a lamb in a cauldron
Brass is the vessel below and brass the cover above it” (Herodotus, 1985, 58).

When the messengers returned and the various answers were read, Croesus declared that this was only the acceptable one. For, he said, on the departure of his messengers he had set himself to think what was most impossible for anyone to conceive of doing, and then waiting till the day agreed upon arrived, he acted as he had determined. He took a tortoise and a lamb, and cutting them in pieces with his own hands, boiled them both in a brazen cauldron, covered over with a lid which was also of brass (Herodotus, *ibid*, 58).

As mentioned in the introduction, belief in, and records of, the occurrence of such phenomena, has persisted over the centuries in Europe and America. I will attend now to a sample of these records from the West, and also to provide evidence from Africa for the occurrence of the phenomena. I will concentrate on the evidence for precognition because I believe that it is the feature of the paranormal whose reality, if established, will be most pregnant with implications for fundamental scientific and philosophical categories of thought such as causality, space and time. I will then argue that skepticism of these events cannot be legitimately sustained and end the chapter with a review of the philosophical problems raised by the reality of these events.

1.2. Evidence From Europe and America

1.2.1. Spontaneous Cases

The phrase ‘spontaneous cases’ is used here to represent all cases of paranormal events reported out of an experimental setting. In 1889, the SPR published *The Census of Hallucinations*, a collection of reported cases of paranormal events. Part of the book focused its attention on seventeenth century informants who had experienced “death coincidences”. This experience was established when a subject X, at time has a hallucinatory experience of the appearance of another person, Y, where Y died within twelve hours before or after X’s experience, and where X had no reason to expect Y’s death. It was calculated on cautious assumptions that the ratio of hallucinations that were death coincidences was much higher than expected by chance – the ratio was one in sixty three at against the one in nineteen thousand expected by chance

(Tyrell,1953,17-25). Since this publication, there have been many reports of such sporadic cases of precognition in Europe and America (Johnson, 1955, 35-42).

Investigations into such spontaneous cases of precognitive experience was met with tremendous efforts to discount and discredit the evidence, and the critics presented good reasons for dismissing these phenomena as spurious. These reports were vulnerable particularly to doubts about the honesty of the subjects or about the reliability of their memories. Next, questions lingered as to whether or not the subjects of these reported experiences were exposed to sensory cues that helped them infer the occurrence of the event; and there were also doubts as to whether the event could be a mere chance occurrence. Many psychical researchers in the early 1920s admitted to the weakness of the available evidence. Thus G.N.M. Tyrell, then a member of the SPR, wrote:

“It is evident that the value attached to a spontaneous case will depend enormously on individual judgment. Anyone with a bias against such evidence will find plenty of ways in which he may attempt to explain it away” (Tyrell, *ibid*, 25).

The researchers understood that skepticism of the veracity of precognitive experience could not be laid to rest merely by the compilation of more testimony under the same conditions. This set the stage for the experimental phase of research of PNC, a stage which aimed at proving, *inter alia*, that the non-inferential nature of precognitive awareness is neither coincidental nor sensory.

1.2.2. Experimental Evidence

The experimental evidence for the occurrence of precognition is varied and extensive. I will therefore recount three experiments common to most of the relevant literature and consider these to be representative of the various tests. Then I will elaborate on a recent experimental model which has been applied with remarkable results.

These experiments describe the three main methodological stages developed by researchers to test precognitive ability. The simplest experiments that produced significant evidence of this ability were conducted in the para-psychological laboratory at Duke University in the 1920s and 1930s by J.B. Rhine and his team. In these, a pack of “zender” cards consisting of twenty five cards were used. One of five different symbols is embossed on the front side of each card, and there are five of each kind in the pack. The back of the cards has identical symbols. An agent is invited to guess the order of cards as they will be in a pack which will be shuffled in ten minutes time. The

pack is shuffled and the order of the cards is recorded and checked against the agent's guesses. This type of experiment gave results, over many trials, with some agents quite outside the range of chance as an explanation (Rhine, 1934, 35-52).

Work in this tradition is still carried out, but of late it has been partly overshadowed by experiments utilizing electronic machinery for the presentation and randomization of target sequences and for the recording of the guesses of subjects. Extremely influential in this case have been some experiments by Schmidt. Schmidt used small numbers of subjects in two experiments. The targets, in each experiment, were four electric lamps of different colours. In the first experiment (i), the subjects' task was to indicate, by pressing the appropriate button, which lamp they thought would light next; and in the second experiment (ii), subjects were to pick a lamp which would not light. The lamp which in fact lit (or did not) was determined by the closure of an electronic switch which designated each lamp in turn a quarter of a million times per second. Between the pressing of the button and the closure of the switch there was a delay about one tenth of a second. This lapse of time was determined by the decay of a piece of radio-active substance, a process which, as far as is known, is quite random. Three subjects in (i) achieved results such that the odds against its being due to chance were greater than 500 million to one. In (ii), their success was such that the odds exceeded 10 thousand million to one (Schmidt, 1969, 99-108).

The third set of experiments to be considered was carried out by Whately Carrington. His method was as follows: on ten successive evenings he made and hung in his study drawings of certain concrete objects. The process of opening mathematical tables at random determined his choice of an object and using this to determine at what page a dictionary should be opened. The first concrete object on that page was selected. The drawing of this object remained hanged from 7 pm to 9 am the following morning. During this period, a number of subjects in England, Holland, America and Scotland, were asked to reproduce it. A third party assessed the resemblance of the attempted reproductions to the original. The results indicated that as the occasion of display of a target was approached, the proportion of resemblances began to rise, reaching a maximum at the time of display and falling off gradually after this occasion (Carrington, 1946, 28-32). The increased ratio of success indicated appreciable precognition of a target which had not then been chosen by a chance method 48 hours or 24 hours later. It would be possible to continue giving examples from the field of experimental work in Europe and America that demonstrates undeniable facts of the authenticity of precognition. But the three sets of experiments described must suffice for this purpose.

Now, I want to mention the Psi-Meditated Instrumental Response (PMIR) model developed by Rex Stanford, Director of the Center for Parapsychological Research at Austin, Texas to analyze laboratory findings on PNC and to suggest experimentally testable propositions about how these findings relate to life experience. Among other things, the model suggests that at least some of the meaningful events in life, which we usually dismiss as sheer coincidence, may be mediated by PNC and actively produced by the human organism in accord with its needs and typical modes of adaptation. Thus the model gives serious consideration to the responsibility the psychical researcher has of proposing and testing ideas about the functional significance of paranormal abilities. Much evidence obtained from the application of this model (Stanford, 1978, 426-446) suggests a psychological and biological basis for some of the phenomena as “para...”. PMIR suggests that these phenomena may be more frequent and integral in the nature of things than we have hitherto imagined. We will attend closely to the question whether these phenomena are best described as “para...” or not in Chapter Four. For the moment, let us look at the evidence from Africa.

1.3. The African Experience

Although no concerted effort at research into the paranormal has been undertaken in Africa, my research indicates that the belief in these phenomena is common to most of the cultures in Africa. The African may think the facts (of a report of the occurrence) of these phenomena strange, but they will barely strike him as absurd. Although my research is only on Ghanaian traditional belief in these phenomena, I have good reason to believe that the Ghanaian experience is common to many of the cultures in Africa. This assumption must not be taken as a declaration that the traditional setting of the whole of Africa subscribes to one homogenous metaphysic. There are, even in Ghana, a variety of traditional cultures whose metaphysical foundations differ in some respects. Nevertheless Kofi Antubam in his *Ghana's Heritage of Culture* ascribes the belief in paranormal agents and phenomena to all these cultures (Antubam, 1963, 23ff). We may justifiably, then, claim that this belief is common to the traditional cultures in Ghana. My interview with some medicine-men from various parts of Ghana provides support to this claim.

The traditional Ghanaian world-view or theory of being is common to most cultures in Africa. Many anthropological accounts of traditional African societies suggest that divination, witchcraft and spirit mediumship are common to all African communities (Gyekye, 1987, 202). Mbiti remarks that:

“Every African who has grown up in the traditional environment will, no doubt, know something about this mystical power which often is experienced, or manifests itself, in the form of magic, divination, witchcraft and mysterious phenomena that seem to defy immediate scientific explanation” (Mbiti, 1990, 189).

He then goes on to give many accounts of reported experiences of paranormal events all over Africa (Mbiti, *ibid*, 190-198). Furthermore, Gyekye contends that aspects of divination and spirit mediumship correspond to the various species of PNC delineated by Western psychical research, because “...the African diviner claims knowledge of the thoughts of other persons and of certain facts that have been acquired without use of the normal senses” (Gyekye, 1987, 203). He adds “...judging from the popularity of diviners and mediums and from the assiduity with which people in an African community seek certain kinds of knowledge from them, it can legitimately be claimed that paranormal cognition is recognized by and large as a mode of knowing” (Gyekye, *ibid*).

In his book *Juju in My Life*, J.H. Neal, an Englishman, recounts his experiences with mystical forces while living in Ghana. I will recount one of the experiences that he relates to in his book.

During the construction of the harbour at Tema, Neal was called upon to advise on some security measures at the site of construction. While there, a supervisor (a European) complained to Neal that one tree was giving him trouble; that all mechanical equipment had failed to uproot the tree. It was a small tree. An African foreman at the site insisted that it was a ‘magic’ tree, which could be removed only if and when the spirit of the living in it agreed to forsake it and go to another tree. A traditional ‘priest’ (probably a diviner) was summoned, who asked for a sacrifice of three sheep and an offering of three bottles of gin to be given to the spirit, and an amount of money as his payment. When the sheep had been killed and their blood poured at the bottom of the tree, and the gin poured as libation at the base, the diviner became a medium and conversed with the spirit, persuading it to leave that tree and go to another tree. When the rite was over, the European supervisor ordered tractors and bulldozers to uproot the tree, but the diviner stopped him

telling him that a few labourers could pull out the tree. This they did with great ease, to the amazement of European spectators and satisfaction of African onlookers (Neal, 1966, 19-24).

S.A. Danquah, a professor of psychology at the University of Ghana, reports a contemporary case of Psychokinesis.

While serving as a clinical psychologist at the Teaching Hospital of the university's medical school, he was involved in a case in which a woman confessed to being a witch. To test the veracity of her confession, Danquah asked the woman for a demonstration. The woman traveled with him to a forest and showed him a tree, about 30 meters high. He saw a pot resting at the crest of the tree. The woman asked him to walk a certain distance, saying that on his return the pot will be on the ground. He did, and came back four minutes later to find a pot on the ground. Danquah claims that he has every reason to believe that the pot he found on the ground was the same pot on top of the tree, but that he cannot explain how the woman succeeded in bringing it down (Danquah, interview, 11/7/99).

My own experience of these seemingly inexplicable phenomena is this:

The officiating priest of a shrine at Larteh, *Ɔkomfo* Kwaku Kwapong, set out to demonstrate to me that "there are (strange) occurrences in this world". I experienced what I am about to describe at his shrine in December 1998. But after my interview with him on the 28th of April 1999, I needed another demonstration. And he agreed to perform it: we were in a room, roofed by concrete, without windows. The door served as the only means of entrance/exit to the room. A piece of white cloth divided the room into two compartments, and we sat on one side, I facing the door and he facing the white-cloth curtain. He drew the curtain on one side and asked me to examine the other half of the room for signs of any entrance/exit to that part of the room. I satisfied myself that there was none. He drew the curtain to partition the room again and we re-occupied our positions. He now began ringing a bell and chanting. After about three to four minutes, I heard a whistle on the other side of the partition. He stopped the bell-ringing/chanting, and whistled back. This communication by whistling continued for about a minute or two. Then he brought forth a pot

containing what seemed to be water, applied it to my eyelids and drew back the cloth-partition to expose the other side of the room.

Standing there was a creature, about 90 centimeters high, covered from the shoulders down to the floor in a smock, which also covered the arms, so that its body was totally hidden from my sight. Its head was bowed towards the chest, and from the head threshed meshes of hair dangled onto the floor, so that I could not see its face either. I was told by *Ɔkomfo* Kwapong that the creature was a dwarf, one of the three which instructed him in the power of herbs when he was isolated in the forest for three years, learning his profession. What I can say for certain is this: I cannot think of any usual way by which this creature entered the room.

In regards to precognition I will recount only one event reported by *Ɔkyeame* Darko, a senior linguist of the chief of Larteh, Akwapim.

In October 1958, while teaching at Konongo (in the Ashanti region), *Ɔkyeame* Darko received a letter from his father, then a farmer at Asuboi, summoning him home for Christmas. He arrived on December 17th only to find out that his father had sent a similar message to his four other children. By 19th December all five children had arrived at Larteh. His father, then showing no signs of illness, informed that he will not survive the end of the year, and proceeded to distribute his property amongst his children. Asked why he believed in his imminent death, the father answered only that it was a strong feeling he had. The children, thinking that their father's anxiety was unjustified, assumed the reason for it to be fatigue and old age, and were greatly amused by it all. On the 27th of December, around 4 pm and just before he was served the evening meal, the father complained of headache and drowsiness. He was rushed to the Tetteh Quarshie Memorial Hospital some 12 km away, where he died just over an hour after his arrival.

Regardless of the lack of experimental work on these claims, African philosophers have given some attention to paranormal phenomena. In this connection, two articles deserve mention. The first is *On the Existence of Witches*, written by Sophie Oluwole. Mrs. Oluwole, in this paper, is critical of Western skepticism about witchcraft. She denies that the belief in paranormal phenomena can be dismissed simply because

Western science has not been able empirically to verify them. She points out that the assumption underlying the current requirements of empirical verification, the assumption that information can be transmitted and received by human beings only through the recognized channels of the senses, is subject to amendment in the future. She contends that the assumptions of science result from our epistemological rather than an ontological requirement (see page five in the Introduction). What this means is that scientific criteria for reality, truth etc. are, at best, only good working hypotheses for the present, not indubitable truths about nature. Hence to declare something unreal or false just because there is no place for it in contemporary science is to present a logically invalid argument. Oluwole then asserts that the reality of witchcraft power can be scientifically proved by the following three methods, arguing that the positive result of any one of them would be sufficient to establish the reality of witchcraft:

- a. we may be given an explanation of the *modus operandi* of witchcraft power
- b. we may experimentally establish a causal relationship between the postulated paranormal power and the event that proves the practical efficiency of this power
- c. we may show a practical manipulation of the power (Oluwole, *ibid*, 367)

Oluwole then asserts that the African's claim that her belief in the reality of the paranormal forces falls within the logic of Western science is based on methods (ii) and (iii). If by "the logic of Western science", Oluwole means formal logic, then I disagree with Oluwole on this. Although I believe that the African employs rational methods which border on the scientific to substantiate her belief in the reality I do not think that Oluwole is right in claiming that these methods fall within the limits of the logic of Western science, which defines truth only in terms of the law of identity. These issues will be probed sufficiently in the next chapter and in the last.

For now, we must note that the African, through various experiences, can validly infer the existence of the paranormal. She may point to the fact of the phenomena by her knowledge of their effects and from here seek to derive their possible causes. She can go on to strengthen her claim by applying the third method (manipulating his power). Here too, there exist abundant claims of the ability to control and manipulate these powers. Medicine-men, diviners etc. claim knowledge of these powers, and there is enough testimony to the apparent genuineness of some of these claims.

Thus, the African's belief in the paranormal is due to the fact that he has testimony of its practice: he can use it over and over again, he can control it and he can teach it. He can show that his belief in the reality of PNC cannot be ruled out on purely logical grounds. We will see shortly that his belief cannot be ruled out on empirical grounds either. If this is the case, then he is justified in claiming knowledge based on that belief. It must be stated again that in claiming good reason for the belief, I follow Oluwole. In other words I agree with her that being able to explain, in scientific terms, the modus operandi of the factors that produce an event is not a necessary condition for knowing that that event is real.

The second article alluded to earlier on was written by Peter Bodunrin as a rejoinder to Oluwole's paper. In this rejoinder Bodunrin differs from Oluwole on at least two points:

- a. on the value of science to knowledge and
- b. on the question of the sufficient conditions for a scientific proof.

He takes the view that a proper proof constitutes meeting item (i) on Oluwole's list above. Further, Bodunrin makes it plain that scientific criteria are the only legitimate arbiter of both the rationality and the truth of beliefs. He writes:

“In our time, rationality is judged by the standards of logic and science and what both science and logic demand are self-consistent procedures for the formation of beliefs (Bodunrin, 1978, 44).

In regard to their rationality, Bodunrin vindicates the claims of psychical research on the grounds that they conform to scientific methods: “the investigations were carried out according to scientific methods, methods which we now consider reliable, and by experiments whose scientific competence is not in doubt” (Bodunrin, *ibid*). If so, then Bodunrin seems to be admitting that items (ii) and (iii) on Oluwole's list are adequate to establish the rationality of PNC claims, items which both psychical researchers and African believers meet. But in Bodunrin's view, the truth of these claims can only be established by meeting (i). Thus, according to him, the existence of a theoretical entity is proven to be scientifically true if and only if an explanation of the modus operandi of that entity is available. He writes:

“A scientist postulates the presence of an entity when he notices a gap in the explanatory theory, i.e. when a theory demands it...Gaps in the well accepted explanatory theories of science together with a massive background of accumulated knowledge must have led to the postulation of the neutrino and of the positrons. The theoretical entities in traditional metaphysics are *deus ex machina*. The validity of their postulation is not tested and their necessity not established” (Bodunrin, *ibid*, 43).

“It is common place to accept a belief as true”, he adds shortly afterwards, “if it corresponds to the facts. The difficulty is that correspondence to facts cannot be used to establish the existence of psi (paranormal) abilities without question begging. It cannot be used to verify the truth of beliefs in unknown entities or uncharted areas of experience” (Bodunrin, *ibid*, 45).

I think there are many strands in Bodunrin’s thinking which can legitimately be controverted. First, on his conception of the prowess of scientific methods, I wonder whether in claiming that scientific criteria are the only arbiter of rationality and truth, Bodunrin is not claiming that thought in all other epistemological frameworks, i.e. pre-scientific thought is false, irrational etc. just because of its pre-scientific nature? Is there no other framework, save the scientific, that possesses “self-consistent procedures for the formulations of beliefs”? Bodunrin’s views would seem to answer this question in the affirmative, but such an answer would be mistaken because such an answer would be contending that a pre-scientific insight into medicine is useless. Yet, homeopathy claims its fair share of contemporary medical practice in many Western societies.

We may ask also if it is true, as Bodunrin claims, that a scientific theory is legitimate if and only if it can explain the *modus operandi* of the entities it postulates for explanatory purposes. I firmly believe that he errs on this. It is a common view among philosophers of science that, for instance, Newton’s Laws of Motion (which *inter alia*, postulate the force of gravity) merely provide descriptive generalizations of unobservable entities. Harre, for instance, characterizes Newton’s Laws as a species of “Reticular Theories” and affirm the scientific legitimacy of such theories (Harre, 1964, 8-20). These reticular theories are explanatory hypotheses whose confirmation is purely descriptive, not conceptual. The force of gravity, then, is not responsible for the apple’s fall; i.e. the cause in the meta-descriptive sense is still unknown. Therefore, the claim that there is a force in nature called Gravity is a mere belief legitimized each time an apple falls. In fact Newton himself, towards the end of his life, reputedly

expressed his dissatisfaction with the unexplained status of gravitation, and made suggestions as to the hidden order of things that might account for it (Harre, 1964, 106-108). This hidden order has eluded human understanding up to date. Yet Newton's force of gravitation is in brisk scientific business. Another case in point is that the effectiveness of aspirin has long been enjoyed, though how this happens remains a mystery. Therefore the claim that a conceptual understanding of the modus operandi of a causal factor is a necessary condition of scientific knowledge is not justified by the facts.

Again, Bodunrin claims that we shall be begging the question if we use the facts of psychical research etc. to verify the truth of beliefs in paranormal phenomena. Why? The verification principle, one of the basic principles of scientific empiricist doctrine, states that an entity or event is true if and only if it is scientifically provable to be demonstrable. Much of the findings of psychical research meet this test of demonstrability; a man is called upon to demonstrate his telepathic or precognitive abilities under conditions which only telepathic or precognitive abilities can be genuinely demonstrated. He does this again and again. I must admit that I do not see Bodunrin's point of begging the question. I do not see why the correspondence of precognitive beliefs to verified facts (later events) cannot serve as sufficient demonstration of precognitive ability.

Finally, I wonder whether Bodunrin himself is not guilty of begging the question in his claim that the methods of physical science are not the only arbiter of truth regarding paranormal phenomena. According to him truth about nature is determinable only by the standards of science. But the point in question is: in the face of the available evidence for the occurrence of paranormal events, is the proposition that the current standards of science determine all the truth about nature not questionable? If this is the relevant question, then to claim that the same proposition being questioned must judge the legitimacy of the questioning (i.e. truth of these phenomena) is to place the cart before the horse. It seems to me therefore that Bodunrin's conclusion is contained in his premises, and the believer in PNC rejects these premises.

But in spite of these weaknesses, Bodunrin's article throws some light on an important point: we need an understanding of these events, and since the scientific method has been employed in the attempt to establish their reality, a scientific approach to how they work is worth pursuing. After all, the current laws and methods of physical science do not exhaust the concept 'scientific activity'. And perhaps by admitting the reality of a power that we don't understand, and by manipulating this power repeatedly, we might be able to discover the laws that govern it.

The cases reported in the African setting can be categorized as spontaneous cases. The ideas generated from these cases should, thus, be studied in the experimental setting. A major reason for this would be to eliminate extraneous factors so that the 'truly' relevant factors can be identified. Let us now assess the experimental evidence against some negative hypothesis employed by skeptics against the spontaneous cases before we can make confident claims on the reality of precognition.

1.4. Skepticism of the Paranormal

The attitude to paranormal phenomena of those who subscribe fully to the principle and ideals of physical science is best expressed by Richard Rorty, an avowed physicalist, in an analogy between the entities postulated by proponents of the paranormal and those postulated by physical science. Rorty writes:

“A certain primitive tribe holds the view that illnesses are caused by demons - a different demon for each type of illness. When asked what more is known about these demons they reply that certain members of the tribe - the witch doctors - can see, after a meal of sacred mushrooms, various (intangible) humanoid forms on or near the bodies of patients...if we encountered such a tribe, we would be inclined to tell them that there are no demons. We would tell that diseases caused by germs, viruses and the like. We would add that the witch doctors were not seeing demons, but merely having hallucinations. We could be quite right...” (Rorty, 1971, 178-179)

The only meaning of demons that Rorty provides us is 'intangible humanoid forms'. Therefore, our response must address itself to this definition. We understand Rorty to be saying that under certain conditions (eating certain mushrooms), certain creatures, otherwise inaccessible to sight, appear to these witch doctors. But where in this is the proof that these witch doctors are hallucinating, and therefore that there are no demons? All the physicalist can show, from Rorty's example that (a) the presence of demons is constantly correlated with that of germs, viruses and that (b) certain conditions sometimes make people see demons. This is hardly sufficient to show that there are no demons. The most that this shows is that if we refuse to believe in demons then we can have another account of the perceptual report of the witch doctors. Finally, Rorty seems to be making a universal claim with regards to the cause of illnesses. In other words, the tribe holds the view that all illnesses are caused by

“germs, viruses and the like”. This view cannot be attributed to Akan thinkers. As will be seen in Chapter Two (e), most Akan thinkers believe that some diseases are caused by microbes whereas others are brought about by non-physical causes.

Another exemplification of the physicalist’s attitude to paranormal events is provided by Anthony Flew in his book *A New Approach to Psychical Research*. In this work, Flew advocates the superiority of the physicalist picture of the universe to any other picture in the following words:

“For those of us for whom science has driven the gorgons and the harpies out of the world, and revealed or imposed a new order - uncapricious, impersonal and majestic - upon the chaos of experience: the suggestion (that paranormal events are real) is a nightmare. Then to bring out something of the difference between a scientific sort of explanation and a non-scientific sort, consider such a people as the Azande whose world is permeated by witchcraft. Their ideas for what questions it is possible and proper to ask, of what requires explanation, and of what counts as an adequate explanation are utterly different from those scientifically educated people, and immeasurably inferior to them” (Flew, 1953, 121-122)

The question I would like to ask is: why are Zande explanatory theories inferior to the scientific ones? The only answer to this question that we can elicit from Flew’s statement above is because Zande explanatory theories are outside the scientific paradigm. Flew’s position then takes a circular form; that is, his argument that the scientific framework is necessary for adequate explanations cannot be formulated if adequate explanations are not ‘scientific’. His argument is reduced to the claim that judgments are ‘scientific because adequately explained because they are scientific’. This is an unsatisfactory answer to our question, but perhaps this is the best any physicalist can do. His best, however, does not suppress the vitality of the question: why are the Zande explanations inferior to the scientific? What independent criterion for ‘adequate explanation’ is being evoked here?

What we are questioning is the presupposition underlying the scientist’s assurance that “x caused y” is meaningful only if we can find a continuous chain of physical events between x and y - that physical stimuli emanating from x acted directly (necessarily) upon y. We will, in Chapters Two and Four of this work, discuss these presuppositions underlying physical science. But, in the meantime, it seems to me that the success of physics in formulating exact natural laws to explain nature has made the physicalist believe that it is somehow necessary that nature presents everywhere

regularities that make for exact formulations in the explanation of natural events. This is a belief that has credence only in the context of a narrow conception of 'reality' and of 'truth'.

All known skepticisms of the paranormal can be brought under four categories. These are:

1.4.1. The hypothesis of chance

Skeptics of paranormal events often evoke the contempt of chance. The skeptics deny to these events are causal principles, holding that all the positive evidence in favor of PNC has occurred by persistent accident stretching through varied conditions in different cultures over a wide range of subjects at different times. But even if the spontaneous cases are vulnerable to this hypothesis I believe that the experimental results show its falsity. To ensure that the events do not occur by chance alone, all the investigations mentioned employed the mathematical evaluative principle of probability. The calculations of chance employed by researchers from the 1920s onwards fulfill the requirements for general practice among statisticians (Rhine, 1934, 150). Again, in 1937, the American Institute of Mathematical Research affirmed that assuming his experiments had been properly performed; Rhine's statistical analyses (which became the standard for later researchers) were essentially valid (Mundle, 1967, 55). And with the recent growth of meta-analysis of these findings, all the basic phenomena delineated by psychical research have been statistically vindicated (Utts, 1991, 363). Of course philosophy is well accustomed to the view that a probable occurrence is never a sufficient condition for a necessary and universal causal principle. Hume for instance asserts that even constant conjunctions are not necessarily causal connections:

“Shall we then rest contented with these two relations of contiguity and succession as affording a complete idea of causation? By no means - an object may be contiguous prior to another, without being considered as its cause. There is a necessary connection to be taken into consideration and that relation

is of much greater importance, than any of the other two above - mentioned” (Hume, 1975, 46).

With this statement, Hume reveals the problematic nature of the empiricist’s claim to the understanding of causality. But although Hume is right in pointing out that our theoretical understanding of causality is inadequate, it cannot be denied that our present practical understanding of it is sufficient for the purpose of knowledge. Probability is used to establish cause in much of the social and biological sciences (Doyal and Harris, 1986, 52-70). And on this understanding, psychical researchers assert that a reasonably great number of cases have been found to conform to an established scientific method of experiment and a traditional method of analysis of testimony. And they claim that this is adequate test for a causal principle in paranormal phenomena. Therefore since the assertion of a causal principle has been sufficiently established on probabilistic grounds, the chance hypothesis cannot stand.

1.4.2. The Fraud and/or Incompetence Hypothesis

Once the chance theory has been ruled out, the question of human reliability arises: if the reporters of spontaneous cases are not fraudulent, can the same be said about the people involved in the experiments? And assuming their sincerity and competence, could there exist certain loopholes in their techniques and processes such as might invalidate their conclusions?

With regards to fraud, it is my opinion that psychical research, like most academic pursuits, is primarily a search for truth about nature. Therefore, if it reveals phenomena outside the normal scheme of things it is only prudent, if we truly desire to know the truth about nature, that we come to be open-minded enough to admit and ponder over the revealed data. With regards to the subjects of the experiments recounted, all of them were witnessed almost entirely during the test. And the responsibility for observing them was undertaken by different people all with an interest in the authenticity of the test results. Therefore, the fraud hypothesis may also be dropped. Writing in 1972, Koestler observes that there is hardly a country in the (Western) world which does not have one or several university departments engaged in para-psychological research and therefore the fraud hypothesis, if true, would have to involve not several hundred but thousands of respectable scientists (Koestler, 1974, 15). But it would be unreasonable to suppose that such a conspiracy is real. Hence the fraud hypothesis must be dropped.

To meet the claims of incompetence one need only point to the probity of researchers at work: there were frequent checks on points of procedure, eliminating any possible loophole found in technique. Rhine's opinion on this hypothesis is this:

“It is also probable that some errors have been made in recording, totaling and computing values. If so, such errors are at most of trifling consequence. The general ground has been covered too often and by too many individuals for serious error that would vitiate an important conclusion” (Rhine, 1934, 154).

I share Rhine's opinion. On the strength of the evidence it should require an unintelligent doubt to make room for disbelief in the competence of the researchers. Therefore the hypothesis of incompetence is not justified and should be rejected.

1.4.3. Rational Inference

Another reason for ignoring the pre-experimental data was that there might be sensory indices from which a subject might rationally infer to produces his guesses. But in the light of the experimental evidence, it is plain that this claim cannot stand. Neither of the mentioned experiments provides room for rational inference. In view of these, we must disallow this hypothesis as well.

1.4.4. Replicability

The final negative hypothesis worthy of consideration is that paranormal events are difficult to confirm in a way that science has come to demand for questionable or marginal claims. I think that this claim can be rationally defended only if one's criterion of justification is the exactitude demanded of the physical sciences. But these sciences are not the whole of science. Honorton, for instance, reports that a review of PNC experiments reported during the period 1934-1939 (approximately 3.3 million trials in all) indicates that sixty one percent of these were replicable, and that the rate of replication was statistically significant. Honorton claims that “this is 60 times the number of significant studies we would expect if the significant results were due to chance error” (Honorton, 1978, 487). Honorton goes on to say that “it has become clear to me that the replication status of parapsychological findings must be viewed within the larger perspective of replication in other areas of research” (Honorton, *ibid*).

What Honorton means, I think, is that these phenomena are not the only events in which strict replicability is unfeasible. In fact, it is only in the hard sciences that this sort of replication is demanded. In the medical i.e. the behavioral and the social sciences, such a demand would be the exception rather than the rule. Strict replicability and predictability are not the sufficient criteria in these sciences. Thus “as we move further away from psychophysics into the realms of personality and social behavior, the harder it becomes to satisfy the criterion of strict replicability at will” (Beloff, 1994, 9). The same applies to some scientific studies in the Arts e.g. history. Yet the methods and findings of historians are not derided as “false”. Since most of the efforts to discount and discredit the findings of psychical research are made to ward off the threat these findings present to physical science, one might have thought that these skeptics should, as good Popperians², pay special attention to claims that seem to confute the physicalist schema. Unfortunately, they prefer the easier option of simply ignoring them.

The hypotheses discussed in this section are the main ones that conflict with the hypothesis that paranormal phenomena are real. In fact the persistence of any one of them would constitute sufficient grounds for doubting the reality of these events. But the available evidence of experimental research strongly suggests that these hypotheses are without support. Therefore paranormal events seem to stand without being subverted by a significant hypothesis. In fact Arthur Koestler, after reviewing the evidence for ESP, asserts that the question, “does ESP exist”? be regarded as settled on the basis of the work of psychical researchers. He suggests that the controversy should be shifted to the question “how does it work”? (Koestler, 1974, 23). We will attend to this later question in due course. For now, however, I will proceed on the assumption that there is a *prima facie* case for the reality of paranormal events. I now turn to a metaphysical system that does not fully endorse “the fundamental ideas and principles upon which modern science has been built” and does not deny the paranormal. I will argue that the claims of this metaphysical framework can be legitimately sustained in the face of its consistency with other doctrines of reality and its rationality.

² In his book *Conjectures and Refutations*, Sir Karl Popper advances the view that falsifiability is the only criterion for distinguishing legitimate scientific theories from illegitimate ones. According to him, however much evidence is amassed to confirm a theory is not sufficient to demonstrate its truth, yet just one contrary instance can show that it is false. For a Popperian, then, evidence against a theory should always be of more interest than a mountain of favorable evidence for it. What I am saying is that as good Popperians, physical scientists are constrained to pay serious attention to paranormal phenomena than they seem to be doing.

CHAPTER TWO

2. The Philosophical Foundations of the Paranormal in Akan Thought

2.1. Akan Philosophy

I intend, in this chapter, to undertake an inquiry into the metaphysical presuppositions of the Akan people in order to ascertain how these presuppositions help in explaining the paranormal and in allowing us to give it the status of a legitimate form of knowledge. It is important to our work to examine these culture-specific metaphysical concepts because they form and inform the Akan people's understanding of what is real and knowable. Therefore an attempt to analyze their conception of reality and knowledge in terms other than theirs is likely to occasion inconsistencies in the exposition. Let me give an example to illustrate what I mean: The Akan concept '*sunsum*' is usually translated into English as 'spirit'. But if the word spirit is the best rendition of *sunsum*, then the 'spirit' that is *sunsum* differs from the spirit of post-Cartesian Western thought because *sunsum* is not exclusively immaterial. As will be seen shortly, it is the nature of *sunsum* to be immediately inaccessible to sense experience yet, in spite of this, *sunsum* is capable of physical manifestation in space-time.

The nature of reality for the traditional Akan thinker demands a rigorous analysis and synthesis of another kind that requires him to unveil, in his explanation of paranormal phenomena, a conception of the dimensions of space and time different from the logical structure of Western spatio-temporal coordinates. In this chapter we will follow the Akan thinker into the complexity of his conceptions, and show why they are tenable.

2.2. Some Features of Akan Metaphysics: Cosmology and Ontology

The predominant interpretation of the Akan view of the universe reveals the following three essential features.

The first essential postulate of Akan cosmology is that existence comprises visible and invisible realms such that there are things that really exist and yet are imperceptible.

Secondly, Akan thought postulates a universe containing a hierarchy of beings, with *Onyame* (the Supreme Being) at the top. In descending order from *Onyame* comes the *abosom* (deities), the *Nsamanfo* (ancestral spirits), human beings and physical objects. Subject to minor variations, this hierarchical structure of Akan ontology has been asserted to professional philosophers (i.e. Gyekye and Danquah) and anthropologists (i.e. Minkus) alike.

Some commentators have attributed a dualistic universe to the Akans, assigning all the categories of being beyond human beings to be the immaterial/spiritual realm of existence, whereas observable entities like trees have been consigned to the physical realm. I would like to suggest here that although the Akan thinker affirms that the universe is composed of visible and invisible beings, it is doubtful whether he implies by this that these aspects of existence are two distinctly separate categories as the notion of dualism would suggest. (The as yet unsolved mind-body problem in Western philosophy is sufficient evidence that interactionism is no solution to the problems that beset dualism). Rather, the Akan thinker conceives of these two realms as two points on a continuum, and not distinct realms. This is because an *obosom*, for example, which in a strictly dualistic interpretation of Akan cosmology will belong to the immaterial realm, is believed to be capable of physical manifestation and as such, enter into a visible world. On the other hand a tree, which in a universe would be conceived as a physical entity, is believed to be constituted of a spirit by the Akan thinker. This makes a clear-cut dichotomy of the immaterial/material or spiritual/physical in Akan ontology implausible. We will return to this shortly.

The third essential postulate of Akan cosmology is that the Akan universe is endowed with varying degrees of force of power, all of which derive ultimately from *Onyame*. Gyekye reports that,

“This force or power is *sunsum*...in this metaphysic all created things, that is, natural objects, have or contain *sunsum*. Every deity (*obosom*) is a *sunsum* but not vice versa. *Sunsum*, then, on my interpretation, appears to be a generic concept, it appears to be a universal spirit, manifesting itself differently in the various beings and objects in the natural world” (Gyekye, *ibid*, p72-73).

Gyekye informs us of other senses in which *sunsum* is used. He says

“First it is used to refer to any self-conscious subject whose activities are initiated self-consciously. In this sense *Onyame*, the deities, and the ancestors are said to be spirits (*sunsum*), that is spiritual beings with intelligence and will. Second, it is used to refer to the mystical powers believed to exist in the world. These powers are held to constitute the inner essences or intrinsic properties of natural objects, and are believed to be contained in those objects” (Gyekye, *ibid*, 73).

Thus, on Gyekye’s interpretation, *sunsum* denotes both

- a. a conscious being and
- b. a power that constitutes the essence of all existents

Gyekye’s analysis of *sunsum* has been upheld by many of the traditional thinkers with whom I have discussed the subject. Furthermore, Gyekye’s views are in consonance with those of Minkus, who also affirms the dual interpretation of *sunsum* in Akan thought. She writes:

“As well as designating the activating essence of particular beings and things, it (*sunsum*) also refers to the general power to act in non-ordinary, non-physical ways” (Minkus, 114-115).

I would like to say at the outset that it is the *sunsum* as an all-pervading force in the universe that I will be mostly concerned with in this work; for two reasons:

First, I think that ‘a conscious being’ (Gyekye) and ‘the activating essence of particular beings and things’ (Minkus) are subsumable under ‘a power that constitutes the essence of all existents’. I am suggesting that we interpret Akan cosmology as asserting that the element (*sunsum*) internal to any self-conscious subject that empowers a person to initiate an act self-consciously is a species of a universal phenomenon. In other words, we are redefining, on Akan terms, a conscious being as a being, which belongs to that class of existents whose essence, is a power (to act in the

world) that is contingent upon a universal natural power. I will argue fully for this position in the next sub-section of this chapter.

According to the traditional Akan thinker, then, what makes any existent what it is, is possession of this force: the attribute *sunsum* belongs to a human being by virtue of his being human, and likewise to a tree by virtue of its being a tree. According to this ontology, it is the essence of a physical being to be active. As such, a physical being can be a causal agent in the world. Thus Minkus writes that:

“They (i.e. all existents) are similarly unified by their indispensable possession of *sunsum*...the concept of *sunsum* accounts for the basic similarity of all existents, which are alike in being spirited or active. The universe of traditional Akan thought contains no inert objects in the sense of matter incapable of awareness or action” (Minkus, 114).

This notion that every existent is composed of active power constitutes a difference between the metaphysic of the Akans and other metaphysical systems. Gyekye notes this difference in the following passage:

“In saying that natural objects contain *sunsum* or power Akan thinkers mean to attribute to them an intrinsic property, namely the property of activity or an activating principle. If this interpretation of the Akan position is correct, then it rejects by implication the view held by Cartesians and others in Western philosophy and also in Islamic philosophy that matter is essentially passive or inert and that a creative divine being must therefore activate it (Gyekye, *ibid*, 75).

The difference between the Cartesian and the Akan views bears on how matter is activated. As will be seen shortly, on the Akan view, it is not only a transcended intelligence and the absolute ground of existence (God) that can activate matter. A human being, by force of training, can also identify and utilize the activating principle in physical objects. Let us now look at what the Akan thinker means by matter being active.

2.3. *Sunsum* as Conscious Energy: Some Preliminary Remarks

What is *sunsum*? What do we mean by *sunsum* is a ‘power’ or ‘force’ that pervades the universe? Is this ‘force’ physical, spiritual or something that does not strictly belong to either of these two categories?

According to the Akan thinker, reality comprises of visible and invisible aspects. Most traditional Akan sages and modern philosophers alike admit that *sunsum* belongs to the invisible aspect of reality. It is, according to many, a force that is concealed from the immediate senses, something shrouded or veiled, something which the senses can access but only after the act of removing the cover which veils *sunsum* from immediate perception. This veil may be removed, as will soon be seen, by training or by the conscious (or unconscious) assumption of a certain mental state. On this interpretation then, Akan thought posits *sunsum* as a force which is accessible to sense experience only under certain conditions.

So far, then, we are only allowed to infer from the beliefs about *sunsum* that:

- a. it is possibly accessible to the senses, and
- b. that it is contained in the world, meaning that it is part of the spatio-temporal schema

But is it a spiritual entity? If we ascribe spirituality to *sunsum*, we must be understood as using ‘spirit’ in a philosophical sense since our aim is to provide a philosophical elucidation of the concept. I will like to state explicitly here that the spirituality that the Akan thinker conceives to be the essential attribute of *sunsum* cannot be identified with the Cartesian notion of ‘spirit’, which is the most successful conception of the term in Western philosophy. I think that defining the ontology of the *sunsum* as coinciding with Descartes’ *res cogitans*, is problematic for the following reasons:

First of all, the word “spirit” in its common philosophical use, and especially in post-Cartesian philosophy, refers to a substance which, by nature, is not accessible to sense experience. It is also, by nature, not susceptible to the system of coordinates that define the spatio-temporal schema. As such, I think that the concept ‘spirit’ is inadequate to express fully the meaning of the Akan *sunsum* which is conceived of as a force capable of manifesting, and influencing events, in the physical world.

One reason why I believe ‘spirit’ mismatches ‘*sunsum*’ is that ‘spirit’ in the Western philosophical context under discussion has been distinctly separated from the realm of matter. Yet I believe that certain entities in Akan cosmology prohibit such a drastic separation, such that any conceptual analysis of these that ignores this prohibition encounters logical problems such as ‘the mind/body problem’ and ‘the problem of

other minds'. The concepts that define such entities can only be interpreted successfully within the coherent framework of specific Akan conceptualizations, and this framework may reveal complicated processes on all of which we cannot attain clarity with the logical principle of identity. This is precisely because this principle, being primarily concerned with the form and not the content of thought, is ill equipped to capture all the ramifications of a dynamic concept like *sunsum*. I believe *sunsum* is a concept, a deep understanding of which we cannot reach by cutting, with the razor of formal logic, through the layers of ideas and practices in which it is embedded.

On Akan terms, *sunsum* is a force located in this world, and is accessible to sense experience under certain conditions. If we attribute spirituality to *sunsum*, therefore we must bear in mind this idea of its possible physical manifestation and discard the meaning of 'spirit' in the Cartesian sense which, by definition, has no physical attributes. What then, is meant by that *sunsum* is a 'force' or 'power'? Perhaps the relationship between *sunsum* and the Akan word '*tumi*' will help us in understanding the meaning of this. *Tumi* translates into English as 'power', and in Akan cosmology everything in existence has '*tumi*'. The relationship between *tumi* and *sunsum* is that to have *sunsum* is to have *tumi*. Thus, *tumi* is an essential constituent of *sunsum*, which in turn is an essential constituent of Being.

The views of a sage I interviewed will help clarify this relationship. Asked to comment on *sunsum*, Nana Ofofu, a retired fetish priest resident at Amoakrom answers:

“*Sunsum* is everywhere, in everything. We have believed in its existence throughout our history, and our belief has been justified by our practices and our experiences. God created them both (i.e. the *sunsum* in and external to man) so why are you surprised that there is a channel by their interaction?...herbs are *abosom*. I mean by this that God has blessed herbs such that they may be useful to other beings in creation. If they weren't deities they will not have the *tumi* to heal.”

Then I asked: what is *tumi*? Answer:

“*Tumi* is the content of *sunsum* in man, and other *sunsum* are also *tumi*. *Tumi* is the power which God gave to *sunsum*. So if your *sunsum* constantly meets bad *sunsum* your *tumi* becomes low or bad. We can also acquire more

tumi by relying on good external *tumi*. When we meet our obligations to them we activate their powers and they protect us and thereby increase our *tumi*. The channel of all these is the *sunsum*. So *tumi* is power endowed to a person either by God or by a good deity” (Ofosu, Amoakrom, 14/8/99).

Nana Ofosu’s views largely coincide with Gyekye’s discussion of *sunsum*. Both of them assert that *sunsum* is a force present in nature of which one cannot expect to have immediate sensory experience. Its presence pervades all space and time, and it is a force of which every Being is composed. But according to Nana Ofosu, the vitality of this force depends on the level of its *tumi*, and in order for Beings to be active or have consciousness; their energy (*sunsum*) has to interact with the energy of something else in the universe.

It is interesting to note that the Akan word for libation pouring is ‘*mpaebo*’, a compound word derived from ‘*pae*’ and ‘*bo*’. *Pae* has two meanings: it may mean to open, as in ‘*dua no mu apae*’ (the tree is split/open), or it may mean either to beat or to sound. Thus ‘*mpaebo*’ can be interpreted as ‘to sound a call’, veritably to the *sunsum* external to you. You set your energy into vibration by the call so that it may reach the other energies. Experience in this world, then, has to do with this interaction of *sunsum*. Sometimes these interactions lead to experiences of which we are (cognitively, affectively, or sensorially) conscious. But at times we will have no conscious experience of this interaction of our *sunsum* with others, yet they occur and produce real events, only it is a reality we are not conscious of. The reason why we may not consciously experience these events, on the theory of being under contemplation, is that the level of consciousness of a Being depends on the strength of the *tumi* in the *sunsum* of that being. The *sunsum* possessed by the different categories of being contains different level of *tumi*, and these different levels of potency of *sunsum* determine different levels of awareness or consciousness of reality. Consistent with this view, Hagan asserts that “*sunsum* can have more or less *tumi*. And the more *tumi* a *sunsum* has, the greater its consciousness or its ability to experience” (Roundtable Meeting, 14/7/99). Thus in regards to the human being, the level of *tumi* (in your *sunsum*) with which you descend into this world might be sufficient for you to be conscious of only the physical world. But you may be born with a more powerful *sunsum*, or you might augment the power of your *sunsum* for it to acquire what Grills calls ‘cosmological consciousness’. This level of consciousness, according to her, denotes “our understanding of the divine and our relationships to the divine and everything’s relationship to everything else” (Roundtable Meeting, 24/10/99). Cosmological consciousness, then, denotes the ability of a person’s *sunsum*

to maximize the use of primordial intelligence with which he was endowed at birth, such that his *sunsum* would be able to interact with the *sunsum* of other beings in existence. *Sunsum*, then, is instrumental to the level of that Being's consciousness of events of two levels of reality in Akan cosmology. Thus, by virtue of our relative levels of inherent power, you may experience something of which I would have no experience whatsoever. *Sunsum*, then, enables beings to develop to different levels of consciousness such that one Being can know of things which are not ordinarily knowable to others. It is clear that the energy that I allude to here is not the physicalist's conception of energy but a dimension of energy that activates consciousness at various levels. This conception is more suggestive than exhaustive, and it will be pursued further at a later stage in this chapter.

Our interpretation of *sunsum* suggests, inter alia, that the level of a beings' consciousness determines that being's position on the hierarchical order of Akan ontology. Furthermore, the level of *tumi* distinguishes the different things in a particular category. And due to the belief in the existence of universal *sunsum*, and also that all *sunsum* derives from God, it is legitimate to argue that Akan metaphysics conceives of Being or Nature as One. This divine energy that is made manifest in the perceivable and imperceptible worlds constitute the different modes of expression of God. So, in this ontology, human beings, like all categories of being, are just part of this Being (God or nature). Therefore, we cannot plausibly separate being (as matter) from being (as consciousness). God or Nature/Being is understood as being a Whole, or that which makes everything connected into a Whole: I am composed of *sunsum*, and so is that tree and both of our *sunsum* deriving from one source: God or nature. What this notion of Being as One simply means, I think, is that each existence is merely a pattern of interactions within a whole; that each existing entity has the power to interact with every other entity and, as such, is a key to universal knowledge. I will expand more of this notion of Wholeness in a subsection below entitled 'Holism'. For now, however, we must note that this notion has serious implications for our explanation of paranormal phenomena. In fact we may wonder whether subscribing to this cosmology makes these events 'paranormal' or simply events not yet understood by our levels of consciousness.

2.4. The Concept of a Person

2.4.1. *Ɔkra and Sunsum*

Most philosophical and anthropological accounts suggest that the Akan consider the human person as metaphysically constituted of the following elements, namely; the *Ɔkra* (usually translated into English as soul), the *sunsum* (the activating principle in the person) and *Huɔnam* (the body). Since J.B. Danquah published, in 1944, his *Akan Doctrine of God*, the relationship of *Ɔkra* to *sunsum* has occasioned a philosophical debate which still rages on and has produced different positions on the matter. For brevity, I want to adopt Gyekye's analysis of these concepts as my point of departure in my discussion.

On Gyekye's terms, the *Ɔkra* is the principle of life whereas the *sunsum* is the basis of personality. These two entities are logically distinct, but they form an ontological unity. The *Ɔkra /sunsum* symbiosis is an immaterial entity. These unified entities are both spiritual and survive bodily death (Gyekye, *ibid* 85-98). I think Gyekye's contention that the *Ɔkra /sunsum* symbiosis does not denote a logical identity is correct. What is meant by this is that *Ɔkra* and *sunsum* are not identical in the sense of their having a relationship of strict identity. This type of identity relationship is said to exist between X and Y if every non-intentional predicate asserted of X, if true, is also true of Y and vice versa. This is not the kind of relationship that *Ɔkra* has with *sunsum* because, as Gyekye points out, we can make assertions about *Ɔkra* that will not apply to *sunsum*.

In this ontological unity, the *tumi* of the *Ɔkra* is the same as the *tumi* of the *sunsum* because the *sunsum* of a human being and the principle of life (*Ɔkra*) of that individual are mutually dependent on each other. It will appear that this relationship of mutual dependence between them is one of necessity. I mean by this that these two elements must belong to the being of a human person at any time. Although *sunsum* can depart the body of a person sometimes, it departs solely to explore the external world for the benefit of the person's life, for the edification of the self. Some Akan sages support this interpretation. Thus *Ɔkyeame* Darko, for example, maintains that:

“*Ɔkra* is that which gives life and *sunsum* is the spiritual power that protects a man's life. It is the governing body protecting man. As a human being, a man cannot live without his *sunsum* and his *sunsum* cannot live without

his life...it is the *sunsum* of a person that comes into contact with the *sunsum* in an *obosom*" (Interview, 30/8/99).

In spite of the slight differences in their accounts, we can derive the following from all of these sages:

- a. as elements of a person, the *ɔkra /sunsum* unity is one of necessary interdependence
- b. the *sunsum* is dynamic, protective mechanism of the person's life
- c. it may depart the body of a person to interact with its kind

Another strand in Gyekye's analysis of the *ɔkra* and *sunsum* is his admission that the *sunsum* is capable of physical manifestation. In spite of this, Gyekye maintains nevertheless, that it is essentially immaterial/spiritual in a sense different from my notion of spiritual. One of his reasons for maintaining this position is that this physical manifestation doesn't take place in the spatio-temporal world, "since the act or mode of seeing is not at the physical or spatial level" (Gyekye, *ibid*, p86). For reasons to be given shortly, I agree with Gyekye that the fact of the physical manifestation of *sunsum* doesn't necessarily make it *toutcourt* physical. But on the other hand I disagree with him that this leads to the conclusion that the *sunsum* in *toutcourt* immaterial. Gyekye's arguments are designed primarily to refute the position that the *sunsum* is a physical entity. And Gyekye's job is made difficult by his thinking that once we admit its physical manifestation, it is difficult to see why we cannot legitimately infer a spatially-bound *sunsum*. The argument that Gyekye makes is a logical one: if the *ɔkra /sunsum* materializes in space, then it is presumably present at a specific location at a specific time, and these characteristics define the essence of a physical substance. But Gyekye's answer to this problem, also a logical one, engenders certain problems: if we admit Gyekye's position that this substance is immaterial (non-spatial) because the modes of seeing it is not physical, then we are bound to admit the argument that electromagnetism is immaterial because its manifestation (to those with the ability to interact with it) is extra-sensorial. We can legitimately make this inference from Gyekye's argument. But this would be incorrect: electromagnetic force is no non-spatial reality. Thus we can admit the immateriality or non-spatiality of *ɔkra /sunsum* only at the cost of ignoring its other important features – its manifestation in space-time. If we chose nevertheless to conceive it as immaterial,

this choice would be arbitrary. To avoid a choice, in this case, it might perhaps help to look at the nature of *sunsum* in other terms.

Wiredu points out these problems with Gyekye's conception and provides his ontology of *ɔkra / sunsum* as, essentially, a physical entity with some accidental non-physical properties. Referring to the *ɔkra*, Wiredu writes, "there is the conception under discussion only a reduced materiality and the reduction affects not its imagery but dynamics" (Wiredu, 1992, 140). In other words, the *ɔkra* is, essentially, a material entity. Elsewhere, Wiredu relies on the Akan language to argue more forcefully the physicality of the *ɔkra* (Wiredu, 1987). Wiredu's conception of the *ɔkra*, thus, differs from Gyekye's. But there are more problems with this conception than there are with Gyekye's. For instance we may ask: if the *ɔkra* is essentially physical, then why is it not completely susceptible to space-time coordinates?

It has been observed, and I think correctly, that the differences between Gyekye and Wiredu could be reduced to one question: "What is the nature of that being which, when it is physically observed, is *sunsum* and when it is not observed, is *sunsum*? Are we to say that it is physical or non-physical?" (Engmann, *ibid*, 171). The one question thus becomes two in Engmann with two purposes. The first interrogates the nature of the *sunsum*, and the second prescribes two possible answers to the first. But taking into consideration the context in which the question arises, I think the only legitimate question is the first one. This question is appropriate because it is the more vigorous of the two. The second question erodes the interrogative force of the first question by reducing the range of possible answers to it to only two. And by so doing, it suggests that there are only two possible and opposite answers to the first question. It pretends as if the solution to this problem is necessarily a logical one, that we have on our hands a riddle whose resolution must be "either/or".

Such a resolution may have required if the reality of *sunsum* was experienced by the Akans as inextricably locked under the key of Cartesian dualism. But it cannot be decided out of hand whether logic and its fundamental rules can provide the standard for dealing adequately with the question about nature of being as such. In connection with this insight I would like to quote a passage from Heidegger's *Introduction to Metaphysics*:

"perhaps the whole body of logic as it is known to us, perhaps all the logic that we treat as a gift from heaven, is grounded in a very definite answer to the question about the essent; perhaps in consequence all thinking which solely follows the laws of thought prescribed by traditional logic is incapable

from the very start of even understanding the question about the essent by its own resources; let alone actually unfolding the question and guiding it towards an answer” (Heiddeger, 1987, 25).

Judging by the attributes they ascribe to *sunsum*, it is clear that Akan thinkers consider the validity claims about *sunsum* as transcending the laws of non-contradiction and of the excluded middle. It is clear from the fuzziness of their conception that they do not wish to deny themselves the possibility of asserting ‘both/and’ if this is what nature presents to them as real. Perhaps an analysis of this concept in terms other than the logic of Western science is what is called for, since this logic is based upon a certain conception of the existence of space and time, and considers events as ultimately based upon the activity of bodies in this conception of space and time. In this respect, the conception of *sunsum* as an all-pervading force is relevant. This relevance is better captured by posing the question: are there not natural phenomena - forces in nature - which manifest themselves to man’s sense experience only under certain conditions? The answer is: there certainly are. Take electromagnetic force, for instance; electromagnetic theory was founded largely to explain ‘action at a distance’. Elaborating on this theory, Einstein writes:

“As a result of the more careful study of electromagnetic phenomena; we have come to regard action at a distance as a process impossible without intervention of some intermediary medium. If, for instance, a magnet attracts a piece of iron, we cannot contend to regard this as meaning that the magnet acts directly on the iron through the intermediate empty space, but we are constrained to imagine that the magnet always calls into being something physically real in the space around it, that is something being what we call a ‘magnetic field’ (Einstein, 1960, 74).

Now, according to Einstein, to explain some types of natural phenomena, physicists *are constrained to imagine* the intervention of some physical reality pervading all space. We can legitimately infer from this that even in an uncompromising scientific framework the borderline between the physical and the non-physical is not clear-cut as mainstream logical analysis would like to affirm, that there is an area between these two realms in which we cannot with logical certainty identify events as belonging here or there. All this is implied in Einstein’s admission of imaging entities; for the activity of imagination, in traditional Western epistemology, is not a route to certainty.

Electromagnetism (the imagined reality Einstein talks about) is not ordinarily perceptible to sense experience, but under certain conditions it emits photons and becomes a visible glow. Yet we neither conceive electromagnetism as an immaterial entity nor a physical substance with reduced physicality. It is a force of nature. Einstein calls it physical, and that is fine for me. All I wish to assert here is that electromagnetism bears a striking resemblance to *sunsum*, as it is being conceived in this work. And although electromagnetism has been largely understood by physics, I see, in principle, no reason why *sunsum* cannot be conceived as a similar natural phenomenon even though it may be more recalcitrant to being reduced to the laws of physics.

My suggestion is that instead of conceiving the ontology of *ɔkra* /*sunsum* as substance and thereby predisposing an account of it in terms only of the material/immaterial dichotomy, we should conceive it as a vital force of nature, intermittently manifesting itself for the ordinary person's sense experience in the world. This force inside of man is a species of a universal force, in man. Perhaps lodged in the brain, it joins, under certain conditions, with its kind outside man, and this interaction ushers forth a manifestation which is considered extra-sensorial. If this is the case, then we have no particular reason to encase this entity into a strict category of the physical or non-physical. The *sunsum* inside of man would appear to be a power to which both mental and physical predicates are applicable in space-time. When it joins with its kind outside of the human body, the manifestation ushered forth cannot be accounted for in either purely physical terms or in terms of a Cartesian spirit. It is, simply, a natural phenomenon. As said, it is due to the interaction of this force in and out of Man that makes a person accomplish those things that transcend the normal. A person's ability to harness the *sunsum* outside of him and to appropriate it can be achieved, inter alia, by training. The possession and teaching of this ability, in the African setting, is the province of the traditional priest or diviner. Because he can produce this interaction and harness the resulting activity of force, the diviner can know (receive reliable information) of events that others cannot know of, and to do something about this information if he wants to.

The spatio-temporal nature of this interaction diffuses the logical difficulties that beset Gyekye's analysis. In other words, the interaction does not have to take place in a non-spatial realm because there are, in fact, non-sensible entities in this realm constantly in contact with the physical under certain conditions. On the other hand, the imperceptibility of *sunsum* answers the problems associated with Wiredu's physical substance with reduced physicality (quasi-physical being). In other words, we have no reason to conceive *sunsum* as a physical entity just because it is very difficult

to justify a conception of it as a spirit unless our only conception of 'spirit' is the Cartesian version of it. In conclusion to this subsection, I want to emphasize the view that it is because it's 'happening' in space and time that the hypothesized interaction can explain paranormal phenomena. Because of its spatio-temporal existence, those with the capability (the knowledge) to locate, experience or exploit this interaction can, in principle, do so. And just because of the invisibility of *sunsum*, we have no reason to deny its activity in space and its movement through the three dimensions (past, present, future) of time.

2.4.2. Mogya

Another element of the person in Akan thought that has a bearing on our understanding of *sunsum* is the concept of '*mogya*', usually translated as blood. Gyekye conceives of *Mogya* as part of the *hɔ̃nam* (body) and therefore a physical element (Gyekye, 85). On this interpretation, *mogya* is akin to the biologist's concept of blood (Gyekye, 85). Furthermore, both Gyekye and Wiredu also contend that *mogya* is derived from a human being (one's mother). I think that a closer look at the internal structure of the word '*mogya*', coupled with the significance of *mogya* in Akan ritual practices may suggest differently.

The term *mogya* is composed of two morphs, '*mo*' and '*gya*'. '*Mo*' translates into English as the plural form of the second personal pronoun 'you' whereas '*gya*' has two meanings. It can either mean fire, as in "*dum gya no*" (extinguish the fire) or it can mean 'to accompany', as in "*mee ko gya no Nkran*" (I am accompanying him to Accra). Interpreted thus, *mogya* can either mean

- a. your fire - the fire that is in you
- b. that which accompanies you

From these, I would like to suggest a definition of *mogya* as 'the energy (fire) of your life that accompanies you from the time of your birth'. Defined thus, we can plausibly conceive of *mogya* as a spiritual element (a force) in man. The pronouncements of various Akan sages seem to support this view.

Thus *ɔ̃kyeame* Kwame Bekoe of Akropong asserts that:

"*Mogya* is the food of the *ɔ̃kra* . It is the wheel around which the *ɔ̃kra* revolves. The two are inseparable, and they are inseparable from *sunsum*.

Sunsum hovers around this relationship between *mogya* and *ɔkra* . The difference here is that *sunsum* can operate without *mogya* whereas *ɔkra* can't (Interview, 8/10/99)

And in Apraku's view,

“*Mogya* is the container of life. In the case of the human being, it is the dwelling-place of the *ɔkra* . That is why life departs when *mogya* is spilled. The blood must be there circulating in the person before the *ɔkra* will be there in the person” (Interview, 9/10/99).

From notions such as “the food (i.e. the energy giver) of the *ɔkra*”, and the “dwelling-place of the *ɔkra*”, we can ask how likely it is for the *ɔkra* to be “sustained” or “contained” by a vessel which is purely physical. But more importantly, what is implied in all this is a seemingly indissoluble bond between the *ɔkra*, *sunsum* and *mogya* of a person. It appears to me therefore that the argument could be made that, for the Akan thinker, a person is essentially composed of a spiritual trinity. The blood you see is not just a compound of white and red cells. It is the physical manifestation of a spirit. Likewise, the person you see is a physical manifestation of an essential spiritual trinity made up of *ɔkra*, *sunsum*, and *mogya*. He is a homogeneous, spiritual Whole in essence. This conforms to the Akan thinker's holistic conception of reality.

A sample of Akan thinkers reveals that this notion of *mogya* as spirit can be sustained by Akan ritual practice involving *mogya*. Thus commenting on the significance of *mogya* in rituals, Nana Yaw Dartey, the chief of *ɔbosomase*, asserts:

“What sets blood apart from everything else is that it is the one thing which nobody or nothing else but God can create. That is its peculiarity and its value. And because of this it is the only thing capable of cleansing every stain. So we slaughter a sheep to let the *ɔkra* in the *mogya* clean the dirt on the way, so that our requests may be made along a cleansed and paved way” (Interview, 5/9/99).

And Nana Armah, also of *ɔbosomase*, contends:

“*Mogya* is a commodity of great value because it is the best sacrifice to make to the world of *sunsum*. We know this by experience. One cannot pacify *sunsum* with anything better than *mogya* because there is nothing better. Nothing can resolve dispute better, nothing cleanses sin better. The offer of *mogya* brings peace of the peculiar *tumi* that *mogya* possesses” (Interview, 4/9/99).

I think that the strong bond asserted here between *mogya* and *ɔkra*, and also the role of spiritual cleanser or purifier attributed to *mogya*, suggests the spiritual nature of *mogya*. More on this later. I will like at this juncture, to look at another element in Akan cosmology and to inquire about its relevance of our understanding of paranormal events.

2.5. Causality

Many philosophers are of the view that Akans subscribe to the principle of universal determinism. They believe, in other words, that the principle that every event has a cause is a fundamental principle in the causal theory of the Akans. This position is shared by Gyekye (Gyekye, *ibid*, p82), (Minkus, *ibid*, p 115) and Agyakwa (Agyakwa, *ibid*, 79).

In Akan thought, then, the suggestion of a chance event in nature is discreditable. Gyekye even goes as far as saying:

“When an European explains an unpredictable or unexpected natural event by reference to chance, coincidence, luck, or fortune, from the point of view of Akan thinkers, that is the same as saying that the cause is unknown. But the Akan thinker would here retort that ignorance of the cause of an event does not imply the nonexistence of a cause” (Gyekye, *ibid*, 82).

But Akan determinism differs in a fundamental manner from that of Western philosophy and physical science. In Western thought, if X is determined by Y, then the moment Y occurs X follows necessarily. Embedded in this notion of causation is the idea that Y, the cause must precede the event X which Y causes. There may be intermediate chain of causes between X and Y, but all these intermediaries must derive from Y before X can properly be considered as the cause of X. There is thus a lineal

progression of causes from Y to X, such that any causal event closer to Y in the chain of causes precedes a cause closer to X.

Within the deterministic universe of the Akans, there are two types of causal explanations. The first type is explanations to what Gyekye terms 'Why 1' questions. In these, contiguous causal relations are established and therefore physical laws are considered relevant and sufficient to explain relations between natural phenomena. This is the same as the theory of causality upheld in Western philosophy and science. But where the events to be explained are considered extraordinary in character, such that physical laws prove inadequate to explain them, then these events will invoke a 'Why 2' question. Why 2 questions, thus, admit the limitations of the explanatory capacity of physical laws, and seek different kinds of explanations. *Sunsum*, or more appropriately the interplay of personal and universal *sunsum*, is the fundamental postulate in these explanations.

Writing of the Yoruba concept of Inner Essence, Ayoade suggests that we should not conceive of non-supernatural and supernatural questions as constituting two irreconcilable categories of causal theory but rather as different points along the same continuum. He writes "this is particularly so because the Yoruba believes that a non-supernatural ailment makes a patient highly susceptible to, or softens up a patient for, the infliction of a supernatural ailment" (Ayoade, 1979, 49). Ayoade's 'non-supernatural' and 'supernatural' is coterminus with Gyekye's 'Why 1' and 'Why 2'.

Ayoade's point is that in Yoruba causal theory, Why 1 causes and those of Why 2 are complementary and mutually exclusive. The same can be said of the Akan theory of causation. The Akans believe in a visible and an invisible aspect of the world. The visible world is composed of bodies to which the laws of physics apply. But the quintessence of the bodies in the visible world is a force which itself is invisible. In man, as in every other existent in the visible world, this force (*sunsum*) dwells in body. Though a man's *sunsum* is capable of intermittent manifestation outside of the body, it cannot have an independent life outside the man's body. All its activities outside of a man are meant either for the good or the bad of that man. Furthermore, it is the *sunsum* that activates the body and gives it its distinctive power and characteristics. Under such arrangements, it is plausible to conceive of the body and the *sunsum* not as belonging to separate causal realms but to a continuum. If we adopt this integrated approach to causal analysis, it becomes plausible to explain the anomalies and paradoxes that we see in nature and label as paranormal by reference to this vital force or quintessence of Being called *sunsum*.

In his book *Foundations of African Philosophy* (1993), Godwin Sogolo advances a view that is relevant to this discussion of Akan causal theory. Here, Sogolo argues, *inter alia*, for the importance of cultural determinants in the analysis of 'cause' because, according to him, a given event can have a variety of causal explanations and our interest in that event determines which of these various causes we advance. He describes a fire event brought about by an arsonist, and writes:

“Our interest in the fire example is two-fold. Firstly, it shows the almost infinite kinds of causal explanation that can be given for a single event. And because the explanations are of different sorts, the question of the superiority of one over another is misplaced. The explanations provided by the fire fighters, the psychologist, the social worker, the anti-smoking campaigner, and the fundamentalist preacher might appear to be out of tune with what, in scientific terms, is accepted as a causal explanation, but this is so only from the point of interest of the scientist. Besides, there is no consensus among scientists about the notion of causality or what should count as an adequate causal explanation. The second crucial point about the example we have chosen is that the different explanations are complementary and non-mutually exclusive” (Sogolo, 1993, 107-108).

On this view, the physical scientist's disdain of the causal theory of the Akan thinker in his explanation of paranormal events is because the scientist has no interest in the explanatory framework of the Akans. But this is hardly sufficient to render the Akan thinker's explanation false.

2.6. Causality and *Sunsum*

I believe that when Why 2 questions are posed, we can expect two types of explanatory hypothesis: First, we can attribute to chance the cause of these extraordinary events. But as Gyekye pointed out, the hypothesis of chance is ruled out by Akan metaphysics. And I think Gyekye is right here.

The second option is the one I favor, and it involves explaining the phenomena in terms of *sunsum* as a natural force, and to show the rationality of this explanation. In this framework physical laws make for regularity in the explanation of nature, but physical laws cannot exhaust all possible explanations of events and human behavior because reality is not wholly physical and observable. In the scheme under

consideration, a naturalistic (scientific) explanation does not presuppose absolute regularity in nature, for such regularity is undermined by the existence of irregular and abnormal events which, as evidenced in chapter one, are also part of human experience. And the cause of these latter events is an unobservable force present in the world, which the Akans call *sunsum*. Thus the *abosom*, ancestral spirits etc. which are considered as embodiments of *sunsum* are, as such, causally active. They are deemed to be capable of causing events from a distance. If this notion of an active but unobservable entity causing events from a distance runs counter to Western traditional notions of determinism, we will point out in chapter four that contemporary physics has a theory of 'action at a distance' that is very similar to our postulated activity of *sunsum*. As noted earlier, the Akan thinker's admission of a causal link between *sunsum* and an event in the spatio-temporal schema is not without evidence as to how this link occurs. I believe experience provides evidence for the belief in the causal activity of *sunsum* for the following reasons.

First, we heard Gyekye asserting that ignorance of a cause of an event does not imply the nonexistence of a cause for the Akan thinker. This means that he believes an explanation can be found and will, therefore, not abandon the search for such explanations so easily. And writing on a conceptual scheme similar to the Akans', Joyce Engmann makes the following observation about the Ga conception of *sunsuma* (*sunsum*):

"it is clear at many points in theory of the *sunsuma* that it has an empirical basis, in the sense that it is a means of explaining phenomena whose occurrence its proponents regard as having been adequately established wither by observation or testimonial evidence" (Engmann, 1992, p186)

My research also suggests that in their theory of the *sunsum* as an active cause of phenomena, Akan thinkers show a willingness to relate facts to theory. Thus they infer the existence of the entity they call *sunsum* from certain manifestation that they attribute to it. They then consider these manifestations as a sufficient reason for their inference, and we can show reasons why this inference is valid.

In her article referred to earlier on, Oluwole claims that we can justify the assertion of the reality of X by any one of the following methods:

- a. by giving an explanation of X's nature and modus operandi
- b. by demonstrating a causal relationship between X and the occurrence which is cited to prove the practical efficacy of X
- c. by practically manipulating X (Oluwole, *ibid*, p31)

In support of this thesis, she argues that to demonstrate a causal relationship between X and an event (Y) doesn't necessarily entail a conclusive explanation of the modus operandi of X. I agree with Oluwole on this for the following reasons:

First, it would seem that paranormal phenomena defy explanation in the epistemological framework of mainstream Western thought because this framework has mistaken empirical causation of logical necessity.³

³ Since Hume's attack on the concept of causation as having no rational grounding, it is now largely accepted by both philosophy and since that a constant connection between two events is sufficient to prove a 'causal connection' between them. Hume argued that the physical existence of causal necessity was demonstrable neither on purely rational nor empirical grounds. This, according to Hume, is the case since no logical contradiction is involved in assuming that the relevant correlation between 'cause' and 'effect' will cease to occur. For example it is not logically contradictory to deny that night will fall today, but it is to deny that all bachelors are unmarried men. But neither can causal necessity be derived from experience. So that when a causal relationship is supposedly experienced, the most that can be said is that there is a regular sequence of events. Consequently, no observational evidence exists for the sort of physical cement which holds events necessarily together in the Western sense of causation. Hume writes: "when we look about us towards external objects, and consider the operation of causes, we are never able, in a single instance, to discover any power or necessary connection; any quality which binds the effect to the cause, and renders the one an infallible consequence of the other. We only find that the one does actually, in fact, follow the other. The impulse of one billiard ball is attended with motion in the second. This is the whole that appears to be outward senses. The mind feels no sentiment or inward impression from this succession of objects: consequently, there is not in any single, particular instance of cause and effect, anything which can suggest the idea of power or necessary connection." (Hume, 1975, 63)

A number of points arise out of Hume's position. First, undisturbed regularity is sufficient to establish a causal link, since this link does not have the necessity of a rational truth. What this means is that the Western thinker's contention for 'X causes Y' means that whenever X is present Y follows necessarily is, as best one of many possible truths about causation. This is so

From the foregoing, it will appear that another reason why paranormal phenomena defy the explanatory apparatus of Western physicalist epistemology is that this framework has mistaken nature for what is describable by physics. I refer once more to Oluwole's rejection of the substitution of the epistemic for the ontic, for it is this substitution that leads Western science to deny reality to paranormal phenomena. But according to Oluwole, scientific criteria for causation, reality, truth etc. are, at best, only good working hypothesis for the present, not indubitable truths about nature. We will see, in chapter four, that science itself has proven Oluwole right. For now, let us recapture what this subsection says about the relevance of the Akan analysis of causality to the explanation of paranormal phenomena.

If the notion of causation is psychological in origin, and my interest in an even can lead me to focus on a certain type of explanation, then where adequate conjunction is established by this kind of explanation, I am providing a sufficient explanation of the event. It will appear that these conditions are met by our Akan thinker's explanation of the paranormal. If his explanation is doubted by the scientist, it is because the scientist has no interest in the explanatory framework advanced by the Akan thinker, but this lack of interest is not sufficient to prove the falsity of the Akan explanation.

because of the truth of his view does not have the necessity of a logical truth. Causal relationships are psychological in origin, and this position is supported by new perspectives in theoretical physics, as will be seen in Chapter four. Secondly, this notion of a lineal causation in which the cause must be antecedent to the effect can be denied by experience, as psychical research has abundantly shown. And if causal relationships are psychological in origin, then there is no reason why we cannot experience a non-lineal causation. There is no reason why we cannot experience a number of randomly located, non-physically linked causes provided these causes are not mutually exclusive. Furthermore, if causation is psychological in origin, then imagination should be admitted as an important feature in our explanation of the causes of natural phenomena. As shown earlier on with Einstein's elaboration on electromagnetic theory, even an uncompromising scientific framework such as physics utilizes this element of explanation. And if in physics the borderline between the physical and non-physical (which we have rendered as the phenomena that gives rise respectively to Why 1 and Why 2 explanations) is not as clear-cut as mainstream, logical analysis would like to affirm, then we can use imagination as a route to knowledge of the paranormal.

The dual conception of causality in Akan thought is tenable because:

- a. Why 1 and Why 2 explanations are not mutually exclusive
- b. Of his metaphysical presuppositions, the Akan thinker focuses his attention on the role of *sunsum* in a Why 2 question
- c. As a theoretical posit in explanations, *sunsum* is similar to postulates in other explanatory frameworks.

It is now time to look at another strand in the fabric of Akan thought that enables us to provide a rational explanation to paranormal events.

2.7. Holism

It has been observed that Gyekye reduces the many beings of Akan ontology to two categories: the spiritual and the physical, and accords ontological priority to the spiritual by claiming that beings in the spiritual realm can have causal influence on bodies but not vice versa (Gyekye, *ibid*, p76). Wiredu, on the other hand, advocates a material monism for Akan ontology by reducing all the entities postulated in this ontology to materiality. (See Wiredu 1987, pp160-163) I believe, however, that it would be more accurate to speak of a multiplicity of beings in Akan ontology which belong to the realm of neither dualism nor material monism. This is because whereas in the Akan ontological scheme God (*Onyame*) is, beyond doubt, a spirit in the Cartesian sense, it is not at all clear whether many other beings have that status: the *abosom* (deities), the human being, and others belong exclusively to either a spiritual realm or a physical realm. It could be said that these existents partake of the features of both ontological categories.

Where a cosmic dualism pertains, it is easy to view the universe in terms of the independent categories of spirit and body. In other words, because there are only two opposing categories, it is easier to maintain a sharp focus on them. But the Akan focus on these supposedly distinct categories is blurred. Take the relationship between *sunsum* and '*ntoro*' (another metaphysical constituent of the person), for instance. According to Gyekye, the *sunsum* constitutes an ontological unity with the *ɔkra*, although they are logically distinct. As a twin of the *ɔkra*, the *sunsum* is a spiritual entity. On Gyekye's terms, the *sunsum* is a spiritual entity also because it is the basis of the personality of a person, and since the properties of personality are non-physical,

it follows that the *sunsum* cannot be physical. Yet Akans also conceive the *ntoro* as a basis of personality traits inherited through the father. As such the *ntoro* must be considered as the physical basis of personality. But ex hypothesi, the basis of personality cannot be physical. Therefore, on Gyekye's terms, the claims of the *ntoro* must be false. Yet Gyekye himself admits that the conception of the *ntoro* is not easily dismissible from Akan ontology (Gyekye, 1987, p94 and p119). But why can the seat of personality not be both physical and spiritual? Admittedly, a thing cannot be itself and something else according to the principle of identity. But it is fairly well documented that this principle is not the only test of rationality (Kosko, 1994). I maintain here that the Akan thinker who advocates the reality of paranormal phenomena does not have to subscribe fully to the principle of identity in order for his thought to retain its rigor.

It seems to me that because of the multiplicity of beings in his universe, the Akan thinker has a strong tendency to view the universe from a holistic perspective. Thus although traditional Akan thought may allow the spirit/body distinction, yet in his thinking about an entity supposedly made up of these two elements, the Akan thinker does not see these two elements as belonging to two separate spheres. For, he sees these spheres as aspects of a complex whole inhabited by beings which, in themselves share characteristics of both of these spheres of existence. Referring to Akan cosmogony, Abraham observes that “the whole forms one internally contiguous order” (Abraham, 1962, 51).

Gyekye seems to be affirming a holistic Akan metaphysic when he writes that: “Akans sometimes speak as if the relationship between the soul (that is *ɔkra* plus *sunsum*) and the body is so close that they comprise in indissoluble or indivisible unity, and that consequently a person is homogeneous entity” (Gyekye, *ibid*, 99). But shortly afterwards he disengages himself from this holistic view by arguing that “But Akan thinkers cannot strictly or unreservedly maintain such a theory, for it logically involves the impossibility of the doctrine of the disembodied survival of life after death, which they tenaciously and firmly hold” (Gyekye, *ibid*). Gyekye is right about this inconsistency which arises on the level of logical analysis. But I believe that a holistic Akan metaphysics can be maintained in spite of the inconsistency pointed out by Gyekye. The reasons for my belief are twofold:

First, consistency in terms of conformity to the law of identity is not the only test for legitimacy. The Akan view of the universe may not subscribe fully to this law of formal logic, but coherent modes of thought that subscribe to other notions of consistency cannot be denied legitimacy merely because they are at variance with the law of identity. Subscription to the law of identity is not the only means to consistency

in discourse. In fact some philosophical doctrines, legitimized with time, have been expounded in analysis beyond the identity principle. Existentialism is one such doctrine. Although both components of human being-ness, Sartre's "in-itself" and the "for-itself" subscribe to two notions of rationality, for whereas the in-itself conforms fully to the law of identity, the for-itself doesn't. Secondly, the doctrine of disembodied survival can be easily absorbed by our conception of *sunsum*. On this conception we do not insist that when a man dies, the *sunsum* (force/energy) in him also disintegrates. There is no inconsistency in our position if we should maintain that the *sunsum* in a man has physical attributes and, yet, that at his death, his *sunsum* may join the pool of universal *sunsum*. If so, then disembodied survival need not stand in the way of a holistic conception.

In fact, a holistic view of the universe is commonly held by many African cultures. Senghor asserts that "the African conceives the world, beyond the diversity of its forms, as fundamentally a mobile, yet unique reality that seeks synthesis" (Senghor, 1970, 184). It is important to understand that in the process towards this potential synthesis that Senghor talks about, the essential relations between the various elements in the system allow for such fluidity that the categories, which define the essential attributes of these elements, dovetail into each other. This view of the universe therefore affords us a picture of nature as an aggregate of components that interact in both determinate and indeterminate patterns. A holistic conception of the universe furnishes us with a language for describing or reasoning about natural and man-made phenomena. It is a language that, while acknowledging the importance of logic, recognizes the limitations imposed by it. It is a language that transcends the limitations imposed by it. It is a language that transcends the limitations imposed by formal logic in order to articulate insights on nature's complexity. It is a language now open to use by the physicist, the social scientist, the humanist and the traditional thinker. This language reveals the human capacity to operate simultaneously at the physical and conscious level, and Man's capacity to interact with other entities in nature whose being man cannot accurately define. In this order of things, our search for unity (for a definite, absolute knowledge of nature) reveals that no method of investigation can yield a perfect truth about nature. Instead, we are encouraged to recognize and to explore the interdependence of significant elements in totality, and to appreciate the relevance of this recognition and exploration to our knowledge about nature.

2.8. Holism and Western Philosophy

A holistic conception of nature was very much in currency at the outset of the Western philosophical enterprise. In his elaboration on the concept of Being as such, Heidegger informs us that the ancient Greeks called it *phusis*, customarily translated as “nature”. For the Greeks, then, nature as a whole was the realm of being. But the translation of *phusis* into the Latin *natura*, according to Heidegger, marked the complete restriction of the meaning of *phusis* to physical existence – to that describable by physics (Heidegger, *ibid*, 13).

The Greek *phusis*, then is Being itself by virtue of which existents become and remain in existence. On this view, nature as a whole is the realm of Being, and the essence and character of a natural event is that which emerges and endures. It is clear that this view of nature, as that which unfolds and endures embraces both the phenomenon of becoming (an active process) and that of being in the restricted sense of inactive endurance, the sense which physical science has adopted as the definition of nature. In much of the early Western philosophers, as in Akan philosophical thought, we encounter this holistic view of being in the blurred distinction between the spiritual and the material components of nature. In regard to the Western philosophers, we find in Pythagoras, for example, the idea of a soul susceptible to physical influence: Pythagoras taught that the consumption of beans, a physical act meant to nourish the body, was not good for man on the grounds that it is injurious to his soul (Burnet, 1960, 98).

Again we find, in Aristotle, the idea that matter is inseparably joined with form or *energeia* in the realm of existence – the realm of being. Hence in his *De Anima*, Aristotle says that the animated (*psyche*) is not opposed to the physical (inert matter) (Aristotle, 1931, 412 a 5-18). And furthermore, that nutrition, sensation and locomotion, among others, are all attributes possessed by the human *psyche* or soul (Aristotle, *ibid*, 412a 25-30). And he tells us, again, in his *Metaphysics* that

“There is a science which investigates being as being and the attributes which belong to this in virtue of its own nature. Now, this is not the same as any of the so-called special sciences; for none of these others treats universality of being as being. Now since we are seeking the first principles and the highest causes, clearly there must be something to which these belong in virtue of its own nature...therefore it is of being as being that we also must grasp the first causes” (Aristotle, 1928, 1 1003, a 20-30).

In fact long after Aristotle, and in various periods both before and after Descartes, this holistic view of nature, in which spiritual essence was never devoid of physical attributes, was noticeably present in Western philosophical thought. Strict separation of matter from spirit reflected neither the folk thought nor the only philosophical position of various periods both before and after Descartes. For instance the Italian philosopher Giordano Bruno, burnt at the stake in year 1600 for his revolutionary ideas, held that God, the purest spirit and most transcendent and eternal being in Descartes' schema, is immanent in creation. Bruno's view was that the principle that informs creation is one with its creatures, a view that stressed the unity of spirit and matter. To put it in another way: for Bruno, the One (foundational principle) is in the many. It must be noted that in his Ethics, Benedict Spinoza, who lived after Descartes, held an almost identical position with Bruno's in regard to this matter.

Aware of the limitations of Cartesian dualism in accounting for reality, some contemporary Western philosophers have adopted holism as the most viable theoretical approach in their search for an admissible basis for knowledge. Alfred North Whitehead is one such philosopher. In fact Agyakwa considers Whitehead's philosophy to be so much in consonance with the holistic perspective of traditional Akan thought that he considers Whitehead's philosophy as an appropriate bridge between Western and Akan thought (Agyakwa, 1974, 245ff.) But let me quote from Whitehead's own outline of his 'Philosophy of Organism', before I consider Agyakwa's elaboration of it. I will like to quote extensively from Whitehead's *Science and the Modern World* to illustrate his position:

“My procedure is to start from the analysis of space and time. Things are separated by space, and are separated by time: but they are also together in space, and together in time. I will call these characters the ‘separative’ and the ‘prehensive’ character of space-time....The volume is the most concrete element of space. But the ‘separative’ character of space analyzes a volume into sub-volumes, and so on indefinitely. Accordingly taking the ‘separative’ character in isolation, we should infer that a volume is a mere multiplicity of non-voluminous elements, of points in fact. But it is the unity of volume which is the ultimate fact of experience, for example the voluminous space of this hall. This hall as a mere multiplicity of points is a construction of the logical imagination. Accordingly, the prime fact is the ‘prehensive’ unity of volume, and this unity is mitigated or limited by the separated unities of the innumerable contained parts. We have a ‘prehensive’ unity, which is yet held apart as an aggregate of contained parts. But the prehensive unity of the

volume is not the unity of a mere logical aggregate of parts. The parts form an ordered aggregate, in the sense that each part is something from the standpoint of every other part, and also from the same standpoint every other part is something in relation to it” (Whitehead, 1953, 64-65).

Whitehead, thus, believes that experience is integral. It is due to this integration that the ‘prehensive’ unity of events is achieved. Thus he considered the following lines of the religious hymn “abide with me/fast falls the eventide” as giving full expression to the core of his metaphysical approach, the first line, according to him, expresses substance or permanence whereas the second stresses flux. And “these two clines cannot be torn apart” (Whitehead, 1969, 318).

Hence, for Whitehead, for any philosophy that stresses being at the expense of becoming, or vice versa, cannot provide a full account of nature.

Agyakwa provides an excellent analysis of Whitehead’s holism, and I choose to present some aspect of it. He delineates two elements in Whitehead’s philosophical enterprise: according to him, Whitehead

- a. Reveals the deficiencies in one of the existing traditions in Western philosophy, and
- b. Uncovers a system in which “the actual world” is presented as an organically interrelated order (Agyakwa, *ibid*, 242).

In Whitehead’s cosmology, nature is conceived as a composite system on interpenetrating events or occasions. An event, for Whitehead, is a spatio-temporal occurrence which enters into transactions with other events. And the actual world is a “process” of active “prehensive” events which is a unity (Agyakwa, *ibid*, 243). The fundamental structures of Whitehead’s philosophy, as elaborated by Agyakwa, underscore the status of change in his cosmology. Whitehead asserts that adventure is one of the dominant qualities of a nature. Not only must adventure be dominant but it must be exhibited as well in all phases of experience (Agyakwa 245). According to Agyakwa, this emphasis on adventure stems from Whitehead’s distaste for what he (Whitehead) calls “the static fallacy” introduced by Aristotle “who conceived of primary substances as static foundations which received the impress of qualifications” (cf Agyakwa, *ibid*, 246). In place of this static foundation, Whitehead introduces adventure as a vehicle for advance. Adventure is the essence of what Whitehead calls

“Creative imagination”, an indispensable element for the transition from what is, to what might be (Agyakwa, *ibid*, 246).

In line with his metaphysics, Whitehead’s epistemology defies traditional Western philosophy: he emphasizes art and symbolism as a source of knowledge (see Agyakwa *ibid*, 247). Consequently, in Whitehead, myth becomes a genuine source of apprehending reality. Furthermore, in his doctrine that feeling is central to the process of reasoning; Whitehead seems to have collapsed the age-long distinction between reason and the senses. He argues that “knowledge is always accompanied with accessories of emotion and purpose” (cf Agyakwa, *ibid*, 249). On this view, both feeling and reason are inalienable features of true knowledge. It is clear that Whitehead’s philosophy of organism, by virtue of its stress on the integral essence of reality, coincides with Akan holism. Indeed, J.B. Danquah affirms this coincidence of views by asserting that Whitehead’s philosophy has given “balance and some correction” to his own interpretation of the Akan view of reality (Danquah *ibid*, 141 ff). The similarity between Akan holism, as I see it and Whitehead’s ‘Organistic Philosophy’ will become clearer still in the next chapter when we consider some features of Akan epistemology.

2.9. *Sunsum* and Holism

In this section I intend to shed some light on the role of *sunsum* in a holistic framework. We have seen that the organism is the most basic tool of analysis in this framework. For, although the event, say X, may comprise of parts, all these parts are just modes in which they (the parts) enter into the composition of X. What, then, would be the place of *sunsum* in this schema? Its role would be to link the singular events not as unity, and this role becomes particularly evident when a diviner performs an act of precognition which brings together parts of reality that apparently have no link.

But how does *sunsum* serve this function? *Sunsum*, on our interpretation, is a force which pervades the whole universe. It dwells in every particular existent and, because of the particularity of existence; the *sunsum* in every existent is peculiar. There is also *sunsum* in space outside of the individual. The *sunsum* internal to a particular existent is capable of escaping its spatial localization and join with external *sunsum* because the localized *sunsum* is only a species of a universal phenomenon. In a holistic conception of nature, the activity of *sunsum* can provide us with a meaningful explanation of precognition because the structure of space and time in this conception of nature is different from the physical-scientific conception of it. The potency of the

diviner's psychic power (his personal *sunsum*) enables him to collapse the barriers erected in our consciousness by our fixed conception of space and time that normally serve as indispensable coordinates for our understanding of events. By this collapse of space and time, the diviner's personal *sunsum* becomes a receiver in the present of events 'transmitted' from the future. *Sunsum* as energy is the medium of this transmission. The potent psychic energy of the diviner (personal *sunsum*) apprehends the future event through the medium of universal *sunsum* which pervades space and time, conceived as a whole structure. It is because of the wholeness that universal *sunsum* can serve as the vehicle through which 'the whole situation' can be grasped by a potent personal *sunsum*. For the diviner, therefore, something unknowable in the physical scientific framework - the future- becomes potentially knowable because the barrier (time) that shields the future away from the present is removable.

Thus, the *sunsum* that pervades space outside of individuals provide a link by which individuals can be connected, although they may themselves inhabit different location in space. This link may be contiguous, but because *sunsum* is inaccessible to ordinary sense, we are unable to apprehend this contiguity. Again, because of the nature of *sunsum*, there is no reason to suppose that it does not link existents in the various dimensions of time. Through *sunsum*, therefore, a connection may ensue between different existents at different places at a particular time. Likewise, through it, a connection between particulars can ensue at different phases in time. It is in this connection that *sunsum* can adequately explain the 'paranormal' and substantiate its occurrence. Let us take the phenomenon of precognition for our illustration:

Suppose a man, X, is able to preconceive the death of another, Y and Y's death comes to pass. If X did not have access to any of the normal routes to fore-knowing Y's death, we conclude that he precognized the event. The physical realist has great difficulties in accepting this conclusion, but on a holistic conception of space-time, there would be no difficulties in explaining this event due to the role of *sunsum*. We can explain it in the following manner: X's *sunsum* was able to connect with the moribund *sunsum* of Y through the intermediary of the *sunsum* that pervades space-time outside of individuals. This is how X precognized the event although he might not himself be able to explain how. I believe that there are regular occurrences of this sort, resulting in unfamiliar psychical states that we either do not acknowledge because they are beyond our capacity to understand; or if we acknowledge them we ascribe their cause to them other than *sunsum*.

Hence *sunsum* provides us with a new way of explaining observable events in a coherent structure of spatio-temporal coordinates - the holistic structure. In other

words, *sunsum* unveils a traditional explanation of paranormal events in our human sensible dimensions of space and time.

CHAPTER THREE

3. Paranormal Cognition and Knowledge

3.1. Introduction

The late Professor P.O. Bodunrin was the first among African philosophers to raise the question of whether a person who gains information by paranormal means could be considered to have knowledge. The previous chapter adumbrates my affirmative answer to this question. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the conditions under which information derived from paranormal events may be considered a valid way of knowing. In other words, I intend here to dispute the view that no information, which derives from a perception consequent to a paranormal event, and afford us a way of knowing in the 'real' sense of the verb 'to know'. I will argue that paranormal cognition can be legitimately considered as a type of knowledge. But before I undertake this enterprise, let us consider the nature of 'normal' knowledge, that with which paranormal cognition is said not to coincide.

3.2. The Analysis of Knowledge in the Western Epistemological Tradition

Arguably, the three most important questions a theory of knowledge has to answer are:

1. Can we know anything at all?
2. If we can know something, then what is it that we can know? In other words, can we know everything or are there limits to what we can know?
3. How do we know what we can know? What are the sources and the pathways to knowledge?

Answers generated by theories in Western philosophy have generally been considered as standard answers to these questions. It will help therefore to have a brief look at the conditions of knowing in the Western epistemological tradition.

Save the absolute skepticism of Pyrrho and his followers, the common view among Western philosophers has been that some things are accessible to human knowledge. I am using 'thing' comprehensively to include events, propositions etc. But what does it mean to say that we can 'know' some things? What is the nature of knowledge? In his *Theaetetus* Plato provided an account of knowledge that was widely accepted as a sufficient account of knowledge in the Western philosophical setting until Edmund Gettier, an American philosopher, published his article "Is Justified True belief Knowledge?" in 1963.

The essential idea in Plato's dialogue is that to know that P means that

1. P is true
2. You must believe that P is true
3. You must be justified in believing that P is true

It has been a central claim in Western philosophy since the *Theaetetus* that these three conditions, taken together, are necessary and sufficient condition for knowledge. This given, however, the interpretation of (3) has posed a perennial challenge to Western epistemologists. In other words, if my knowing that P means my having justification for my belief that P is true, then what kind of justification will do? What does the justification condition amount to? Western philosophers have provided various interpretations of this condition. I would like to look at the approaches taken by Descartes and Locke, since these constitute two prominent approaches to knowledge in the Western philosophical setting.

3.2.1. Knowledge Requires Certainty

According to Descartes, knowledge requires certainty. In other words to know that P, the evidence I have in support of P must be indubitable. The evidence is indubitable if the statement that represents the evidence(s), relates to P in such a way that it is impossible that P should be false if S is true. Descartes formulates this theory thus:

“But if I did convince myself of anything, I must have existed. “But there is some deceiver, supremely powerful, supremely intelligent, who purposely always deceives me.” If he deceives me, then again I undoubtedly exist; let him deceive me as much as he may, he will never bring it about that, at the time of thinking that I am something, I am in fact nothing. Thus I have now weighed all considerations enough and more than enough; and must at length conclude that this proposition “I am, I exist”, whenever I utter or conceive it in my mind, is necessarily true (2nd Meditation).

In fact Descartes makes it clear at the outset of his *Meditations* that he is setting out in search of an indubitable foundation on which human knowledge could be grounded. As the passage above reveals, this search, after his exercise of the hyperbolic doubt, leads him to the intuitive certainty of the existence of his thoughts. And this, he holds, is indefeasible evidence for his existence, for it is impossible both for him to be aware of his thought and not to exist. On this view, then, the evidence that justifies your belief must be indefeasible. Therefore, to know that P, means satisfying the following conditions:

1. P must be true
2. You must believe that P is true
3. You must have indubitable evidence for the truth of P

Suffice it to say that the impossibility of procuring indubitable evidence in support of our beliefs was the breeding ground for absolute skepticism. According to these skeptics, knowledge requires certainty, and since no one can be certain of anything it follows that no one can know anything. In fact when Descartes' theory is applied, we can hardly claim knowledge, the truth of all evidence we have on the external world is uncertain. Nothing then is certain except the existence of our own minds.

Later on in his *Meditations* Descartes attempted to save his theory from such a conclusion by claiming that God guarantees the certainty of a priori knowledge and the evidence of our senses. But for this claim to be acceptable, we must know (have indefeasible evidence) that our experiences correspond to reality because God has guaranteed that. But Descartes doesn't show us how we have such evidence of god's

guarantee. Therefore, it is legitimate to maintain that on Descartes' terms, we cannot know anything about the world save the existence of our own minds.

3.2.2. Knowledge Requires Good Evidence

The British empiricist John Locke was the first to formulate an epistemology which requires not indefeasible evidence but good evidence as sufficient justification. According to him, although the evidence of experience is always defeasible, it is nevertheless adequate to justify our true beliefs about the external world. He argues in Book 2, Chapter 1 of his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, that all our knowledge is ultimately founded on experience. Then later in the book he writes:

“He that in the ordinary affairs of life, would admit of nothing but direct plain demonstration, would be sure of nothing in this world, but of perishing quickly”
(Bk 3, Chapter 11, Section 10).

Thus sense experience provides us with the grounds for probable, but not certain, knowledge; and probability, in practical life, is sufficient justification for knowledge. Locke's theory can be formulated thus: to know that

1. P must be true
2. You must believe that P is true
3. You must have good evidence that P is true

But if to know is to have justified true belief, and if experience justifies our beliefs and yet experience is always defeasible, then how do we decide which experience is reliable? In answering this question empiricists have often claimed that some of the knowledge acquired by experience provides the basis for the rest of our knowledge. In other words, all our knowledge is founded on one basic class of things we know. We will recall that Descartes also founded our knowledge on the guarantee of a benevolent and an all-powerful God. Epistemologies such as Descartes' and Locke's are called *Foundationalist Epistemologies*. They are foundationalist because they postulate a class of beliefs, of which we allegedly have secure knowledge and assert that all other beliefs, if they are to constitute knowledge, must be properly derived from these foundational beliefs.

Foundationalist epistemologies ruled without serious challenge to Gettier's paper. In this work, Gettier provided examples that showed that the justification principle in foundationalist epistemology could produce a situation where a false belief is (or, can be) justified.

The problems posed by Gettier's paper prompted other approaches to the analysis of knowledge. One group of such theories is collectively known as Causal Theories of Knowledge. These theories are non-foundational, and they interpret the justification condition as requiring that the fact that the belief is true should not be by mere accident. I believe that these theories of knowledge afford a means by which paranormal cognition can be validated through mainstream Western epistemology. In section (d) below, we will look at Causal Theories and how they validate paranormal cognition. For now, I want to turn my attention to Akan epistemology, specifically to what it says of the paranormal as a way of knowing, because I believe its claims would help to enlighten the claims of the causal theories.

3.3. Some Elements of Akan Epistemology

3.3.1. The Types of Knowledge

Neither modern Akan philosopher nor traditional thinker is known to have advocated skepticism of the Pyrrhic type. There is, thus, a reasonable likelihood that Akan thought affirms the proposition 'it is possible to have some knowledge'. Many Akan philosophers (see e.g. Agyakwa, *ibid*, 77-79) hold that the verb 'to know' (*nim*) in the Akan language admits of the three following meanings:

- a. Knowledge by recognition or acquaintance: thus the Akan will say: "*me nim Martin*" meaning, "I know Martin". And if you ask him how he knows Martin, he would answer, for instance, that "he is my friend".
- b. Knowledge as possession of a certain competence: The Akan will say "*me nim afiri ka*" (I know how to drive a motor vehicle). You ask him how, and he would proceed to show you the content of his professed knowledge.
- c. Propositional knowledge: P invokes this type of knowledge when he claim that "I know that X", where X has a truth value; i.e. where X is a claim whose validity can be tested, verified, evaluated etc. In this sense the Akan will say that "*me nim se Martin atu kwan*" where Martin represents X.

The three senses of knowledge in the Akan language correspond to the meaning of knowledge in English (Lehrer, 1974, 1-3) and also in other African languages such as in Igbo (Opata, 1998), in Ewe (Dzobo, 1992, 74-75). Traditionally, the claim to propositional knowledge has been the main subject of epistemology in the West. As such, it is the Akan claims to this type of knowledge, or rather their views on the validation of it that will be rendered simply as knowledge unless a specification of the type of knowledge is necessary.

If knowledge is attainable, as claimed by the Akan thinker, then how is it acquired according to him? What can we know? Is there only one level of knowledge or more? What are the sources of knowledge? There are the kinds of questions to which I will now attend.

3.3.2. The Levels of *Nim* in Akan Epistemology:

In consonance with his metaphysics, the Akan thinker offers a hierarchical order of the objects of knowledge and the pathway to it. Three levels of knowing can be identified in the Akan philosophy of knowledge. These are:

3.3.2.1. *Nea Wohu*

Literally, this means the observable or perceivable. This category of knowledge represents the knowledge derived from ordinary sense experience and rational thought. In other words, '*nea wohu*' represents both rational and empirical knowledge in traditional Akan epistemology.

The sources of knowledge of this level are:

'*hu*' which translates into the English 'see, observe', and

'*te*' which translates to 'hear'. The verb '*te*' is also used to represent perception by other sense organs as well. Thus, '*me te nka*' (I feel) and '*me te pampa*' (I smell) denote sense experience other than by hearing.

So far, '*te*' and '*hu*' have been shown to be the pathways to empirical pathways to empirical knowledge. But these verbs are used also to represent knowledge procured through the pure activity of the mind. Thus, '*mahu nea wokyerere no*' means 'I understand what you mean' and '*mate ase*' means 'I understand/comprehend the

depths of it (of the subject matter)'. Thus reason and sense experience are accepted pathways to knowledge in Akan epistemology.

3.3.2.2. *Nea Etra Adwen*

The Akan word, '*adwen*' has both a wide and a narrow meaning. Interpreted widely, it means 'consciousness' whereas its narrow interpretation yields the English 'thought'. It is being used narrowly in the phrase '*nea etra adwen*' to mean 'that which transcends thought'. Thus Akan thinkers maintain that we can access propositional knowledge at a level beyond rational deliberation. Two reasons, at least, make this position plausible. First, this is in consonance with their holistic metaphysics expounded in chapter two. If reality comprises the visible and the invisible, and the visible is comprehensible through rational deliberation, then it is reasonable to suppose that there must be another way by which invisible reality could be comprehended. Secondly, experience forms the basis of this strong belief in the access to knowledge at a level beyond rational deliberation, as will soon be seen. In fact most modern Akan philosophers, notably Gyekye (1987, 202), Agyakwa (1974, 57), and Ogua (1977, 204-205) assert that, further to reason and sense experience, paranormal cognition is a third mode of knowing.

Some expressions in the Akan language that illustrate the reality of this kind of knowing are the following: if, for example, X is able to foretell the arrival of Y in a way that we will recognize as precognitive, and you ask X how he came to have this true belief of Y's impending arrival, he would say, '*na ne din da m'adwene mu*'. In other words, 'his name was in my mind'. Another statement which could be made to answer the same question could be '*onipa din ben ne ho*'. In other words, 'a person's name is attached to him'. How do these statements reflect the assertion of the type of knowledge I have referred to as *nea etra adwen*?

First the notion of '*din*' or name in both statements is relevant because a person's name, for the Akan, has a direct bearing on his *ɔkra* through the medium of *kradin* (the name of the *ɔkra*). Every Akan has a *kradin* to signify the day his *ɔkra* entered the visible world in the form of a human being. Now, as seen in chapter two, the *ɔkra* constitutes an ontological unity with the *sunsum*. Therefore, '*ne din da madwene mu*' means that the person (the embodiment of *ɔkra* /*sunsum*) is in my mind. I was consciously aware of him. His persistent presence in my mind was indicative of his coming. The precognized event (his coming) was informed by the persistence of his being in my mind. Two things are implied here, I think. First, that the statements '*onipa din ben ne ho*' and '*X din da madwene mu*', when used in this context, could be

considered to be inductive statements from observation: each time X's person persistently occupies my mind, he turns up where I am. This means, second, that there is some sort of communication between the mind of X and mine without my being cognitively aware of this. My awareness of the presence of X is my consciousness of this communication between our minds, but I am not cognitively aware of this communication. Although I am not rationally aware of this communication, experience tells me that it is reasonable to suppose that such communication takes place. Thus there is awareness, but it is an awareness on another level, an awareness which '*tra adwen*' (surpass thought).

Similarly, an answer to how one came to have a certain clairvoyant information would elicit the answer '*esɔ me mu*' (it gripped me). It occurred to me suddenly and without any rational deliberation. In other words, it occurred to me intuitively. Such an occurrence demonstrates an important characteristic of awareness as '*nea etra adwen*'.

It is important to note here that the usual expressions for knowledge: '*nim*' and '*nyansa*' will not apply to knowing at this level. The knower at this level will neither be characterized as '*nimdefo*' nor as '*nyansafo*'. Rather, he will be attributed with '*ben*' and be called an '*ɔbenfo*'. The term '*ɔben*', then, epistemically employed, will denote the possession of knowledge at the level of *nea etra adwen*.

The word '*aben*', in ordinary usage, means 'well-cooked'. But it is used in other senses as well. Christaller, for instance, defines 'ben' inter alia as "to be smart, clever, well versed in any knowledge or business, good or bad". In this sense, '*ɔben*' implies an understanding capacity or ability to know. A context in which this sense of '*ɔben*' would be employed is this: suppose you go to an *ɔkomfo* for consultation and, before you speak, he tells you of your mission to his shrine. The Akan thinker will surely attribute the term '*ɔben*' to the *ɔkomfo*, and what he would mean by this word here is that the *ɔkomfo* has a profundity of perception which is beyond the ordinary.

The profundity of perception attributed to the *ɔkomfo* will reflect the view, first, that he has reached the apex of knowledge in his field of activity. This is why he perceives further than his colleagues in the field. Now, 'the field' here is the field of reality and this field comprises the visible and invisible realms of reality. In the case of this *ɔkomfo*, the '*ɔben*' clearly refers to his competence to know of events in the invisible realm. Hence, we refer to a version of knowledge of this type *nea etra adwen*.

The *ɔkomfo* (X) '*aben*', then, would mean X is well-versed in the affairs of *sunsum*; that X can penetrate the realm of *sunsum* and to manipulate it. What does this mean? It means that X's *sunsum* contains an abundance of *tumi* and as a result of this his perceptive faculties are heightened to a level from which he can transcend the

limitations of the visible world and gain a deeper insight into the fundamental principles that govern relationships between things and events in both realms of reality. This *tumi* (power) of the *sunsum* under consideration here refers to psychic power. I am maintaining here that the high psychic power of an *ɔbenfo*, when activated, leads him to distinct perception of the fundamental relations in existence. Hence this power is a gateway to some kind of knowledge. The vitality of an *ɔbenfo's sunsum* overcomes uncertainty, confusion, rashness and other hindrances to knowledge, so that his mind can reach occurrences in reality that cognition cannot reach.

The concept '*ɔben*' then suggests that a subject can possess capabilities for non-ordinary knowing. I want to suggest, further, that the concept is also indicative of the plausibility of a holistic approach to knowledge. If to '*ben*', by definition, is to be well-versed in *any* type of knowledge, then this implies that both '*nea wohu*' and '*nea etra adwen*' are equally important routes to knowledge. The mind of such a person will be the juncture of a configuration of pathways leading to different forms of knowledge. Therefore, he would be the repository of holistic knowledge.

3.3.2.3. *Nea Wonhu*

Nea wonhu means the imperceptible or unobservable but, as we said earlier, the verb *hu*, in the Akan language, is also used to represent understanding and comprehension. Thus *nea wonhu* may mean 'the incomprehensible', and it is in this sense that I use it here. Strictly speaking, this is not a dimension of knowledge but rather the suggestion of a level of reality of knowledge of which is incomprehensible to the human mind. It is important to explore this category because in his concurrent elaboration on epistemology in the Ewe and Akan traditional settings, Dzobo contends that "the first attitude to knowledge is that there is a limit to what any one individual can know, even though there is no limit to what can be known in principle". (Dzobo, 1992, 78) he quotes the following proverb in support of this claim, "knowledge is like a baobab tree, and no one person can embrace it with both hands". Dzobo's position clearly disputes my claim that '*nea wonhu*' sets limits to human comprehension. But Dzobo cannot maintain his position on the basis of this proverb because although the proverb informs us that there are limits to an individual's capacity to know, it surely does not claim that knowledge is limitless. Therefore, it is reasonable for us to claim the existence of this realm of the unknowable. The objects in this realm would be analogous to Kant's "thing-in-itself" which, although real, is unknowable. (Kant, 1973, 27)

There is little doubt, in fact, that many Africans recognize paranormal cognition as a mode of knowing. But is this recognition legitimate? Is PNC a valid form of knowing? If it is, on what grounds is it?

In my view, the belief that paranormal events afford us a way of knowing must meet the justification requirement in order for PNC to be admitted as another valid category of knowledge. In other words, if P claims knowledge of X through paranormal means, what method of validation for that knowledge can he disclose such that if X is indeed true, we will come to believe that P has good reason for believing that X? My position is that the justification condition can be squarely met by paranormal cognition. The rest of this chapter will be devoted to how we can validate PNC through:

- a. Mainstream philosophical theories of knowledge
- b. The Akan concept of sunsum
- c. A philosophical theory of science

3.4. Paranormal Cognition and the Causal Theory of Knowledge

We alluded to Causal Theories in Section (a), while elaborating on the Foundational Theories of knowledge. We said that the problems posed by Gettier's analysis of these theories inspired another set of theories of which Causal Theories are one. I believe that Causal theories afford us a means by which PNC can be validated.

The idea underlying all the various formulation of the Causal Theory is that in order to know that P,

1. P must be true
2. You must believe that P is true
3. Your belief in P must be caused in an appropriate way (Appiah, 1989, 52)

For these theories, therefore, the justification condition is met if your belief is caused in an appropriate way. But what way is appropriate? How do we decide which ways are appropriate? In addressing these questions Alvin Goldman, one of the foremost advocates of the Causal Theory, suggests that the appropriate way of getting a true belief is to be able to distinguish the actual state of affairs for which the belief is true from relevant possible states of affairs of which the belief is false. This discrimination

of the actually true from the possibly false state of affairs is best done by a method that is reliable in the circumstances (Goldman, 1976, 774).

A few things emerge from Goldman's theory which will justify my claim that Causal Theories can provide a validation for paranormal knowledge. First, Goldman's theory suggests that the appropriate way by which beliefs are caused varies. A reliable method varies with the circumstances. If X is driving through a district where a legal ban on the construction of facsimile barns, enforced by a heavy penalty, was in place, then merely looking out of his car window would be a reliable means for causing his belief that a barn is there. What constitutes good evidence for a true belief, then, is relative to the state of affairs prevalent in the belief situation. If so, then I contend that in their circumstances. Rhine and his team had every justification for their belief in the truth of paranormal cognition. In the same way Goldman's theory provides validation for the Akan thinker's belief in the validity of paranormal cognition as knowledge. Take the case of my experience with the *Ɔkomfo* who was able to 'call forth' the creature that he identified as an '*aboatia*'. Under the circumstances described, I am justified in saying 'I know that there exist certain creatures which are capable of defying the limitations ascribed to bodies in space by physical laws', because I cannot think of any set of circumstances which can lead me, falsely, into believing that I saw the creature.

Secondly, traditional epistemological theories look at the relationship between mind and knowledge from the point of view of that subject 'looking out' on the world. Causal theories, on the other hand, look at mind as a causal system in the world because they see human consciousness and the problems it addresses as part of the wide world of nature. For these theories, therefore, the notion of a mind having a direct effect on an object in the world is intelligible. Because they do not see human consciousness as detached from the natural world, Causal Theories are compatible with the Akan thinker's holism and his account of consciousness (the activity of *sunsum*,) as an integral aspect of the natural world.

The final point of interest in Goldman's analysis is that, the Causal Theory represents a radical departure from the foundationalism of traditional epistemology. Causal Theory denies that the justification of a belief depends on that belief supported by a foundation. In other words, Causal Theory does not distinguish between basic and non-basic knowledge. Provided the belief is produced by a reliable method, it is appropriately justified on this theory. Since paranormal cognition can be shown to be based on 'a reliable method', it can be validated by such a theory. Let us take a case of precognition for illustration: I tell you today of my belief that 'h' will happen at noon tomorrow. I have no cues whatsoever to afford me a reasoned guess of the occurrence

of 'h', and you satisfy yourself in this respect. I have nevertheless a strong 'feeling' that 'h' is definitely forthcoming. I believe this feeling is due to the high level of *tumi* in my *sunsum* which I believe heightens my perceptive abilities. 'H' occurs as predicted. What is the modus operandi of *sunsum*, you ask me? Although I am unable to explain this satisfactorily to you, suppose I tell you that each time I have someone persistently on my mind accompanied by nervous tension, I go for a certain herb and mention the person's name and say 'come in peace'. Suppose each time this happens the person in question comes, and suppose this was so in the case of 'h', would you not admit then that I have a reliable method of forming the belief that 'h' will happen? If I am able to foretell correctly a number of times and you find no other relevant alternative to my explanation, then you must admit the reliability of my method. If my belief that 'h' will happen is true, and I do form that belief by a reliable method, then the Causal Theory says that I do know that 'h' will occur tomorrow at noon. In other words, my belief that 'h' need not be anchored to some foundational empirical or rational principle.

3.5. *Sunsum* and Divination

I turn now to how PNC may be validated in terms of Akan thought. To investigate this question, I choose to isolate a mode of knowing in Akan epistemology that through which precognitive knowledge is usually attained. This mode is divination. After asserting the African's belief in divination as a way of knowing, Gyekye gives some characterization of divination in the following words, "In Africa, this information is thought to be the result of the activities of discarnate minds that is, spirits. Divination thus links the physical and the spiritual worlds....." (Gyekye, *ibid*, 203). Gyekye thinks also that extra-sensory capacities are inborn and cannot be acquired through experience (Gyekye, *ibid*).

Agyakwa's views on these issues partly coincide with Gyekye's. He defines divination as "one of the devices by which man attempts to bridge the gap between...the invisible world of spirits on the one hand and the concrete reality of man on the other" (Agyakwa, *ibid*, p57). He then goes on to affirm divination as one of the modes of knowing in Akan epistemology. He writes:

"Divination bring us to groups of specialists who possess esoteric knowledge; i.e. the kind of knowledge which is hidden from the general public and which requires special training...it is maintained that no account of Akan

epistemology would be satisfactory which did not examine the role of divination and mediums” (Agyakwa, *ibid*, 57).

According to Agyakwa, then, divination has the following distinguishing features:

1. it presupposes a world of spirits,
2. it is knowledge accessible only to specialists and
3. it can be learnt.

Gyekye and Agyakwa clearly agree on item (1) and (2) above. There is a difference between Gyekye and Agyakwa with regards to (3). Whereas Gyekye says that extra-sensory capacities cannot be learnt, Agyakwa claims that they can. In regard to this, I side with Agyakwa. I agree with both of them on (2).

I argued in the previous chapter that the word ‘spiritual’, as is commonly interpreted by most Akan philosophers, requires revision if it is to suit my interpretation of the concept of *sunsum*. For although these philosophers describe ‘spirit’ as invisible, they insist on its non-spatiality. I differ with this latter view, because I do not think that we can deny spatiality to *sunsum*. Neither can we deny it some of the attributes commonly assigned to spirit. I proposed a definition of *sunsum* in terms of ‘unseen force of nature’ and stipulated that the natural, as used in that context, is not co-terminus with the physical. Nature, on my conception, describes a realm much wider than ‘that whose essential attributes is extension’.

In my research many practitioners of divination asserted that divination is, indeed, a structure through which specialists interacts with ordinary non-sensible realm of existence. But as argued in chapter 2, the non-sensorial or non-physical cannot necessarily be akin to a Cartesian spirit. As a matter of fact, some philosophers, e.g. Wiredu, seem to hold the view that to conceive of the spiritual as the source of knowledge is to exempt this knowledge from the third condition of epistemological validation. According to Wiredu, such a position amounts to mistaking mystical awareness for knowledge proper; but that mystical awareness is an erroneous claim to knowledge. Wiredu considers the defining features of mystical awareness to be that;

1. it transcends sensible experience and is therefore not empirically verifiable and
2. it can either be learnt or thought (Wiredu, 1980, 105)

We can infer from Wiredu's views the position that we can either accept or reject the validity of mystical awareness as knowledge depending on our individual perspective, but such an acceptance will not be rational, since we have no recourse to investigation into the validity of this type of knowledge. I wish to stress that I make no such claim. I believe that mystical awareness can be taught. All the African diviners I had discussion with assert that personal *sunsum* (psychic power) is educable. So even if Wiredu should define knowledge by divination as mystical knowledge, he cannot legitimately claim that this knowledge cannot be taught or learnt.

I have no objections to postulating spirits as a source of knowledge or as a causal mechanism in the world. My only concession, as regards (1) above, is that the realm of *sunsum* is the realm of the ordinarily non-sensible forces of nature. As far as I can see, there can be no objections to this interpretation so long as 'nature' is conceived as *phusis* in ancient Greek philosophy, before Cartesianism mapped onto nature the exclusive regions of the spiritual and material. Nature, on the conception to which I appeal, is the whole of nature as the realm of being. It includes both physical and other forces and energies which are not ordinarily susceptible to sense-experience. Thus, this view of nature refers to the whole complex of being. It is the holistic view and makes room for things which are not necessarily subsumable under the laws of physics. It includes, in other words, what Rhine has characterized as, "forms of energy different from all forms of energy" (Rhine, cf Mosley, 1978, 12). We can say, therefore, that divination is a process by which experts interact with the ordinary non-sensible forces of nature. In this way, knowledge by divination is open to the third epistemological condition in so far as it is susceptible to the type of investigation capable of verifying or falsifying its reality.

Now I come to Gyekye's and Agyakwa's (2) above. The central claim here is that knowledge by divination is a feat acquired only by specialists. My field research confirms this as largely correct, if 'specialists' is not made to denote some category of a chosen field. Instead, to say that this type of knowledge is specialist knowledge is to say that its acquisition requires undergoing an extraordinary process of training. This will make knowledge by divination similar to other types of specialist knowledge. Thus (2) is correct in so far as it doesn't imply the society of diviners is a close cult open only to a chosen few. It is not a closed cult also because under certain conditions every person, by choice, can be made to possess this esoteric knowledge. For these reasons, I side with Agyakwa (3), i.e. that the method of divination can be learnt.

Having now defined knowledge by divination as knowledge derived from a process by which man interacts with the non-sensible forces of nature, I wish to claim that it can be validated through the mainstream analysis of knowledge. If knowledge by divination is acquired through the interaction of the knowing subject with unseen forces of nature, and the method of this interaction can be learnt or taught, and then because it can be learnt or taught, it is possible for the validity of such knowledge to be assessed by an independent expert on such matters.

That we can ascertain the reliability or validity of knowledge by divination by appealing to experts on the subject matter is perfectly in order. In fact, this is how we relate to any type of specialist knowledge. If I doubt the diagnosis of a specialist physician, I seek the opinion only of another physician to confirm or disconfirm that diagnosis. If I come to believe the views of the latter physician and these views turn out to be true, I do not say that medical science is a hoax; rather, I say that the first physician is incompetent.

As the experimental evidence suggests, ESP and psychokinesis derive from 'a form of energy different from all known forms of energy' (Rhine, cf Mosley, 12). I maintain that in Akan thought this unknown form of energy can be identified with *sunsum*. In the diviner's view, many instances prove the practical efficacy of *sunsum*. He experiences *sunsum* as working, in the sense of producing results that can reasonably be attributed to the activity of *sunsum*. Although this experience (which leads to the belief that valid knowledge can be derived from the realm of *sunsum*) defies known limits of ordinary experience, he claims that they do not defy the limits of possible experience. The persistence of these experiences leads him to this conclusion. Therefore the conclusion is legitimately inferred from this evidence, and as such, his argument is good. Therefore, we are unreasonable if we persist in conceiving knowledge by divination as nonsensical propositions considered as knowledge by a hallucinating 'chosen few' (Rorty, *ibid*) or as pseudo-scientific knowledge (Bodunrin, *ibid*). By stressing the nature of *sunsum* as an imperceptible natural force capable, under certain conditions, of manifesting itself in the physical world, I am suggesting that there is a reasonable likelihood that 'experts' on *sunsum* would conduct an open, critical and analytic inquiry into an area which is as yet unknown to science, but which could be brought fully into the purview of science.

3.6. Normal Science

In this section I would like to pursue further the comparison of the activities of African diviners with modern science. My aim is to shed a light on these two activities in order

to determine the extent to which divination is similar to scientific activity. I will attempt to draw this analogy with the aid of the ideas of Thomas Kuhn. In his epochal *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Kuhn, a philosopher of science, conceives of scientific activity from a sociological perspective. This perspective emphasizes the thesis that science always takes place within a certain conceptual framework. This framework provides 'the lenses' through which the scientist sees natural phenomena. It also determines to a large extent what questions he may consider as worthy of pursuit and the kinds of answer that might be acceptable to him. Furthermore, particular scientific theories are interpreted within these frameworks and to understand these theories we must understand the frameworks. Kuhn calls this framework a 'paradigm'. He writes: "...law, theory, application and instrumentation together provide models from which spring particular coherent traditions of scientific research." (Kuhn, 1970, p10). Thus, a scientific community (those who share a coherent tradition of scientific activity) consists of certain kinds of practitioners with similar education and professional background who pursue an organized activity and draw similar lessons from their similar training.

Since paradigm is the key concept in Kuhn's account of a scientific community, let us closely look at what it contains. Kuhn distinguishes between two senses of 'paradigm', a broad and a narrow sense.

3.7. The Paradigm as a Disciplinary Matrix (DM)

This is the broad theoretical and practical background which members of a scientific community share. It consists of the following:

Symbolic Generalizations: These include the laws, postulates or hypothesis of a science. Some examples of these in physical science would be Newton's laws, the Boyle-Charles Law of Gases, etc.

Theoretical and Heuristic Models: A model is an attempt to give a concrete picture of how things, according to the scientific theory, work, e.g. according to the Law of gases mentioned above, molecules of gas are said to behave like tiny billiard balls colliding into each other and bouncing away.

Shared Values: the following are some of the values a scientific community is supposed to cherish and share; accurate prediction and quantitative methods, adherence to whatever margin of error is accepted as the standard, the social utility/usefulness of the science etc.

Exemplars: This refers to the narrow sense of 'paradigm'. The exemplars are the widely accepted solutions to old problems that are considered the paradigm's best examples of ways to solve new problems. These include concrete solutions to problems which students of a particular science learn in their education. These shared examples of problem-solving techniques constitute important reference points for a scientific community, for the exemplars allow practitioners to see a variety of situations as similar in some important respects.

According to Kuhn, 'Normal Science' is carried out by a scientific community which shares a Disciplinary Matrix based on a shared stock of exemplars. Through their education, the practitioners of normal science have learnt the common generalizations in the context of learning the accepted exemplars. And beyond the ability to solve standard problems, learning these exemplars also means mastering the ability to find new interpretations and applications of the symbolic generalizations on the basis of the common stock of exemplars. Thus normal science does not only aim to show that everything is in accordance with the DM. According to Kuhn, solving puzzles about how to extend the DM is an essential task of normal science. As he puts it, "exemplars are sufficiently open-ended to leave all sorts of problems for a group of normal science practitioners to resolve" (Kuhn, *ibid*, p10. See also sections II - IV). Thus it is the imperative of the normal scientist, when he encounters problems and puzzles which counts against his DM, to resolve these puzzles so as to bring theory and new facts into harmony. This implies that a DM is not static.

In Kuhn's view, then, a science is only meaningfully systematized and organized way of knowing, explaining, and predicting natural phenomena. Any coordinate system which possesses certain fundamental parameters (a Disciplinary Matrix and Exemplars) should be able on its own to satisfactorily explain natural phenomena in scientific terms.

3.8. Divination and Normal Science

In the light of this view, I intend to argue in this section for the position that African systems of divination have much in common with 'normal science' and are capable of disclosing reality like any other organized scientific activity. Propositions asserted by normal scientists in the description of nature are usually taken to be knowledge on nature. How many elements of normal science can we find in the activity of divination? The more elements we find in common between these two activities, the more justified we will be to assert that 'a strong relation holds between them', thereby justifying Einstein's condition for the commensuration of coordinate systems. So how

far do African diviners, in their activities, meet Kuhn's criteria of science? I think they meet many of them. Let us see how, with reference to *Afa*.

Afa is a system of divination based on sixteen basic and 256 derivative figures (*du*) obtained either by the manipulation of sixteen palm nuts or by the toss of a chain of eight half seed shells. The real core of this practice lies in the thousands of memorized verses by means of which the 256 figures are interpreted. *Afa* is practiced by the Yoruba and Benin people of Edo State, Nigeria, who call it *Ifa* (Parrinder, 1961, 148), the Fon of the Benin Republic, who call it *Fa* (Herskovits, 1938, 201-230), and the Ewe of Togo and Ghana who call it *Afa* (Klu, 1985, 2). It is also practiced by descendents of West African slaves in Cuba and Brazil (Bascom, 1991, 3). The purpose of *Afa* divination is, inter alia, to foretell future events and to prescribe action that will enhance the occurrence of these foreseen events or to avert their consequences. Does *Afa* possess a viable paradigm? Let us see what Bascom, an American anthropologist who spent over three decades studying this system, and Togbui Dunyo, a practicing diviner and the Volta Regional Chairman of the Traditional and Psychic Healers' Association of Ghana, have to say in this respect.

3.8.1. On the Theoretical Presuppositions Underlying *Afa* Practice

Togbui Dunyo asserts in an interview on 17/5/99 that *sunsum* (*gbogbo*) is responsible for the accuracy of *Afa* predictions. The '*gumaga*', or divining chain, is said to be the repository of *sunsum*, and that this *sunsum* is capable of "speaking with" the *gbogbo* that inhabits every existent in the world, and of the *sunsum* "resident in the air".

Previous studies reveal that it is customary practice in *Afa* divination for a client to conceal from the diviner the problem for which he has come for consultation. The diviner diagnoses the client's problem by throwing the divining chain and reciting the verses to which the "throw" constrains him. The client decides which is the appropriate verse and the diviner arrives at an answer to the problem by interpreting these verses. It is this concealment of the problem from the diviner which makes this practice different from, say, a consultation with a physician where clues are given by the patient to the doctor to help in his diagnosis. Commenting on *Afa* procedure, Bascom says: "...*Ifa* divination is essentially a projective technique, comparable to the Rorschach Test⁴ in that its interpretation depends on the client's motivations and

⁴ The Rorschach Test is a projective test designed to reveal the dynamics of the unconscious. Invented by Hermann Rorschach, a Swiss psychiatrist, the Test consists of ten bilaterally symmetrical "inkblots", each on a separate card. The respondent is shown each card separately and asked to tell the examiner everything she sees on the card i.e. everything the inkblot could

other psychological factors” (Bascom, *ibid*, 69). Now, *The Rorschach Test* is an admissible procedure for diagnosis in mainstream psychology (Rosenhan and Seligman, 1989, 166ff), and it is not difficult to see what role *sunsum* can play in this procedure. To augment Togbui Dunyo’s explanation, we can say that the *sunsum* in the ‘*gumaga*’ (divining chain) links with *sunsum* that “exists” in the future. This futuristic *sunsum* then “talks” to (i.e. communicates with) the client’s *sunsum*. It is this communication between *sunsum* that elicit the client’s “motivations and other psychological factors” which in turn direct the client’s choice. Thus, suppose the client’s problem is whether or not to build a house on some piece of land. The prescription may be “don’t: if you do, you will lose a child at such and such a time”. Suppose further that the consultation also reveals that no action can reverse this prospective event if *Afa*’s warning goes unheeded. Now, suppose the client does not heed this warning and the event comes to pass. Then, according to Bascom, we can legitimately say that a method akin to the *Rorschach Test* has been employed to substantiate the occurrence of a future event, making this test analogous to a method by which the activity of *sunsum* is displayed. It would seem that we can account for the activities of ‘empirical observation, hypothesis formulation and testing’ if we adopt Bascom’s interpretation of the nature of the divining activity, and this interpretation is both convincing and rational.

Skepticism about the truth of *Afa* predictions has been expressed in terms that a client is rarely able to decide whether the prediction is accurate or not, or whether it was the prescription that in fact procured the good projected consequences or forestalled the bad ones. This is a version of the *Hypothesis of Chance* dealt with in chapter one. To this, Bascom replies that

“Even Western Medicine has been plagued by questions of this type, and one may debate whether to follow the advice of one doctor or another, or none at all. Like these other systems, *Ifa* divination depends upon an underlying foundation of belief frequently reinforced by its successes while its failures are rationalized or forgotten...As in the case of doctor whose patient dies, a number

resemble. The responses are interpreted and used for the diagnosis of hidden anxieties, unconscious conflicts etc. What causes the phenomena may be an interaction between two or more personal *sunsum*, or between personal and generic *sunsum*.

of explanations are possible, and while the doctor's skill or knowledge may be questioned, the system of medicine itself is not" (Bascom, *ibid*, 70)

In other words, in science, doubts about the competence of a particular practitioner do not invalidate the Disciplinary Matrix (DM) of that science.

On this Bascom is in line with Kuhn, who holds that a DM may be rejected but never solely because of data which counts against it. He writes "rejection of science in favor of another occupation is, I think, the only sort of DM rejection to which counterinstances by themselves can lead" (Kuhn, *ibid*, 79). Then he says: "the attitude of a normal scientist with respect to recalcitrant data (counter instances) is that it is a poor carpenter who blames his tools" (Kuhn *ibid*). Thus it is the scientist, not his DM (tools) to which blame would be leveled when he fails to solve puzzles and problems which seem to count against his DM. It is the imperative of the normal scientist to resolve these puzzles, to bring data and theory into harmony. Here, we find the shortcomings of physical scientists: they do not put forth bold, novel conjectures in the face of the occurrence of paranormal phenomena. They do not strive to develop theoretical alternatives that will widen their DM. But this is another matter. What I want to say here is that on Bascom's and Kuhn's view, the normal scientist acquires knowledge by applying symbolic generalizations to nature. And this would seem to be, partially at least, what the diviner does.

3.8.2. The Training of *Afa* Priests

Studies indicate that:

1. Diviners are trained through a system of apprenticeship similar to that in the arts and crafts. The pupil learns by observing the divinations performed by the teacher for his clients, and also by specific instruction (Bascom, *ibid*, 85)
2. At the end of his apprenticeship, the novice is tested before he can practice on his own (Bascom, *ibid*, 85)
3. Even after his initiation to practice independently, a diviner continues to learn and has obligations towards his teacher (Bascom, *ibid*, 81). Thus: "the duration of the period of training, mentioned by diviners in their own cases, varied from three to ten years, but none of them stopped learning when it was completed" (Bascom, *ibid*, 86)

4. The diviners claim also that *sunsum* is made manifest in the diving chain through the application of (the right combination) of herbs, and that this combination is taught.

3.8.3. Professional Ethics

1. We have seen that *Ifa* priests do not ask for the reasons why clients have come for consultation. This is to display their honesty in diagnosing and also to attest the efficacy of *Ifa*. Togbui Dunyo asserts that a priest who flouts this rule of non-disclosure is likely to lose his license to practice.
2. In discussing with Bascom how one arrives at consultation prices, one diviner informed Bascom that “whatever amount pleases one is what we sell *Ifa* for”. Another also told him that it would be unfair to take advantage of sick persons or to charge strangers more than relatives. As regards the sacrifices to be made, the priest cannot charge more than is mentioned in the verse (Bascom, *ibid*, 76)
3. There is also the problem of dishonesty: of diviners who falsify their predictions. Although, the customary practice of clients concealing their problems is a precaution against this, there is the added precaution, reported by Bascom, that any diviner who is caught controlling the divining chain or modifying its interpretation so as to misrepresent the message of *Ifa* must leave the profession as this is considered strictly unethical (Bascom, *ibid*, 77)
4. Bascom gives another reason why dishonesty and other professional malpractices of *Ifa* priests are unlikely. He states that, “they operate in perfectly good faith, employing a system in which they believe implicitly and in terms of which they themselves offer sacrifices, make decisions and in fact order their own lives” (Bascom, *ibid*, 79). This is a behavioral argument: if *Ifa* priests behave as if they believe in *Ifa*, then there is evidence of their belief in *Ifa*. Although one can find counter-instances to this assertion, one must bear in mind that a behavioral argument is an inductive argument and as such can withstand counter-instances.
5. Furthermore Bascom, asserts that before beginning to divine, every morning, diviners rest their divining chains to ascertain whether a particular chain is “talking”. They do this by asking questions whose answers are already known, and if the wrong answer is selected they decide that the chain is “not talking” and test another in similar fashion (Bascom, *ibid*, 79).

Much in this section suggests that important elements of normal science coincide with central elements in the divining activity. I have tried to say, in so many words, that the activity of divining is compatible with Kuhn's view of science, which defines science as a meaningfully systematized and organized way of knowing. Kuhn and Einstein together present us with the view that co-ordinate system should be capable, on its own, to explain natural phenomena satisfactorily in scientific terms if it possesses certain fundamental parameters. In the light of this, we can legitimately assert that African systems of divination are capable of disclosing reality like any other 'normal science'. African explanations are built on hypotheses that are legitimate in their cosmologies. I mean by hypothesis, unproven underlying principles. Hypothesis, as defined, is the necessary presuppositions for theory. When this theory is proven, the hypothesis becomes legitimate knowledge. And I say that it is legitimate to consider some African cosmological presuppositions as analogous to scientific postulates. The Akan thinker claims that a person at place P, under certain conditions, can simultaneously know what is happening at place P in such a way that we cannot account for his acquisition of this knowledge by the ordinary methods of knowing. His underlying assumption is that *sunsum* is responsible for this event. He says that the *sunsum* in a particular person may be such that it can interact with universal *sunsum*, and this interaction may cause the person to perceive events occurring at another place, in defiance of the laws which apply to physical interaction in space-time.

On closer look, there is not such a big difference between the physicist's 'quantum jumps' and the Akan thinker's claim. The physicist says that these quantum jumps, this behavior of sub-atomic particles, defy our normal space-time coordinates; that this is in the nature of things. What the Akan thinker says also is that the mind defies these coordinates. And if it is in the nature of an atom to defy these coordinates, then it is not unreasonable for him to believe that mind may be empowered to do the same because, for him, mind and matter are both constituted of *sunsum*. The Akan thinker believes, furthermore, that the capacity to explain, predict and control real occurrences in our spatio-temporal schema can be learnt; that certain people are capable of interacting with imperceptible reality, and tapping the appropriate forces and laws in the universe otherwise inaccessible to human understanding. It is difficult to understand why these claims should outrage the physicalist who, on the other hand, is witnessing a progressive extending and blurring of the traditional boundaries of the physical. Perhaps due to these events in his own field of knowledge, the Akan thinker must be taken seriously when he asserts that '*nea etra adwen*' is another path to knowledge. But if the physicalist is still unconvinced, it might help him to consider the

striking resemblances between science and the activities of the African practitioners of the paranormal.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. The Akan Diviner as a Holistic Scientist

I aim in this chapter to further the argument, adumbrated in the latter part of the previous chapter, that the Akan *Ɔkomfo's* activities can be given the status of 'science'. Toward this end, I look afresh at developments in some branches of Western 'normal' science vis-a-vis Akan theories of being and their employment by the *Ɔkomfo*.

4.1. Theoretical Physics

It should be observed at the outset that physical science or physicalism is at the forefront of the skepticism of paranormal events, and this is simply because these events defy the explanatory apparatus of physicalism. But physicalism's fundamental postulate about reality has been questioned by new events in physics and, consequently, the relevance of this assumption and its attendant methodology to scientific knowledge has been profoundly diminished. The factors that first led physicists to distrust their orthodox faith were two theoretical systems developed between 1900 and 1927. One of these was Quantum Theory, which deals with fundamental units of matter and energy. The other was the Theory of Relativity, dealing with space, time and the structure of the universe as a whole. Both of these theories are now accepted pillars of modern physicalist thought. I have discussed the theories of Relativity in chapter three. I propose to discuss Quantum mechanics here because I believe that its findings are consistent with Akan cosmology, and with the theories and methods of the practitioners of the paranormal.

It is widely accepted by historians of science that Quantum Theory was put forth by Max Planck in 1900 to meet certain problems that had arisen in studies of radiation (Davies, 1986, Ch.3). This theory has made strides since Planck, but at the heart of the subject lies the question whether an atom is a thing or just an abstract construct used for explaining a wide range of observations. If an atom really exists as an independent entity, as claimed by the physicalist, then at the very least it should have a location and a definite motion in space at all times. But Quantum Theory denies this. It says that it is impossible to know simultaneously the velocity and the position of an electron

orbiting around an atomic nucleus. You can know either position or momentum, not both. This is the celebrated *Principle of Uncertainty*, formulated by Heisenberg, one of the founders of this theory. This principle asserts that it is impossible with any of the principles now known to science to determine the position and the velocity of an electron at the same time - to state confidently that an electron is "right here at this spot" and is moving at such and such a speed". This is because micro particles have been observed to traverse their path in space discontinuously: they move to other parts in space only by disappearing and then reappearing at a new location: they change location by "quantum jumps". It is as if a car, traveling from Accra to Kumasi at 100 Km/h, did not traverse the road continuously but appeared at Nsawam, Nkawaw, Konongo, etc., but at no place in between these towns. As Whitehead puts it, "the electron seems to be borrowing the characteristics which some people assign in the Mahatmas of Tibet." (Whitehead, 1953, 35) In other words, the most we can know of a particle is its partially defined state. This is because an attempt to arrest a particle at place (p) and time (t) produces such a diversified wave structure of the particle and such an increase in waves in its environs that it becomes difficult to determine which of the different phase-waves is to be identified with the particle's energy: an attempt to locate the particle at both (p) and (t) produces such a simplified wave-structure of the particle such that its particularity is, literally speaking, "loosened" and it spreads throughout the configuration of space (Agyeampong, 1993, 16-17)

To give meaning to the wave-like and particle-like representations of nature, Niels Bohr proposed another principle: the *Principle of Complementarity*, which states that:

"The particle picture and the wave picture are two complementary descriptions of the same reality, each of them only partially correct and only within a limited range of application. For a full account of reality both viewpoints are needed, even though they are incompatible and cannot be viewed simultaneously" (Akyeampong, *ibid*, 20-21)

In a sustained elaboration on the *Principle of Complementarity*, Finch writes:

"In quantum theory, the properties of an electron or photon do not exist until they are perceived and measured. Thus, what a photon is going to be - wave or particle - depends entirely on how if the most neutral, unencumbered experiment imaginable could be designed, the results of the reaction would still be altered by the very act of observing it. This means that the perceiver and the

thing perceived are indissolubly linked; absolute objectivity is impossible. Form the quantum perspective things exist because they are perceived” (Finch, 1998, 263).

From the above considerations, two implications of quantum physics emerge that I consider extremely relevant to, (a) the argument for the Akan thinker’s explanatory model for paranormal phenomena, and (b) the argument against skeptics of the paranormal.

In terms of the *Uncertainty Principle*, the location of causal events in the micro world cannot be completely determined. If there exists no exact state of the particle, the idea that at real thing is that which can be located at a certain place at a certain time is questionable and, with it, the classical notion of causality. If all explanations and predictions of micro phenomena can only be inexact, and it is these micro phenomena that are the ultimate constituents of macro phenomena, then events and phenomena at the macro level whose cause cannot be determined with certitude (e.g. paranormal phenomena) could be plausibly taken to illustrate the course of nature.

The *Complementarity Principle* seems to suggest that the metaphysical barrier that separates man the observer from ‘objective reality’ has become obscure. For whenever Man attempts to spy on the ‘real’ objective world, he changes and distorts it by the very process of his observation. Furthermore, this principle supports the view that there exist phenomena in nature which cannot be explained or understood with the current methods of science. These are phenomena which the Akan thinker will describe as “*etra adwen*” (that which surpasses thought). My view is that since this principle rejects all absolutes, it implies that there are limits to any particular scientific insight. It says that we should approach reality from several perspectives, and that these various perspectives, taken together, will produce a better understanding of an experience which defines thought in a single framework of knowledge.

Einstein found this element of non-regularity in nature unacceptable. According to him, the universe must be viewed in an orderly, strictly deterministic way. Thus he is reputed to have declared, many times: “I cannot believe that God plays dice with the world”, to which Niels Bohr is reputed to have responded “nor is it our business to prescribe to God how He should run the world!” (Agyeampong, *ibid*, 20) But Einstein persisted, arguing that the only possibility under which the uncertainty Principle could be maintained was if the particles were connected by some ‘spooky action at a distance’, but that such action at a distance was incompatible with any valid model of reality. So to disprove the quantum principles he produced a paradox (the EPR

paradox) which seemed to dispute the quantum principles. According to Finch, the dispute was finally resolved by the French physicist Alain Aspect in 1982. Aspect monitored the behavior of two photons emitted in opposite directions from the same atom and found that the two correlated particles moving away from one another continue to act upon each other, even at great distances. Aspect's experiments have been corroborated many times. Finch writes:

“It is also meant that the principle of non-locality, i.e., ‘spooky action at a distance’ was now permanently imbedded in physics...the principle of non-locality supplied an empirical foundation for psychic phenomena and properly speaking, parapsychology could justifiably be considered a branch of modern physics” (Finch, *ibid*, 264) .

Finch makes other startling observations in regard to the implications of quantum theory to ontology and epistemology. He states that,

“From the point of view of real-time events or observations, something called the ‘collapse of the quantum wave function’ occurs that is measured by reference to another similar wave that is a *conjugate wave*. The two waves must ‘merge’ in order for anything ‘real’ to happen. The thing is these waves come at each other from different directions of time...Cramer calls the original wave an *offer* wave and the conjugate wave an *echo wave*. Thus a transaction occurs involving an *offer* and an *echo*. The implication of this thinking almost defy comprehension: every observation is both the start of a wave propagating toward the future in search of a receiver event and is itself the receiver of a wave which had propagated towards it from some past observation event, in other words, every observation – every act on conscious awareness – sends out both a wave toward the future and a wave toward the past” (Finch, *ibid*, 267).

We can identify the collapse of the quantum wave function effected by conscious perception with the disintegration of the coherence of the principles which govern our normal conception of events in space-time. What does this mean? It means, in the least, that a sensitive mind can ‘reach’ a past that he/she has not cognitively experienced, and that he/she can predict the future. Thus on this view, we can infer from quantum physics that one can look in either direction and perceive events in either and beyond the normal time barrier.

We see here a striking resemblance between the claims of quantum physicist and the Akan cosmologist. They both assert that our normal conception of time is no detriment to a sensitive mind's perception of events. Both the *Complementarity Principle* and the *Uncertainty Principle* substantiate the plausibility of the Akan concept of *sunsum*, as elucidated in sub-section 2.3 of Chapter Two where we argued for a two-fold definition of *sunsum*, first as a power/energy that pervades the whole universe (universal *sunsum*) and second, as that which constitutes the conscious essence of being in nature (particular *sunsum*). We said that particular *sunsum* is a species of universal *sunsum*, and that for this reason it is capable of transgressing our normal conceptions of space and time. And we have seen that the *Complementarity Principle* can afford us the view that mind or consciousness can transgress our ordinary conception of space-time. Another point of similarity between quantum physics and Akan cosmology is their view on causality. As seen, the *Uncertainty Principle* invalidates the classical notion of causality since the location of the causes of events in the micro world cannot be completely determined. Similarly, the Akan cosmologist postulates a causal element (*sunsum*) whose location and mechanisms are difficult to determine.

Thus at the dawn of the 21st century, a new scientific worldview, a synthesis of scientific insight over the past centuries, has emerged. Instead of strict determinism, we have a statistical nature of reality, and the objectivity of the natural world has been replaced by the view that the behavior of the object under investigation changes as we change our point of view. The present scientific worldview, especially the *Complementarity Principle*, seems to agree with the notion that there are several mutually exclusive approaches to reality. This principle conceives Nature as being too subtle to be understood from any single viewpoint, hence it confirms the fact that there are phenomena or experiences in nature that presently cannot be understood or explained with the methodology of physicalism alone. It says that we must approach reality from several viewpoints, and that these various viewpoints, taken together should add to our understanding of the phenomenon or the experience as a whole. The impact of the new scientific world view on physicalism's denial of truth to paranormal phenomena is clear: physical science cannot legitimately maintain its position on this issue, for the best that the epistemological paradigm can reveal some truths, but not all the truths, about nature. Hence it is prudent to the physicalist to pay regard to a plausible view of nature that makes room for the reality of paranormal phenomena.

4.2. Synchronicity

The recent vindication of the *Uncertainty Principle* by Alain Aspect and the subsequent admission of Einstein's 'spooky action at a distance' as a real feature of Nature was anticipated by the work of Swiss psychologist Carl Jung who used the term "synchronicity" to describe events, that fit our definition of paranormal occurrences. A synchronicity was "the simultaneous occurrence of two meaningfully but not causally connected events" (Jung, 1955, 25). Such events are "mutually interactive in a kind of simultaneity that does not obey the cause-to-effect- relation" (Jung, *ibid*). According to Jung, synchronicity is an "acausal connecting principle" as powerful and pervasive as cause and effect in objective events. Jung dwells on a number of cases, especially that of a woman foreseeing her husband's death, as examples of synchronicity, and argues:

"In all these cases, whether it is a question of spatial or of temporal ESP, we find a simultaneity of the normal or ordinary state with another state or experience which is not causally derivable from it, and whose objective existence can only be verified afterwards. This definition must be borne in mind particularly when it is a question of future events...an unexpected content which is directly or indirectly connected with some objective external event coincides with the psychic state: which I call synchronicity, and I maintain that we are dealing with exactly the same category of events whether their objective appears separated from my consciousness in space or in time" (Jung, 1972, 41)

And in this view, this principle is at the root of divinatory procedures as well as precognition and telepathy. Thus he discusses *I Ching*, a method of divination practiced in China, and asserts: the method, like all divinatory or intuitive techniques, is based on an acausal or synchronistic connective principle.

Not only does such a view deny the presuppositions of physicalism, but it also coincides with the Akan theories of existence. Thus Jung's theory and Akan ontology and epistemology coincide in their assertions that

- a. nothing in existence is unrelated
- b. connected events can be located at different periods of time

The Akan thinker holds that events involving the interaction of forces in space (exactly what Jung will call synchronistic events) occur in the life of everyone. Most of these would be ignored or explained away as coincidences by those who subscribe to “the basic limiting principles” of ordinary thought. But the Akan thinker, Jung and the quantum scientist differ from the physicalists only because their theory of Being and knowing makes them incapable of perceiving and understanding events in the unseen realm or reality. Where the physicalist sees coincidence, the Akan thinker sees the interaction of *sunsum* (either personal-personal or personal-generic). Jung sees two events whose occurrence he explains by the notion of synchronicity. On the macro level, the theoretical physicist sees events whose relationship to one another is explained by reference to principles that are normally applied to quantum phenomena. They will be describing the same reality from the different angles from which they perceive the world. When an *Ɔkomfo* goes into a trance (is possessed by a *sunsum*), he/she enters a world unhindered by normal limitations of space and time, as the quantum world is. The world he/she perceives is legitimately explained using quantum principles. In this world, facts and events of the past, present and future co-exist simultaneously, and all reality is synchronistically woven into one whole fabric of existence.

Thus the Akan diviner’s mind, working on the basis of Akan ontological presuppositions and epistemological principles, coincides with the conclusions of physicists and psychologists. The diviner’s work has its theoretical coherence in his definition of *sunsum* and his description of its relation to objects and events in space and time. It has its methodological coherence in his training and practices which constitute a treasury of techniques, services and procedures that collectively provides him with a tool for identifying, analyzing and understanding events at the level of ‘*nea etra adwen*’. And finally, his work has its practical coherence in the results he achieves that evoke in rational men a belief in the validity of his work.

4.3. Further Considerations on African Thought and Science:

In fact, many scholars have shown the striking resemblance between science and traditional African theories. Robin Horton, for instance, in his ‘*African Traditional Thought and Western Science*’ draws an extensive analogy between traditional African and modern Western scientific modes of theorizing. He argues that both of these activities are primarily concerned with explanation, prediction and control of natural phenomena through hypothesis formulation and justification. Oh his view, African traditional thought and Western science coincide at many points. One can thus infer

from this aspect of Horton's thoughts the position that traditional African thought is *mutates mutandis* like scientific thinking, for, according to him, the difference between these two activities "is more than anything else, a difference in the idiom of the explanatory quest (Horton, 1970, 69-70). Horton meant by this that whereas modern scientific thinking is couched in terms of impersonal forces and entities, African traditional thought is rendered in terms of the action of supernatural or personal forces. Due to this difference Horton goes on to create a huge gulf between African thought and Western science. I think that my reinterpretation of *sunsum* renders this idiomatic difference irrelevant, or at least it weakens the difference. If this is correct, then the insights presented in Horton's analogies can be reinforced.

But Horton's analogy has been challenged, and this challenge must be met before we can boast of the gains from Horton's analogies. One important challenge comes from Vernon Pratt, who denies Horton's claims of substantial similarities between the two activities. According to Pratt, "there is more than a difference of idiom between personal and non-personal explanations. The former are intrinsically less capable of rigorous prediction than the latter" (Pratt, 1972, 14).

We can, thus, account for two further objections to our attempt to give the status 'scientist' to African practitioners of the paranormal. These objections consist of;

- a. the personal versus impersonal ways of theorizing and explaining
- b. it is claimed that scientific explanations yield high predictions whereas African explanatory schemes do not. I will deal with these items in turn.

I have said that I believe that the personal/impersonal dichotomy, which supposedly distinguishes these two activities, cannot be sustained if we conceive *sunsum* as a force that pervades nature. It is a reality which is inaccessible to ordinary sense experience but will become accessible to a subject only when that subject has undergone a certain process or has met certain conditions to augment his mental power. These conditions are known by the African diviner and, whenever he meets them, he enters into this non-ordinary world.

In fact, Emile Durkheim is reputed to have remarked that the dichotomy between 'the natural' and 'supernatural' is the product of a particular western world-view; i.e. the world-view of "The-God-of-the-Gaps", (Horton, 1972, 22). The God-of-the-Gaps argument says that science (which supposedly postulates only impersonal entities) and religion (which supposedly postulates only personal entities) are mutually exclusive activities fighting for each other's space, so that every scientific discovery implies a

loss of territory for God. Kudadji and Osei argue that this argument does not necessarily hold in the African cosmological context (Kudadji and Osei, 1998, 57). I wish to affirm their view by asserting that there is no reason to suppose that African conceptual schemes are native versions of the God-of-the-Gaps cosmology. If the God-of-the-Gaps- conception is indeed responsible for the personal/interpersonal dichotomy, then this dichotomy may indeed be inapplicable in the African context because the peculiar circumstances which gave rise to it cannot be fully present in the contemporary African cultural context.

Furthermore, *Sunsum*, on my interpretation, nullifies the personal/interpersonal dichotomy and becomes, as such, a legitimate scientific postulate, for another reason: We saw in Chapter Two that philosophers of science now agree that, for instance, Newton's Laws of Motion (which, inter alia, postulate the force of gravity) merely provide descriptive generalizations of the nature and behavior of unobservable entities. I see no reason why *Sunsum* cannot serve as one such postulate to be explored. We strongly suspect its reality and causal efficacy because of certain manifestations: it allows us to conceive a link between a man and his fore-knowledge of an event bound to occur in the future. For these reasons, it should be possible to conceive *Sunsum* as a hypothesis in a broader conception of science, a holistic conception which collapses the distinction between the natural / supernatural dichotomy and hence the personal/interpersonal explanatory schemes.

I now turn to the objection raised by Pratt, that scientific explanation is capable of rigorous prediction whereas Africa theories lack this characteristic. Pratt does not state clearly what he means by "rigorous prediction", but the tone of his paper suggests that he alludes to strict determinism. Pratt would then be asserting that scientific theories do predict phenomena with a high degree of exactitude, while that African theories lack this characteristic. This view of Pratt's can be controverted for the following reasons.

First of all, the uncertainty principle of quantum physics, as we have seen, gives the lie to this argument. A large section of the scientific community in the twentieth century accepts that strict determinism in nature is a conception of the past. Next, even within physical science, probability is adequate for explanatory purposes. This goes not only for the social sciences but also for the biological sciences, e.g. in medicine, and is not unlikely that the "rigorous prediction" achieved in some of these sciences may be surpassed by the activities of diviners. Furthermore, it is difficult to maintain the thesis that African theories lack "rigorous prediction" in the face of what the evidence from my research suggest: the diviners and priests are able to make contact, at will,

with *sunsum*, and they are prepared to demonstrate the efficacy of this knowledge that they possess.

Therefore, to deny them appreciable success in their endeavors seems unjustified. Furthermore, Horton affirms that the invisible entities in most of the traditional explanatory systems so far studied “are for the most part regular in their ways, predictable in principle; retrodictable where not always predictable in practice, and consequently lacking in spookiness” (Horton, 1972, 24-25).

Kudadji and Osei present a position similar to Horton’s. They write:

“it is an open secret that can quite often what are posed as ‘supernatural powers’ by which unusual feats are performed are quite natural effects coming from leaves, barks, roots and animal parts rather than from supernatural forces. Consequently, they are or should be quite capable of undergoing laboratory testing. Even if they are not and cannot come under the purview of Western science, it is pertinent to remember that western science need not be the only kind of science” (Kudadji and Osei, *ibid*, 56).

I support the view of bringing the activities of African diviners into the purview of science, and I will soon suggest the outlines of such a science.

But our attempt to give the status of ‘scientific’ to the theories and activities of traditional practitioners will not succeed unless we answer on more possible objection to this attempt. This is related to the acquisition of knowledge by divination. I asserted earlier that the way to this kind of knowledge can be learnt and taught. But one may protest that the mode of acquisition and evaluation of this knowledge is different from the methods of science: scientific knowledge is open to every person who is capable of the studies leading up to it; and its prospective validation or falsification is as well open. This objection has been raised by Horton. According to him, the essential difference between traditional thought and scientific thought is that,

“In traditional cultures there is no developed awareness of alternatives to the established body of theoretical tenets; whereas in scientifically oriented cultures, such an awareness is highly developed” (Horton, 1970, 153).

This distinction led Horton to describe the traditional paradigm as “closed” and scientific culture as “open”.

This objection may be formulated in the following way: the method of acquisition of knowledge by divination is not open (i.e. accessible to whoever wants to acquire it) whereas this openness is a crucial characteristic of scientific knowledge. To meet this objection, let us look afresh at the method of training for this type of knowledge. I would like this time to approach this issue from the perspective of another system of divination. My research at the shrines at Larteh reveals that there are, theoretically, four means by which the acquisition of this type of knowledge may be achieved. These are:

- a. A deity may “call someone to serve it” (i.e. admit someone for training). The reasons for this “call” vary. For instance a person may be “called” because his family may be bound to the shrine in one way or another, or this “call” may be the price exerted for saving that person from some calamity – usually from untimely death
- b. Someone may start behaving extraordinary (having extraordinary insights) or abnormally (as if he is losing his sanity). His relatives will send him to a shrine to inquire into the reasons for his behavior. It will then be revealed, on investigation, that the god X or Y desires his service. He enters training at that shrine and he regains sanity
- c. P may come to the shrine and declare his wish to be trained. Certain rituals will be performed and a day appointed in which the deity will either “descend on P” or not. Descending on him would be sufficient evidence that the deity accepts P for training.
- d. Anybody can walk up to the shrine and request to be made to possess extrasensory powers. If she grants the request, relevant rituals will be performed and then the person will be endowed with these powers.

Of these opinions, obviously, it is only (a) that denies the prospective trainee the freedom of choice. Options (c) and (d) are the most conducive to the said freedom. Option (c) is very much akin to an application for admission to any institution whatsoever. If you meet the minimum requirements an entry test is conducted. If you pass, you are admitted. Although both *Ɔkomfo* Kwapong and *Ɔkyeame* Okoto admit that no one, to their knowledge, has entered the priesthood through (c), the fact that

this process is available defeats the view that the admission to this admission of this type of training is “closed” as per Horton’s meaning.

It is more difficult to meet the objection with regards to option (b). But let us see if this can be done: P’s extraordinary or abnormal behavior, as we have seen, is said to be because P has been earmarked for prospective tutelage under deity X. When P eventually embarks on his training, this may be seen as his having been compelled into training against his will. But he may also interpret this to mean that P was chosen because of his potential. On this conception, P is given ‘a scholarship’ because of his talents. Thus (b) reflects, on the part of the shrines, a desire to maintain high standards.

Furthermore, as I said, P initially may be sent to shrine Y or Z where he would be told that it is deity X which has earmarked him for training. This is an admission of the principle of the division of labor from the diagnosing shrines. In other words, these shrines admit that it is only under deity X that P can best develop his peculiar potential. Thus process (b) doesn’t necessarily deny access to those capable of training, although on my analysis talent is made to overrule freedom of choice, and it is an open debate whether this is justifiable or not. However, because of options (c) and (d) above, it can legitimately be argued that training for the priesthood is accessible to many more people than is usually acknowledged by critics of the shrines.

Once the admission process is over, and training begins, instruction takes two forms:

- a) there is what could be termed ‘negative instruction’, in the form of taboos and other don’ts for the neophyte to abide by
- b) then there is ‘positive instruction’. This involves teaching the method of interacting with *sunsum* (*Ɔkomfo* Kwapong, interview, *ibid*).

4.4. Holistic Science

These considerations lead me to the suggestion of a science in which the perspectives from quantum physics, Jungian psychology and the activities of the Akan diviner converge. I shall call such a distinct science holistic science. I employ the term ‘science’ in conformity to Kuhn’s conception of scientific activity (see Section C, 11, of chapter 3), a conception which is an acclaimed version on the subject.

The ontology of holistic science does not recognize the spirit/matter of distinction and upholds neither full-fledged Cartesian dualism nor physicalism. It will admit that

“many are the forms of that which is unknown”, and consider existence to be a continuum of being in which Gyekye’s Why 1 and Why 2 questions are posed not to address events in mutually exclusive but complementary realms of existence. The spirit/matter distinction is rendered unsustainable in Akan thought by upholding the definition of *sunsum* in this work, and by recognizing that particular *sunsum* in only a species of universal *sunsum*.

Secondly, holistic science proceeds on the assumption that strict determinism, the view that the causes of events in nature can be reduced to a set of known laws, and that therefore events are definitely replicable, is a conception of the past. Probability, in this science, proves sufficient for explanatory purposes. This need not occasion any serious interrogation, for in the social sciences and in much of the physical sciences, probability is adequate for explanatory purposes.

Furthermore, holistic science will not insist that the *modus operandi* of a theoretical postulate be conceptually accounted for in every one of its theories, I have shown, in Chapter 2, why such a demand is unreasonable. I would like to augment my views in that chapter by saying that atomism, propounded as early as the fifth century BC by Democritus, formed the backbone of corpuscular science right down to the end of the 19th century. This theory achieved widespread success in the physical sciences without any appreciable knowledge of the inner activity of the atom. It was only around the beginning of the twentieth century that scientists acquired a substantial knowledge of the inner structure and activity of the atom (Van Melsen, 1967, 193-198). What this shows is that a theory does not have to account conclusively for the ‘how’ of all its theoretical postulates before it is legitimized. A coherent description of how these entities work, and the ability to manipulate them to achieve results are, sufficient evidence of knowledge of these entities.

I accept, however, that a lot more is required of African diviners before their activities can undeniably acquire the status of normal scientists. Kuhn lists some tasks that practitioners of a normal science must constantly face if their science is to thrive, and I think that diviners could do more along these lines. These tasks include the following:

4.4.1. Theoretical Tasks

1. Manipulation of the symbolic generalizations to make them more predictive with respect to an ever widening range of phenomena
2. Making adjustments to the Disciplinary Matrix (DM) to take into account disconfirming data

3. Making concepts in the DM as precisely quantitative as possible

4.4.2. Non-Theoretical Tasks

1. gathering experimental data to compare with the DM predictions
2. gathering experimental data which helps in the description and explanation of natural phenomena
3. gathering experimental data which helps make the DM quantitatively more precise

It is clear that these tasks are designed to achieve more exactitude in the prediction and explanation of natural phenomena. For African diviners to make genuine and reliable contributions to human knowledge, they must seek to abandon unproductive approximations and acquire, in quantitative terms, some of this exactitude. For now, perhaps all we can confidently say is that the evidence suggests that these diviners are capable of interacting with and exploiting, non-sensible forces of nature; that the mind has more capacity than is known to Western physical science, and that African diviners have the ability to exploit the powers of the mind to a greater extent than Western physical scientists. A little more clarity on the methods that result in their successes is needed to enable us to say confidently that by positing *sunsum* as a theoretical entity capable of explaining natural phenomena, and by combining sound and herbs and other natural products of the earth to achieve regularity and control of events which we cannot ordinarily understand, the African diviner provides a particular example of a universal human enterprise - the enterprise of scientific practice. Man has described (not necessarily conceptualized) many regularities and irregularities in nature by this method. A little more exactitude would enable us to say that *sunsum*, a force of nature not ordinarily perceived through our senses, is Africa's present contribution to this human history.

Conclusions

I have aimed in this thesis to show why the reality of paranormal events cannot be legitimately denied and how these events could be said to provide us with genuine and reliable knowledge. I have also attempted a reconciliation of African traditional thought and practices with science (as understood in the West).

In pursuit of these aims, I have pointed out that the physical scientist's condescending attitude towards attempts to obtain legitimacy by other epistemological frameworks is unjustified. His attitude to other systems of thought is unjustified because his science rests on an epistemology which may provide beneficial lessons to others, but one which, nevertheless, cannot denigrate others by denying them legitimacy. Physical science cannot denigrate others by denying them legitimacy. Physical science cannot arrogate itself to the status of 'the only discoverer of truth in nature' because the epistemological framework of physical science is just one of many legitimate epistemological frameworks. I have questioned the legitimacy of certain features of physical science even though I do not question the value of scientific practice itself. Rather, in questioning the physical realist's claims, I have affirmed the potentialities of a science in West African thought must partake and to which I believe it can make considerable contribution.

The dominating note of science until the beginning of the 20th century, and still a powerful note in contemporary science, is that the doctrine of physicalism affords an adequate basis for scientific concepts. But so many complexities have developed in respect to the fundamental concepts of science (in respect to matter, space, time and energy), complexities which have undermined the physicalist schema to a point where it can hardly hold longer. The legitimacy of the physicalist schema is under serious question also because undeniable phenomena, previously ignored by the physicalist, cannot be ignored any longer in the light of their persistence and the explanatory potential of other conceptual schemes.

I believe that the science to which the African experience must contribute can develop the competence to deal with claims of the paranormal. Available experimental evidence and the activities of African traditional practitioners of the paranormal suggest that competent approaches to the paranormal have been initiated. At least a

few approaches have been developed that work well enough and deserve to be pursued. I believe that the development of these approaches will be hastened if the principles and methods employed by these practitioners in the description of phenomena are studied more formally, applied and improved upon. Why? Because they yield results which other systems of thought fail to achieve. Somewhere in the unknown depths between physics, neurophysiology, psychology and divination, paranormal phenomena reveal data for the beginnings of a new science, a holistic science destined to bridge the gap between the polarity of mind and matter.

It is in this context that African thought is invited to contribute to universal knowledge. By redefining and appropriating traditional thought, African philosophers can help define the parameters of this science. This task must begin by interrogating traditional conceptions and experience, exposing their weaknesses and emphasizing their strengths. My emphasis on the need to re-interpret the Akan concept of *sunsum* is an attempt to contribute to this task of the African philosopher.

In light of *The Rhind Papyrus*, current knowledge of the influence African ideas have had on some ancient Greek philosophers and evidence of traditional Africa's achievements in metallurgy and medicine; it would not be justified to deny science to the African past. But at the dawn of the 21st century, Africa has little use for recounting past glories by emphasizing how African mathematical thought entered the Greek mind and became native to Western thought. More forceful statements on Africa's contribution to scientific culture is required, and her achievements in explaining phenomena that do not fully fit in the explanatory scheme of Western philosophy and science provide an avenue for such contribution.

Finally I think it will be appropriate for African philosophers and scientists to hasten to the task of defining the parameters of the holistic perspective to science embedded in my view of African traditional thought. The guiding principle for this task should be that nature is wider than physics, that the mental world is part of nature, and that more will be known of the ordinarily non-sensible aspect of nature as more scientific work is carried out in an appropriately modified scientific framework.

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